

**POST-FEMINISM AT WORK?: THE EXPERIENCES
OF FEMALE JOURNALISTS IN THE UK**

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Abstract

Within the UK recent research has suggested that a belief in gender equality is becoming increasingly prevalent. Women are frequently framed as empowered individuals who are now enjoying a freedom to choose in every aspect of their lives, placing them on equal terms with men. From this perspective, feminism is consequently viewed as outdated and redundant. Such ideas have been labelled as 'post-feminist' by feminists and cultural theorists. However, as many feminists have argued, whilst considerable advances have been made, women in the UK are in fact far from experiencing 'true' gender equality.

This study focuses on UK journalism, examining the impact of post-feminism on the experiences and beliefs of women working in an industry that has been identified as contributing to upholding post-feminist ideas through its cultural products. In 2002, the most recent large-scale survey of UK journalists revealed that this traditionally male-dominated industry was now one of the few occupations with almost equal numbers of men and women. However, despite this numerical equality, more women in journalism are clustered in lower status roles and in less prestigious areas than their male counterparts. It is possible that female journalists may thus be experiencing sustained workplace inequalities of a type not acknowledged by post-feminism.

This research aims to provide an insight into the experiences of women working in the UK journalism industry through 49 semi-structured interviews with female journalists from newspapers and women's magazines. There has been little previous research in this area; earlier work suggests however that female journalists' experiences may be uniquely shaped by the existence of an individualistic occupational culture. This study consequently looks from a feminist perspective at the beliefs that female journalists hold about gender (in)equality, to reveal the way/s they interpret their working lives, investigating a possible affinity between journalistic work culture/s and post-feminist ideas.

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Journalism Glossary

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|-------------------|--|
| Broadsheet | A large format newspaper. Now also used to describe more serious, less sensational styles of newspaper journalism, and often referring to 'quality' newspapers despite the fact they may no longer be produced in the traditional broadsheet format. |
| Byline | The writer's name, printed at the beginning or end of an article. |
| Copy | Written material for publication. Usually has a timeframe for completion indicated by a ' <i>copy deadline</i> ' |
| Editor | The person in overall charge of the editorial content and direction of a newspaper or magazine |
| Features | Longer articles, usually in greater depth than news items. Features may grow from a current news event or be examining a timeless issue. Features which are not strongly connected to hard news events are often called <i>soft features</i> . <i>Soft features</i> are central copy within women's magazines, or women's newspaper supplements. |
| Freelance | Usually a reporter or writer without a formal long-term employment contract with one particular organisation (as opposed to <i>staff writers</i>). Instead they work on projects under short-term contracts |

or are paid individual amounts for work accepted for publication.

Journalist

Someone who finds and presents information to the audiences of newspapers, magazines, television news programmes etc. Within newspapers, two key journalistic areas are often distinguished as news and features. Journalists may work within just one area of news (a *specialist reporter*), work as a general *news reporter*, be a *features writer*, or work across a mix of different types of writing. In magazines, there are many different journalist roles, including general *feature writers*, and specialists such as *fashion editors*. The term 'journalist' also encompasses overall *editors*, as well as *subeditors*, and any other roles relating to the creative side of producing copy.

Lead time

The amount of time that a journalist has between receiving a writing assignment, and submitting the completed piece.

Local press

For the purposes of this research, the local press refers to newspapers produced for a non-national readership (incorporating 'regional' publications).

| | |
|-------------------------|--|
| Midmarket | Distinguished from tabloid newspapers by their black-top, as opposed to red-top masthead, midmarket newspapers fall directly between broadsheets and tabloids in terms of news content, with a mix of 'hard' and 'soft' stories. |
| National press | Daily newspapers produced and distributed for a readership across the UK (but based in London). |
| Subeditor | Journalists who check and edit reporters' and writers' copy. They format stories, add headlines and often plan page layouts. |
| Tabloid | A small, compact format newspaper. Also used to describe a newspaper style that uses short, simply-written stories and headlines with many pictures to illustrate more sensational content. |
| Women's magazine | A magazine produced for a female readership. Some are brought out weekly, others monthly. Each magazine tends to target a specific audience, mostly distinguished by age and income. |

Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Setting the Scene: post-feminism and the 'Equality Illusion'

'Today it is widely believed that feminism has achieved its aims and that the struggle for equality between women and men is over' (Banyard 2010:1). After (what some have identified as) three 'waves' of feminism (Siegel 2005; Gillis *et al.* 2007) with a shared goal of complete gender equality, it appears that many believe that this goal has been won, consequently viewing feminism as outdated and redundant. This distinctive 'cultural climate' (Whelehan 2000:3), often referred to as 'post-feminism' within cultural and feminist theory (Barrett 2000; McRobbie 2004), frames women as empowered individuals who are now enjoying the freedom to choose in every aspect of their lives, placing them on equal terms with men. However as many feminists have argued, whilst considerable advances have been made, women in the UK are far from experiencing 'true' gender equality (McRobbie 2009; Banyard 2010; Walter 2010). Indeed, in her recent book addressing this issue, feminist campaigner Kat Banyard declares that there now exists an 'Equality Illusion' (2010:12). Among other areas such as the education system and the home, Banyard argues that the workplace is one of the key places in UK society where women are still far from equal and are instead experiencing barriers to success which are hidden from view. Attempts to draw attention to continued gender inequalities are often undermined by the prevalence of post-feminist

thought. Banyard (2010), along with others (Aronson 2003; Gill 2009; Walter 2010), suggests that the UK media (including the journalism industry), plays a significant part in perpetuating post-feminist ideas to the extent that they are now accepted by many as common knowledge.

1.2 Introducing the Research: post-feminism and women in journalism

This study focuses on UK journalism, examining the impact of post-feminism on the experiences and beliefs of women working in an industry which has been identified as contributing to upholding post-feminist ideas through its products. In 2002, the most recent large-scale survey of UK journalists revealed that this traditionally male-dominated industry has changed to the extent that it is one of the few occupations in the UK with almost equal numbers of men and women (Journalism Training Forum 2002). However, on closer inspection of this survey's findings, it is also evident that despite this numerical equality, more women in journalism are clustered in lower status roles and in less prestigious areas than their male counterparts. It seems that the journalism industry may be an example of the sustained workplace inequalities that post-feminist thought does not acknowledge.

This research consequently aims to provide an insight into the experiences of women working in the UK journalism industry. Taking into account the prevalence of post-feminist ideas within wider society, it looks at the beliefs that female journalists hold about gender

(in)equality, looking for similarities and differences in the journalists' accounts, identifying significant patterns which reveal the way/s that these women, who are employed within an industry which contributes to the perpetuation of post-feminist ideas, interpret their working lives. There has been little previous research in this area; work done so far however suggests that female journalists' experiences and the meanings they bring to those experiences may be shaped by the existence of a dominant occupational culture which fosters a powerfully developed rhetoric about the idea of being a journalist (Aldridge 1998; Ross 2001). This may have encouraged a shared conviction that journalists are self-made, self-motivated individuals who hold the responsibility and power to determine their own career success. It is this individualistic belief which is suggested to uphold an idea of the journalism industry as innately meritocratic: those who work hard enough and have the talent, will succeed. Aldridge (1998), in one of the few studies of UK journalistic occupational culture, suggested that whilst the journalism industry is not at all unique in having an unequal gender demographic, it may be that an inherent individualistic work culture functions to direct attention away from gender as a relevant issue. Aldridge consequently suggests the possibility that women in journalism, whilst experiencing structural barriers to success, may be more likely to reinterpret such experiences as due to the fault of the individual.

This thesis consequently examines the impact of journalistic occupational culture, taking into account the popularity of post-feminist

rhetoric within wider society which, it is suggested, may function in a similar way. Thus the post-feminist zeitgeist appears to align closely with what has been identified as a journalistic occupational culture with its focus at the level of individual agency: each suggests that a woman has the potential to achieve almost anything – it is up to her to prove herself. From this perspective then, feminist interpretations may be less likely to be considered, potentially being usurped by post-feminist alternatives.

As such, this study is centred around the following overall research question: 'Employed to assist in the creation of a product which often contributes to sustaining a post-feminist discourse, how do female journalists experience and understand their lives, in terms of gender equality?'.

This central focus encompasses three key research questions:

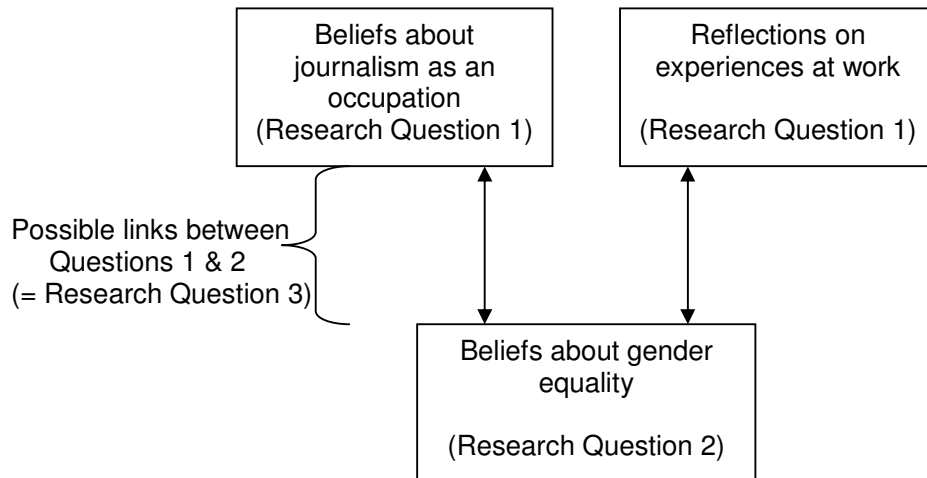
1. How do female journalists experience and think about their occupation?
2. What are female journalists' beliefs and understandings about gender equality?
3. Is there any relationship between the two?
 - a) What is the nature of this relationship?
 - b) To what extent is a distinctive occupational culture of journalism a significant factor in this relationship?

Consequently this research provides an original contribution to existing research about women in journalism and the impact of post-

feminism today. It examines the experiences of female journalists in order to gain an understanding of what it is like to work within this occupation, investigating the potential existence of a dominant journalistic occupational culture and encompassing a focus on ideas about gender equality and feminism supported by this culture. Through semi-structured interviews with a variety of different female journalists in the UK, I explore the above research questions to discover the extent to which post-feminism is 'at work' in the journalism industry, investigating its potential impact on the lives of female journalists.

Figure 1.1 below illustrates the links between the research questions:

Figure 1.1:



The following chapters provide a thorough analysis of these issues, ultimately assessing the viability of the suggested affinity between the journalistic occupational culture and post-feminist beliefs, and the potential impact of this. Chapter 2 examines the existing literature, critically discussing the key themes of this research, providing a context for discussion of findings in the subsequent

chapters. In chapter 3, I provide a detailed overview of the research process, from discussing the research questions in detail to explaining the research method used, ending with my personal reflections as a researcher; it thus functions as a natural history of the research. Chapter 4 investigates the journalists' experiences at work, looking at the nature and impact of work cultures. Chapter 5 provides an opportunity to look more specifically at gender as an issue, assessing the female journalists' perspectives on the extent to which being female makes a difference. Chapter 6 looks directly at beliefs about gender equality and feminism, investigating the personal views of the participants and the extent to which these fit with the post-feminist phenomenon. The final chapter revisits the research questions, providing a discussion of the main findings and demonstrates their significance, concluding that although many women in journalism are experiencing barriers to success, the journalistic occupational culture functions to perpetuate post-feminist ideas which may shape the way that they interpret these experiences.

Chapter 2

Gender Equality, Journalism and Work Culture: a critical review of the literature

2.1 Introduction

'In today's cultural climate feminism is at one and the same time credited with furthering women's independence and dismissed as irrelevant to a new generation of women who no longer need to be liberated...because they have already 'arrived'' (Whelehan 2000:3). Current beliefs about gender inequality in the UK are complex. Feminists assert that women are far from experiencing equality; nevertheless such claims are countered by the widespread popularity of 'post-feminism', declaring that gender equality has been achieved (McRobbie 2006). However, at the time of data collection for this project, statistics (Labour Force Survey 2007)¹ strongly suggested that, at least within the area of employment, women were still struggling to gain equal status: post-feminist claims appear to be premature. The question remains then as to how such ideas persist within current social discourse. Many have identified the media, including journalistic output, as a significant perpetrator of post-feminist ideas (Budgeon and Currie 1995; Barrett 2000; Aronson 2003; McRobbie 2006; Gill 2009). However, 'journalism is not produced in a vacuum' (Harcup 2004:12); the product may be influenced to some extent by the beliefs of those who create it.

¹ As my data for this research project was collected during 2006/07, the 2007 Labour Force Survey is the most relevant source of comparable workforce statistics. It must be noted therefore, that this study does not take into account the inevitable changes which have taken place in UK industry due to the recession which began in 2008 and from which the economy is currently still recovering.

Women's position in journalism reflects national trends: many hold lower-status roles in newspaper organisations, and despite the fact that women dominate numerically in magazines, the primary decision-makers tend to be male (Gallagher 1995; Journalism Training Forum 2002; Labour Force Survey 2007). Previous research into the unique occupational culture of such organisations has highlighted an individualistic approach to viewing the working world, alongside a conviction in equal opportunities rhetoric (Aldridge 1998). Such a culture may be likely to contest accounts of such inequalities which draw on structural explanations such as gender discrimination. Consequently it is possible that post-feminist discourse, which focuses on individual agency and female empowerment, may to some extent be found within the beliefs of women in journalism. Perhaps a reflexive relationship therefore exists between post-feminist beliefs within output, and the beliefs of female journalists, within the context of such a distinctive occupational culture. My research examines the beliefs and experiences of female journalists in order to gain an understanding of what it is like to be female in such organisations, and to understand what ideas about gender equality are to be found within this occupation, given the post-feminist tendencies in the output being produced.

Accordingly, this chapter will critically discuss the key underlying issues involved, examining current beliefs about gender equality, post-feminist ideas within journalistic output, the situation of

women in UK employment and women in journalism, followed by a discussion of work culture theory as an introduction to examining the nature of the occupational culture of journalism itself.

2.2 A spectrum of beliefs about gender equality today: from feminism to post-feminism

In British society today, there appears to be an unsteady mix of beliefs about gender equality, with some calling for sustained action against continued inequalities, whilst many others assert that men and women are now equal. Views on gender equality within popular culture in the first few years of the twenty-first century have been heavily influenced by the continued rise and sustained popularity of ideas described as 'post-feminist' in nature (Tasker and Negra 2007). This complex term, examined in detail below, encompasses the suggestion that gender equality is no longer a goal needing to be fought for; the aims of feminism are purported to be irrelevant to women today (McRobbie 2006). Popular focus has thus shifted towards the abilities of individual women to access and demonstrate female empowerment through their perceived freedom to make unrestricted life choices (Budgeon 2001; Walter 2010). Such claims are strongly critiqued by feminists, who continue to point to persistent structural processes of gender inequality in society today (Sperling and Owen 2000; Gillis 2007; Banyard 2010). 'Third wave' feminism is a term often used to describe a predominant strand of contemporary feminist thinking which has been shaped, in part, by the need for a reaction to the rise of post-

feminism (Garrison 2007). The third wave thus draws attention to the way in which contemporary popular culture contains post-feminist ideas which effectively undermine the feminist message, being rooted in the assumption that women are experiencing equal opportunities to men, and may even surpass them, in all areas of society. The following discussion aims to provide an overview of feminist and post-feminist ideas, mapping current thinking about gender equality and providing a context for understanding the way feminism is perceived in the UK today².

There is no set definition of 'feminism' today: despite some 'reluctant collectivism', a web of complexity surrounds the concept, with various attempts at sub-dividing and labelling feminists having been met with some resistance from within the movement (Beasley 1999:28). A broad description however, would centre around the central belief that women and men should have equal political, social, sexual, intellectual and economic rights (Whelehan 1995). As mentioned above, traditionally the history of feminism has been conceived of as divided into three 'waves' (Kristeva 1979; Siegel 2005; Gillis *et al.* 2007). The first wave is identified as occurring in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, a movement which evolved to fight for women's inclusion in political, economic and social life,

² This discussion should not be viewed as encompassing an exhaustive examination of contemporary feminism. Instead it seeks to provide an outline of the 'wave' model of thinking about the development of feminism, including the 'third wave', as this conceptual framework shapes popular understanding of the movement, despite its critics by some feminists (Adkins 2004; Siegel 2005).

focusing on key issues such as the right to vote (Siegel 2005). The second wave, emerging during the 1960s and 1970s, was rooted in dissatisfaction with the extent of the accomplishments of earlier feminists – turning to look at the ways in which social divisions persist even within a framework of legal and political equality. The second wave thus saw women's cultural and political inequalities as inextricably linked and encouraged women to understand aspects of their personal lives as deeply politicised and as a reflection of patriarchal power structures (Gillis *et al.* 2007).

Critics of the 'wave' metaphor exist (such as: Roof 1997; Harris 2001; Gorton 2007), suggesting that it encourages a view of feminism as a fluid historical trajectory, with waves occurring consecutively, not overlapping. As Roof (1997) argues however, the situation is much more complex. Second wave feminism has not necessarily been replaced completely. Some (now older) second wave feminists, such as Whelehan (2000), continue to see themselves as distinct from the newer, younger feminist generation, and are often critical of their feminist 'daughters' (Harris 2001). In addition, despite some positioning themselves as critical of the second wave, many third wave feminists (discussed below) see their work as founded on second wave principles (Shapiro Sanders 2007).

The emergence of what has been termed 'third wave' feminism began during the 1990s. It arose partly as a critique of the second

wave, as well as a response to the post-feminist 'backlash' (see below) (Faludi 1992; McRobbie 2009). Third wave feminists (such as: Heywood and Drake 1997; Walter 1998; Baumgardner and Richards 2000) criticise what they see as the second wave's essentialist definitions of femininity, which they view as over-emphasising the experiences of an upper middle-class white female demographic and consequently not taking into account diversity among women (Siegel 2005; Stone 2007). Third wave feminism is therefore informed by a postmodernist approach to the social world, asserting that inequality is experienced differently by different women, encouraging additional consideration of intersecting variables, such as class or ethnicity (hooks 2000; Genz 2006). It is premised on a conviction that despite (post-feminist) claims to the contrary within popular culture today, complete 'gender equality' remains a luxury experienced by a privileged minority of women (Stone 2007). Third wave feminists therefore advocate a critical engagement with contemporary popular culture, with much third wave work arising within the fields of cultural and media studies (such as: Genz 2006; Gorton 2007; Pender 2007).

'Post-feminist' ideas encompass a way of thinking which positions past and present feminist beliefs as historical and irrelevant, alongside an accepted common-sense understanding that gender equality is, at the very least, not a central cause of the difficulties faced by women today, and at most, a totally accepted state of affairs – a

certainty that gender equality has been achieved (Barrett 2000; Adkins 2004; Lotz 2007; Tasker and Negra 2007).

It is noteworthy that whilst the following discussion focuses on 'post-feminist' ideas as defined above, many have pointed to the fact that some feminist and non-feminist scholars also use this term to refer to areas of contemporary third wave feminism (Brooks 1997; Phoca and Wright 1999; Barrett 2000). The feminist adoption of the term derives from the third wave's use of post-modernist theory in their exploration of the multiple meanings of 'woman', in addition to utilising the prefix 'post' to emphasise the progressive nature of third wave theory. Others have attributed the term 'post-feminism' to a collection of 1990s young, conservative feminists such as Wolf (1991), Roiphe (1993) and Denfeld (1996), who explicitly defined their work as a direct attack on the second wave (Shapiro Sanders 2007). As Heywood and Drake assert, 'in the perpetual battle of representation and definitional clout, the slippage from "third wave feminism" to "post-feminism" is important' (1997 in Braithwaite 2002:335). Braithwaite (2002) thus argues that the feminist struggle is hindered by those who continue to describe feminist beliefs as post-feminist. Popular culture has a propensity to ignore complex arguments and trust 'common sense' interpretations (Billig 1991 in Benschop *et al.* 2001:12; Gorton 2003). Thus the feminist cause may be undermined by public definitional elision, and the third wave feminist message may be lost behind the 'more publicly familiar vocabulary of post-feminism' (Garrison 2004:32).

Common-sense understandings may assume that if feminists themselves are willingly advocating a concept called post-feminism, then popular suspicions are confirmed: feminism may no longer be needed (Brooks 1997).

Within popular and consumer cultural discourse however, post-feminism is most often defined as the belief that society has now entered an era where feminism is no longer relevant: women are experiencing equality (Brooks 1997; Becker 2000). Such ideas have gained great currency in recent years, leading Douglas Vavrus (2002) and Kinser (2004) to assert that a post-feminist hegemony exists in popular culture. Post-feminist images of women's 'liberation' proliferate within UK popular culture, to the extent that that images of strong, (seemingly) independent women are a marketable commodity (Gorton 2007; Gill 2009). These representations however, are produced with a subtext which implies that the goals of second wave feminism – 'financial autonomy, a successful career, sexual freedom...have been superseded' (Gorton 2007:212). As Lotz suggests, 'in this connotation, post-feminist is effectively synonymous with anti-feminist' (2007:78), distancing women from feminism.

The post-feminist critique tends to be rooted in a reaction to a recurrent 'grotesque parody' of feminism within the popular psyche, based on a very radical form of second-wave feminism - hence the popularity of stereotypical ideas of angry 'man-hating' feminists

wearing no make-up, favouring dungarees and burning bras (Church-Gibson 2004:138). For example, Garrison identifies a central discursive technique within post-feminist discourse as 'commodif(ying) the categories of 'the feminist' and 'real women/femininity as opposing perspectives and competing factions' (Garrison 2007:191). This trend contributes to the distancing of women from feminism as they are encouraged to re-embrace their femininity – a reaction against an exaggerated stereotype of second wave feminism, positioning feminism as antithetical to an interest in fashion or beauty of any kind (Genz 2006; Negra 2009; Walter 2010).

Thus the post-feminist discursive repertoire includes an, often implicit, 'backlash' against feminism. The term 'backlash' was popularised in this context by Faludi's (1992) early post-feminist text which pointed to the subjectivity of the media and its agents, providing examples of the ways in which the 1980s American media falsely accused feminism of causing suffering among women. McRobbie's (2009) recent valuable text 'The Aftermath of Feminism' argues from a British context that this demonisation of feminism continues today, though in a more subtle way. She asserts that within contemporary popular and consumer culture, post-feminism goes beyond being simply a backlash against a stereotyped version of the second wave feminist agenda. McRobbie (2009), along with more recent contributions to this debate by Walter (2010) and Banyard (2010), suggests that in addition to the insistent claim that we have reached

the 'end' of feminism, a rhetoric of 'power' and 'choice' is used, seemingly supporting women in their new-found individualistic 'freedom'. This discourse is held up as a substitute for feminism, undermining the basis for collective thought and action, 'so as to ensure that a new women's movement will never emerge' (McRobbie 2009:1).

Beliefs about gender equality in the UK are likely to be significantly influenced by the post-feminist beliefs prevalent within popular culture. As Coppock *et al.* (1995:3) point out, 'the irony is that...post-feminism has occurred at precisely the same moment as acclaimed feminist studies demonstrate that...women's real advancements (have) been limited'. The task of feminism is consequently made all the more difficult as women contend with persisting gender inequalities whilst post-feminist discourse encourages them to interpret the effects of these inequalities on an individualised basis. The media has thus been highlighted as a key player in the perpetuation of post-feminist ideas (Tasker and Negra 2007; Gill 2009; McRobbie 2009). The following section consequently examines in more detail work looking at portrayals of women gender equality, and feminism within journalistic output.

2.3 Post-feminist media?: beliefs about gender equality in journalistic output

Skidmore (in de Bruin 2000:232) argues that the dominance of men in the upper echelons of journalism 'interacts with gendered values to create particular tendencies in the coverage'; there is a degree of reflexivity between producer and product which is surprisingly under-explored. Gallego *et al.* (2004) assert that newspaper journalists learn to accept inherently shared values, procedures and beliefs. Thus each new journalist must 'internalise the model and style of the newspaper one works for, that is, assimilate its ideology and philosophy...as well as perspectives that should be rejected because they are apparently considered unacceptable and distorting – such as feminism' (2004:58). Manning (2001:61) consequently explains that in all forms of media production, 'stories are frequently selected because they fit into the inferential frameworks which experienced journalists have already accepted'. As such, it is essential to address existing research looking directly at media output; if female journalists are working to produce a product which may be shaped to some extent by a prevalence of post-feminist beliefs within their work culture, it is important to gain some understanding of what this might mean. This section will consequently specifically consider post-feminism in relation to journalistic output.

McRobbie (2003; 2009), along with others (Roof 1997; Segal 2000; Adkins 2004) argues that the widespread use of the 'wave' metaphor to conceptualise the historical trajectory of the feminist movement has in fact drawn attention to divisions between feminists, drawing the public (and the media's) gaze towards the third wave's critique of second wave feminism and vice versa, in such a way that the feminist movement is often presented as unstable and fragmented. Adkins (2004:430) thus suggests that when attempts are made to document its history, feminism is often viewed within the media as having 'passed on', in addition to the prevalent post-feminist assumption that it is no longer needed.

As discussed above, post-feminist ideas position women as having the freedom to direct their own lives, making their own choices (Whelehan 2000; Walter 2010). Implicit within this message is the understanding that women cannot and should not blame gender inequality as a factor influencing their lives; the emphasis has shifted towards women as agents, responsible for making their own decisions (Coppock *et al.* 1995; Banyard 2010). Gill's (2009) analysis of post-feminism in women's magazine output identifies this trend. She notes that within many women's magazines there is a subtle emphasis on contemporary society providing all (especially women) with the potential for success. This can be achieved by making the 'correct' decisions, such as choosing the right attire, the right degree of

assertiveness, the right time-management skills, and so forth. Thus 'success' for women can be achieved by adopting a self-reflexive approach, learning how to access and demonstrate female empowerment through taking responsibility for directing one's own life course (although often, as Gill argues, this 'life course' is in fact directed towards making oneself more desirable to men, despite being framed as 'personal fulfilment').

As Rhode (1995:703) concludes in her similar earlier analysis of women's magazine content, 'in this journalistic universe, feminism's aspirations to equality are widely shared, but its call for collective action is widely ignored'. Budgeon's (2001) research with young British women found that the women interviewed did not associate themselves with the experiences of other females; instead they offered individualised explanations for situations that could have been explained with reference to gender inequality as a barrier experienced by many women. This tendency, according to McRobbie (2007:79), results in the implication that 'feminism is decisively "aged" and made to seem redundant...(It) is cast into the shadows where at best...it might be regarded ambivalently'.

This post-feminist emphasis on individualised choice, often found within journalistic output (Gill 2009; Walter 2010), aligns closely with work by sociologists including Giddens (1991), Beck (1992) and Beck and Beck-Gernsheim's (2001) work on 'Individualisation', which

posits that contemporary society can be characterised by the way in which individuals must now choose the kind of life they want to live. They must be more reflexive with regard to every aspect of their lives, to ensure that they make the 'right' choices. Interpreting these ideas in a more critical way, McRobbie (2009) suggests that post-feminism constrains women, with its implication that while they now have the freedom to make such decisions without restraint, they must choose 'correctly'. Consequently she argues that 'choice is surely, within lifestyle culture, a modality of constraint. The individual is compelled to be the kind of subject who can make the right choices' (McRobbie 2009:19). Accordingly McRobbie (2009), as well as others including Tasker and Negra (2007), Negra (2009) and Walter (2010), mounts a critique of media output which implicitly suggests that 'correct' choices predominantly revolve around making oneself attractive to the opposite sex. The rising acceptability of practices such as pole-dancing, topless modelling and wearing clothes which overtly position women as sex objects (with slogans such as 'porn-star' etc.) are seen as evidence that women are indeed deciding to reject the feminist stance by choosing to view themselves as sexual objects – a view which consciously evokes and yet dismisses feminist beliefs as belonging to the past (Gill 2003; McRobbie 2009; Walter 2010).

A related image regularly portrayed in journalistic output including newspapers and women's magazines is that of the 'superwoman' (Coppock *et al.* 1995:4; Barrett 2000). This is often the

representation of the 'average' modern woman: she appears to easily combine motherhood and domestic responsibilities with a career, and excels at both. This image ties in closely with the conviction in the freedom to choose (discussed above) (Walter 2010); no longer are women constricted by the shackles of inequality: the 'superwoman' could potentially be any woman (Whelehan 2000; Spencer 2003). Twenty years ago, Ferguson (1990) was one of the first to draw attention to the fact that a privileged minority of women who had succeeded in achieving the crucial 'balance' between their private and public lives were disproportionately featured in media output, heralding the prevalence of women living the 'post-feminist dream' (see also: Lee 2004). More recently McRobbie (2007:1) asserted that this tendency has not disappeared in recent years; instead, within the British media can be found a 'discourse which suggests that girls have never had it so good...[which] serves to undercut the need for any feminist initiative...[and] deflects attention away from any idea of a patriarchal authority'.

The above discussion is not to imply that feminist agendas are never expressed within journalistic output. However if, as Aronson (2003) suggests, feminism is now seen by many (men and women) in society, as irrelevant to women of today, the fact that one of the main shaping factors of journalistic output is to write what sells (Gallego *et al.* 2004) suggests that post-feminist ideas are more likely to dominate within such output, rooted in the post-feminist premise of full gender

equality. The following section explores the truth behind this post-feminist contention, examining the extent to which women in the UK workforce actually experience gender equality.

2.4 Questioning post-feminist claims: women in UK employment

Fourteen years ago the UK media pounced on new statistics (Labour Market Trends 1995-1996) which showed that the total number of women in paid work had significantly increased. The dawn of a new era of the 'feminisation of employment' was declared (Charles 2002:21). This trend has continued, with a recent government survey confirming that the proportion of working-age women in employment has risen to 70% (amounting to 46.7% of the total UK labour force), an achievement aided considerably by the rapid development of the service sector (90% female) in recent years (Labour Force Survey 2007). Such data suggest substantial progress towards feminist goals. However any subsequent claims to gender equality may be tempered by statistics which show that the majority of women remain underrepresented within the higher levels of organisational hierarchies (35% of managerial roles are filled by females – Labour Force Survey 2007) and are more likely to be working part-time or in temporary jobs (with 77% of all such roles fulfilled by females), and earn less on average than men (Labour Force Survey 2007). In addition, processes of occupational segregation continue to sideline women into jobs of lower status (Opportunity Now 2008). Fitzsimons (2002) therefore

suggests that despite government legislation officially prohibiting gender discrimination at work, there may still exist subtle ways in which organisational structures, patterns and attitudes interrelate to restrict women's opportunities, often without any conscious intention to discriminate.

Many organisations can be said to be shaped by a 'gendered understructure': 'practices and policies that perpetuate unequal power, rewards and opportunities' (Acker 1998:195,197; see also Emslie *et al.* 1999). Despite the fact that more women are joining the workforce, their success is varied. Barriers exist which impede women's progress to differing degrees, including demands for long hours from full-time workers (Rutherford 2001; Trade Union Congress 2008a), the continued ideological connection of women to the domestic sphere and a reluctance within organisational cultures to accept females as equals (Bradley *et al.* 2000; Mills 2002).

Contemporary work organisations are characterised by increasing job insecurity (Burchell 2002; Burchell *et al.* 2009), with a decline in union power and a rise in short-term contracts and 'flexible' working such as freelancing (Halford and Leonard 2001). Rutherford (2001) asserts that such changes have intensified demands on workers' time; they are expected to prioritise work to an extent never before required. Indeed Landers *et al.* (1996), in their research on the working practices of lawyers, suggest that the powerful long hours

culture they observed was a common feature of many workplaces and often working longer hours was directly linked to promotional opportunities – a finding corroborated more recently by the Trade Union Congress (2008a). Acker points to the ideological ‘conceptualisation of boundaries that tend...to define ‘work’ as paid work in organisations and unpaid family work as ‘non-work’”, with the latter assumed to be women’s domain (1998:44). Thus Fagan (2001) found that it is women who are more likely to reconcile the competing demands of work and home by electing to work part-time. Fagan’s conclusion continues to apply: in 2007, mothers were twice as likely to work part-time (41%) compared with women without dependent children (22%) (Labour Force Survey 2007).

During the 1990s, a controversial school of thought emerged, questioning the conceptualisation of women ‘struggling’ to reconcile both home and work responsibilities with an aim to succeed at both, and/or accepting a lower status job to minimise this problem. Hakim (1995; 2000; 2002), the main proponent of such ideas, argues that many women make a rational choice to dedicate their time to domestic life, and thus consciously decide to work part-time for example. However feminists have criticised Hakim, emphasising that this ‘preference’ is not a ‘rational’ one in the neo-classical sense (Glover 2002). Crompton and Harris (1998) assert that such ‘choices’ are made within the constraints of existing ideological structures which maintain a gendered division of labour. Their later research found that public child-

care arrangements in the UK are inadequate, with private care being extremely expensive (the average weekly cost of a nursery place for a child under 2 was £152 in 2007 – Labour Force Survey 2007), and so it is the women, as the ‘traditional’ caregivers, who most often ‘decide’ to remain in the home (Crompton and Harris 1999). Crompton and Harris conclude that workers have a tendency to adapt their ‘orientations to work’ to what is realistically available to them (1998:122). Thus Brannen (2000) emphasises that such decisions are seldom made due to a personal indifference towards working full-time and are more likely to be compromises which sacrifice personal desire to ensure domestic responsibilities are fulfilled .

Those women who work full-time are likely to experience an exhausting ‘double-day’, dedicating long hours to their job and undertaking unpaid domestic work in the evening (Opportunity Now 2008). Indeed women spend twice as much time on housework and childcare as men (Bradley *et al.* 2000). Such women may also continue to experience subtle but powerful discrimination at work (Maier 1999:82). Male managers may view female employees as less committed if they show ‘evidence’ of responsibilities outside of work. ‘Individual...women may permeate (but not crack!) the glass ceiling to the extent they are prepared...to forgo either marriage, child rearing, or both’ (Equal Opportunities Commission 2005). Indeed a report published in 2005 by the Equal Opportunities Commission found that

30,000 women in the UK leave their jobs each year due to pregnancy discrimination (Equal Opportunities Commission 2005).

Bradley *et al.* (2000:72) explain that this situation may be enhanced by the persistence of stereotypical views, or 'myths' about women's abilities. Female employees are often ideologically defined as lacking in the talents needed to take on professional and/or managerial roles. Marshall's 1995 study of female managers in the UK who had recently left their jobs, found their reasons for leaving did not include a lack of ambition or talent, neither did the women blame the demanding work-life balancing acts (seen as an implicit part of being a female manager). Instead their accounts made references to negative experiences of 'male work cultures' which inhibited their progression and framed the 'ideal' worker as male (implicitly supported at home by a female partner) (1995 in Liff and Ward 2001:20). Thus Liff and Ward conclude that women's working lives - including the extent to which they attempt to balance work and family responsibilities, as well as the way in which their gender affects their day to day experiences at work - can only be fully understood when they are 'embedded within an analysis of the broader organisational culture' (2001:34).

Dellinger (2002) approaches her study of gender equality in media organisations by examining organisational and occupational work cultures; she sees these as created by the sharing of formal and informal social beliefs and rules about acceptable behaviour by

employees in an organisation, as well as collective understandings about their own industry as a whole. She asserts that 'workers and workplaces actively construct, perpetuate, and at times resist systems of gender inequality' through the creation, perpetuation and acceptance of specific beliefs about gender within work cultures (Dellinger 2002:4). McDowell's (1997) study of women in London banking identifies the dominant masculine work culture as a significant reason why, even with higher qualifications, female employees' careers progress more slowly. Indeed the reports of the UK project 'Opportunity Now' (2008) (designed to further gender equality in employment) emphasise that organisational changes which aid women's advancement are most often impeded by the subtle discriminatory mechanisms of work culture. They point to alarming statistics such as the fact that there were 28,153 sex discrimination claims (even excluding claims regarding equal pay, of which there were 44,013) brought by women between 2006 and 2007, and argue that this is a clear sign that discriminatory attitudes within UK organisations are preventing women from realising their potential within the workforce.

Thus there is much evidence to suggest that women's success within many organisations may be hindered by the increasingly conflicting demands of work and home, in addition to the existence of work cultures framing the ideal worker as male. But how much awareness do women have of these barriers to their success, and the nature and influence of their work culture? Despite its feminist critique,

it is enlightening to revisit Hakim's argument at this point. Her emphasis on female agency as an explanation for gender inequality at work is clearly rooted in a post-feminist discourse. Thus it is possible that a woman's personal beliefs about gender equality will affect the extent to which she identifies her gender as limiting her success.

Having discussed gender equality experienced by women in the UK workforce in general terms, discussion will now turn to address the position of women in UK journalism, an industry identifiable as an occupation in which gender may be a significant factor in determining employee success.

2.5 Women in UK Journalism: numerical equality, systematic barriers to success

Fifteen years ago, Gallagher (1995) was one of the first to note that for the first time, women's participation in media organisations worldwide had swiftly and significantly increased. UK journalism was no exception; many more women were training as journalists and entering newspaper and magazine organisations (Beasley 1993). Gallagher referred to this shift as symptomatic of a process of 'feminisation of the media'; however she remained cautious about the exact implications of such a declaration (Gallagher 1995:59). The most recent and largest ever survey of British journalists was published by

the Journalism Training Forum³ in 2002. At that time 49% of UK journalists were female (2002:21): the trend identified by Gallagher appears to have caused a balance in the numbers of male and female employees. There are slight variations by sector, with proportionately more women working in the magazine sector (55%), and more men employed in newspapers (55%) (Journalism Training Forum 2002). However, as de Bruin (2000:225) usefully argues, 'counting men and women...(is) only scratching the surface of the realities of media organisations...it is necessary to go beyond the body count'. Much research has been conducted into the hidden discrimination women often face in contemporary industries: do female journalists also experience obstacles to success, despite their numerical equality?

2.5.1 UK Journalism: recent changes

Organisational changes have had a significant impact upon the everyday experiences of UK journalists (Burchell 2002; Ladipo and Wilkinson 2002). Mirroring similar trends within other industries (Aldridge 1998; Franklin 2006), the journalistic workforce has been put under increasing pressure as workload has enlarged whilst job security has diminished. Increasingly competitive conditions (Gough-Yates 2003:39) have been created by the 'intensification' of both newspaper and magazine outputs, in the context of the 'growing hegemony of

³ It must be noted that the Journalism Training Forum encountered difficulties in identifying a sampling frame for this survey; this was eventually compiled using several different sources and hence the results may not be completely representative of all UK journalists. The survey remains however, the most recent and comprehensive source for statistics regarding the UK journalism industry.

ideologies of free-market enterprise' (with proportionally more product being produced by the same number of, or in many cases fewer, employees) (Keeble 2001). There has been a gradual increase in short-term contracts and freelancing work, alongside an increasing reliance on computer technology lessening the number of jobs available (Allan 2006). However despite the decrease in permanent staff numbers, in recent years more and more pressure has been felt by both newspapers (local and national) and magazines, to publish articles online; thus copy must be compiled and submitted 24 hours a day (Marjoribanks 2000; Keeble 2001; Aldridge and Evetts 2003). In addition, union power has declined due to government legislation which removed their collective bargaining rights to a significant extent (Aldridge and Evetts 2003:560). The overall reduction in job security, accompanied by heightened pressure to be the first to publish online, has meant that journalists employed in newspapers and magazines have experienced an internal re-focusing towards the worth of the individual accomplishments of each employee: 'an utterly performative environment', with workers subjected to increasingly competitive conditions (Aldridge and Evetts 2003:560).

As Keeble (2001:4) argues, 'job insecurity always promotes conformism. With the decline in union's power, opportunities for exploitation have increased'. Consequently the traditional long-hours culture of journalism has been strengthened, with management demanding more commitment with less employee resistance (Ross

2001). The Journalism Training Forum survey (2002:52) found that the average journalist works 41.6 hours per week - over 6 hours more per week than the average British worker at the time of the research, with many working significantly more than this. More recently, a report published by the Trade Union Congress (2008b) revealed that on average, media professionals (including journalists) are 50% more likely to work unpaid overtime as the rest of the working population, with each worker clocking up almost £6000 worth every year. The report concludes that the UK media industry is thus 'one of the worst offenders when it comes to unpaid overtime' (Trade Union Congress 2008b:1). As women constitute half of the journalistic workforce, are they experiencing similar difficulties to their male counterparts, as the pressure to succeed heightens?

2.5.2 Women in UK Journalism: barriers to success?

'The world of the media is still very much a man's world; with little decision-making power...women media workers are highly vulnerable – even when they are in a majority' (Gallagher 1995:2). This vulnerability is due in part to the difficulties they often face when attempting to attain positions of greater responsibility. Chambers *et al.* (2004:10) suggest that a 'glass ceiling' ('an invisible barrier to promotion' for women) continues to be a significant factor within newspaper and magazine journalism. The Journalism Training Forum survey found female employees are twice as likely than men to have experienced discrimination at work, and that men dominate the higher-

ranking job categories of 'General Management' and 'Editorial Management' (2002:17). Thus even in areas such as women's magazines, where creative staff are predominantly female, mostly male management above editorial level continue to control the commercial aspects of the business. More recently, a report published by the Sutton Trust focusing on the 'top 100' UK news journalists included only 18 women (Sutton Trust 2006). This trend was examined in more detail a year later: a survey conducted by the Fawcett Society (2007) found that during the summer of 2007 only 2 out of the 17 national newspapers in the UK had a female editor, and only 1 had a female deputy editor.

Melin-Higgins (2004), in one of the few studies directly examining the role of women in UK journalism, explains that inherent 'vertical segregation' procedures ensure that female journalists, despite theoretically having identical promotional opportunities to their male colleagues, in reality experience a hierarchical level above which they may not be able to go. Aldridge's (2001b) research concurs that there exists a powerful internal opposition to women occupying leading roles within regional UK newspapers, and observes that this trend may in fact be intensifying. Frohlich (2004:72) suggests that 'the very attitudes that get women into the communications sector – sensitivity, caring, honesty, fairness or morality – are also associated [in the minds of decision makers] with a lack of assertiveness, poor conflict management, and weak leadership skills'. Thus women may not reflect

upon the possibility that the skills which got them their jobs could construct boundaries to their success later on in their careers (Frohlich 2004).

In addition to the difficulties women may face when struggling to climb vertically within journalism, 'horizontal segregation' is also occurring within UK journalism. The majority of journalism students are women (Frohlich 2004); this new majority appear to be entering the workforce and clustering in areas producing output for women (e.g.: women's magazines/supplements/pages) (Gough-Yates 2003), or in areas of 'soft' news such as human interest, health and travel, as opposed to 'hard' news (concerning topical events: politics, economics and world crises) – a traditionally male preserve (Chambers *et al.* 2004)⁴. Indeed the 2007 Fawcett Society study highlighted the specific case of Westminster lobby reporting for national newspapers continuing to be a male bastion. Only 26% of political journalists registered at the House of Commons in 2007 were women, with just 2 out of the 16 political editors being female (Fawcett Society 2007:1). The Journalism Training Forum survey (2002:22) highlights that there are more women working for magazines⁵ than for newspapers. Dougary stressed, in 1994, that working in specifically 'women's areas'

⁴ Exceptions appear to succeed through remaining single and childless (Coppock *et al.* 1995, Adie 2002), but still may earn significantly less on average than their male counterparts (Women In Journalism 1998)

⁵ The survey data unfortunately do not provide the exact proportion of female journalists employed by women's magazines, relying on an aggregate total for all UK magazines. However this figure remains significant as a large proportion of magazines are consumer lifestyle publications which are thus categorised as 'soft' and often viewed as less prestigious than daily newspapers (McKay 2000).

should not be viewed as an alternative route to female power. Van Zoonen's (1998) paper on this issue suggests that the foregrounding of specifically 'women's issues' in news media has resulted in these being treated as inferior to 'proper' news; she explains that this should be seen as part of a wider social trend in which 'most things women do and like are not valued very highly' (1998:46; see also: McQuail 2005). Bonner (1992:11) thus refers to a process of 'ghettoizing women': marking them as different but not equal. Consequently Heller, a female journalist herself, warns others to avoid 'being shunted towards the ghetto of writing "as a woman"', advising them to write 'as a human' instead (Heller 1999:10).

Haworth identifies a further barrier to women's progress (in radio), highlighting the issue of hidden discrimination against mothers returning to work after maternity leave: 'there is a glass door that slides shut behind a heavily pregnant woman' (2000:257). She is often prey to a loss of respect and responsibility within the workplace. Comments made by female respondents in the 2002 'Journalists at Work' survey confirm this trend is also prevalent in UK newspaper and magazine journalism; for example: 'I took a sabbatical to take time off to start a family. When I got back I had been effectively demoted' (Journalism Training Forum 2002:60). Indeed, very revealingly, the survey found that 77% of all UK journalists had no dependent children (2002:7). In addition, Ross's survey of UK female journalists found that most respondents complained of struggling to cope with 'the near

impossibility of successfully combining family and career' (2001:531-532). The culture of newspaper journalism, with its long, unpredictable and unsociable hours, conflicts with such a goal (Frith and Meech 2007). As Aldridge (2007:153) suggests, in UK journalism: 'the "gender problem" is treated as solved...The reality is that most media sectors are not family friendly and are becoming less so. "Flexibility" is usually an employer demand, not the offer of more congenial working conditions'. This issue may be relatively less problematic for women who work in magazine journalism: the nature of the work (with longer deadlines and more freedom to plan in advance) means that the hours are likely to be more predictable and shorter. The Journalism Training Forum survey supports this proposition: the average hours worked in the newspaper sector are longer than for magazines (2002:53).

Continuing this emphasis on the problems of work-life balance for female journalists, Fenton (2000:735) asserts that the inadequate childcare provisions offered by UK media employers are a prominent example of the way 'gender difference (links to)...power relations in the cultural industries'. It is likely that the majority of women in UK journalism have also made this connection. The order of expected priorities is clear: 'life (must) be squeezed around the growing demands of work' (Perrons 2003:89; see also Antcliff 2005). Franklin (2006) suggests that the growth in the number of female freelance journalists is a sign that many women are "choosing" to leave the security of a staff contract in order to pursue a better work-life balance.

Although this route has many benefits, it could be suggested that women who leave in this way when they anticipate starting a family can be seen as potentially side-stepping the barriers to mothers in journalistic culture, with the remaining majority of more-experienced men left to further their careers, subsequently perpetuating the glass ceiling for women in journalism.

A further inequality experienced by some female journalists was highlighted in a pilot study conducted by Women In Journalism (2007). Their report, entitled 'The Lady Vanishes - at 45', suggests that even when women establish successful careers in journalism, they are likely to experience discrimination in the form of ageism as they get older. In the survey of 100 women, 71% described themselves as 'very' or 'quite' anxious about anticipated difficulties with continuing to work at their current job level until they were 65, due to discriminatory beliefs held within the culture of journalism (2007:1). It seems that a woman in her fifties or sixties does not fit with beliefs about the 'ideal' journalist, and consequently older women are often 'marginalised and ridiculed'; a problem not experienced to the same extent by men of a similar age (Women in Journalism 2007:1). Indeed, the Journalism Training Forum (2002:7) survey found that over a third of journalists are aged between 20 and 29, with a further third between the ages of 30 and 39.

It is apparent that vertical and horizontal segregation, along with home/work conflicts and ageism within the culture of journalism, is

likely to impact upon the success of female journalists. Sebba (1995:247) suggests that those women who succeed in gaining a high status position within a journalism organisation (and despite remaining a minority, there are increasing numbers who do) have 'a clear sense of their paths having been littered with obstacles'. However such an assumption should be received with some caution; as Frohlich's (2004) suggestion (outlined above) implies: female journalists' awareness of the barriers they may face should not be taken for granted.

Returning to the earlier idea that occupational beliefs about gender equality may affect the ways in which female employees conceptualise their experiences at work, attention will now be turned to examining the theory of 'work cultures' in more detail. This will function to highlight relevant issues for subsequent discussion investigating this link within journalism by examining journalistic occupational culture itself.

2.6 Cultures at Work: occupational and organisational

Previous research has highlighted the existence of a distinctive occupational culture within journalism; its pervasive nature means that journalists from different organisations often experience their jobs in a similar way, as the culture of 'being a journalist' may be more influential than any differences in organisational culture. This section will examine occupational and organisational cultures as forces which shape the experiences and beliefs of employees.

For the purposes of this discussion, it is useful to distinguish between two different forms of what can be termed 'work culture': organisational and occupational culture. To some extent these are similar concepts, varying only in their breadth of application. Organisational culture is often defined as shared beliefs and practices (both formal and informal) within a company, which impact upon the way in which individuals perceive their work and interpret their experiences within it (Parker 2000; Priola 2007). Occupational cultures are based on the traditional beliefs and practices which have developed over time within one specific trade, thus influencing workers in many different organisations (Ames and Rebhun 1996; Dryburgh 1999; Strangleman 2004). It follows that an individual worker can in theory experience both of these forms of work culture at any one time, to varying extents.

Previous studies into work cultures have taken differing approaches to explaining their existence. Some such as Helms and Stern (2001, see also: Ames and Rebhun 1996) have viewed work cultures simply as shared values amongst a working community, which are unlikely to have been implemented in a deliberate manner. Helms and Stern (2001) thus suggest that occupational cultures are sustained as a side-effect of working within a specific occupational environment. Individuals entering the occupation are inevitably affected to some extent through socialisation with others; whilst learning to become a

member of the occupational community they tend to adopt beliefs shared by colleagues.

Others (see for example: Alvesson 2002; Priola 2007) have framed work cultures in terms of the way in which they are likely to reflect the interests of those with power and influence within the organisation or occupation. Alvesson (2002:118) consequently asserts that just because shared beliefs exist within a working community, 'does not necessarily mean that this should be viewed as an expression of consensus or harmony...one should seriously consider the possibility of powerful actors or ideologies being central for the development and reproduction of these orientations'. Building on this line of argument, research arising from the management studies discipline (see for example: Schein 1991) is premised on the theory that work culture can be controlled and manipulated. As Wilson (2001:175) explains, in such literature 'culture is seen as a manipulable accessory to performance', and managers are consequently informed that work culture can be used as a tool for their benefit. However, many who approach the study of work culture from a sociological perspective are openly critical of such a suggestion. Parker (2000:220) thus argues that 'culture – however defined – is unlikely to be a very manageable property of organisations' because it does not exist as one cohesive set of beliefs. He suggests that there are likely to be many conflicting elements constituting each organisational culture, as there are so many

different groups of people integral to its existence, with differing perspectives and levels of power.

2.6.1 Organisational and Occupational Cultures: conflicts of interest?

Existing studies looking at the intersection of work culture and gender equality differ considerably. Research (see for example: Alvesson and Berg 1992; Hofstede 1998; Wilson 2001; Mills 2002) has tended to shift away from exploring the impact of occupational cultures, in favour of looking solely at organisational culture. There seems to be an assumption by some that a successful move towards pushing for gender equality within an organisation is likely to affect the dominant organisational culture to the extent that all will accept it. For example Bajdo and Dickson's (2001:411) large-scale study in the U.S which examined the relationship between organisational culture and women's advancement, concluded that 'a cultural emphasis on gender equity is probably necessary for women to advance and be able to influence the organization's culture'. They consequently suggest that a cyclical process of improvement should ideally take place within organisations: the subsequent advancement of women to more powerful positions is likely to encourage increased respect for feminine values within the culture, easing the path of advancement for other women in the future.

However this conclusion is based to some extent on the assumption that those women who do benefit from any initial changes in organisational culture will actively work towards supporting the

advancement of female colleagues. There is evidence to suggest that women within traditionally male-dominated occupations, who should benefit from efforts to promote gender equality at an organisational level, may not place emphasis on their gender and may in fact play-down their femininity. This may be because they are experiencing a conflict between organisational and occupational cultures. Miller's (2002) study of women in engineering used interviews with females working in the Canadian oil industry to explore symbolic barriers within gendered work cultures. She describes the occupational culture of this industry as characterised by a 'hard-nosed, dog-eat-dog, highly competitive approach to business' which consequently values traditionally masculine behaviour (2002:150). As such, Miller's study aligns with work done by gender theorists Connell (1987; 2005) and Seidler (1997) who, whilst disagreeing on some points, both draw attention to the way that 'dominant notions of masculinity are intimately tied up with the power we (men) traditionally exercise in relation to women' (Seidler 1997:16). Miller (2002) thus concluded that despite an organisational policy shift to encourage females into the oil industry, most of the women interviewed changed their behaviour to adapt to the persisting masculine occupational culture.

However, Phalen's (2000:244) study into female managers working in the U.S broadcasting industry observed that although some of the women were indeed 'accused of selling out' and supporting existing patriarchal structures by modifying their behaviour to fit the

demands of the masculine occupational culture, others did not. Some of the women interviewed instead explained their rise to management level as being due to the efforts of existing female managers who acted as mentors, encouraging other women to aim high by giving advice and by personally challenging cultural practices which prevented progress towards gender equality. As such, research exploring the impact of work cultures on women highlights the complexity surrounding this issue. It is important to take into account work cultures at both organisational and occupational levels; conflicts between the two may occur.

Hallett's (2003) paper adds to this complexity. Through a detailed argument outlining the need for a new approach to studying organisational culture, Hallett (2003:129) ultimately suggests that those who study work cultures should 'reconceptualise organisational culture as a negotiated order', explaining that this does not mean that every member of the organisation has equal negotiating power. His theory suggests that at any one time there are likely to be a few who have gained the 'symbolic power' to influence work culture. There is likely to be conflict and heterogeneity within one organisational culture, as there are often competing 'pockets' of symbolic power, valuing different beliefs, practices and traditions. Each of these pockets battles for dominance, forming layers of the overall organisational culture, whether or not it is significantly influential among members of the company. Although Hallett (2003) does not directly address issues of

gender and occupational culture within his paper, his theory enhances the above discussion. Hallett's argument suggests that in addition to taking into account the possibility of co-existing organisational and occupational cultural influences on women at work, it would also be constructive to frame these influences as potentially competing sites of symbolic power which may each, in turn, contain layers of conflicting beliefs.

Following on from this discussion emphasising the importance of considering the role of work cultures in shaping the experiences of women at work, the subsequent section will examine the nature of the occupational culture of journalism in order to consider what effect it may have on the experiences and beliefs of female journalists.

2.7 Assessing the Occupational Culture of Journalism

2.7.1 Autonomous individualism: the nature of journalistic occupational culture

Previous examinations of the occupational culture of journalism have been limited in number. Deuze's (2005a:446) paper draws together earlier literature (such as Soloski 1989 and Reese 2001) investigating this area in the context of journalistic identities on a global scale, concluding that 'what typifies more or less universal similarities in journalism can be defined as a shared occupational ideology'. Journalism is characterised by a clear sense of vocation and on-the-job socialisation (Aldridge 1998). Tunstall (1996) noted over a decade ago

that journalistic culture continued to foster an innate scepticism of those journalists who began their career at a national newspaper via a route other than having obtained the traditional 'indentures' at a local paper first. As Creedon (1993) suggested, this sense of themselves as crafts-people learning a trade promotes a strong set of shared values; journalists often conceptualise their lives as shaped by their work identity. Despite significant increases in the number of graduate and postgraduate journalism training courses available in the UK in recent years (replacing the indentured apprenticeship scheme) (Journalism Training Forum 2002), the persisting prevalence of the idea that journalists learn on-the-job leads Aldridge (2007:140) to emphasise their continued 'self-identification as a craft, rather than a profession'.

Deuze (2005) explains that journalism can be seen as distinctive in that, unlike other industries in which work identity varies according to the specific cultural values of individual organisations (with subsequently strong organisational cultures), journalists maintain a very clear sense of their status as part of a wider *occupational* community. de Bruin (2000:228) also makes this distinction, pointing to a complex interrelationship between the occupational 'culture of the newsroom' and the organisational 'culture of the media organisation', with an integral part of journalistic culture involving a conviction in the dominance of the former over the latter. Journalists thus advocate a clear symbolic division between the 'business' side of their

organisations and their occupational autonomy as journalists (de Bruin 2000; Hesmondhalgh 2002).

Aldridge (1998:113) asserts that this belief in autonomy has created an individualistic working culture: 'the job is constructed so as to pit colleague against colleague'; there is no sense of teamwork. Marjoribanks (2000), in his comprehensive study of the development of the global media conglomerate News Corporation in the UK, suggests that with the deunionisation of journalism in recent years, there is even more of a reason for journalists in the UK to believe that they must be self-reliant. Journalists thus perceive of themselves as self-motivated individuals, who hold the responsibility and power to direct their own fate through careful management of their careers (Aldridge 1998). Such ideas are continually perpetuated within UK journalism through in-trade publications such as the 'Press Gazette' (see for example: Kennedy 2001; Morgan 2003) which reinforces the powerfully developed rhetoric about the idea of being a journalist. The continuing trend for 'celebrity' journalists to publish their autobiographies (see for example: Adie 2002; Keane 2006) compounds the notion of the existence of a specific journalistic identity, separated from the 'business' of journalism. In addition, a glance at many of the textbooks and learning resources created for use by trainee journalists highlights that a pride in being autonomous also stems from a belief in the need for objective reporting. An example opening sentence from such a book effectively illustrates this: 'The heroes of journalism are reporters. What

they do is find things out. They go in first...sometimes taking risks, and capture the beginnings of truth' (Randall 2000:1).

This enduring belief in individualistic self-sufficiency is supported through the persistence of occupational myths which frame journalists as solitary individuals: hard-nosed, highly cunning and ruthless, with live-to-work attitudes and great commitment to the long-hours culture their job demands (Aldridge 1998). These (individualistic) stereotypes may appear harmless; however Pettigrew proposes that such myths are critical 'in the continuous processes of establishing and maintaining what is legitimate and that which is unacceptable' in occupational culture (1979 in Miller 2002:149). It is interesting to note that Women in Journalism (an organisation established to find solutions to in-house gender inequality) actually appears to reflect such individualistic ideas in their published reports on this issue. Significantly, their 1998 report concluded that 30 years of feminism had considerably improved the experiences of journalists. Women in Journalism (1998) has thus been slow to consider structural barriers to women⁶, and has often drawn on attitudinal explanations at the level of the individual. The implication is thus that women are now able to potentially succeed because a few have made it to the top.

Thus journalists themselves often 'paint a picture of a fiercely independent journalistic (occupational) culture that keeps news

⁶ Aside from their 2007 report on ageism, discussed above.

departments largely autonomous within the larger organisation'; however this perceived freedom is in fact unlikely (Shoemaker and Reese 1996:156). Shoemaker and Reese argue that 'the wall between the editorial and business sides of media organisations has been steadily eroding' (1996:156). Most journalism operates along capitalist lines: it is primarily bound up in an ultimate search for profit, despite journalists' view of their work as primarily altruistic, 'opening a window to the world' (Manning 2001:50). Curran (1990 in Hesmondhalgh 2002:163) asserts that 'journalists are allowed to be independent only as long as their independence is exercised in a form that conforms to the requirements of their employing organisations'. However, despite such arguments questioning the beliefs of journalistic occupational culture, a conviction in individualistic autonomy appears to remain.

2.7.2 Journalistic occupational culture and gender: male norms and female conformity?

Melin-Higgins' valuable contribution to this area asserts that the occupational culture of UK journalism should not be seen as homogenous: there are many conflicting ideas but 'in the process of hegemony, a dominant culture is created' (2004:196). Adopting a similar approach to Hallett (2003) as discussed above, she utilises Bourdieu's theory of habitus to explain that there is a constant battle for symbolic power within the culture, also drawing on Jarvinen's work which states that this struggle is in fact a hidden contest between males and females (Melin-Higgins 2004:196). It is men who

monopolise the power to define the 'doxa' ('the official definition of what is reality'); thus the occupational culture is formed from the male point of view, despite the fact that it appears unrelated to gender (Melin-Higgins 2004:197). She provides an inventory of revered elements which distinguish the dominant culture as male-orientated (from the female 'deviant' culture): 'hard' news (vs. 'soft' news), facts (vs. values), objective (vs. subjective), individualism (vs. collectivism) and the separation of work and home (vs. recognition of balance) (Melin-Higgins 2004:200, see also Van Zoonen 1998). Thus elements such as the long-hours culture and belief in individualistic autonomy subtly coerce women to conform to male standards of practice.

However, as a piece of research conducted by Women in Journalism (1999) highlights, the impact of such beliefs is likely to differ according to which sector of journalism a woman works in. The study found significant differences between newspapers and magazines, in terms of the way in which the long-hours culture was established. The relative predictability of working hours in the magazine sector reduced the negative impact of this element of journalistic culture for women, as they were more able to plan their private lives around a fixed work day. Thus the dominant culture within many magazines is less male-oriented. As Ross's (2001) research suggests, this is often one of the reasons why female journalists often move from newspapers to magazines when they reach the child-bearing life stage.

Melin-Higgins (2004:198) found that some female journalists are aware they need to develop 'tactics' to survive in a male culture, ensuring they never present a challenge to the gender stereotyping often experienced, accepting the limits of the traditional feminine domain of writing and tolerating discrimination at work. She notes that those who oppose such issues by contesting this stereotyping may experience heightened negative responses from other journalists, who frame their actions as unfeminine and wrong. However Ross's (2001) work contests such theories which imply female journalists are aware of the gendered nature of their occupational culture. She contends that 'the incorporation of women journalists into a largely male profession has the effect of "normalising" what are essentially male-identified concerns and a male-directed agenda' (see also Bajdo and Dickson 2001). Her small-scale survey of UK journalists found that many viewed their gender as insignificant at work and often blame for failure was placed upon the individual women concerned. Aldridge's (2001a:618) interviews with female Canadian journalists highlighted the possibility that such beliefs are especially articulated by those women who have achieved greater career success: '[t]wo of the most successful women expounded their fierce personal belief that success would and should be based purely on individual merit in such a performative...occupational environment'.

2.7.3 Journalistic occupational culture and post-feminism: an intersection of beliefs?

Thus the journalistic occupational culture has been distinguished as strongly individualistic. An interesting issue to investigate however, is the extent to which such an environment might encourage belief in post-feminist ideas. There appears to be an affinity between the individualistic conviction that all employees are responsible for their own fortunes, having equal potential to succeed (regardless of gender), and the post-feminist belief in the achievement of equality of opportunity for all. Aldridge (2001b), although not directly alluding to post-feminism, supports such a suggestion, arguing that the 'individualisation' of an organisation should *in theory* begin to dissolve structural barriers rooted in an older, traditional paradigm, thus ameliorating the fate of those who were previously vulnerable, namely women. From this perspective, a 'level-playing field' should have been created as the individualistic culture teaches that all are judged with identical criteria: according to their journalistic skills and commitment. Goldsmiths Media Group (2000) however remind that often a gulf exists between the perceptions implicit within such a culture, and the 'reality' experienced within it. Thus it may be that the cultural conviction in individualism and the idea that journalists are self-made, perpetuated through the strong sense of journalistic occupational identity, may impact upon female journalists' beliefs about their ability to direct the success of their own career on equal terms to men.

Thus the occupational culture of journalism appears to foster a cultural climate which may propagate a conviction in gender equality amongst employees, but how can this possibility be explained? How do elements of an external occupational culture become a manifest part of the self-identity of individual employees? Aldridge and Evetts (2003) go beyond the taken-for-granted assumption that there is a straightforward link between the beliefs sustained by individuals, perpetuated within an occupational culture, and their experiences within that organisation. They point to the significance of the *ideological* character of the journalistic occupational culture. Thompson (1984 in Eagleton 1991:6) asserts that 'to study ideology...is to study the ways in which meaning...serves to sustain relations of domination'. Shoemaker and Reese consequently argue however that ideology is not a conspiratorial phenomenon; 'it is not directed behind the scenes (by those in power)...Rather ideology happens as a natural outgrowth of the way the system operates' (1996:251; see also Alvesson 2002).

'Occupational ideology' is a thus a term used by Aldridge (2001b:8.7) to describe an 'endemic occupational blindness to structural inequality' within the newspaper journalism. Aldridge's research suggests the intensity of dominant individualistic cultural beliefs is such that any experiences of structural barriers to success are likely to be re-interpreted as due to the fault of the individual. Thus it may be that the individualistic occupational culture of journalism inherently legitimates post-feminist ideas. Female journalists may thus

be more likely to access and adopt explanations of their experiences at work which frame them as free agents with the power to direct their own lives through free choices, as opposed to considering the possibility of gendered structures which may be functioning to constrain those choices.

2.8 Conclusion

This chapter has raised a fundamental question about a possible link between the recent popularity of post-feminist ideas and the nature of journalistic culture. However there is a real gap in the literature: no previous study has directly examined the possibility of the impact of post-feminism on female journalists' perceptions, within the context of such an individualistic occupational culture. Consequently, this research examines the experiences of female journalists in order to gain an understanding of what it is like to be a female in such organisations, and to understand what ideas about gender equality are to be found within this occupation, given the post-feminist tendencies in the output being produced.

As stated earlier, this central focus encompasses three key research questions (discussed in more detail in chapter 3):

4. How do female journalists experience and think about their occupation?
5. What are female journalists' beliefs and understandings about gender equality?
6. Is there any relationship between the two?

- b) What is the nature of this relationship?
- b) To what extent is a distinctive occupational culture of journalism a significant factor in this relationship?

Chapter 3

Methodology

This chapter provides an overview of the research process. Beginning with a discussion of the research questions, I explain my choice of research method used to explore these questions. This is followed by a discussion addressing the choice of research participants and the sampling procedure used. The chapter continues with the design and implementation of this research method, followed by a description of the process of data analysis including addressing my theoretical standpoint. Finally, I consider the ethical issues that arose in the course of the research, followed by a section on my own personal reflection on the research process.

3.1 Research Questions

This research is centred around the following overall research question: 'Employed to assist in the creation of a product which often contributes to sustaining a post-feminist discourse, how do female journalists experience and understand their lives, in terms of gender equality?'. Previous studies of UK journalistic output have highlighted a tendency to reflect post-feminist ideas within the text, claiming that feminism is no longer needed because gender equality has already been achieved. My research examines the experiences of female journalists in order to gain an understanding of what it is like to be a female in such organisations, and to understand what ideas about

gender equality are to be found within this occupation, given the post-feminist tendencies in the output being produced.

As outlined in chapter 2, this central focus encompasses three specific lines of enquiry, which will now be addressed in turn⁷.

Research Question 1:

How do female journalists experience and think about their occupation?

My research involves an exploration of female journalists' experiences from their own perspectives, aiming to gain an understanding of the extent to which female journalists view their potential for success as limited by their gender. This research question also provides the groundwork for the more complex issues being addressed in Question 3. Consequently this investigation into the beliefs of female journalists is also viewed within the context of occupational culture theory. As Question 3 explores in more detail, it is possible that the strength of the occupational conviction in individualistic autonomy within journalism may to some extent affect consideration of gender inequality as a potentially restricting factor on female journalists' careers.

Research Question 2:

What are female journalists' beliefs and understandings about gender equality?

⁷ For a more in-depth discussion of these issues, including a review of relevant literature, see chapter 2.

The rise in popularity of post-feminist ideas has inevitably hindered the progress of feminism. Many have suggested that if women are convinced that they are already experiencing gender equality, they are less likely to consider their gender as a factor affecting their working lives. This suggestion may be especially relevant to female journalists working within organisations that contribute to post-feminist discourse through their product. This possibility is explored in more detail in the final Research Question. Question 2 consequently aims to gain an in-depth understanding of each interviewee's beliefs about gender equality.

Research Question 3

Is there any relationship between the two?

c) What is the nature of this relationship?

d) To what extent is a distinctive occupational culture of journalism a significant factor in this relationship?

Question 3 explores possible links between Research Questions 1 and 2, and is premised upon the hypothetical possibility that women in newspaper and women's magazine journalism may be facing the consequences of a divergence between their beliefs and their everyday experiences. The strength of a journalistic occupational culture which heralds the ascendancy of a post-feminist era may contribute to an overall framework perpetuating post-feminist ideas and possibly reduce awareness of structural barriers to success for women. Female journalists may thus be more likely to access and adopt explanations of

their experiences at work which frame them as free agents with the power to direct their own lives through free choices, as opposed to addressing the possibility of gendered structures which may be constraining those choices.

3.2 Choice of Research Method

As a feminist researcher (see section 3.5.2 below for a discussion of my theoretical standpoint), I reflected upon the influence that my perspective might have upon my decision as to which research method to employ. Since the 1980s, there has been a constant dialogue between feminists (see for example: Oakley 1981; DuBois 1983; Harding 1987), debating whether conducting research from a feminist point of view should also involve a commitment to a particular methodological standpoint. Until recently, many feminist voices developed a critique of the claim that 'scientific' methods are value-neutral, building a case for the need for a 'feminist methodology' consistent with feminist values (Epstein Jayaratne and Stewart 2008). This manifested as a deep suspicion of quantitative research, and a heralding of qualitative methods (and in particular, unstructured interviews), as the gold standard of the feminist approach to research. Over time however, some feminist researchers (such as Letherby 2003; Epstein Jayaratne and Stewart 2008) have begun to argue that one can conduct research from a feminist perspective using any research method. I support this approach, believing that when

choosing a research method, it is best to select 'methods which can best answer particular research questions, but always using them in ways which are consistent with broad feminist goals and ideology' (Epstein Jayaratne and Stewart 2008:47). As such, my final decision was to carry out qualitative semi-structured interviews. This was not predetermined by my feminist approach, but the result of careful consideration of which method would provide best access to the type of data required.

I selected a qualitative methodology as the most effective choice, given the nature of the research questions – providing a 'deeper understanding of social phenomena than would be obtained from purely quantitative data' (Silverman 2001:32). A quantitative approach, such as a postal questionnaire, would have been unlikely to have provided such an in-depth insight into the nuances of the journalists' experiences and beliefs. The standard highly-structured format of such questionnaires would mean that although I could have collected data on the demographics of the female workforce, the reduced scope for probing questions would have meant that the participants would not have been given the opportunity to reflect at length about what it means to be female in UK journalism, and potentially reveal links between this and their beliefs about gender equality in general. Additionally, had I decided to implement this approach, it is likely that I would have been much less successful in gaining a high enough response rate. Harris also anticipated this

problem when planning her research with journalists: 'journalists work to tight deadlines...and this lack of time (combined with the numerous items journalists receive in the post every day) means that a postal questionnaire would probably end up being buried in an in-tray and forgotten about' (2003:56).

Whilst deciding on a specific qualitative research method, different options were considered. Participant observation was viewed initially as a possibility. However, this method would have been unlikely to have been a helpful strategy. Hansen *et al.* (1998) assert that the media industry can never be adequately researched unless the significance of a chain of command is recognised. They note that due to the inability to directly observe those in the highest positions of authority, many earlier media ethnographies lacked validity. I wished to avoid such a critique and planned to ensure that, as far as practically possible, I took into account those women at the top of organisational hierarchies. I expected that such journalists might be inaccessible through any qualitative method other than interviewing, due to the norm that those with power tend to work in areas physically separate from other workers (Acker 1992). In addition to this issue however, I required a method which would help me gain comprehensive accounts of the women's experiences and beliefs. My conviction in this need to access beyond the observable led me to ultimately discount this method. As Bryman (2001:329) asserts, 'it is likely that there is a wide range of issues that are simply not amenable to observation, so that

asking people about them represents the only viable means of finding out about them'. Had I simply observed the journalists while they worked, I would be unlikely to have found out about their beliefs about gender equality, or be provided with an insight into their past experiences at work. Consequently, participant observation was excluded from consideration, as it would have been unlikely to provide access to journalists at different levels, and would have, more importantly, precluded my ability to ask questions needing to be asked.

My decision to carry out semi-structured interviews was rooted in my need for a method which allowed me to gain an in-depth understanding of female journalists' personal beliefs and experiential reflections about their work culture, and about gender equality more generally. Burgess describes interviews as 'conversations with purpose' (1984:102). Such an approach to interviewing enabled me to explore the perspectives of these women at a level of detail which would be unattainable through other methods (Arksey and Knight 1999; Mason 2002a). I was able to create an interview schedule which ensured that all elements of the research questions were addressed, whilst allowing freedom for elaboration of points, clarification of complex ideas, and expansion of discussion beyond my original questions.

This approach thus allowed room for digression, as the interviewees occasionally guided talk away from the interview schedule

to some extent. It was this flexibility which proved an extremely valuable resource. As Bryman (2001:313) explains, semi-structured interviewing allows the interviewer to 'respond...to the direction in which interviewees take the interviews'. The journalists were free to refer to other topics or themes which I may not have previously considered or linked together, and I had the freedom to follow up replies and ask new questions. For example, in my initial design for the interview schedule, I had not anticipated that such a large amount of talk, in many interviews, would be devoted to the issue of motherhood and the difficulties of balancing family and work life. The semi-structured approach chosen meant that not only did I have the freedom to be able to not rush this valuable discussion, but many of the interviewees then linked this to other themes such as their belief in feminism - a link I may not have established, had I been restricted by a fixed set of ordered questions in a structured interview.

Nina: When I first started, before I had the kids, I really wasn't sure about feminism – quite cynical about it really to be honest... That's all changed now!

[Higher-level journalist working for a broadsheet newspaper – 27/BS/46-55/H/3/M]

An unstructured interview approach would have been similarly unsuitable. Having the interview schedule ensured that, when discussion ran dry, or when it had deviated too far off track, I could easily glance down and be reminded of another relevant topic yet to be

covered, and direct talk towards addressing the research questions once more. In addition, the semi-structured approach was more appropriate from the outset as I began my investigation with a relatively clear-cut set of research questions on which to base my interview schedule; had my research been more of a general examination of a broad topic, then perhaps unstructured interviews would have been more suitable.

In contrast to quantitative enquiry, in which data can be clearly summarised through the use of tables and charts, qualitative data analysis involves a very different procedure: the researcher needs to somehow categorise and summarise the narratives of the research subjects (Burns 2000). The process of getting from rich, detailed interviews forming long transcripts, to drawing out patterns and themes which then provide answers to research questions, must be made as clear as possible. My decision to use semi-structured interviews as a method was thus made alongside a commitment to ensure that I describe my data collection and analysis process in as much detail as possible, combined with a responsibility to make certain that substantial relevant extracts from the interviews were frequently included to support claims made (avoiding decontextualised anecdotes with no indication of the degree to which they represent the group as a whole).

3.3 Research Participants: choice, sampling and access

3.3.1 Selecting a Sample Population: newspapers and women's magazines

In order to address and explore the issues encompassed by the research questions within the time available, I decided that the most productive approach would be to direct the focus of the research towards two key areas of UK journalism: newspapers and women's magazines. Much previous attention paid to the issue of gender in the journalistic workforce has focused mainly on newspaper organisations (see for example: Aldridge 2001a; 2001b; de Bruin and Ross 2004). However, Lowrey (2004) asserts that studies of journalism need to avoid viewing it as a singular occupation, as the experience of being a journalist may vary according to the type of organisation worked for and also the particular job of the journalist concerned. My research takes this into account, widening the focus to encompass a range of different journalistic roles within the production process of two different outputs: newspapers and women's magazines.

The decision to focus the research on two areas of journalism was also influenced by my need to ensure that an adequate sample of journalists representing each type of organisation could be interviewed in the time allocated for this project. Had I included any further types of journalistic organisation in the fieldwork, a larger sample would be required. As a lone researcher, I wanted to be realistic about what was

achievable, maintaining a balance between quantity and quality by ensuring that there was adequate time and resources available to conduct, transcribe and analyse each interview.

Accordingly, female journalists were selected as research participants from both the UK newspaper and women's magazine workforce. A key consideration influencing this decision was the contrasting nature of newspapers and women's magazines, both in terms of the organisations involved and the product.

Newspapers

With around 40% of all journalists in the UK working in newspapers (Journalism Training Forum 2002:7), it is the largest journalistic sector. Many have previously documented the male-dominated nature of newspaper organisations (Creedon 1993; Sebba 1995; de Bruin 2000; Cole 2005). The Journalism Training Forum survey (2002) found that there are less women than men working in the UK newspaper sector; these women are more likely to be working in roles which are considered to be of lower status within the structure of organisations. The newsroom culture specifically demands and rewards a stereotypically 'masculine' approach to work, which in many cases precludes the possibility of flexible, family-friendly working hours. Previous work in this area by Aldridge (1998) and Ross (2001), has suggested that female newspaper journalists are further disadvantaged as they are working within an occupational culture which is based on a

belief in individualistic autonomy - on the premise that gender should no longer be an issue affecting their working lives (a principle which could be viewed as 'post-feminist' in nature).

Not all roles within newspaper organisations are necessarily directly affected by the dominant news culture however; many women work in areas which differ from news reporting. Jobs such as features writing, subediting, or working within local journalism were identified as potentially offering female employees a different experience, and perhaps even an opportunity to sidestep the difficulty of inflexible and unpredictable working hours experienced by other journalists. Thus female newspaper journalists were distinguished as ideal research participants. I decided that approximately half my sample of interviewees would come from this sector of journalism, including a cross-section of women in different roles and working at different levels. In addition to its distinctive occupational culture and male-oriented demographic, the newspaper sector was selected due to the perceived role that its product plays in our society. Traditionally, journalists view their job partly as a responsibility to present facts and reflect the world around them (Kieran 1998). By choosing to interview newspaper journalists, I hoped to be able to not only explore the ways female journalists experience and understand their lives in terms of gender equality within this context, but also examine the journalists' views on the way that issues of gender and feminism are portrayed within newspaper output, given the prevalence of this occupational

cultural conviction which would suggest that newspapers should contain an accurate account of women's roles and relevance in all walks of life.

Women's Magazines

In 2002, the Journalism Training Forum found that approximately 25% of UK journalists worked in magazines (2002:7). Although there are no statistics available showing specifically how many of these are employed within women's magazines, this sector was selected for inclusion in the research primarily due to the contrasting nature of its demographic when compared to newspapers: the survey noted that of this 25%, the majority were female (2002:7).

Ferguson (1983:10) identified women's magazines as 'one of the most significant yet least studied social institutions of our time'. More recently Van Zoonen (1994), McKay (2000) and Frith and Meech (2007) have all drawn attention to the curious lack of academic consideration of magazines, compared to newspapers. Despite being relatively sidelined as a focus for qualitative enquiry, the women's magazine organisation provides a valuable opportunity to examine the experiences of journalists working within a predominantly female workforce. The decision to conduct approximately half my interviews with women working in this area was shaped by this difference from newspaper organisations. I anticipated that by interviewing women's magazine journalists I would be able to examine their distinctive

experiences working within an occupational culture which may be very different to mainstream newspaper culture. The nature of the work (with longer deadlines and more freedom to plan in advance) suggests that hours are likely to be more predictable and shorter, and therefore may be more family-friendly.

Women's magazines themselves are perceived differently to newspapers as a product. Research conducted by Women in Journalism (1999:10) has suggested that they cater for 'women readers [who] want aspirational images rather than the unglamorous reality of their everyday lives'. My interviews with women's magazine journalists aimed to examine the way they think about their product, and the messages about gender equality/feminism they see it portraying. By investigating women working within this distinctive context, and as a part of a hierarchical structure dominated by females, I planned to gain an insight into the way/s that their experiences at work might correspond with their beliefs about gender equality, and how these might differ to those expressed by journalists working in different roles within newspaper organisations.

3.3.2 Sampling Variables

In order to be able to compare and explore the experiences of a wide range of female journalists working in UK newspapers and women's magazines, it was important to identify key variables to inform the structure of my sampling strategy. As mentioned above, it was vital

to ensure that I take into account the different types of organisation, as well as the diversity of roles within each. Keeble (2001:1) writes in his guide to being a journalist, 'There are many 'journalisms'. The poorly paid journalist on a local freesheet is living almost in a different world from a top columnist on a national'. Indeed Lowrey (2005:47) advocates an awareness of a 'host of subspecialities...[including] reporting, content editing, copyediting, page design...the impact of gender may differ from one subspeciality to another'. Although both Keeble and Lowrey are referring only to newspaper organisations, McKay (2007) confirms that this lack of uniformity also applies within women's magazines, distinguishing between different types of women's magazines and also drawing attention to the varying experiences of women at different levels within the organisational hierarchies. Consequently, my sampling strategy reflects this, taking into account the different types of publication and the roles of the journalists working for them. Finally, I also considered age to be a significant variable; as recent statistics show that the majority of women in journalism are from a younger age group than their male counterparts, my sampling strategy used age as a way to help ensure that the cross-section of women I interviewed reflected the full demographic of women working in newspaper and women's magazine journalism in the UK. The following discussion outlines these three key sampling variables in detail, building up a clear picture of the decision process involved in deciding which journalists to approach as potential research participants.

Type of Publication (Organisation) worked for

My research questions specify a focus on female journalists working for UK newspaper and women's magazines. As a central part of the research involved examining potential patterns and links between the type of organisation worked for and the work culture experienced, the sampling strategy needed to take into account the different types of newspaper and women's magazine which exist in the UK. The daily working life of a female journalist employed by a weekly women's magazine is likely to contrast in many ways with that of a tabloid news reporter. As such, before I started to make contact with potential participants, it was important to identify the ways in which these sections of the UK media are segmented.

The contemporary UK newspaper industry is somewhat distinctive: it has a strong national daily press, based in London, with significant concentration of ownership (this is in contrast to the USA for example, where the daily newspapers are mostly regional or city-based publications⁸) (National Readership Survey 2007). This is not to say that the local newspaper sector does not have its place. According to the Newspaper Society (2009) (the trade organisation of the local UK press), in 2009 80.4% of British adults regularly read a local newspaper, compared with 61% who regularly read a national

⁸ This difference is due in part to the smaller geographical area of the UK, with better travel infrastructure enabling national distribution.

newspaper. Thus it was important that my sample incorporated representatives from both the local and national press.

The national press is traditionally conceptualised as divided up into three well-established market segments – the upmarket ‘broadsheets’, ‘midmarkets’ and downmarket ‘tabloids’. The three categories of newspaper cater for different readerships and are seen to be driven by different agendas. Today these unofficial divides are less straightforward as they used to be⁹. However, as Stevenson (2005:47) suggests, ‘the labels of ‘tabloid’, ‘midmarket’ and ‘broadsheet’ are...crude divisions, largely caricatures...[but are] nevertheless still useful as a shorthand way of characterising the different types of newspaper produced in the UK today’.

The National Readership Survey (2007) shows that the three newspaper categories are split along socio-economic class lines in terms of readership, with the highest percentage of middle class (ABC1¹⁰) readers regularly reading broadsheet newspapers, and the least reading a tabloid publication (and with midmarket newspaper readers falling in between the two).

⁹ In the main, confusion has arisen over the distinction between the upmarket quality ‘broadsheet’ and downmarket popular ‘tabloid’. Traditionally printed on the larger ‘broadsheet’ size newspaper formats, more recently both the Independent and the Times have launched tabloid-sized ‘compact’ editions, and the Guardian has also moved to a smaller design - these have now entirely replaced the larger original formats. For the purposes of this research however, the terms ‘broadsheet’ and ‘tabloid’ refer to the newspaper categories as grouped in Table 3.1

¹⁰ ABC1 refers to the top 3 levels of the National Readership Survey’s system of socio-economic classification, and is often equated with the term ‘middle-class’.

Table 3.1 All UK National Daily Newspapers

| Daily broadsheet newspapers (Highest % of ABC1 readership) | Daily midmarket newspapers | Daily tabloid newspapers (Lowest % of ABC1 readership) |
|--|-----------------------------------|---|
| The Financial Times The Times The Independent The Daily Telegraph The Guardian | Daily Mail Daily Express | Daily Mirror The Sun Daily Star |

Source: National Readership Survey (2007)

Broadsheet newspapers ‘present themselves as providing predominantly serious news, garnished with sport and some entertainment as well’ (Tunstall 1996:12). Their focus is on political, financial and other ‘hard’ news stories. They are predominantly dependent on revenue gained from selling advertising space, as they are able to charge high rates to advertisers wanting to reach more wealthy consumers (Audit Bureau of Circulations 2009). In contrast, tabloid newspapers (and, to a lesser extent, midmarket publications) are financed mainly through large circulation sales, relying relatively less on advertising (Keeble 2001). The mass-market tabloids sell up to four times as many copies as the broadsheets (Audit Bureau of Circulations 2009). There is immense commercial pressure to appeal to larger readerships. Driven by this commercial rather than a public interest agenda, they therefore feature human interest stories,

entertainment, sports and scandal. Articles about the personal lives of celebrities and ordinary people are prioritised over the more serious stories covered by the broadsheets. 'These daily papers focus on light news, the entertaining touch...this in practice means focusing on crime, sex, sport, television, showbusiness, and sensational human interest stories' (Journalism Training Forum 2002:18). Unlike the tabloids, the UK midmarket newspapers are shaped to attract a significant female readership. Distinguished from the tabloids by their black-top, as opposed to red-top masthead, they fall directly between broadsheets and tabloids in terms of news content, with a mix of 'hard' and 'soft' stories. Weekend supplements and carefully-placed advertising frame these newspapers as cheap alternatives to women's glossy magazines. Popular sports supplements aimed at men aim to broaden their readership.

The non-national press employs approximately 73% of all UK newspaper journalists (Aldridge 2007:61). Focusing predominantly on local news and a key outlet for localised advertising, especially property and employment, there are many differences between the countless non-national newspapers in the UK. A key variation concerns the extent to which readers rely on the paper for 'breaking' local or national news; Aldridge (2007) explains that some of the larger daily local newspaper organisations often produce more than one edition each day, fuelling a fast-paced work culture not dissimilar to that found in the national press. Weekly local newspapers focus more on

community news and events, with the aim to produce 'the maximum possible volume of news items with local relevance' (Aldridge 2007:61).

There exists some definitional blurring surrounding the terms used to describe the constituent parts of the non-national press. This terminology needed clarifying before I could decide how to incorporate this area of the newspaper industry into my sampling strategy. The terms 'regional' and 'local' press, for example, are often interchanged but are sometimes used to refer to specific types of publication. As Aldridge (2007) explains, the larger daily morning newspapers which have a widespread or large city-based readership, tend to be identified as 'regional' publications. The 'local' press tends to refer to the small-town weekly newspapers, although many now produce numerous localised editions, and thus reach a larger readership than the term 'local' may suggest. In addition to this confusing distinction, 'in terms of frequency of publication...[there is a] customary distinction between morning and evening papers [which] is rapidly breaking down as most 'evening' papers become better described as mid-morning to mid-afternoon papers' (Tunstall 1996:7). For the sake of simplicity however, and to sidestep such definitional elision, for this research, non-national publications are referred to collectively as the 'local' press, within which a distinction is made between 'daily' and 'weekly' publications.

The women's magazine market is incredibly fast-moving, with new titles arriving every year, some with relatively short life-spans due

to the immensely competitive market (Gough-Yates 2003). Since the 1990s in the UK, there has been a shift towards a rise in popularity of the weekly women's magazine (McKay 2000), alongside the more 'traditional' upmarket monthly glossy. Weekly women's magazines in the UK can be seen as covering three main niche markets: celebrity gossip, real life stories and, for older readers, the more traditional 'classic'/'mature' weeklies (such as Woman's Own - many of which date back to the 1930s). It is however, the celebrity and real life sector which is currently causing a decrease in sales for many of the monthly women's magazines. Known as 'glossies' because of their higher quality paper and upmarket editorial, with their predominant focus on fashion and beauty, the monthly magazines continue to attract a more affluent readership (Braithwaite 2002b).

The cover prices of most women's magazines do not ensure that profits are made. As with the more upmarket newspapers, these publications are reliant on attracting a targeted readership which will guarantee advertising sales. Thus UK women's magazine titles can also be usefully grouped using ABC1 readership statistics (Table 3.2), with weekly publications aimed at women from lower socio-economic groups (National Readership Survey 2007).

Table 3.2 UK Women's Magazines

| Examples of Monthly magazines (Highest % of ABC1 readership) | Examples of Weekly magazines (Lowest % of ABC1 readership) |
|---|---|
| Cosmopolitan Marie Claire Vogue Elle Good Housekeeping | Hello! Now! OK! Closer Bella |

Source: National Readership Survey (2007)

Having assessed and defined the various types of newspaper and women's magazine publications in the UK, I then used this information to help clarify my ideal sample. This process would ultimately assist me in exploring whether different types of organisation, publishing different products with different readerships and lead times, employ women who experience life as a journalist in very different ways. I consequently decided that I would ensure that the following were well represented among the interviewees: journalists working for broadsheet, midmarket and tabloid national newspapers, as well as from local daily and weekly publications. I would also include women working for both weekly and monthly women's magazines.

Status of Journalist's Job and Age of Journalist

In addition to taking into account the type of organisation worked for, it was important that I consider the type of job the female journalists do, as this would also be a key factor potentially influencing their experiences at work. As outlined in chapter 2, previous research has suggested that processes of vertical and horizontal clustering within

some newspaper organisations may be affecting female journalists' chances of competing fairly with their male counterparts (Franklin 2006). In order to gain a clearer understanding of this issue, it was important that I attempt to explore the accounts of women at different levels in the industry, and at different stages of their career. Statistics also showed that of the proportion of UK journalists that were female in 2002, the majority were in their twenties (Journalism Training Forum 2002), which is very different to the older male demographic. More women seem to be leaving journalism at a younger age, before they have reached a higher-status position (Women in Journalism 2007). I determined that the two variables of 'age' and 'status' may correlate in many instances, as for example, a higher-level newspaper journalist may be more likely to be older as she has had more experience. In women's magazines however, I hypothesised that these two factors might correlate less, as the age of staff is more likely to be influenced by the target magazine readership age. Furthermore, with a predominantly all-female demographic, higher-status roles within the organisation would logically be more likely to be filled by women. Consequently, in addition to the type of publication worked for, I resolved to ensure that I included a cross-section of journalists at different hierarchical levels and of different ages, ensuring that I examined as wide a range of journalistic experiences as possible. Tables 3.3 and 3.4 form a key to my operationalisation of these two variables.

Table 3.3 Status of Journalist's Job: 3 categories

| | | |
|----|-------------------------|---|
| 1. | Lower-level journalist | E.g.: news reporters/feature writers/magazine writers |
| 2. | Higher-level journalist | E.g.: section heads/editors (responsible for a department/section, often supervising a team of other journalists) |
| 3. | Editor | Overall head of editorial content |

Table 3.4 Age of Journalist: 5 categories

| | |
|----|------------|
| 1. | Aged 20-25 |
| 2. | Aged 26-35 |
| 3. | Aged 36-45 |
| 4. | Aged 46-55 |
| 5. | Aged 56+ |

3.3.3 Sampling and Access Strategy

My plan for a sampling strategy was consequently structured around the three key variables outlined above. I aimed to ensure that I accessed a cross-section of female UK newspaper and magazine journalists, including an even spread of women in different types of organisations, and of different ages and job statuses. I considered that, given the amount of time and money¹¹ available for the data collection, analysis and write-up of this research, a realistic yet substantial target of approximately 40 interviewees would be a satisfactory goal. However, I planned to be flexible: should the need arise, I would be willing to add to this sample size if by the time the target was reached, I judged it necessary to continue with further interviews. This would be

¹¹ The primary financial cost was the expense of travelling around the country in order to meet and interview the journalists.

the case if I gauged that supplementary interviews would bring new insights or highlight new themes which had not yet been fully illuminated within the existing data collected, thus reaching the point of data 'saturation'.

When planning my sampling strategy, I anticipated that gaining access to enough willing interviewees for my research would be a particularly challenging element of the research process. This expectation was supported by knowledge gleaned from previous researchers' reports of working in this area. Harris (2003:71), when planning her research with journalists, experienced this problem: 'I knew that finding enough willing journalists...would be difficult and would take time. Journalists tend to work to strict deadlines...I assumed that many of them would not have any interest in talking to me – after all, what was in it for them!'. The pressurised nature of the media industry is such that, with its high turnover of work with quick deadlines, journalists have very short diaries and unpredictable timetables. I consequently envisaged possible difficulties in persuading potential participants (especially those in more prominent occupational positions) to agree to dedicate a specific amount of time (approximately 1 hour) to helping me with my research. In addition to time constraints, as mentioned above, previous researchers (such as: Gough-Yates 2003; Harris 2003) have found that journalists may be wary of being interviewed themselves, suspicious of hidden agendas (with prior experience of journalistic interviewing styles - attempting to 'dig for

dirt'), with those of higher seniority within the organization proving the hardest of all to access. Gough Yates (2003:75) even describes how she was compelled to change the emphasis of her whole research design, purely due to the difficulties she experienced in gaining access to women working in the women's magazine industry.

In addition to such anticipated difficulties with accessing the research participants, I was aware that I would encounter significant problems if I attempted to implement a probability sample¹², as there is no national collected database of all UK newspaper and magazine journalists which would form the sampling frame from which a sample could be randomly generated. Many women's magazines and some local newspapers do regularly print a staff list within their publication. However, some do not, and more significantly, no national newspapers follow this practice. This perhaps relates to the occupational cultural view of journalists as objective fact-finders: once the 'craft' is learnt, each journalist is believed to function in the same way and so their identity becomes irrelevant. Beyond perhaps key headline articles which will have a byline, only columnists tend to have an explicit point made about their identity (often including a photograph), as they are writing opinion columns and are therefore being overtly subjective. It is

¹² A probability sample is 'a sample that has been selected using random sampling and in which each unit in the population occurs entirely by chance' (Bryman, 2004:85).

thus difficult to gain a clear picture of the full organisational structure of the newspaper industry¹³.

Under such circumstances, I decided that a non-probability sample would be a more realistic and productive approach to use. Snowball sampling would provide me with the best possible chance to speak to the number of participants I needed. Indeed previous researchers of journalism have reported that this is the most effective way to gain access to media organisations, which tend to be very insular; trust is more likely to be gained through the knowledge that a colleague has also agreed to participate (Aldridge 2001a; Harris 2003). Consequently I planned to use the few contacts I had already in various areas of the industry, as gatekeepers into the field. Snowball sampling would then take place as I asked each journalist I was put in touch with, whether they knew of any others who might be agreeable to be interviewed. I would ensure that I repeated this question at the end of every interview I conducted.

Having planned and prepared in detail, my data collection was extremely successful, involving 49 interviews with female journalists from newspapers and women's magazines. There were two key differences from the planned sampling strategy, which emerged as the interviewee access process got underway. The first was that although I

¹³ My interviews consequently provide a useful insight into the demographics of national newspapers, with a specific focus on the gender balance.

had planned to reach all my respondents through a snowballing technique, after I had conducted the first few interviews I realised that I was accessing mainly local newspaper journalists. I had however been given a number of work email addresses for journalists working at various national publications. I began to see that a 'cold-calling' email would be a way for me to contact a larger number of journalists, in an extremely unobtrusive way. It also allowed me to sidestep the potential ethical difficulty of causing annoyance to many journalists, had I attempted to reach them via cold-calling on the telephone. Harris (2003:75) reports that she had many difficulties when trying to call potential interviewees at their offices, and described how she 'quickly developed a thick skin, as some journalists were prone to be more abrupt than others'.

Thus email recipients could simply read or delete the message at their leisure, and perhaps fit a response into their fast-paced working lives (Selwyn and Robson 1998). I formulated an email which summarised my research and my request for help (see Appendix 1). I then set in motion a process of 'educated guesswork' in order to find out the email address formats used by staff of key national newspapers and women's magazine organisations. I bought numerous copies of their publications, and regularly compiled a list of any female staff members mentioned in bylines or on staff lists. I then selected one individual from each publication as my initial test email recipient. As an illustrative example of this process, if I had seen a Jane Smith

mentioned in a byline for the Daily Herald¹⁴, I would then sent an email to, for example:

jane.smith@dailyherald.com

jsmith@dailyherald.com

janesmith@dailyherald.com

janesmith@dailyherald.co.uk

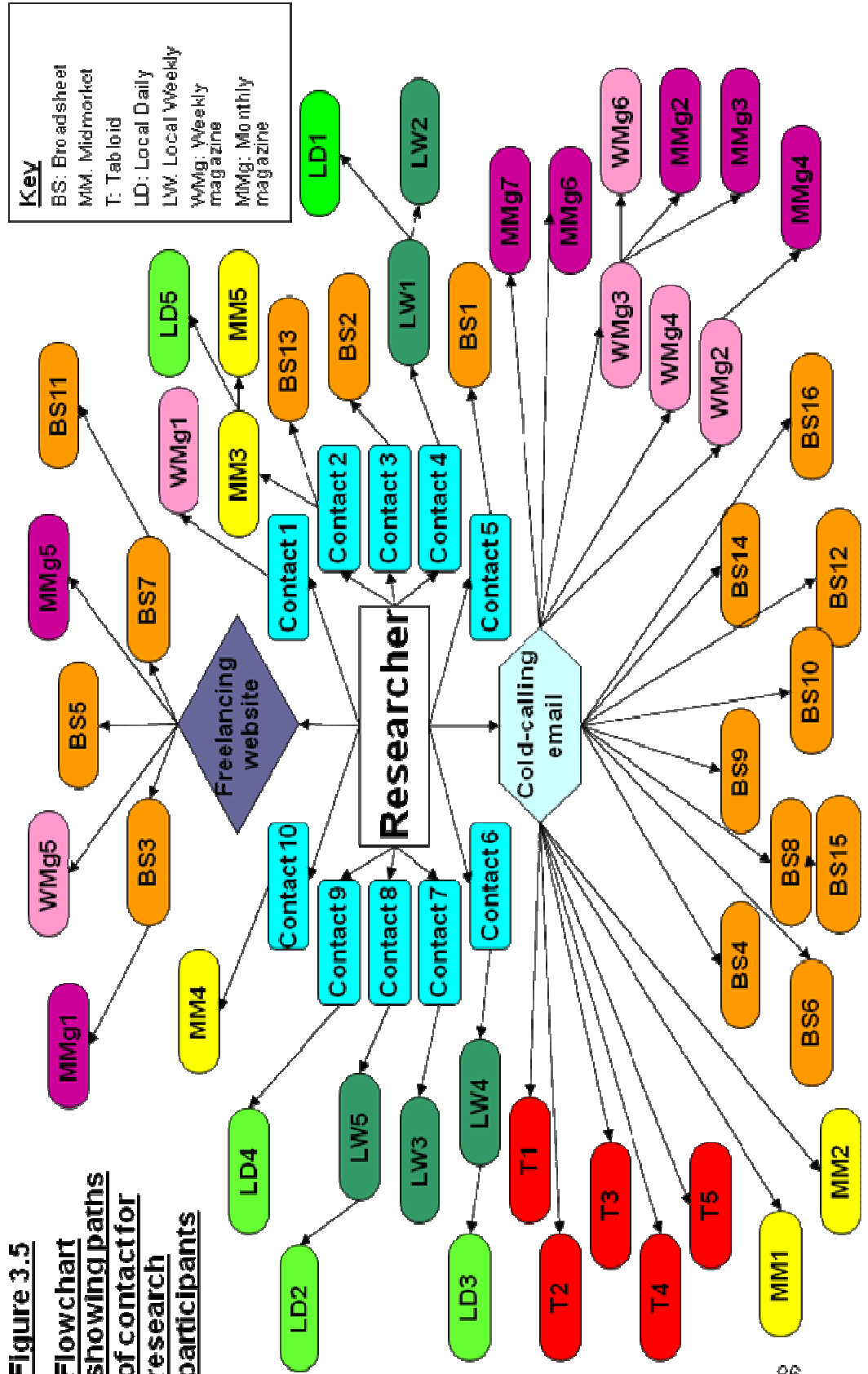
and so on, noting which were returned as undeliverable, until the correct format was identified. I would then use this format to email other journalists working for the same company. I accessed 25 journalists this way, having sent approximately 250 cold-calling emails to journalists.

I recognise that decisions about who was and who wasn't interviewed were, in part, made by the contacts I made in the field, potentially causing my sample to be less representative than if it were possible to implement probability sampling. For those accessed by a 'cold-calling' email, a degree of 'self-selection' took place as only those who actively responded to the emailed request were considered for interview. As Aldridge (2001a) suggested in her study of Canadian female journalists, it is likely that the sample may be slightly unrepresentative as it may be that only those women who feel that they are 'successful' in their work, might be willing to talk about it with me. However, this mix of two access strategies was the most practical and feasible approach under the circumstances. Using both approaches

¹⁴ In order to protect personal data, I am using a fake newspaper to demonstrate this process.

together also limited the effects of the potential bias I may have experienced in my sample, had I implemented just one. The emailing ensured I spoke to some journalists who were not all connected through a snowballed chain of personal contacts; the snowballing ensured that I included some journalists whose names may not have been present in published staff lists or bylines. Figure 3.5 shows the different paths of access I used to reach each journalist.

Figure 3.5
Flowchart
showing paths
of contact for
research
participants

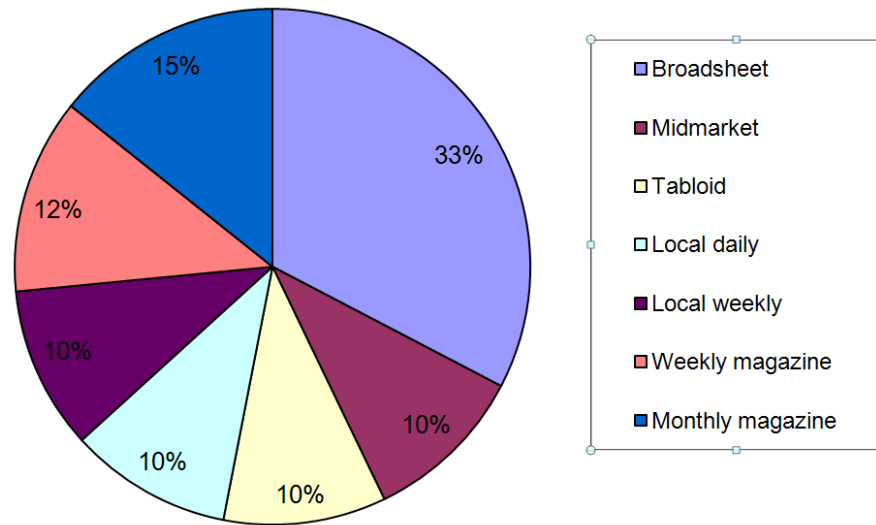


The second difference from the original planned sampling strategy was that the eventual sample size grew from 40 to 49 participants. This is due to my planned strategy to be as flexible as possible, to allow interviewing to continue until data saturation had been reached. As I conducted and transcribed the first 40 interviews, it was clear that the theme of motherhood had emerged as a central issue influencing female journalists' experiences at work. Many were suggesting that having children significantly affected women's chances in the industry, and many had referred to female colleagues who had chosen or changed to work specifically in areas which were more likely to allow them to plan family life outside of work. As such, I decided it was important to include women who worked as subeditors and freelancers (the latter were mainly accessed via gaining email addresses from freelancing websites), as well as reviewing the existing sample to ensure I had a mix of women in different positions, with and without children. Thus my final few interviewees were targeted specifically to fulfil these criteria, effectively adding a fourth variable of motherhood.

My final sample did include a spread of journalists across the four key stratifying variables, as Charts 3.6, 3.7, 3.8 and 3.9 illustrate:

Chart 3.6

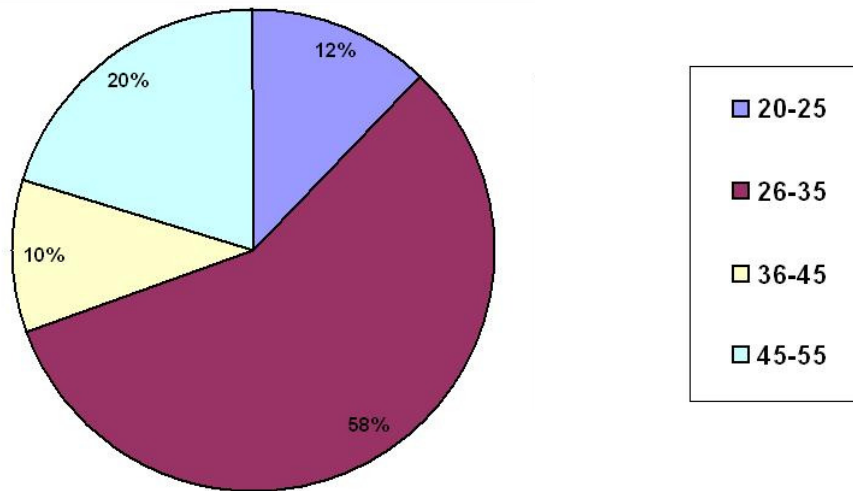
Sample Variable 1: Type of Publication



There are no national numbers available which reveal exactly how many women work in each of the sectors mentioned above; it is therefore difficult to make assumption about how representative the sample is, in this regard. However, from information gleaned from journalists through the interview process, it does appear that in terms of national newspapers, many more women are employed within broadsheet organisations than in midmarket and tabloid newspapers. There is also a high proportion of female journalists in the UK working in women’s magazines. However, the sampling process was to some extent reliant on gaining access to willing participants and, as discussed below (see section 3.7), many magazine employees were actively resistant to my request for help.

Chart 3.7

Sample Variable 2: Age

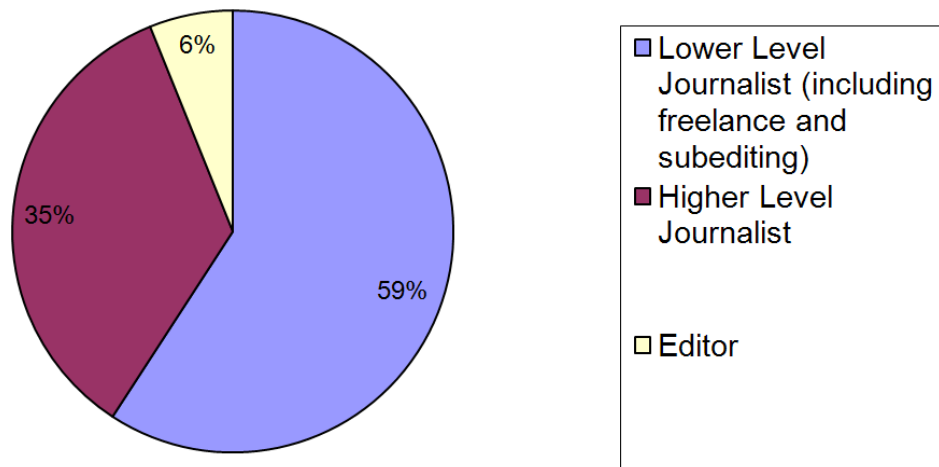


When compared to the most recent national statistics charting the personal characteristics of UK journalists, the pie-chart above shows that my sample is roughly comparable, with approximately half of all female journalists aged between 25 and 34 years, and much smaller percentages in the younger and older age brackets (Journalism Training Forum 2002:22)¹⁵.

¹⁵ It must be noted however, that these figures include *all* types of female journalist (including television, radio etc.), and therefore act as a rough guide, in lieu of any more accurate national statistics.

Chart 3.8

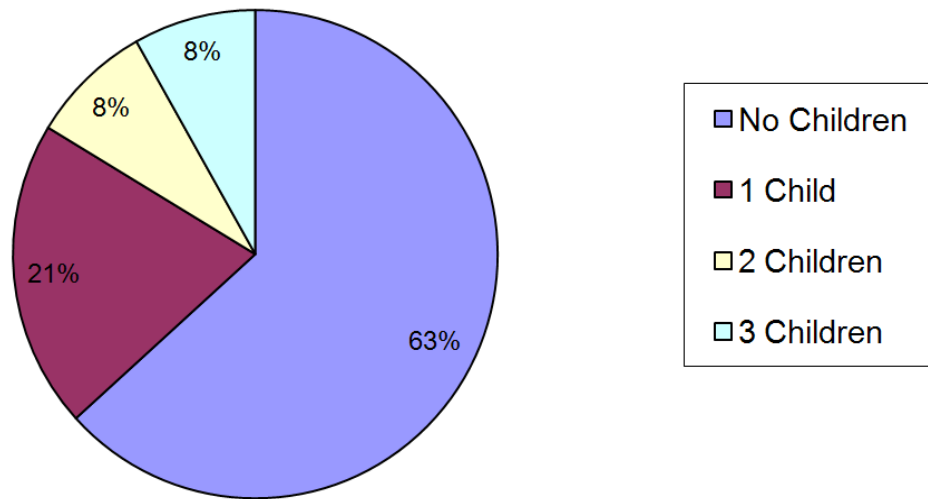
Sample Variable 3: Job Status



When compared to the Journalism Training Forum (2002:17) statistics, the pie-chart above appears comparable: approximately one-third of female journalists in the UK are classed as 'Editorial management' or 'Section heads' (roughly corresponding to my 'Editor' and 'Higher-Level' categories), with the remaining two-thirds working as 'Writers/Reporters' or in 'Production' (my 'Lower-Level' category).

Chart 3.9

Sample Variable 4: Motherhood



The Journalism Training Forum (2002) survey did not distinguish between male and female respondents when reporting on this issue. It also only focused on journalists with *dependent* children. The survey found that only 23% of all UK journalists had dependent children (Journalism Training Forum 2002:4). It is possible that my sample may contain a higher proportion of journalists within children because I did not exclude journalists with non-dependent children. It is also possible that my sample might be slightly biased in this respect. The self-selection element of my sampling procedure may have meant that more women with children were keen to take part in a study looking at being a woman in journalism, bearing in mind that many admitted they only noticed gender as an issue in the industry once they became a mother.

3.4 Carrying Out the Interviews

The 49 semi-structured interviews were carried out at intervals over a period of about a year, during 2006/07. In preparation for the interview process, I revisited my research questions and formulated interview schedules (one for newspaper and one for women's magazine journalists – varying only very slightly) to guide my questioning (see Appendix 2). The interview schedule was comprised of a list of open-ended questions I kept in front of me during each interview. It effectively functioned as an interviewer guide, ensuring that the key areas needing to be covered were brought into each discussion. As explained above in section 3.2, the advantage of semi-structured interviewing is that it provides scope for a certain amount of deviation from the schedule, should the interviewee bring up new or related issues which may not be directly mentioned in the prepared questions. Thus each interview was to some extent different; I generally began with the same few questions, and then allowed the interview schedule to act as a guide to what to ask next, checking it at intervals throughout the talk to assess which topics still needed to be introduced into the discussion. Many times I would not necessarily need to ask all the questions, as the interviewee had themselves pre-empted topics I might be interested in, and shared their experiences without the need for prompting. Other interviewees would be less vocal, answering one question at a time; having the interview schedule

in front of me ensured that could swiftly move the conversation onto the next item without any uncomfortable pauses.

The first part of the interview schedule was shaped around my aim to discover in as much depth as possible, the ways in which female journalists think about their own occupation and reflect upon their experiences within it. Later on in each interview I directly introduced the issue of gender, encouraging the journalists to consider whether they believed that the fact that they are female makes any difference to their working lives. However some interviewees related this general discussion about their life as a journalist, to gender from the start. By first asking the interviewees about their work experiences in a non-specific way, I gained valuable insights into the extent to which they normally reflect on their gender as a significant factor shaping their working lives¹⁶.

Mason (cited in Wolf 1996:20) is emphatic about the importance of avoiding asking interview questions referring to abstract concepts which interviewees may have not encountered before, or may not have considered prior to participation. I anticipated that the theory in which my research questions are rooted may indeed be too intangible for the women I interviewed to immediately relate to their own experiences. I decided to circumvent direct references to concepts such as 'post-

¹⁶ I recognise, however, that when I initially approached each interviewee to request their participation, I did refer to my interest in finding out about specifically *female* journalists. With this context in mind, it is possible that some interviewees began to discuss gender from the start, as they anticipated the direction of my line of questioning.

feminism' or 'occupational culture', and instead focus on questions which draw upon everyday experiences. For example, I began each interview by asking the participant two ostensibly simple questions: to describe her career in journalism so far, and to describe a 'typical' day at work. I then used answers to these questions (which were often quite in-depth) as tools with which to guide participants into considering more complex issues.

Accordingly, the initial general avenues of investigation into female journalists' experiences involved broad questions. These included asking them to describe their career so far, to explain what makes a 'good' journalist in their opinion, to describe what it is like to work for their particular organisation (what the day-to-day atmosphere is like within their workplace), to express what were the best and worst aspects of their job, and to talk about the extent to which they have creative autonomy. In this way, I aimed to gain an insight into the occupational cultural environment they work within.

I then drew upon the themes already expressed by the interviewees in their answers to these questions, and directed talk towards a discussion of gender. This included a direct question asking in what ways (if any) they believe that being a woman has affected their working lives in journalism. Subsequent talk built upon responses to this question, including discussion addressing the extent of career

opportunities within their organisation, in addition to any personal experiences of balancing home and work responsibilities.

The subject of gender having been introduced, the interview schedule next addressed the journalists' beliefs about gender equality in the UK. This was achieved by initially asking each interviewee what they understand by the term 'feminism', before prompting them to discuss whether, why, and to what extent they think this is relevant in society today. I also asked whether they believed the current state of affairs (whatever this is perceived to be) can and should be changed. The research participants were also asked to discuss their awareness of any possible reasons why gender equality has not yet been achieved (if they expressed this opinion).

This section of the discussion concluded by drawing the conversation towards examining these issues within the context of journalism organisations specifically, with the aim of gaining a grasp of the women's perceptions regarding the extent of gender equality in their place of work. This was accomplished primarily by asking the women to share any personal experiences which might help me understand how female journalists are treated (equally or unequally), directing talk towards the exploration of attitudes towards feminism within journalistic occupational cultures. This involved asking each individual to comment on her personal opinion of feminist ideas within the context of today's society, in addition to enquiring how typical they

believe their answer might be among other female journalists in their organisation.

In order to test the effectiveness of my interview schedule, I decided to conduct a pilot interview. I used an existing contact in journalism to interview, allowing myself enough time after the pilot to re-work the schedule if I felt that this was needed. The pilot was immensely helpful; it reassured me that overall, the schedule worked well as a tool to guide talk in the most useful direction. However, my experience during the pilot interview taught me that I needed to have prepared slightly better. To ensure that the interviewees fully understood each question, I needed to prepare 'back-up' questions – to be able to easily rephrase each question and provide prompts, should the interviewee not fully comprehend the intended meaning the first time. During the 49 interviews, this tactic worked well; my ability to be able to explain clearly what I was asking if necessary, beyond simply reading out the question as phrased in the schedule, was central to maintaining the smoothness of the dialogue and helping to ensure the interviewee was at ease.

During the pilot interview I fully appreciated the importance of establishing a good rapport with each research participant from the beginning. Following Wolf's (1996) guidance on the need to work towards putting interviewees at ease with informal talk and the maintenance of a relaxed interview style, I ensured that I did just that. I

began by speaking informally about myself and the research, answering any questions or concerns, and asking their permission to record our talk. However following Stacey's (1992) argument, I aimed to avoid any pretence of a relationship beyond that of interviewer/interviewee, believing that research premised upon a guise of friendship would be to some extent manipulative, exploiting the trust of participants in order to persuade them to reveal more.

At the start of each interview, I also gave the journalist a consent form to read and sign (see section 3.6 and Appendix 3); I then gave them a copy to keep. This formalised the details already explained to the interviewee, reassuring participants that they would remain anonymous within the thesis and any other form of dissemination in the future. I found that for many of the women, having an official form for us both to sign, written on University headed paper, reassured them that they were not at risk of being exploited in any way, nor of having their identity revealed.

I let each interviewee decide where would be most convenient to conduct the interview, although specifying that somewhere private and quiet would be best. Most of the interviews took place in quiet coffee bars near to the journalists' place of work, or else at their own home. Only a few asked to meet within their office building, and when this happened it was mutually agreed that it would be best to find somewhere out of earshot. All the interviews were recorded using a

small, handheld minidisc recorder, enabling me to gain the highest quality recording, with minimum overt intrusion into talk. Most interviews were approximately 1 hour in length, with the shortest being 30 minutes and the longest 90 minutes. After each interview, I assigned the participant a pseudonym and clearly labelled their minidisc with this, to avoid a future mix-up. I then transcribed each interview into a Microsoft Word document, changing any identifying details mentioned in the text. The printed transcripts and minidiscs were kept in a secure, locked area, and I saved the Word documents as password protected.

3.5 Data Analysis

This section of the chapter will focus on the way that the data was used, once it had been fully transcribed. This will include consideration of the data analysis and interpretation, alongside a discussion outlining my own theoretical perspective which inevitably influenced this process.

3.5.1 The Analysis Process

The data analysis process began after I had conducted approximately 30 of the interviews. The outcome of this process then dictated how many further interviewees were sought. Following the example of Phalen (2000:234), 'interviewing stopped when data

gathered became repetitive, adding only personal detail to existing categories’.

Following the transcription process, each interviewee was assigned a unique identification code, in addition to their pseudonym (see Appendix 4). The codes initially consisted of information about the journalist, including the type of publication they work for, their age group and their job status. Later, information regarding whether they have children was added (see discussion below for relevance of this). The ID codes were then used during the data analysis process (and also when writing about the data in chapters 4 – 6) to provide, at a glance, information about the context of each interview extract. This facilitated recognition of patterns and relationships within the data according to key variables.

The next stage in the data analysis process was to ‘code’ the data. This involved using the qualitative computer analysis programme QSR Nvivo as a tool to systematically identify emergent themes within the transcripts. This was an inductive process: as each new transcript was coded, new themes emerged and were added to the ‘coding scheme’. Each new interview prompted potential reconsideration of the previously identified themes, as commonalities and differences began to emerge. Appendix 5 shows the complete coding scheme, gradually built up through repeated active reading of the transcripts until all of the key themes were identified and each clearly defined. The themes were

then divided into two groups to facilitate the analysis: 'free' and 'tree/grouped' themes. Free themes stood alone at this stage, with no implicit association to any others; tree/grouped themes tended to be constituent parts of a larger topic (for example: the two themes which designated positive and negative experiences of being a mother in journalism).

This division helped prepare for the next stage in the analysis process: finding possible patterns within the coded themes based on the key sampling variables: publication, age and job status. At this point, the interview extracts relating to each theme were grouped together for ease of access and direct comparison. Utilising the information visible in the ID codes about each interviewee, each themed group of extracts was analysed in turn, looking for particular commonalities and differences between the ID codes. For example, it was at this stage that it was found that the majority of magazine journalists believe that journalism is a good career for women who have children. Indeed, due to the significance of motherhood emerging as a central topic within the interviews, a fourth variable was added to the ID codes at this stage – indicating whether the women were mothers or had no children. This helped to identify patterns in the data relating to the perceived impact of motherhood. Ambiguities in the data were also looked for; places where individuals did not seem to fit within patterns often provided equally rich data – an opportunity to test

theoretical relationships between variables and investigate possible reasons for anomalies.

Lastly, the coded data was re-examined, looking for possible links between the themes. These were then plotted visually, the resultant diagrams acting as an aid to consolidating thoughts and theories (see Appendix 6 for an example of this). This then helped to form the structure of the data chapters (4 – 6) in which the coded interview extracts were used as evidence to support the discussion of findings.

3.5.2 Theoretical Standpoint: Feminism/Critical Theory

Following Habermas' Critical Theory (as examined by: Geuss 1981; Marshall 1988), I believe that structure is prior to everything. However, this does not mean that human agency does not have a role to play. Individuals' attitudes, beliefs and behaviour do have an impact; these are shaped by processes of interaction and socialisation. I consequently believe that research which is preoccupied only with the formal properties of an organisation, looking for example only at employee statistics to prove or disprove gender inequality, may be neglecting the impact of more subtle structural processes of gender discrimination which may be taking place (Crotty 1998).

My study is predicated upon a feminist perspective. As a piece of feminist research it ultimately aims to empower women by 'bring[ing] into focus areas of social life hitherto hidden from view or invisible, namely the social organization of women's experiences' (Brunskell 1998:39). My research questions are therefore based on the assumption that gender inequality is a persistent, oppressive and problematic reality in the UK today. I thus consider that research should be grounded in a commitment to foregrounding female experiences, and with an awareness of the existence of powerful patriarchal social structures which, often covertly, shape these experiences in such a way that women are disadvantaged and gender inequality persists. My feminist beliefs therefore position me as inherently critical of post-feminist ideas which have risen in popularity within UK society over the past two decades, and which are consequently a key focus of this research.

My feminist epistemology meant that I approached the data analysis stage with an acute awareness of the methodological dilemma posed when interpreting different representations of reality. 'Seeking to judge some stories of gender as better than others (rather than just different) requires critical decisions in feminist research practice' (Ramazanoglu 2002:105). Thus my feminist approach to research dovetails closely with a concern with the issue of power, and an aim to ensure that the research relationship is not exploitative by abusing the control that researchers inevitably have over how the data is presented

by unfairly misrepresenting the participants' accounts. I was consequently committed to making my own perspective as clear as possible from the outset, as my interpretation of their accounts would be inevitably influenced by my own beliefs. '[A]ll research is contaminated to some extent by the values of the researcher...[T]he conclusions and implications drawn from a study are...largely grounded in the moral and political beliefs of the researcher' (Silverman 2001:270). By adopting a critical theorist approach I was able to deal with inevitable conflicts between my own and the journalists' perspectives in such a way that the participants' accounts remained clearly visible and separate from my interpretation; their beliefs and experiences are not lost but are presented *alongside* my perspective.

Critical theory enabled me to directly engage with the distinction between my (feminist) beliefs and many of the journalists' post-feminist beliefs. During the data analysis process, a critical tension did arise between many of their perspectives and my own interpretation of the situation. The nature of the research enabled me to access and look for patterns across many different journalists' accounts. Thus when for example, many women complained about the difficulties faced by mothers in journalism, I was able to draw conclusions from this which contradicted the accounts of journalists who framed their struggles in balancing family and work commitments as a unique experience. When my interpretation of the data conflicted with the participants' in this way, I did not view this as an indication that I was in some way more

insightful, just that I was in the privileged position of being able to see individuals' accounts in the context of their similarities or dissimilarities with the beliefs and experiences of many other female journalists.

I ensured that the rigorous data analysis process was always the key guiding factor; whilst my research questions were formed from a feminist perspective, the patterns found in the data became the foundations of my interpretation – clear evidence in the form of many interview extracts was central to ensuring that the data interpretation process was rooted in the interviewees' accounts and not merely the product of my feminist perspective twisting the facts.

It could be argued that the data is reliant upon claims made by journalists which may not be truthful. Harris (2003) noted the danger that journalists may talk up their strengths and try to show themselves in a favourable light. However, whilst there is no way of testing the extent to which this may be the case, there are many examples whereby the participants seemed happy to discuss problems they were experiencing at work that they admitted they did not feel comfortable talking about to other people. I did feel that in general, the journalists shared their honest opinions during the interviews, and that their accounts were not deliberately misleading.

It is clear that analysis of 49 interviews does not allow for absolutely definitive statements applicable to all female journalists in

the UK. The research was not set up to be a representative sample; indeed the access method itself meant that the sample was not completely random. However, the fact that the sample did include a cross-section of different ‘types’ of female journalists in the UK newspaper and women’s magazine industries meant that my close reading of the transcripts allowed for the identification of common themes which should not be disregarded as coincidental. Thus my research aimed to provide an insight into the world of journalism as experienced by different women, allowing for comparison of accounts to identify patterns and variations of beliefs and experience, from a feminist perspective.

3.6 Ethical Considerations

Ethical behaviour helps protect the rights of individuals who have agreed to participate in social research. This section will discuss the ethical issues bound up in my use of interviews, drawing on key ethical principles outlined in the BSA Statement of Ethical Practice (2009) and the ESRC Research Ethic Framework (2009).

3.6.1 Informed Consent

As Israel and Hay (2006:67) suggest, the ethical principle of informed consent is upheld through the fulfilment of two specific requirements: consent to participate in any research should be ‘both *informed* and *voluntary*’. In each interview, I began by introducing

myself, and ensuring that I spent some time explaining the context, purpose, and future use of the research my study. In addition, as advised by Davies (2007), it was made clear that should the journalist wish to go ahead with the interview, they were free to decline to answer any questions they felt uncomfortable with, and that they could withdraw from participation completely at any time. I also ensured that potential participants understood that the interview would last approximately 1 hour, in order to avoid misleading anyone into committing to more than they were comfortable with. Each interviewee was then provided with a consent form to read and sign, confirming the details already discussed. I also signed this, with both parties keeping a copy. This formalised our agreement, and in many cases served to reassure the participant that there was very little risk involved.

‘Most social scientists accept that the process of informed consent forms a worthwhile part of how they negotiate their relationship with participants’ (Israel and Hay 2006:67). Indeed, I found that the process of gaining informed consent played a key role in establishing the research relationship. Beginning the discussion in this way provided space for me to begin to build a rapport with the interviewee as we talked through the details and I ensured that there was ample opportunity for them to ask me questions or to raise any concerns.

3.6.2 Confidentiality

The ESRC Research Ethics Framework stipulates that ‘the confidentiality of information supplied by research subjects and the anonymity of respondents must be respected’ (ESRC 2009:3). The nature of my research is such that I asked interviewees to provide anecdotal information about their experiences at work, which may be problematic if colleagues were able to identify them. The close-knit nature of the media industry is such that concealing journalists’ identities is slightly more complex than it may be with other occupations. Aldridge (2001a) highlights this potential danger of ‘jigsaw identification’, whereby for example, mentioning that a political editor of a newspaper is 41 years old may provide a direct clue, enabling other journalists to potentially identify them. During her research with Canadian journalists, Aldridge consequently omitted ‘the customary parenthetical detail about their age...or place of work’ from her results (2001a:622).

I therefore ensured that, as far as possible, all forms of potential detection, including identifiers such as names or geographical clues, were removed or changed to pseudonyms at the transcribing stage. My decision to use age groups, rather than state the exact age of each journalist contributed to this process of obscuring their identities. In terms of the interviewees’ places of work, this posed a slight dilemma, as I wished to identify the ‘type’ of each participant’s place of work – be it a tabloid newspaper or a weekly women’s magazine. I decided that I

would make it clear to each participant, as part of the ‘informed consent’ discussion, that I wished to refer to this information when I reported the research results. In this way, those who did not feel comfortable with this, because they feared that they would not remain anonymous, could decide not to participate. In practice only one journalist expressed concerns about this potential risk. She agreed to go ahead with the interview, only if I would agree to email her every quote I included from her interview. I subsequently did this, and she then gave me permission to use them in the final version of my research findings.

3.6.3 Dissemination of Results

Although I ensured that participants were aware of the possibility that the study was likely to be circulated within academic circles, I also remained alert to the prospect of ‘unanticipated misuse of the research by third parties’ (British Sociological Association 2009:1). The subject of investigation may mean that the research would be of interest to journalists, and consequently may be more liable to be reported within media output. As such it was even more important that the anonymity of participants was upheld within the discussion of interview results.

3.6.4 Security of data

An important part of ensuring that the promised confidentiality was maintained, was to take steps to protect any data that might lead to the participants’ identification. I consequently made certain that

'appropriate measures...[were] taken to store research data in a secure manner' (British Sociological Association 2009:1). I stored the computer transcript files in a password-protected format. Furthermore, the consent forms, any transcript printouts and the recorded minidisks are kept in a locked cupboard, and will only be stored for the minimum time required by the research council funding this work (after which time they will be destroyed).

3.7 Reflections on the Research Process

As I stated at the beginning of this chapter, I will now reflect upon my experiences of conducting this research. This discussion will focus on my access strategy and the dynamics of the interview process.

When I was planning the exact way to gain access to female journalists for interview, I was aware that I needed to prepare for potential difficulties. Heeding the warnings given by previous researchers in the field of media production such as Gough Yates (2003) and Harris (2003), I anticipated problems with gaining enough willing participants (see section 3.2 above). I therefore decided to begin by approaching journalists that I had personal contact with myself, or through acquaintances, with the mindset that it would be best to start with these, and ask them if they could then put me in touch with colleagues. As discussed above, I thus planned to use this snow-

balling approach to reduce the likelihood of refusals by initially avoiding 'cold-calling'. When this plan, whilst it was bringing me willing participants, failed to provide access to a wide enough range of journalists working in different roles and at different levels, I realised I would have to come up with an alternative approach which would enable me to target groups missing from my sample. Following advice given by many of the initial interviewees, I avoided using letter-writing as a method of contacting these individuals; several had referred to the fact that they so rarely had time to pay attention to paperwork on their desk. With the shift in technology, email communication would increase the likelihood of my message being read, as daily life in most offices now involves repeated checking of emails (Selwyn and Robson 1998). I did consider contact via telephone, but decided this plan would be more likely to involve disrupting and irritating the potential participants, whereas emails could be read when it was most convenient. Indeed Harris (2003:80), when trying to track down journalists for interview, described how she 'often spent hours trying to contact a journalist [by telephone] only to be referred onto another member of staff who similarly would pass me onto someone else'.

Thus I adopted and developed my emailing strategy (see section 3.3.3 above). Having planned a sample size of approximately 40 journalists, and subsequently gained access to 49 willing participants, I see this access method as key to the success of this research project. Nevertheless, it is clear that only journalists who were

proactive enough to respond, and felt strongly that they wished to participate on reading the email (see Appendix 1), became part of the sample. Indeed, this was demonstrated by four women's magazine journalists who were among the few who replied with a refusal (most just did not respond). These women variously explained that they did not feel that my study was relevant to them because it was about gender in the journalism industry (although I avoided using the word 'feminism' in the email, it did inform recipients about the broad research topic). Here is a typical excerpt from one of these, very similar, replies:

'Sorry but I don't think that this really applies to me. I wouldn't have anything to say as I work for a women's mag so my sex isn't an issue'

Despite responding to assure them that their views would be extremely relevant, none were convinced enough to agree to participate. This however, can be seen as data in itself - the fact that women's magazine journalists were less likely to see their gender as significant enough to merit being the subject of research parallels the findings in chapter 5, revealing the role of the culture of work and staff demographic in downplaying gender as a relevant issue for women's magazine journalists.

A further point to make about the cold-calling email method of access is that I sent around 250 emails to real addresses, but gained

only 25 participants this way; a 10% success rate doesn't appear to be a sign of efficiency. However I found that the advantage of this access method is that it is relatively quick to do, and also has no costs associated with it. Once I had determined the publications' email address formats, it took me approximately two days to send all 250 requests. Overall I feel that, when managed efficiently, this access method is a worthy option to consider when trying to contact research participants who lead such busy lives: it is fast, free and effective.

Whilst my sample is comprised of a cross-section of journalists of different ages, roles and statuses, these women are predominantly from a white, middle class background. Only one interviewee identified herself as being from an ethnic minority. This is in fact reflective of previous research into the demographics of UK journalists (Journalism Training Forum 2002; Sutton Trust 2006), which have drawn attention to a distinct lack of ethnic diversity. This is revealing, as Tasker and Negra (2007) in their assessment of the spread of post-feminist beliefs, suggest that a white, affluent elite is also the focus of post-feminist discourses which over-emphasise the experiences of this minority of women. It appears therefore that the demographic of journalistic organisations may mean that they are even more likely places to find post-feminist rhetoric flourishing.

The interview process was an organic one – I learnt more as I went along, discovering the best way to phrase questions and, as the

interviews progressed, becoming much more comfortable in my role as interviewer. I was then able to spend more time focusing and reflecting on the dynamics of the interview relationship and the significance of this. I met most of the journalists in relatively informal, public locations such as cafes and coffee houses near to their place of work. Some interviewees preferred me to meet them at their homes. Being away from the office environment seemed to provide these interviewees with the confidence to talk more openly about their experiences. This was highlighted during the six interviews that took place inside the journalist's place of work, often in a communal seating area or side room. It was on these occasions that I felt that the women were comparatively more on edge - three directly referred to a fear of being overheard by colleagues, and the others' body language revealed they were ill at ease, frequently looking over their shoulders to check who was nearby. Overall however, I was constantly aware of the importance of efforts on my part to ensure that the participants felt at ease being interviewed. I dressed smartly but not too formally, and tried to maintain a professional but approachable and friendly manner. After the first few interviews, once I myself had relaxed in my role as interviewer, I gradually became aware of the difference that my body language made. When I felt at ease I was more able to maintain appropriate eye contact throughout each interview, responding to talk in an encouraging way by nodding and ensuring that the women felt that I was interested in whatever they were saying.

Much has been written about the imbalance of power in the interview relationship, with many suggesting that the interviewer controls the interview and therefore holds power over the interviewee (Wolf 1996; Fontana and Frey 2000; Cotterill 2003). Approaching the research from a feminist perspective, I was aware of the importance of avoiding an exploitative, hierarchical relationship. Whilst I was not adopting the unstructured style of interviewing advocated by some feminists (DeVault 1996; Hollway and Jefferson 2000) as the only way to achieve this, following a semi-structured approach meant that I still had scope to strive for a research relationship which was as equal as possible (Reinharz 1992). Although my interview guide was used to direct each interview, space was allowed for the interviewees to refuse to answer on any topic they did not wish to talk about, and also to lead the conversation to some extent - certain topics directed talk on a route which sometimes differed considerably from the structure in my schedule. As long as the key points of the interview schedule had been covered by the end of the interview, I was happy to let the interviewees talk about what they saw as relevant to my research interests. I see this as central to making the participants feel a part of the research process and as involved as possible.

Although I strived to ensure that I represented their opinions accurately, I am aware that it is my interpretation of their talk, observing patterns in the data as a whole, that is included in this research report – a process that the interviewees are not involved in and thus have

little control over. It is for this reason that it was so important that my data analysis process was fair and rigorous, ensuring that views were not misrepresented (see section 3.5). However, this does completely absolve me from the problem of power. I remain fully aware that my control of the research agenda, process and concluding results still results in an asymmetrical dynamic. I believe that it is both preferable and constructive to therefore acknowledge this issue, rather than ground my research upon the false premise of complete participant equality.

Before beginning the interviews, I was also concerned that there might be an imbalance of power in the opposite direction. I would be talking to many different women, some of whom would be much older, in positions of significant authority within the setting, and experienced interviewers themselves, and as a fairly inexperienced researcher I was anxious that they might totally dominate the interview. In retrospect, these concerns were unnecessary, as all the participants were extremely helpful and eager to assist in ensuring all my topics were covered. It is hard to say whether having a shared gender encouraged this (an argument put forward by feminists such as DeVault 1996, and Finch cited in Cotterill 2003:258). I certainly felt that as a young female I was viewed as less threatening, and probably someone that the women were more likely to open up to about issues of gender discrimination. Also, in a profession where all the attention is directed away from them, towards interviewing and finding out about other people for news or feature articles, they perhaps enjoyed the

opportunity to talk about their own experiences. 'At a basic level most people like to talk about themselves; they...are pleased that somebody is interested in them' (Rubin and Rubin 1995:103).

In this chapter I have discussed my experience of the research process, telling the story of progression from a set of research questions, to implementing a chosen research method, to gaining and analysing relevant data. I believe that this process was extremely productive; the experience has given me the opportunity to develop key research skills whilst 'in the field'. More importantly, it has also been successful in its aim of providing a valuable insight into the beliefs and experiences of female journalists in the UK, the focus of the following chapters which directly address this data.

Chapter Four

Reflections on Being a Journalist

As discussed in chapter 2, the most recent large-scale survey of UK journalists drew attention to the fact that there were more female journalists than ever before (Journalism Training Forum 2002), with almost equal numbers of men and women¹⁷. However, it also revealed that female journalists are more likely to be working within lower-status roles in the industry (Journalism Training Forum 2002). This study consequently accesses the perspectives of female journalists, with an aim to find out more about their experiences in this industry, and the way/s they might frame these experiences. This chapter begins this process by examining their views of journalism as an occupation, providing a context for the subsequent chapters which directly address the impact of gender on their lives, and their perceptions surrounding this issue.

The following discussion investigates the different themes which emerged when I asked female newspaper and women's magazine journalists to talk about the nature of journalism itself. These themes are grouped into three main areas: discussing journalism as a career, talking about the culture/s of journalism and considering what it means to 'be a journalist'. Taken as a whole, this chapter presents a detailed overview of the ways in which the interviewees experience and

¹⁷ This survey incorporated journalists working in many different media areas; thus although overall 49% of UK journalists were found to be female, variations by sector must be taken into account – see chapter 2.

conceptualise journalism as a practice – similarities and variations are identified, with patterns revealing much about the nature of the journalism industry, viewed from the diverse perspectives of female journalists in the UK.

4.1 The Journalistic Career: getting in and getting ahead

In order to ‘tell the story’ of being a female journalist in UK newspapers and women’s magazines, I asked each journalist to talk about their career so far. Each interviewee reflected on the different stages of their career, from their beliefs about and personal experiences of starting out in the industry, to considering tactics for advancing careers in journalism and how much they could be sure of continued success in the future.

4.1.1 Routes into Journalism

Back in 1996, Tunstall suggested that journalistic culture continued to foster an innate scepticism of those journalists who began their career at a national newspaper via a route other than having obtained the traditional ‘indentures’ at a local paper. Despite significant increases in the number of graduate and postgraduate journalism training courses available in the UK in recent years (Journalism Training Forum 2002; UCAS 2009), recent observers have pointed to the persisting prevalence of the idea that journalists learn ‘on-the-job’ (Aldridge 2007). With minimal detailed previous research focusing

specifically on routes into different types of newspapers and women's magazines, and no gender-differentiated data collection regarding this in the most recent large-scale survey of UK journalists (Journalism Training Forum 2002), I asked the interviewees to talk about their entry into the industry. Their experiences (detailed below) were predominantly focused on the struggle to gain a job. This finding is not surprising, given that in the Journalism Training Forum Survey, only 5% of journalists completely agreed with the statement 'Journalism is an open receptive profession' (2002:12).

When describing their career in journalism so far, most of the journalists placed great emphasis on the difficulties they experienced when they first attempted to gain employment in this area. Emma described how she was struggling to find a reporting role in a local newspaper; she was 'making do' with a job as a subeditor¹⁸ until this time. Emma highlighted how much internal competition there is for jobs in journalism:

If you're just starting out, you've got to keep going, because it is such a hard industry to get into. Everyone wants to do it. I've got a pile of rejection letters. You've got to do a job you don't want to do to wait for the one you do want.

LD1 (20-25/S.ed/No ch.)

¹⁸ See Glossary for a definition of this term.

The following quote from Sarah, who is now a higher-level women's magazine journalist, is a typical example of the stress placed on the need for great tenacity and determination when searching for a first job. She described her experiences when trying to use work experience placements as a route to securing a paid role:

When I was about 16 used to write off about 10 letters a week, literally, and got loads of rejections. Then I got work experience at [midmarket newspaper], and I just applied for work experience at various places. And then I was at university doing English literature, and during the Easter holiday I got work experience at [monthly women's magazine] for a month. And...they asked me to stay on. Unpaid and everything...And because I'd wanted to do it for so long I quit uni, got a massive bank loan – oops, which I'm still paying off! Moved to London and just stayed...You have to [take] any opening you can.

WMg1 (20-25/H/No ch.)

Sarah's experience illustrates a commonly described route into journalism: that of work experience. Part of the difficulty in gaining a first job in journalism seems to be that there remains a need for many potential recruits to search for relevant work experience, in addition to any relevant qualifications they may have. Sarah's experience is a typical example of the lengths many of the journalists went to, to gain work experience placements. Many described similar experiences where financial sacrifices had to be made due to the unpaid nature of

work experience roles, an issue which, as recently argued by the National Union of Journalists, contributes to a lack of diversity in UK journalism as working class individuals were less able to fund such placements (NUJ 2009).

The following quote from Jane, a journalist working in a local daily newspaper, also highlights the considerable value placed on work experience as a tool for entering journalism:

We do find...that the best people who come in, come in on work experience, usually when they've finished their degree, and if they turn out to be good then we just keep on using them, and that's the way to get into it. And actually I wouldn't advise anyone to...get a journalism degree. I just think that you'd be better off to do a degree in something else, and then get work experience – maybe do a post-grad course, but it definitely is getting in and getting hands on I think.

WMg1 (20-25/H/No ch.)

The work experience route into journalism seems to be something that has maintained its popularity in recent years, despite involving voluntary unpaid work. A substantial minority (twelve journalists out of the 49 interviewed) described how they gained a job directly through being offered a paid role after volunteering their time initially through a work experience placement. Ten of these 12 were aged under 36; consequently the 'work experience' entry method may

be becoming more common as a route into both newspapers and women's magazines. Underlying this stress on the importance of work experience is the persisting view of journalism as a trade in which an entrant must 'learn on the job': a craft in which skills are ideally acquired through practice rather than theoretical learning (Creedon 1993; Aldridge and Evetts 2003; Aldridge 2007). Great competition for jobs in the media means that employers can afford to draw on such traditional views of journalism, demanding that new recruits have had extensive 'hands on' experience. A hotly disputed topic amongst the journalists was consequently whether new journalists benefit from having had some sort of formal journalistic training prior to starting work. Views varied widely, broadly relating to the age of the journalist speaking. Many older journalists emphasised the importance of learning on the job and therefore dismissed the need for specific qualifications. Others, mostly from the younger generation of journalists, stressed the usefulness of such training in addition to the traditional need for work experience. Wendy is an example of the former group of journalists; she is a subeditor working for a midmarket newspaper (aged 36-45), and is married to the editor of a weekly local newspaper. Despite personally having completed a postgraduate diploma in journalism before starting her career, she plays down its usefulness and frames journalism as meritocratic in nature, implying that innate talents are rewarded as much as those which have been learnt:

And some people would say it's not a profession it's a trade...It's sort of like a vocation...my husband left school at O Levels – you don't need a university degree to do it. You can still get on if you've got the talent: either you have the writing style or design style or something like that...You don't need qualifications.

MM3 (36-45/S.ed/1 ch.)

Wendy's sentiments are echoed by Janet, another example of those from the older generation of journalists expressing their uncertainty about the increasing popularity of vocational degrees and postgraduate courses which claim to provide a fast-track alternative to the 'traditional' route into newspapers. Janet is the editor of a local daily newspaper and is also in the 36-45 age group:

Interviewer: Do journalists need a specific qualification?

Janet: It's changing now towards that. I don't think it's right. There are more postgraduate training schemes now. I still think some of the best journalists that come through are those that will, you know, do the traditional thing - work on their weekly papers, and come up through that. It is much much more difficult.

LD4 (36-45/Ed/1 ch.)

Janet herself used the 'traditional' route into journalism that she describes, along with five other journalists from the older generation.

This stems from the Fleet Street ‘heydays’ of journalism in the UK up until the 1980s, when the route into journalism was via paid indentured apprenticeship with a local weekly newspaper, before eventually moving to a local daily as preparation for a move to a national newspaper (Aldridge 2007). Georgina, who now has a higher-level job at a tabloid newspaper, described her route into journalism. She is one of eight older journalists who hadn’t done a degree of any sort - instead successfully combining a journalism training course with the traditional path from local to national newspapers, thus maintaining the apprenticeship element to entry:

I started out on a weekly newspaper after a journalism training course after my A Levels. I didn’t do a degree because I wanted to be a journalist. I had a definite idea of how I was going to get there...I moved to a daily local paper. Then I got shifts on [midmarket], and I had a really good hit on a story, which then got me a six month contract, and then I got a staff job on the back of that.

T5 (36-45/H/No ch.)

Despite this practice occurring less often, the rhetoric of journalism as a hands-on craft persists today within all types of newspaper journalism, even among those who have not followed the traditional apprenticeship path. This was suitably illustrated by

comments from Charlotte, a reporter from a local weekly newspaper, and Amie and Nina, who both work for broadsheet newspapers:

Charlotte: I think it is really a vocational thing. I don't think you need a degree...It was very useful – it gave me confidence I think, having the degree, because I knew a bit about what happens in the field. But I don't think it's necessary...because it's true that you do learn most of it on the job really. It can't set you up completely.

LW1 (20-25/L/No ch.)

Amie: I guess once you're in, you're in. Which is rarely the case in other professions – in other jobs you can't really learn on the job as much. In journalism you can still work your way up from the bottom, and in many ways you get more respect for having done so.

BS1 (20-25/L/No ch.)

Nina: I think the generation who are the ones who have the main hiring power...they are...fairly snotty about vocational journalism courses...If you turned up here with a media studies degree, I think it would work against you. And I think that having a more conventional degree but quite a bit of experience would help.

BS14 (46-55/H/3 ch.)

Many of the younger newspaper journalists were more optimistic about the merits of vocational journalism courses¹⁹. As Nina was, they remained aware that acquiring such skills in an academic context may be viewed as less desirable by some of the older journalists, but believed their qualifications helped them in a practical sense. Lisa is now a higher-level reporter for a tabloid newspaper. Her views are typical of other interviewees in her age group (26-35) who believe they have personally benefited from taking either an undergraduate or a postgraduate degree in Journalism:

I know that those who hark back to the Fleet Street days all moan about those who have taken a postgrad course [in Journalism]. But I think that they're just stuck in a time-warp. My course gave me a great background knowledge of how it works round here...The short-hand was especially useful. And the politics. I'm not saying I couldn't have picked it up if I had just turned up and started not having done the course, but yeah...And of course there's a work experience bit...so it wasn't all classroom based.

T4 (26-35/L/No ch.)

Indeed five of the newspaper journalists had a degree in journalism and 15 had undertaken a postgraduate course before

¹⁹ In this context, the term 'vocational' is interpreted as referring to a process of learning by which skills are acquired that have a practical application to a specific job, as opposed to learning through studying traditional academic subjects (Dearden *et al.* 2000)

starting their first job. Although these qualifications were never depicted as essential, all of those who had completed such a course thought that it had benefited them and given them skills which would have taken them longer to acquire otherwise.

This emphasis on the importance of work experience over formal qualifications was perhaps even more accentuated among the journalists who work for women's magazines. Most were adamant that vocational qualifications would not necessarily guarantee a job, and indeed only one had a degree in Journalism, with 9 out of the 13 entering magazines having never had any formal journalistic training. Brenda, who currently works as a freelance journalist for women's magazines, explained how she got into this area of journalism:

I was working as a receptionist in a magazine company, and heard of a work experience place going so I applied. It's quite a common route into mags like that. It's who you know really at first...I don't think people would take much notice if you just turned up with something like a Media Studies degree...What practical skills would that have taught you?...Then I just had to prove myself capable. I kind of learnt as I went along. One week I was busily making teas, and the next they'd given me a story to write. And it kind of went from there really.

MMg5 (46-55/Fr/3 ch.)

As Brenda described, her route into magazine journalism was eased through her existing contacts within the business. Danielle, who now works in a higher-level role within a monthly magazine, also emphasised the importance of gaining work experience and found that personal acquaintances helped her to do this:

Probably over half the people I know got into magazines through doing work experience – they didn't necessarily have any qualification in journalism. I don't. A few do – some did a postgrad course. You are more likely to just learn on the job really...But work experience is hard to get in magazines...You've got to push to get it. I had a friend who worked at [weekly women's magazine] at the time, and she put in a good word for me.

MMg4 (26-35/H/No ch.)

It seems that the idea of 'learning on the job' continues to shape the way female journalists from both newspapers and women's magazines think about routes into journalism. However, newspaper journalists are to some extent divided by generation, and many younger journalists now embrace graduate and postgraduate courses as an essential part of training, but continue to emphasise the value of the work experience elements of these programmes. Interviewees of all ages from women's magazines however, stressed how important the work experience placement is in the process of securing a job,

suggesting that the skills perceived as needed to succeed are best acquired first-hand.

4.1.2 Getting Ahead: strategies for career survival and advancement within journalism

As with other creative industries, career trajectories in journalism are most often characterised by their dynamic nature (Hartley 2005). The fast-paced nature of the work, caused by a continuous cycle of copy deadlines, is consequently mirrored within career patterns (Cole 2005; Frith and Meech 2007). Previous research intimates that career progression may be most difficult for women, with higher-status roles less accessible due to gender stereotyping in addition to incompatibility with the domestic commitments associated with having children (Ross 2001; Aldridge 2001b; Melin-Higgins 2004), and that some develop 'tactics' to survive and advance (Melin-Higgins 2004). Thus during the interviews with female journalists, I asked the women about their experiences during their career so far, encouraging them to explain exactly what they considered to be important strategies to be a success. Whilst most responded with no direct reference to their gender as a factor in this process, some reflected unprompted on their experiences and position as a woman, aware of a difference between the careers of male and female journalists.

Many of the journalists began this discussion with the assertion that it is best to plan for a change of jobs every few years, as there is

believed to be no such thing as a job for life. Amie, a journalist who has only been working in her first job for a relatively short time, describes how staying in one role for too long is viewed as unacceptable:

But I've been there three years now and it's time to move on soon – three years is almost too long in journalism. People start to think you're not good enough...The perception of you as a young thing changes, and I am quite ambitious, and I have risen as far as I can go in the section I'm working in now and I need to move on.

BS1 (20-25/L/No ch.)

The tendency to advertise and recruit for jobs internally within journalism contributes in part to this cultural expectation that individuals will gradually move up through the ranks through repeated job-changes, often changing publication as they do so. Gemma, who works for a weekly women's magazine, explained that she anticipates her career path being predominantly influenced by the availability of jobs being advertised internally. She may move to work for a different magazine if a suitable vacancy appears:

Unfortunately a lot of promotions in our industry are word-of-mouth – who you know. Also what you know: you're not going to get to that level by knowing nothing and not being good at your job...I was really lucky with this job when I applied for it, it wasn't internal. But yeah a lot of it is quite hush hush – whispering

*behind closed doors. People are always switching companies.
You have to keep an eye out for what's out there.*

WMg3 (26-35/H/No ch.)

Once a journalist has managed to secure a first job, there continues to be a significant amount of pressure to demonstrate dedication to this role. Most journalists expressed a fear of being viewed as someone who didn't meet expectations of hard work, with many referring to an awareness of being constantly judged.

In journalism I've seen some very good writers who don't push themselves forward and are still working for the same titles that they were when they were 16.

MM3 (36-45/S.ed/1 ch.)

The cultural sentiment that a journalist is only as good as his or her last piece of work thus shapes everyday behaviour within the occupation (Aldridge 2001b). It is clear however that despite the prevalence of this idea, it is an exaggerated claim. Journalists are indeed judged upon the quality of the articles they write; nevertheless, a higher-status individual with many years of experience and a good reputation is unlikely to ruin his or her career if they produce one unsatisfactory piece of work. In spite of this, journalistic culture does feature this perceived element of performativity, whereby 'current performance [is seen as]...the only valid criterion for reward and

achievement' (Aldridge 2001b:1). It is possible that this ideological belief functions to emphasise the hypercompetitive nature of journalism; it therefore implies that journalists cannot afford to relax and take their success for granted. Working long hours and appearing eager and ambitious are key elements of this behaviour, which must be constantly maintained if future promotion or job-change is to be a viable possibility. Erin, a higher-level journalist working for a weekly women's magazine explains:

There's a divide. There's people who really want to, and have always wanted to be. And then there's people who have just ended up in it. You can tell – they tend to be the less ambitious and they push themselves forward less. Whereas if you've always wanted to be a journalist – to get on you have to have a real passion for it. You have to not mind taking that 10pm phone call. Whereas if you're going to whinge about it then you're never going to be a journalist because it's just part of the job.

WMg2 (20-25/H/No ch.)

There is a great fear of a stagnant career and the associated threat of job loss, with job insecurity especially heightened in recent years²⁰ (Ladipo and Wilkinson 2002; Ponsford 2010). Thus matching the dynamic nature of the journalistic career is consequently viewed as

²⁰ See below for discussion of the causes of this.

very important. It seems that for many, just doing your job well isn't enough: you must be seen to put in more effort than may be contractually required. The competitive nature of journalism shapes the way journalists approach their everyday work, as there will always be somebody else who is also planning their next job-move, and who might be seen to be more committed. Visible commitment to the job can be seen as an important element of the way in which journalists assess their worth and future success. This aligns journalism with other industries; recent research into working trends within different occupations has shown that as organisations demand more and more from their employees, demonstrating commitment by, for example, working long hours, is seen as something to be celebrated and rewarded (Roberts 2007; Boden *et al.* 2008).

A significant difference between those journalists interviewed who worked on newspapers and those who worked on women's magazines, is that the former were more likely to refer to gender as a factor in determining approaches to ensuring career advancement. When addressing this issue, some newspaper journalists reflected upon ways in which women worked differently from men when they considered ways to develop their career progression. It is possible that the all-female hierarchy within women's magazines has rendered

consideration of gender difference irrelevant with regard to career development²¹.

When gender was mentioned in relation to specific strategies for career advancement within newspapers (nine out of 36 journalists referred to this, unprompted), the principal issue seemed to be that women were perceived of as needing simply to 'work harder' than their male counterparts. Amie and Hannah, both broadsheet journalists, explained:

Amie: It's down to personality a lot but my female colleagues have as much ambition and drive as my male colleagues – possibly more so, interestingly. Maybe there's still a perception that in any profession, if you're a woman you have to try a little bit harder to get to the top.

BS1 (20-25/L/No ch.)

Hannah: I've noticed that the women work, in general, so much harder than the men in our office. So maybe the men can get away with doing less. Or maybe the women feel they need to prove themselves somehow.

BS11 (26-35/L/No ch.)

²¹ For further, more-detailed discussion of the issue of gender in journalism, see Chapter 5.

Thus having entered the industry, many of the journalists interviewed had developed a keen awareness of strategies which would help them to sustain, and potentially develop, a career. Journalists are under a constant pressure to prove their worth. The performative environment means that they must continually ensure that they are thinking about the next job possibility, with the fear of the stagnant career (and subsequent job loss) a significant motivating factor. In order to demonstrate their dedication to the job, a visible commitment is needed, often in the form of working very hard for relatively low pay. Within many newspapers, journalists must also commit to working long, unsociable hours, with the ability to do this seen as a clear sign of ambition. Some female newspaper journalists expressed an awareness of their gender acting as a barrier to accessing these strategies for career advancement. Despite the occupational cultural celebration of meritocratic principles²², women may be being judged against different standards, having to work harder to prove themselves.

4.1.3 Career Aspirations of Female Journalists

The journalists were also asked about their career aspirations for the future. The extent to which they felt confident about their job prospects revealed a lot about their view of journalistic organisations as potentially fair employers. The Journalism Training Forum survey (2002) found that the vast majority of respondents were planning to

²² See section 4.2.1 below.

continue working as a journalist. This data is not disaggregated by gender, but it shows that whilst entry into the profession is a challenging process, most are prepared to stay once they are in. However, when asked about future prospects, my interviewees were divided as to the ease with which they saw themselves progressing at work.

When discussing aspirations for their future careers, the journalists' responses can be usefully grouped in terms of their age. It appears that the older a female journalist gets, the more likely she is to express concern about her potential to follow a chosen career path upwards. This relationship between aging and career confidence may not be a straightforward one however, as discussed below. Statements made by the majority of journalists under the age of 30 from both newspapers and women's magazines conveyed more of a confidence in their future job prospects. Zoë is an example of such a journalist; she currently works in a lower-level role at a local newspaper and is a single woman in her late twenties:

Zoë: I'm looking forward to moving up in the business. I think the next step for me would be to get a specialist reporting role at [sister paper - local daily newspaper]...something like education, or maybe politics...I know the guy who's the crime reporter's leaving soon. I might choose crime.

Interviewer: So do you anticipate any problems in fulfilling this plan?

Zoë: Oh no, I don't think so. I'm quite bright and well known in the company. They know I work hard and I commit 110%. I've been dropping hints recently about me moving to [sister paper]. Anyway, then my plan is to head to the nationals...I reckon I should be there within three or four years.

LW3 (26-35/L/No ch.)

It is significant that Zoë clearly perceives her gender to be no barrier to gaining a reporting role in areas such as politics and crime – both of which have been a traditionally male preserve in newspaper culture²³. Zoë's certainty in a successful journalistic career is echoed in the way that many of the other journalists in her age group view their future. Potential external barriers to fulfilling ambitious goals were rarely mentioned; discussion of projected careers was framed in a way which suggested that if any such problems occurred, these would be caused by a personal failing rather than by any structural factors limiting success. Jo, a lower-level journalist working for a broadsheet newspaper, and Eleanor, who is employed in a lower-level role at a monthly women's magazine, both express such sentiments:

Jo: It's going to be hard work getting my next promotion. I'm not sure I am quite good enough yet. It's quite a competition. But I'll get there. I just need more experience at more challenging stuff

²³ For more discussion of gendered 'clustering' within newspaper culture, see Chapter 5, section 5.1.2

first. I don't blame them if they don't want to promote me yet...Definitely, it's just a matter of time. My goal is to eventually be editor of my own section. My friend – he's got there...Give it a few years and I'll be there.

BS4 (26-35/L/No ch.)

Eleanor: My plan is to be features editor by the time I'm 30...I hope I manage it. I know I'll need to start putting in way more hours than I've been able to do in the past few months though. I've been quite ill...They can't promote someone who is off sick all the time can they? But I'm much better now. I'm ready to get going...I say I want to be features editor, I mean that's only one step up. I suppose ultimately I'm aiming for editor.

MMg2 (26-35/L/No ch.)

By contrast, older journalists – those in their mid-thirties and older, were much more likely to be wary about expressing confidence in their future career paths. Even those who had already attained a higher-level job mostly framed their discussion of this subject in a way that emphasised a feeling of powerlessness when directing their career paths. Some, like Annie and Kirsten, linked this feeling to their status as a woman in journalism, emphasising their gender as a reason why they are likely to face barriers to success in their future career²⁴. Annie

²⁴ See Chapter 5 for further discussion of this issue.

is a lower-level journalist working for a local daily newspaper; Kirsten is a higher-level journalist working for a midmarket newspaper; both are in their mid to late-thirties:

Annie: I want to be a section editor one day. Well...I say that but it isn't looking promising...I guess I've just learnt from experience that unless I move to London, which I can't do as I'm married...In the papers round here, all owned by the same company, the men get all the good jobs like that. OK there are a few women, but pretty much all the men get where they want to be...It's not fair but I suppose it's just traditional in journalism.

LD3 (26-36/L/1 ch.)

Kirsten: I'm going to see how it goes [with regards to career]...I always wanted to be arts editor...But now since working at the paper for so many years – I'm quite unusual 'cause I haven't moved around [between newspapers] too much – I've realised that at our paper the guys seem to get all the breaks. In our [arts] section there's only four of us but I'm the only woman. I do a good job...but I don't think I'll be moving up any time soon...Unless a big shake-up happens, the old-boys network'll mean I'll probably stay right where I am.

MM4 (36-45/H/1 ch.)

The interview extracts above may indeed indicate that as many female journalists get older and have therefore spent more time immersed in the journalistic environment, they are more likely to view their career paths as at the very least, less straightforward, whether or not they personally link this to their gender. Many younger female journalists tended to express possibly unrealistic confidence in their future, which those with more experience seem to lack. However, whilst this explanation holds weight, some of the responses suggested that age does not only give an indication of a journalist's length of career, but also of their life-stage in most cases.

Despite the fact that only four of the 34 journalists under the age of 36 had children, many were anticipating wanting to start a family within the next few years. Consequently, when discussing career plans, a large majority mentioned the difficulties of being both a mother and a journalist²⁵, predicting a need to adapt their original career plans accordingly. Thus Lynne, who has a lower-level role in a midmarket newspaper, discussed her apprehension about her future career as she approaches her mid-thirties:

Lynne: I know I am going to want a baby in the next few years...It isn't an immediate worry as I'm single at the moment. My God I don't have time for a relationship!...But I'm feeling the

²⁵ See Chapter 5, section 5.2.2 for further discussion of the ways in which motherhood affects female journalists.

pressure – [my] biological clock's ticking...But I worry about my job if I do...I probably might want to freelance because once the kids are at school you've got 6 hours a day to work in...Yes freelancing would be the only way I could see to do it now.

Interviewer: So was freelancing something you had always planned to do at some point?

Lynne: No not at all...I've always admired women like [mentions two women who have higher-level jobs at her newspaper]. I always thought 'I wanna be up there doing that'. But I guess now I think about it, neither of them have a family.

MM2 (26-35/L/No ch.)

Many other journalists of a comparable age, from both newspapers and women's magazines, expressed similar doubts about their ability to either return to the same job or continue on a planned upward career path after having children. The reasons given centred mainly on the difficulties of time management when both their job and their domestic commitments were expected to be demanding so much, reflecting the findings of much research into the difficulties faced by working mothers (Hochschild 2000; Gregory and Milner 2009; Lyonette and Clark 2009). The experiences of those journalists who have already had children suggest that these concerns are not unfounded. Raihannah is of a similar age to Lynne, and works in a higher-level role at a broadsheet newspaper. She is married and at the time of the interview was on maternity leave for her first child:

Raihannah: I've done some freelance in the past and now I've had the baby I'm planning on using my maternity leave to go back to my old contacts and put the word out that I'm looking for freelance work. It'll be just too stressful carrying on with my job...there are no options to job-share or anything like that.

Interviewer: Had you originally planned to go back to freelancing at some stage?

Raihannah: I guess not. No. I mean I never ruled it out really though, as I knew I wanted kids and this is what a lot of my friends did when they started a family...It's sad though. I've worked damn hard to get to where I am at the paper.

BS13 (26-35/H/1 ch.)

Thus it is likely that it is not necessarily simply age which is the key factor here, but life-stage – more specifically the expectation/experience of motherhood by older journalists. The journalists' reactions to anticipated complications associated with motherhood varied from a general awareness that their career aims may have been unrealistic, to an explicit linking of their gender to their potential for success at work.

Some of those who had already achieved the rank of editor were unoptimistic about their future in journalism, despite having climbed to the top of the business. Reflecting the findings of a recent Women in

Journalism survey (2007), ageism was a significant concern for these and many other female journalists, with its effects felt more acutely by those from women's magazines. It was explained that the narrow age bands used to identify the target readerships of such magazines, not only affect journalistic content but also prescribe the ideal age for those who work on their editorial teams. Consequently many magazine journalists anticipated that their future careers would be curtailed if they planned to continue working for their current magazine. Phillipa, who is editor of a monthly women's magazine, described this issue; she stressed that her options are limited as she approaches her fifties:

I'm worried actually that although I've worked hard to land this job of editor...now I'm getting to be a bit old for this magazine. I know the previous editor was asked to move on when she got to 50 – well they said it was about something else but I know they saw her as too old. I mean I don't blame them really I suppose. This magazine is aimed at women up to the age of 45. But I know there are no openings at the moment at any of the magazines for the – you know - older readership. Well, not openings at this level anyway. I might have to take a step down which I really don't want to do.

MMg6 (46-55/Ed./1 ch.)

However, this problem is not exclusive to women's magazine journalists of Phillipa's generation. The predominance of magazines

aimed at a younger readership means that some who currently work for such publications are now concerned about competition for jobs as they get older. Kelly has a higher-level role at a monthly women's magazine which is aimed at a readership demographic of women in their late twenties and early thirties; despite only being in her early thirties, she is already considering the impact of age on her future career:

I'm anxious not to mention my age too much at work...I don't know what to do next really. I know it'll soon be time to leave [current magazine] as I'll be too old for it. But...there aren't many jobs around at the moment for older women. When I say 'older women' I mean obviously it isn't that old but -...Yeah there's loads of us about my age, all competing for the same jobs at magazines which cater for older women. It's gonna be hard.

MMg3 (26-35/H/No ch.)

This issue of age as a barrier to future career progression also troubled some of the older newspaper journalists. Although newspapers are not categorised by readership age as magazines are, some journalists had developed an awareness of age as a limiting factor for women in newspapers. Comments made by such journalists highlight the difficulties faced by female journalists as they get older; an intersection of gender discrimination and ageism appears to create a

barrier to career progression (Moore 2009). Nina is a higher-level broadsheet journalist in her mid-fifties:

Nina: We [herself and female colleagues of a similar age] have been thinking a lot lately about our age. There are less and less of us as the years go on...I don't know why really. Basically newspapers just aren't places where older women seem to work. There are a lot of older men though. But I'd say that they stay because they tend to land the promotions and the columns and the better jobs as they get older and women don't so they leave. They aren't told to leave directly but they reach a point where they aren't being rewarded anymore so they leave.

BS14 (46-55/H/3 ch.)

The suggested relationship between age and confidence in projected career intentions may be complicated however, by comments made by some of the youngest journalists interviewed. Some do fit the pattern: with less experience and at a life-stage whereby they are less likely to be directly considering conflicts with family life, many journalists in their early twenties expressed a self-assured individualistic conviction that there is nothing to limit their potential for success if they work hard enough. Nevertheless it is noteworthy that two out of the four newspaper journalists from the 20-25 age group referred to job insecurity in traditional newspaper journalism as a factor

directing their career plans. Charlotte works on a local newspaper and Amie is a broadsheet news reporter:

Charlotte: I'm thinking that I might have a career change because of what's happening in journalism in general. I mean at the moment they want to cut back seriously on staff and outsource pages...So many people have been asked to leave and I'm at an age where I don't really want to be watching my back all the time...I'm thinking about PR maybe.

LW1 (20-25/L/No ch.)

Amie: My dad worked as a newspaper reporter for years and I always wanted to be like him...I'm thinking of heading towards online journalism soon – it's the sensible way to go really if you want a future in journalism. It's not shorthand skills we need now – it's the knowledge of how to publish online, and write blogs and stuff. In fact they've just created an entire department in our office, just for that...I think that ultimately, newspapers in the paper form will be obsolete.

BS1 (20-25/L/No ch.)

Changes to newspaper journalism in recent years – particularly the shift to simultaneously publishing news stories online and the associated 24-hour demands, have resulted in much job insecurity among those who are untrained in using the new technologies (Allan

2006; Bunz 2010). This, alongside staff cutbacks on many newspapers with tighter budgets forcing the remaining journalists to take on greater workloads, and work more hours for the same salaries (Keeble 2001), has meant that the newest recruits into newspaper journalism have entered a work environment which differs considerably from the culture first experienced by those entering just a few years ago (Aldridge and Evetts 2003). Consequently newspaper journalists beginning their careers in the current climate may be more tentative about their anticipated success in following a similar career path to those higher up in the organisational hierarchy. A heightened awareness of the unique and difficult circumstances they will be working within may lead some to consider alternative routes to gaining a successful career, either within or outside journalism itself. Thus some have developed strategies to pre-emptively combat such difficulties, such as preparing to shift career paths towards online journalism by gaining technological skills as Amie plans to do. The confidence associated with youth and less experience within journalism may be to some extent undermined by the increasingly challenging conditions in which the newest cohort must begin to establish themselves and prepare for the future.

4.2 Journalistic Work Culture/s

The ways in which journalists experience and interpret their working lives is likely to be shaped by the strength of the journalistic

working culture. Previous research (such as Tunstall 1996; Deuze 2005a) has found journalism to have a particularly powerful and resilient occupational culture which encompasses overarching ideas about journalism as a trade and what it means to be a journalist. This section will address the ways the female journalists talked about their experiences at work, providing a context for discussion of different elements of a distinctive journalistic occupational culture, and the possibility that this may sometimes be superseded by a specific organisational culture. It will focus on the working cultures of newspapers and women's magazines, both in terms of general defining features which emerged in the majority of the journalists' accounts, and in terms of elements which vary according to the specific type of publication being produced.

4.2.1 The Occupational Culture of Newspaper (Newsroom) Journalism in the UK

The occupational culture of newspaper journalism is visible through similarities in the ways the women employed in this area talked about their work environment. It is clear that despite working in a disparate range of roles, for various different newspaper organisations, common themes still emerge – the journalists' perspectives combine to provide a glimpse of the overarching cultural beliefs and practices inherent in this sector of the occupation. However a distinction must initially be made between the working culture found in the traditional newsroom, experienced primarily by those with responsibilities for

reporting and editing news on a day to day basis, and the cultures of work generally inhabited by feature writers, subeditors and freelance journalists. The latter were included in the sample to provide a broader overview of the different experiences of female journalists in the UK. This particular discussion will focus principally on life in the newsroom, based on the accounts of those who work or have at some point worked as a newspaper reporter or editor, with the differences between these and the experiences of journalists with other roles addressed in section 4.2.3.

A frequent subject of discussion raised by the majority of the news journalists when asked about the working atmosphere of the newspaper newsroom, is the extent to which it could be described as competitive and cut-throat in nature. Most were aware of the existence of a social stereotype of the journalist as a thrusting, conniving individual (Aldridge 1998), with some directly referring to this idea as the 'newshound'. Interestingly, although many began by denying that this image of the typical journalist corresponded with their own personal outlook at work, most were quick to admit that, taken as a whole, newspaper newsrooms (especially those within national publications) do foster extremely pressurised, 'dog-eat-dog' cultures in which individuals thrive on individualistic competition rather than through teamwork. This element of competitiveness between journalists emerged as a frequently recurring theme, sometimes also linked to the competitiveness which exists *between* publications (see

for example, Deborah below). Tania and Deborah, who work for tabloid and midmarket newspapers respectively, both emphasise this element of their occupational culture:

Tania: All national newspapers are [quite competitive] to a certain extent – some more than others...I know you get pigeon-holed as a mercenary, newshound type person when you're a journalist. There's that picture of the hack in his brown coat, lurking and hoping to stab people in the back. That's not me at all!...Even so, you have to have a bit of a tough edge. There's people calling each other cunts and shouting. And it's a male dominated environment as well. And people will shout at you and tell you that you've fucked up. There's no treading carefully...There's always that simmering tension...Everyone wants to have their name on the front page.

T1 (26-35/L/No ch.)

Deborah: Certainly, news journalism is extremely competitive, always...Newspapers have less money to spend than they used to...Our staff has also shrunk greatly. There is no slack any more...On a big story you are competing against every other paper and...you are also competing against colleagues on your own paper as to who gets the most space in the paper. You have to really...it's dog-eat-dog, every man for himself...When I was training I went on work experience at [tabloid newspaper]...I

saw the way they fought against each other and thought I'd never be like that. Oh how wrong I was! [laughs]

MM1 (26-35/L/No ch.)

Tania and Deborah's comments both highlight a strongly competitive element within newsroom culture between journalists. Tania's account is particularly illuminating as she directly distances herself from what she sees as the macho image of journalism. She identifies the stereotype of the 'newshound' journalist, which she views as characterised by an aggressively sly attitude – the image of the (male) 'hack' (Aldridge 1998). Whilst initially distancing herself from this conception, Tania's description of life in the newsroom contains elements which may be seen as aligning closely with the macho image of journalism, albeit not in such an exaggerated way. Deborah's use of the phrase 'every man for himself' builds on this image of the 'newshound' – the use of such masculine language helps to build up specific ideas about journalism, which in turn help sustain and legitimise the nature of journalistic occupational culture (Pettigrew 1979 in Miller 2002:149). Thus both Tania and Deborah to some extent distinguish between their own approach to work, and the 'dog eat dog' world of competitive journalism. Deborah's account ends with the acknowledgment that since her initial experience of this work culture, she has in fact changed her attitude to align more closely with this competitive element. By explaining that 'you have to really', she directly suggests that newsroom culture encourages journalists to adopt a

particular attitude to their work and their relationships with other journalists – an attitude which both Tania and Deborah allude to as being stereotypically masculine.

Andrea is a freelance journalist who, whilst working for many different broadsheet newspapers, has experienced the competitive element of newsroom culture, and believes this is to the detriment of those who work in journalism:

I think the downsides to journalism are that it is very competitive and that the reason that people get away with being paid nothing is because it's so competitive.

BS3 (26-35/Fr/No ch.)

Andrea consequently links the relatively low pay conditions characteristic of many areas of UK journalism today (Journalism Training Forum 2002; Aldridge 2007), with its competitive occupational culture. Many others commented on this relationship. Gail for example described how financial concerns played a part in the way she participated in the competitive element of newspaper journalism:

I'm not naturally a competitive person really. I wanted to be a journalist in order to write. But then so did lots of people! So I guess I jumped on the bandwagon...I've found myself in recent years learning to become more pushy...The pay I'm on at the

moment is ridiculous. I owe my parents a lot and I want to be able to pay them back...A promotion would be so good. I need the money!

BS9 (26-35/L/No ch.)

It appears that the rise in popularity of journalism as a career in recent years and the recent financial cut-backs leading to job insecurity, have in fact heightened the competitive element of journalistic occupational culture. New recruits have fought to gain a job and they will continue to fight to succeed within the newsroom. As budgets tighten, those on the lowest rungs of the business suffer the most financially. Job insecurity has meant that many employers are able to offer low salaries as there are always those willing to accept them in order to maintain a career in their chosen field, even if this means accepting long hours on low pay (Nolan 2002). It may be that these poor pay conditions are in fact functioning to sustain the traditional value placed on a competitive approach within journalistic culture, as individuals push themselves to surpass their colleagues to achieve promotion and a salary increase.

Among journalists working for local newspapers (as opposed to national publications), opinion was divided as to the relative importance of competition as a significant element within the occupational culture. Some such as Zoë, from smaller organisations, pointed to a contrast

between their working culture, and that of the larger national newspapers.

It isn't really competitive like that for me on a local paper – it is more of a team spirit I would say. Obviously you want to get the best story: you want to get the front page. But I wouldn't say people are trampling over each other to get them...we work as a team. Quite a nice atmosphere really. I think maybe on a daily local paper it's more competitive but ours is a weekly so there's less pressure. Plus we have to get along as we have to share out the jobs and cooperate. There's not enough of us to be able to have specialisms or anything.

LW3 (26-35/L/No ch.)

Thus often the smaller numbers of staff on local newspapers, especially weekly publications such as Zoë's, create a need for more multitasking and collaboration within the newsroom, promoting the value of teamwork as an alternative to competition. Larger local newspapers appear to foster a working environment which is similar to what could be experienced in the newsroom of a national publication. As Emma explained, such newspaper organisations are often used as the final springboard for a career move to the nationals (see Aldridge 2007). As a consequence, along with a larger staff and shorter deadlines, the competitive element is once again at the forefront of the working culture:

A lot of cut-throat things happen in our office. A lot of people have a go. Not necessarily because you're an idiot. It's because of the pressure – everything's deadline, deadline, deadline...It's such a competitive business. It took me nine months to get this job, so imagine the competition to get onto a national! There's a lot of us wanting to do that though, so the pressure's really on me if I want to get there...As I said, I want to get from subediting to reporting too, so that'll be an extra challenge.

LD1 (20-25/S.ed/No ch.)

Alice is an experienced higher-level journalist who has worked in many different local newspapers, as well as a brief spell on a national newspaper. It was the competitive culture of the latter that influenced her decision to remain in news reporting at a local level. Her perspective on this issue highlights the differences in working culture – a difference that journalists such as Emma may have to adjust to when progressing towards the nationals:

It's different on the local papers - if people progress up the career ladder to London – to the nationals - then they have to be prepared for the fact that it is going to be cut-throat; they're gonna have to work all the hours and they're probably going to have to knife their friends in the back for a good story. And some people just know that it's not for them...that's why they do as well as they can, within the field of local media...But you do hear

some horror stories of people who go to the nationals – you worry slightly for them when you hear that they are heading off down to London, because you are constantly having to prove yourself. It's a difficult environment to work in. I found it hard to get used so that's why I returned here.

LW4 (46-55/H/1 ch.)

As mentioned above²⁶, the journalists' accounts also draw attention to an element of performativity within the occupational culture of newspaper journalism. As the following quote from Eileen (broadsheet editor) explains, whether or not this principle is applied in practise, the perceived need to maintain extremely high standards of work contributes to the pressure experienced in daily working life, sustaining the competitive element of the occupational culture:

I think all journalists are competitive. It is a hugely competitive business to be in because you are measurable by the stories that you get.

BS16 (46-55/Ed/3 ch.)

This also encourages an individualistic approach to both work and strategies for career progression, as each journalist measures their achievements against those of their colleagues, trusting that they alone are responsible for their own success (Aldridge 1998; 2007). Although

²⁶ See section 4.1.2

many of the journalists referred to this aspect of their working culture, it was those who work in the newsrooms of national newspapers who were most emphatic about its impact on their daily lives. Among these, opinion was divided as to whether this impact is a constructive one. Younger journalists from national newspapers tended to view the high value placed on performativity as a sign of journalism being a meritocratic occupation and consequently framed it as a positive cultural norm. Deborah is in her mid-twenties, and works for a midmarket newspaper:

I think that ultimately, if what you write and what you do is excellent, even if you're not a particularly pushy person, it's difficult for a newspaper to argue with that. But neither can you hide real incompetence behind a pushy, confident manner. So there's an element of meritocracy in it which is great.

MM1 (26-35/L/No ch.)

Older journalists (from their mid-30s upwards) whilst still not denying the existence of cultural ideas supporting performative individualism, tended to discuss this in a negative light, viewing it as a way to falsely characterise journalism as meritocratic, and to add to the pressures of their working lives. Angie is in her late forties, and works for a midmarket newspaper:

When I was working at [midmarket newspaper], I really struggled to get recognition for all the hard work I was putting

into the job...[I] worked so hard...Everyone [at work] was like 'you know you'll get there eventually – just keep at it'...I was so scared once when I made a mistake [in an article]...I thought my career was done for; that I'd be labelled as a black sheep, so to speak. It's like that really, being a journalist. You're always on edge; you can never just relax; you feel like you're constantly being judged...So I worked hard but although I got results 99% of the time, they just kept me dangling and wouldn't give me a permanent contract...I swear I used to get more stories on the front page than him [male colleague] but he got offered a contract and I didn't! After waiting so long for my reward, he just swooped in and took it...I learnt the hard way that this business isn't as fair as it makes out. People aren't as impartial as they might seem.

MM5 (46-55/H/2 ch.)

Some journalists, whilst acknowledging the existence of a competitive undercurrent within the occupational culture of newspaper journalism, also emphasised an ethic of teamwork and a strong sense of belonging which plays a significant part in their day to day lives at work. Many were keen to become a journalist precisely because of the excitement of the newsroom, with its sense of camaraderie arising from shared pressures and deadlines. It seems that national newspaper journalism may be an industry in which the fast-paced competitive nature of everyday working life is a key reason why many continue to

work in this area. Eileen has had a long career in national newspapers, and has worked for a variety of different organisations:

Newsrooms do tend to be full of competitive people. That doesn't necessarily mean that you have to be cut-throat. And certainly the rooms that I have worked in, have been most successful when they are actually very supportive and a strong team spirit. You want people all to be aiming for the same end. Of course you are out to destroy the competition but to try to do that internally is a bit pointless. I have experienced both types of culture and I definitely prefer a team who pulls together...If a big story comes up, you work together for however long it takes to get it done. It's why you became a journalist – you get a buzz from it.

BS16 (46-55/Ed/3 ch.)

This focus on the 'buzz' caused by the high-pressure work culture and the subsequent dominance of work over the journalists' lives, echoes recent research looking at this effect in other industries (Hewlett and Luce 2006; Boden *et al.* 2008). Boden *et al.* (2008) focus on British politics as an example of an occupation whereby lack of sleep due to working long hours to get a task completed is seen as a sign of commitment to a good work ethic, as well as inspiring camaraderie with fellow politicians. The 'strong team spirit' described by Eileen is a theme which emerged in discussions with journalists of varying backgrounds; playing down the negative impact of internal

competition, such journalists paint a picture of newsroom life which draws upon traditional images of journalism (Lewis *et al.* 2008). For example, Georgina describes her newspaper newsroom as a dynamic place with a team of reporters who would risk their lives to get a good story. Her experiences are based on her work at a tabloid newspaper, and her comments are typical of those describing such organisations:

Newsrooms are a great place to work. They're just mad and never boring. There's an incredible bond as well, in the newsroom. With journalists, they feel like they have to go down with the ship. If they were in the Twin Towers, they would've been the last out. It would be very much frowned upon to run for your life. After September 11th happened, I remember the boss saying 'Right you bastards, get up now, and out!' - the camaraderie!...It's just a lovely atmosphere...I do miss the newsroom actually. I miss the banter and I miss the family feel to it.

T5 (36-45/H/No ch.)

The metaphor of the family was also implemented by other journalists who viewed the competitive nature of the newspaper newsroom as secondary to the connection they felt to their fellow journalists. However, unlike those who used it to describe tabloid newsrooms, emphasising a strong emotional bond between the journalists who work there, others described their work environment as

familial in a more practical sense. Janet is the editor of a local daily newspaper, and Serena is a broadsheet journalist; they both describe the newsroom culture in this way:

Janet: It is becoming more team-oriented and part of the reason for that is – and I would be surprised if that's not happening in the nationals too – staff are shrinking so you aren't able to have days or weeks when you can work on your own story...So...everyone has a role to play...We work together like a family.

LD4 (36-45/Ed/1 ch.)

Serena: Because we're quite a small team and we only have one shot a week at getting stories, although it is competitive, it's quite collegiate too, I'd say. More than on a daily. There's very few of us so we have to behave well to each other, on the whole. We're like brothers and sisters I guess...there's a few rows but we have to get on...It's also akin to something like rehearsing for a show I think – it's teamwork, but people are still disappointed along the way – people whose parts are cut. A lot of tension building up each week.

BS7 (26-35/H/2 ch.)

Thus there appears to be some ambiguity emerging in the way newspaper journalists view the impact of competitiveness within their work culture. Some emphasise the negative impact of the pressure this

puts on individuals, stressing the reality of the 'cut-throat' journalist. Whilst others consider that there is an underlying sense of teamwork which ensures that despite their individualistic ways of working, newsroom journalists will ultimately pull together. This view is both expressed in the sense of cooperation - journalists all doing different jobs but contributing to a greater whole - and in the more sentimentalised language of the traditional familial metaphor, emphasising comradeship with strong relationships between colleagues.

Another prominent theme arising from the journalists' discussion of their working lives centres on the long hours culture which shapes daily life in most newspaper organisations. As mentioned above, the short deadlines and fast-paced nature of the work mean that, especially with daily publications, news journalists are generally expected to work longer hours than the traditional 'nine to five' office worker²⁷. As Magda (a journalist working for a local daily newspaper) and Fiona (a tabloid journalist) explained, an added element to this is the unpredictable and antisocial nature of the hours that journalists may be asked to work, due to last-minute demands brought about by fast-changing news stories:

²⁷ It must be noted that the 'nine to five' working day is becoming less usual for workers in the UK (Social Trends 39, 2008), with more flexible working hours, shift work, and long hours cultures increasingly commonplace.

Magda: You have to be prepared to give up a weekend if a story breaks, for example – because it isn't a nine to five job. You've got to work unpleasant, unsociable hours.

LD2 (26-35/L/No ch.)

Fiona: One thing I would say is that you can never really relax. It's my weekend off this weekend and I really had to point this out to my boss because he tried to send me on a job and I've been asked to do things on my weekends off a few times recently. But obviously if it is a big ask, and the editor really wants something doing, you don't feel like you can really say no. Equally I've often been sent abroad on jobs, and you have to stick with it for as long as it takes – you can't come home until they say so. In theory my office hours are ten 'til six but mostly you are asked to be somewhere at nine or even eight, but you don't typically get to go home any earlier. It's very long hours. You always have to be prepared to be called at the last minute...It makes it hard to plan your life in advance.

T2 (26-35/L/No ch.)

All the newspaper journalists spoke of this element of their job as integral to being a successful journalist; a commitment to being flexible to the needs of the newspaper involves a willingness to work long hours to get the job done and the paper out on time. Some journalists such as Tania (a tabloid journalist), Amie and Andrea

(working for broadsheet newspapers) spoke fondly of this aspect of their job, stating that they could not complain about this expectation, as it is clearly an anticipated and necessary part of working in a newspaper newsroom:

Tania: You can't really switch off. Even all over the weekend I take calls about stories, and in the evenings too. You can't just stop being a journalist. And in terms of the news, you do have to be on top of it...But I can't imagine doing anything else. I love this job...It would be so strange to be doing a nine 'til five type job.

T1 (26-35/L/No ch.)

Amie: And I do think that the long-hours culture is coming in more and more. Having said that people shouldn't come into journalism expecting nine to five. It's what journalism is all about. It's part of the buzz of being a reporter. You can tell some people don't really want to do it, but they aren't properly committed to their job are they?!

BS1 (20-25/L/No ch.)

Andrea: Part of the in-built thing of your job is [the long hours culture]– it isn't about overtime it's about your time – you are the job.

BS3 (26-35/Fr/No ch.)

Andrea is currently a freelance journalist with much experience of different newsroom cultures. Her statement 'you *are* the job' is of great significance: it encapsulates a central premise underlining the cultural expectation to willingly work in such a way. The occupational culture of newspaper journalism frames the career as one which involves individuals fulfilling the role of a journalist to the extent that it shapes their entire lives. The blurred division between work and private life means most continue to 'be a journalist' even when they are not being paid to do so. From a slightly different perspective, Andrea's statement also implies that if a journalist believes they '*are* the job', then there is consequent pressure to work harder, as if they stop working, the suggestion is that the job will not get done. This idea is rooted in the performative nature of the occupational culture, discussed above. Much journalism is based around the idea of ownership of the articles being produced; bylines are important in measuring career success and therefore there is much deep-seated reluctance about leaving unfinished work for the next shift to complete. Accordingly, the performative element of the journalistic newspaper culture upholds a belief in the need for a continued long-hours culture.

Many (such as Raihannah, a broadsheet journalist) framed the long-hours culture of journalism as a problematic barrier to their achievement of a work-life balance, with some implying that it is the

occupational culture itself which propagates a somewhat artificial need for such anti-social working patterns:

The long hours culture is really an issue...you can't be the first to leave the office. And when I was a correspondent, even after working eight 'til eight...often my phone would ring and a story had come up in my area so I'd have to go and cover it...But sometimes yes I felt I couldn't leave the office, even if there was no work to be done. And I think certainly in newsrooms where there's a lot of young reporters all vying for the same job – I mean I'd get to the end of my shift and didn't want to be seen to be sneaking off.

BS13 (26-35/H/1 ch.)

Raihannah's description of the journalistic expectation to commit to working long hours overtly suggests that this is often manifested in the actions of individual journalists who have internalised the idea that journalists must be seen to prioritise work over their private lives, and will consequently conform to the long hours culture, even when they don't necessarily need to. Thus such working patterns can be recognised as a central theme of the journalistic occupational culture (Ross 2001), reflecting similar trends in recent years within other UK industries (Rutherford 2001; Burchell *et al.* 2009). Indeed Georgina, who currently works from home as a local reporter for a national newspaper, having spent years working in the newsroom environment,

explains that the long hours culture continues to shape her working life, despite the fact that the hours she works are no longer visible to her colleagues in London:

I love this job [as local reporter] even though I think I actually work more. It used to be, in London, 7.30 til 7.30 every day – horrendous. No social life, no life at all...Now I start earlier than the London people – but that's because I've got that journalist mentality...When you work from home you feel you have to do twice as much. My home's my office – on my days off my phone's still going. When you're based in the office, that doesn't happen so much.

T5 (36-45/H/No ch.)

Some journalists suggested that change could be possible, and a more acceptable way of working could be found. However they believe this change is prevented by those within journalism who uphold traditional ideas about how such organisations should be run. Indeed some, such as Serena (a broadsheet journalist) also intimated that the work culture is very 'male-oriented', with the ideal journalist having no domestic responsibilities to impede work commitments, and able to function as a 24-hour labour source²⁸:

²⁸ See Chapter 5 for further discussion of the 'male-oriented' nature of journalistic working patterns.

I've been unlucky in that I work in a very male-oriented industry... expected to do things at the drop of a hat and be able to do lots of evening work and be basically living your life around the paper...But there's no need for it...I mean yes news happens 24 hours a day, but journalism is based on shift work isn't it? So if I was in charge, I'd make sure that those on the day shift worked certain hours and had to – and I mean had to - leave when it officially ended. And those coming to start the next shift could just takeover...it could work...But it'll never happen because journalism is very traditional...The men don't mind as much if they stay late on a story. They haven't got kids to look after have they. I guess the younger women don't have kids either so they don't complain do they?...So it'll never change.

BS7 (26-35/H/2 ch.)

Thus the occupational culture of newspaper newsroom journalism in the UK contains many distinctive parts revealed in the journalists' talk. A central defining characteristic within many (especially national) newspaper newsrooms is the competitive element. Whilst to some extent disassociating themselves from the exaggerated stereotype of the aggressively cut-throat (male) newshound, many national newspaper journalists acknowledged that life in the newsroom is extremely competitive, with a performative environment which ensures that adopting an individualistic approach is key to success. Some did stress that it is this fast-paced, pressure-filled atmosphere

which gives rise to a unique camaraderie, as journalists battle together to meet deadlines. However this feature of the occupational culture may have become more prominent as staff numbers shrink and positions paying higher wages are harder to come by. Younger journalists are more likely to frame this performativity as a positive element – seeing it as encouraging a meritocratic way of working, with individuals being (constantly) judged mainly on the basis of the quality of work they produce. Older journalists are more liable to question the extent to which the journalism industry is meritocratic; younger journalists may be less likely to question whether their career success is being affected by their gender.

The occupational culture of national newspapers also upholds the long hours culture as an acceptable norm; journalists must be flexible to the needs of the job. A widely held belief in the all-embracing nature of being a journalist means that for many, shaping life around work is viewed as more than simply being a good employee – it is demonstrating that they are not just doing their job, they ‘*are* the job’. Many however, identified a conflict of interests between this integral part of the work culture, and the ability for women to balance family life with success as a journalist (a theme which will be returned to later, in chapter 5).

4.2.2 The Occupational Culture of Women’s Magazine Journalism in the UK

The journalists who spoke of their experiences within women's magazines tended to describe the work culture of this area of journalism in one of two ways – either as distinctly different from the relatively competitive culture of newspaper journalism (with all but one referring to gender as a factor in their explanation of this), or as containing a strong, if more subtle, competitive undercurrent. With no previous research directly focused on the nature of the women's magazine occupational culture, this data is all the more valuable.

Sarah, who is a higher-level journalist working for a weekly women's magazine, depicts the atmosphere in her organisation as a cooperative environment with an emphasis on supportive teamwork, which she herself distinguishes from the culture of national newspapers. Sarah links her overall enjoyment of work with this aspect of women's magazine occupational culture:

I think that on a magazine – which is really different from a newspaper - it's a real team environment. It's such a different environment...We had a girl who worked for us, and she had a real 'Newspaper Attitude'; she used to work in newspapers for many years. She hid everything and if she had a story she wouldn't let anyone see it. We used to have to tell her 'this isn't how we work: we're not going to steal it from you'...And its also not about being overly ambitious...I don't really want to screw anyone over in order to get what I want...everybody mucks in together.

WMg1 (20-25/H/No ch.)

Sarah suggests that both the gender and age of the journalists contribute to shaping the occupational culture of women's magazines. She is referring to her experiences working for four different magazines, all aimed at a female readership under the age of 30, and with an average staff age corresponding to this demographic. Sarah's account is typical of many such women who have worked in this area of journalism, as the women's magazine market in the UK is biased towards selling to a younger age group (Braithwaite 2002b). Sarah, along with many other women's magazine journalists, implies that a younger, mostly-female staff allows for a more informal working culture. Many journalists espousing a similar viewpoint also referred to friendship among staff as both a central source of job satisfaction, and a motivating factor behind the importance of teamwork. Less individualisation, as Sarah asserts, leads to a less ruthlessly ambitious way of working. She maintains that, by contrast, the occupational culture of national newspapers is influenced by a perceived male-dominated culture, populated by an older generation of journalists. Sarah illustrates this contrast in cultures in her discussion of the 'Newspaper Attitude' demonstrated by her former colleague. She consequently also intimates that occupational culture is a phenomenon which influences approaches to work to the extent that adapting to a new culture may be extremely difficult. The 'Newspaper Attitude' includes stereotypically masculine characteristics which conflict with

the less individualistic approach adopted by female journalists working in women's magazines. Phillipa, the editor of a monthly women's magazine, agrees with this suggestion that gender shapes the culture of her organisation:

On newspapers it's more of a...masculine attitude. You're competing for scoops – who gets their story on the front page, and who gets the most picture bylines or whatever. I'd say it was more competitive, whereas in a magazine it isn't.

MMg6 (46-55/Ed./1 ch.)

Of those women's magazine journalists who highlighted teamwork as a significant aspect of their work environment, only one disagreed with the idea that gender plays a part in shaping this element. Kelly is a higher-level journalist working for a monthly women's magazine:

My editor on the magazine doesn't even have her own office – she chooses to sit with us...much more approachable. Whereas in a national paper I think it's more hierarchical. I don't think it's to do with really us having less men. It's just a different working culture. The job we have to do is different...And we don't have to carry on the stupid traditions of newspapers, which have been going for years and years. We can make our own rules...There's no-one here who's been around for years.

MMg3 (26-35/H/No ch.)

Kelly suggests that it is the difference in the tasks of producing two very different journalistic products which to some extent contributes to the divergence in the work cultures of newspaper and women's magazine organisations. The creative process behind women's magazines is framed as informal, reflecting the light-hearted nature of the output content itself. Despite the fact that Kelly is unique in suggesting that magazine occupational culture is shaped by factors other than gender, her consideration of the way in which the hierarchical nature of newspaper culture may be more persistent holds weight. The consistently-changing young staff of women's magazines may be more open to cultural changes which promote teamwork and informality (such as Kelly's editor ensuring she physically works alongside her colleagues). This is compared to UK newspapers where a strict sense of hierarchy continues to significantly influence working culture; the staff cohort towards the top of such formal hierarchies are likely to have worked in this area of journalism for many more years, and so may be less open to changes to the traditional working culture.

A second group of women's magazine journalists however, did draw attention to the existence of an increasingly significant undercurrent of competitiveness within their organisations. Jobs within women's magazines are becoming more popular – journalism as a trade is increasingly viewed as a glamorous occupation, especially women's magazines with their associations with celebrity and high

fashion culture (Day 2004). This popularity, accompanied by the demands associated with an increase in the number of competing magazine titles being produced, has resulted in growing pressure on individual magazine employees to constantly prove their worth, working to higher and higher standards (Gough-Yates 2003). Jessica, a higher-level journalist working for a weekly women's magazine explains:

Things have changed in magazines actually...now working on a magazine is not that different to working on a weekly paper. There are so many more new titles so it's much more competitive and the pace has picked up – the lead times are much shorter too...And everybody seems to want to work in magazines too. When I first started out there wasn't this image around mags being glamorous places to work...Suddenly everyone thinks they want to...probably more than those wanting to work in newspapers maybe...There's a huge pressure on us – especially new recruits...you could always be replaced.

WMg6 (36-45/H/2 ch.)

A significant number of other journalists who have worked in women's magazines also drew upon this idea of an element of competitiveness within this occupational culture. They highlighted their experiences of some women's magazine organisations being places where beneath an outward appearance of 'niceness' and a seeming

rejection of traditionally masculine values of overtly cut-throat behaviour, there exists an undercurrent of subtle ruthlessness, fuelled by competitive work conditions. Eleanor, who is currently employed by a weekly women's magazine, believes this to be the case:

I would say that I know a lot of people that would be willing to do what it takes to get anywhere, within women's magazines...I've known people to do some things that may be a little bit – I mean for example they've maybe gone in as a freelance covering a maternity leave, and then perhaps while the person they are covering for is away, go to the editor and ask if they are doing the job better than them. That's not on. But rather than being outright cutthroat...it's a bit more slyly manipulative, unspoken...rather than going in there, stamping your feet and saying 'I'm going to get this job; I'm going to have it'.

MMg2 (26-35/L/No ch.)

Eleanor's sentiments were expressed in a slightly more forceful way by Andrea, who is currently a freelance newspaper journalist, but has previously worked in monthly women's magazines:

I think women's magazines are lethal...Fucking hell! I wouldn't work again at a women's magazine if you paid me! My conception of this is it's not about 'soft' subjects. Controversially I don't think women and features, and all of that, necessarily is a

nicey, nicey thing. I think it can be really bitchy....So I think the distinctions aren't so easily drawn – you can't say women's mags and nice girlie features means nice journalistic atmosphere with lots of back-scratching...It's there – the bitchiness – under the surface.

BS3 (26-35/Fr/No ch.)

Eleanor and Andrea's comments are typical of many journalists who described their experiences working in women's magazines. A closer look reveals that this group of journalists are all describing their experiences of working specifically for *monthly* women's magazines aimed at a young readership. This may suggest that a working culture based around this type of publication is less likely to foster a supportive teamwork ethic. Sophie, who has worked for several monthly magazines (but currently works for a trade magazine), makes this point herself, contrasting these with weekly magazine culture:

I found that in some monthly women's magazines it is really quite competitive...the glam ones that appeal to young women. They have features meetings once or twice a week – you had to show that you were coming up with cracking features, and that was very intimidating...It is extremely bitchy. 90% are young, very fashionable, women and the 10% who aren't are the MD, one or two of the financial people and the post-room boy...It is a lot about: are you wearing the right clothes? do you fit in?

There's lots of bitchiness and snobbery. I didn't find that as much when I worked at [magazine company] as it was mostly women's weeklies – they were less pretentious.

MMg1 (26-35/H/No ch.)

Sophie alludes to a relationship between the content of the output being produced, and the working culture of the organisation. The majority of younger women's monthly magazines are centred around the fashion and beauty industry, compared with the higher celebrity gossip and real-life content of many of the weekly publications for that age-group (McKay 2000). It is possible that monthly magazine content supports a culture which places a higher value on appearance, which consequently shapes the working environment into a space where staff feel more pressure to conform to specific beauty standards and will be openly critical of others if they do not. This competitiveness regarding personal appearance may indeed be indicative of a link between the type of output being produced, and the nature of work culture. The clear post-feminist message found within the pages of such publications promotes the individualistic notion that every woman has the freedom to shape their own appearance; however this freedom is in effect constrained by the exacting beauty standards also promoted (Gill 2009; McRobbie 2009). Readers are often also encouraged to join in the magazine's mockery of celebrities who may have been caught out failing to conform to this ideal. The underlying rhetoric is thus that women are free to choose but are blamed if they choose wrongly. As

McRobbie's (2004) article on post-feminist popular culture explains, it seems that the competitive 'bitchiness' described by Sophie, may also have found its place within public discourse (Negra 2009).

Many of these magazines are also viewed within the journalistic community as organisations of higher prestige than those that produce the cheaper weekly magazines, which are more likely to be aimed at a readership of a lower socio-economic status (Gough-Yates 2003). This results in increased pressure on staff to act competitively, as their jobs are in greater demand. Brenda currently works for a women's magazine specifically devoted to the subject of parenting. Although not strictly a 'women's magazine' in the traditional sense, her comparison of this with previous experiences when working for monthly women's magazines devoted to fashion and beauty is revealing:

In monthly magazines which aim at a younger female readership, it is probably bitchier...because you've got a lot of young women...early on in their careers, they're desperate to make a mark...It's the sort of job that people say 'when I grow up I wanna work on a magazine that's quite cool' and I think that therefore for some people it's like 'wow this is my ideal job...and I'm gonna fight to make sure that I progress up the ladder'. I've seen people be absolutely determined...It's also a lot bitchier – there's a lot of pressure to wear the latest fashions and a lot of people using that to put others down if they don't look right...It's

full of beautifully groomed young women who are friendly to some extent but also very bitchy...I've found the parenting mag team very friendly...maybe because most of them are parents and they are used to being patient with fractious children, but they tend to be quite patient and friendly - they are older women. It's not as unpleasantly pressurised to look your best. Everyone supports each other.

MMg5 (46-55/Fr/3 ch.)

Brenda's discussion of the difference between types of magazine draws on similar ideas to Sophie, again alluding to a link between the content of a women's magazine, and the dominant working culture. It is the older staff, writing about issues around parenthood, who appear to work within a less competitive environment. This would suggest that within women's magazine organisations in the UK, occupational culture is likely to vary according to the type of magazine being produced. Although overall it appears that magazine journalists work in a more teamwork-oriented environment than newspaper journalists, individualistic tendencies may be more apparent within high-prestige monthly magazines where the staff tend to be younger, personal appearance is held in very high regard, and criticism (or 'bitching') provides a way to compete with others by asserting self-confidence.

The distinction between the occupational culture of weekly and monthly women's magazines also came to the fore during the

journalists' discussions of the hours they were expected to work. Overall, journalists from women's magazines complained much less about their hours. Most journalists from all types of magazine spoke positively about the fact that their job allowed them to plan their private life around work, as their hours were rarely unpredictable or unsociable. Danielle's description of her working week is a typical example; she works in a higher-level role for a monthly women's magazine:

Usually ten until six Monday to Friday but I try and get in about nine some days, and leave early. And we'll stay maybe one night a month – on the evening of press day. It's nothing horrendous. Pretty predictable each week really. It's nice.

MMg4 (26-35/H/No ch.)

The majority of the women's magazine journalists interviewed had a very similar story to tell, with no mention of an excessive long-hours culture as found within many UK newspapers. However there appears to be a general trend towards those journalists working for weekly magazines working longer hours than those from a monthly magazine. This seems to be based purely on the higher frequency of copy deadlines, which may be preceded by slightly longer working hours the day before, especially for those working in a higher-level role. Sarah, who is a higher-level journalist working for a weekly women's magazine, explains:

Well our hours are 9.30 til 6...But generally on press days, it usually ends up that the most senior people like me work a bit later...I know on newspapers the working hours are much, much longer. And also, because on newspapers everything really happens towards the end of the day, you can end up working quite late...I'm aware that if I did take a job on a newspaper I would be giving up my life.

WMg1 (20-25/H/No ch.)

Overall however, the majority of jobs within women's magazines seem to allow for a predictable, regular working week based loosely around the 'traditional' working day of nine until five. This permits most women working in this sector of UK journalism to achieve a work-life balance, with the chance of this improving if they work in a lower-level role, and/or for a magazine which publishes on a monthly basis.

4.2.3 Organisational and Departmental Cultures

As the above discussion highlights, the occupational culture of print journalism varies according to the type of publication being produced by the organisation. Consequently, most journalists working for newspapers experience a distinctly different occupational culture to those working within women's magazines. However, this occupational culture may in many cases exist alongside a strong organisational

culture, unique to a specific company. Indeed some of the journalists asserted that each organisation has a slightly different working culture. Thus although in general the occupational culture of newspaper journalism, for example, is broadly similar within all such organisations, other factors such as the specific type and political agenda of each newspaper, the attributes of the staff being recruited and the personal beliefs and practices of those with power within the company, may mean that in some cases a distinctive organisational culture shapes the journalistic experience (Parker 2000; Priola 2007). Raihannah, a broadsheet journalist, and Lisa, who currently works for a tabloid newspaper, both noticed distinct differences between the work culture at their current publication and other national newspapers:

Raihannah: In papers it differs even between papers. My friend used to work at [midmarket] and we used to meet for lunch. I'd be there wearing a grey suit – as do all the women reporters at our paper - and she'd turn up wearing short skirts – women were discouraged from wearing trousers there – very like the girls who work in magazines ...It's interesting how each work culture is so different. Maybe they wanted to play up the female thing. I never asked them. I guess there are more men at [midmarket] so they wanted to stand out as women.

BS13 (26-35/H/1 ch.)

Lisa: At [midmarket] it was much quieter – people keep their head down basically. Whereas [tabloid] is quite rowdy and boisterous: we have quite a good giggle really at the same time, which is nice. The [tabloid] seems to be a lot younger actually as well...At [midmarket] the people have been there longer and there's more of a colder atmosphere I'd say...It has a reputation of being a difficult place to work...the management can be very difficult...They don't pull their punches...I worked really long hours there – you never left before 7 and I was often staying until 8 or 9 at night. It was the done thing...But the paper is known for that. They really run their reporters ragged. The [tabloid] is more lenient in terms of when we work.

T4 (26-35/L/No ch.)

Raihannah suggests that staff gender demographic within a specific organisation can impact upon work culture to the extent that journalists employed there experience a unique organisational culture. Lisa's comments highlight both a difference in staff age, and in management style between the two newspapers she worked for. Thus although often the newspaper journalists' accounts draw attention to similarities in occupational culture, a small number reported experiencing distinctly different organisational cultures during their careers.

It is not necessarily the case that the nature of a newspaper's specific organisational culture can be determined simply by the 'type' of newspaper being produced (i.e.: tabloid, midmarket or broadsheet). Angie, a higher-level journalist working for a midmarket newspaper, commented on the difference between the two different midmarket newspaper cultures:

On the whole as a paper, the [midmarket] had a good atmosphere and good camaraderie, despite the problems we're having now with the cut-backs. And people have left to work at [other midmarket] and have come back because they didn't like the atmosphere.

MM5 (46-55/H/2 ch.)

Thus various different factors may impact upon and consequently affect the occupational culture of newspaper and women's magazine organisations. Those journalists who highlighted the uniqueness of specific working culture, frequently mentioned the personal influence of more powerful members of staff, especially editors themselves. Charismatic editors were often described as highly influential; cultural beliefs and practices may in some cases be shaped to a significant extent by the policies of particular higher-level individuals. Phillipa is the editor of a monthly women's magazine; she acknowledged that her personal circumstances (being a single mother)

have meant that she has consciously influenced the working practices of her organisation:

Well other magazines work differently, but on my magazine we're quite organised so we rarely need to work late...I know other magazines work late but that's because they aren't as organised. And I think it's important to finish on time because you need to keep a balance – have a life. And also on this magazine a lot of people have families. I think it's reasonable to go home. I have a daughter...I have to go home to pick her up, I've always felt I can.

MMg6 (46-55/Ed./1 ch.)

Danielle and Georgina, in a women's magazine and a tabloid newspaper respectively, both reported having experienced an organisational culture that was strongly influenced by the editor:

Danielle: I've worked in places where I've felt I can't leave at the end of the day until quite late, even if I've finished my work, because it was kind of expected that everyone works late everyday. I think that's partly because I worked with ex-newspaper journalists. I think that those kind of cultures...can be influenced by one or two people. The editor makes a difference – how long they work defines how long everyone else works. If they leave on time then everyone else will too, but if they are

there for like two or three hours past the end of the day, then everyone else feels that they should stay.

MMg4 (26-35/H/No ch.)

Georgina: It depends; I know on [tabloid] for example, the news editor is an arse. It depends who your boss is...At the moment our news editor is really great. So the atmosphere depends on your middle management.

T5 (36-45/H/No ch.)

Therefore, when considering the working culture of newspapers and women's magazines, it is important to take into account the effect of powerful factors unique to individual companies which may strengthen a distinctive organisational culture, possibly usurping the impact of occupational culture on the experiences of journalists in their daily working life.

A second equally significant issue which merits discussion is the divergence of journalistic experience based on which section of the newspaper or magazine workforce an individual works for. Those within the sample who were employed as freelancers or subeditors work within specific cultures unique to these roles. Similarly, within newspapers, those who worked in features departments, as opposed to news, described a very different working atmosphere. These 'micro' work cultures will now be addressed.

Freelance journalists are self-employed, generally working outside the main organisation they are writing for. Whether they write for newspapers or women's magazines, the freelancers interviewed as part of this research all described how this meant they felt excluded to a certain extent, from the prevailing occupational culture experienced by those who are full employees of a publication and conduct their work from the same office as their colleagues. Most framed this as a positive element of being a freelance journalist; it gives them the flexibility to work whenever and wherever they want, allowing more scope for a successful work-life balance. Interestingly, many of the freelance newspaper journalists in particular, explained that freelancing also helped them to avoid the cut-throat nature of many newsrooms, whilst bringing opportunities to be a part of mutually supportive informal networks among freelancers. Grace and Andrea, both freelance journalists working mainly for broadsheet newspapers, provided detailed accounts expounding the benefits of their chosen career paths:

Grace: I love being my own boss – I work smart. I tend to be able to have a day off in the week which is great!...Freelancing has given me the chance to avoid the – well what you think of when you think of the newshounds at work...They are different beasts; they have big egos and I don't...They're very cut-throat kind of people, and it is them against the world. I'm more of a peace, love and harmony kind of person!

BS5 (26-35/Fr/No ch.)

Andrea: Journalism is cut-throat, no doubt about it – it's a cut-throat, thrusting, Machiavellian business. But within that, there's a very strong stream of people that aren't like that. There seems to be two types of journalists I think, and two types of careers. The ones that are built on being very cut-throat, being very mercenary, pushing your way to the top, shoving people out the way – it's a time-honoured way of doing it. That happens mostly in newsrooms...news and young thrusty people who know that they want to be columnists, or editors...There's also another very strong element of journalism that you can find in features or in subediting teams, but definitely amongst us freelancers – this back-scratching element...Journalists have very long memories – they remember when people help them out...Being a freelance journalist has helped me to escape from all that crap and office politics and the pressure of looking over your shoulder all the time...I love the great sense of – not teamwork as such – but definitely mutual respect that you get between you and your friends who are also freelancers.

BS3 (26-35/Fr/No ch.)

Andrea also refers to feature-writers and subeditors as working within journalistic departments where the dominant work culture differs to some extent from that which is experienced within news

departments. Feature writers within newspaper organisations appear to be subject to very similar working conditions and routines to women's magazine journalists (both roles are concerned with writing mainly non news-related items with relatively long lead times). Within most national newspapers, the main bulk of the features copy produced will be published weekly within a supplement (Pape and Featherstone 2005). Consequently, designated feature writers on national publications will be working to longer deadlines than the news reporters. In addition, due to the nature of the copy being produced, feature writers in general are less vulnerable to last-minute changes or new stories appearing close to the deadline. As a result, the feature writers interviewed described their departmental working cultures as allowing for shorter and more predictable hours than their colleagues in news. In addition, most did not identify with what they saw as the more competitive nature of news journalism, with the emphasis on teamwork within features departments being a significant factor in many of these journalists' decisions to follow this particular career path. Lynne, a features writer for a midmarket newspaper, and Catherine and Tara, who both write features for a broadsheet newspaper, all discussed this issue:

Lynne: We'll try to plan generally two or three weeks in advance, so there's quite long lead times on most stories. Celebrity gossip is more last-minute, but even then you've generally got a whole day to write it. Whereas the news reporters have to produce the goods every day. And they have to do all these blogs and online

news bulletins these days. I don't envy them. Our office is much calmer. It's mostly women and we get on very well. It's a nice atmosphere to work in...My hours are generally 10 'til 6 which is great. It suits my lifestyle. I can have a life outside of work, unlike some of my friends in news!

MM2 (26-35/L/No ch.)

Catherine: I would say that in features it is really focused on teamwork. A good team atmosphere...It feels like you've got to go up a few gears when you work on news.

BS15 (46-55/H/1 ch.)

Tara: But the news journalists are different to us [features]; they are much more hard-nosed. But I think that their department heads aren't as supportive, whereas in features it's more of a total group, a team.

BS6 (26-35/L/No ch.)

Lynne mentioned in passing that her features department is formed mainly by female journalists. This was the case for most of the feature writers interviewed, and appears to be another similarity between this area of newspaper journalism and women's magazines. Samantha is currently a higher-level journalist working for a weekly women's magazine; she began her career as a news reporter for a national newspaper before deciding to move to the features

department of the same newspaper. Her experience as a feature-writer helped her make the move into women's magazines. Whilst comparing the different work cultures of news and features, Samantha also picked up on gender as an issue:

News is a very very male environment – lots of testosterone flying around. Quite scary really...there was a lot more deadlines and, you know, shouting and pressure. Whereas features is a bit nicer. I don't think I was confident enough really to do it [news]. You definitely need a hard shell because it is so fast-paced and also dominantly male as far as I can tell...I think women are just less likely to care about putting on a brave face in front of other women. If someone [in features] is feeling stressed then they would feel they could ask the others for help. That wouldn't happen in news – it is, literally, every man for himself.

WMg4 (26-35/L/No ch.)

Features departments in newspaper organisations consequently seem to exist as micro-cultures alongside larger over-arching occupational and organisational cultural beliefs and routine practices. The opportunities provided for features workers to circumvent the less desirable time commitments and individualistic ways of working associated with many newsrooms, appear to parallel those experienced by journalists choosing to work in women's magazines.

Samantha is of the opinion that the uniquely gendered nature of many features departments explains this difference in culture. However although this factor should not be ignored, as discussed later²⁹, many of the news journalists interviewed were dubious as to whether a rise in the proportion of female news reporters would affect the dominant work culture, as the demands of news would not be reduced. They argued that if the product remains the same, so does the working culture. Accordingly, it may be presumptuous to suggest that the distinctive micro-culture of newspaper features departments would change if more male journalists worked in this area.

Subediting was also suggested to be a role which provides a newspaper or women's magazine journalist with the possibility of avoiding to some extent the mainstream occupational culture experienced by those who are more directly involved in the initial creative process of producing an article. Due to the fact that such journalists are not necessarily personally responsible for a particular story or article, it is much easier for a shift-system to work effectively. At the end of a shift, a subeditor may more easily leave his or her work to be completed by the next shift, unlike other journalists, who may be forced to stay longer due to their 'ownership' of an article which needs finishing. Consequently, subeditors working for both newspapers and women's magazines work hours which are predictable. However, Holly, a subeditor currently working for the features department of a

²⁹ See Chapter 5, section 5.2.1

broadsheet newspaper, asserted that although subediting allows for forward-planning through regular shift-patterns, this predictability of working hours is often accompanied by the need to work unsociable hours, especially if the subeditor is based in a newsroom:

Subediting is great as it gives me a chance to plan my life so much more than if I worked as a reporter...I deliberately decided not to be [a subeditor] in news, because I started off as a news sub, and working really horrible shifts. Some of them were finishing about three in the morning and I had no social life. So when I went from being a freelancer, to being permanent, I went with the features route because I don't want to work unsociable hours.

BS8 (26-35/S.ed/No ch.)

When discussing her experiences as part of a subediting team, Holly also refers to the working atmosphere among her colleagues. Along with Wendy, who subedits for a midmarket newspaper, she describes how the job requires a team-based approach to working together and completing tasks:

Holly: The bit I work on is so small that we have to be teamy otherwise it isn't going to work. We have to share out the tasks...Subediting is like that.

BS8 (26-35/S.ed/No ch.)

Wendy: I think certainly within departments you get a lot of solidarity. But then I think among writers it's very different. But among subeditors we do stick together a lot. We have to – we have to collaborate about a lot of things. We'll ask each other's opinions about headlines and such...It works well.

MM3 (36-45/S.ed/1 ch.)

Thus to differing extents, subediting, along with feature-writing and freelancing, aids journalists in achieving a better work-life balance due to the predictability of the working hours. In addition, its micro-culture based upon mutual support parallels that found within many newspaper features departments and also among freelance journalists. It is clear that such pockets of distinctive cultural practices must be taken into account when assessing the overall nature of the occupational culture of journalism.

4.2.4 The Resilience of Journalistic Work Cultures

The various elements of journalistic work culture are visible through the accounts of the journalists who experience them in their day-to-day lives. During the interviews they revealed, directly and indirectly, the assortment of beliefs and practices which characterise the occupational cultures of newspaper and women's magazine journalism, as well as highlighting instances in which organisational

cultures may to some extent supersede occupational values and routines. When talking about their lives as journalists however, a few interviewees went beyond describing individual elements of journalistic culture, and explicitly addressed the way in which such cultures function. Together, these journalists help to provide an insight into the reasons why the journalistic work culture may be so resilient. Two different themes can be identified within their discussion. The first is effectively illustrated by Hannah, a lower-level journalist working for a broadsheet newspaper, who tackles the issue of how a specific element of her work culture is upheld, whilst answering a question about the gendered nature of her organisation³⁰:

In my workplace the overall editor is male, and he's got about 3 or 4 henchmen around him, who are very public-school – just the whole old-boy networking thing. And when people come in to do work experience you can just see that old-boy networking thing going on. And it really pisses me off. Each newspaper has it's own culture and it keeps going because they recruit on the basis that if your face fits, you're in. So like attracts like I guess. The beliefs of the – the values behind the company go unchallenged. And in most papers they are macho values.

BS11 (26-35/L/No ch.)

³⁰ For further discussion of this issue, see Chapter 5

Thus Hannah, along with a small group of other interviewees, perceives there to be a continual cycle in which the strength of the dominant culture may be sufficient to ensure that new recruits are selected partly on the basis that they will willingly uphold the central cultural values, and as a consequence, there is little change in the nature of the belief-system and practices of a particular organisation. This emphasis on the impact of a selective recruitment process aligns closely with Alvesson (2002) and Priola's (2007) theories of occupational culture, whilst also containing elements of Schein's (1991) work in this area. It centres on the suggestion that ultimately, a work culture will reflect the interests of the powerful: the dominant culture may be upheld, directly or indirectly, by the actions of those in charge. In Hannah's case, this presiding culture is explicitly linked to male dominance – the 'old boy' network³¹.

Alongside this approach to explaining the way in which journalistic working culture functions, a second theme can be identified from the interviewee's accounts. Some implied that the pervasiveness of their work culture is such that new recruits are likely to be unconsciously surrounded by certain beliefs about journalism and about the best ways of approaching their work; the strength of these may preclude consideration of alternative practices and ways of thinking, and journalistic culture consequently remains the same, with few actively challenging it internally. Tara and Judy, lower-level

³¹ For further discussion of this, see Chapter 5, section 5.1.3

journalists working for broadsheet newspapers, both directly express this idea:

Tara: I think they like you to be like a man, but look like a woman

Interviewer: Were you like that anyway, before you started the job?

Tara: God!...I don't know anymore...I've been in journalism so long! I've just been conditioned – [laughs]

BS6 (26-35/L/No ch.)

Judy: Obviously the news department has to work on shifts and that's somewhere where you have to know where people are, and you have to clock in at 9 and you can leave after you've filed. So it has a much more regimented air...It attracts a certain personality type which makes an already very structured environment into an even worse one, I would say. Whereas features attracts a slightly more – a looser individual – someone with more imagination possibly! But the interesting thing at our paper is that you've got a couple of women quite high up in news – so for a long time the news floor has been ruled by women, but that didn't seem to make any difference at all. It's just the culture of that way of working... You go in and it's not the personality of the individual journalists – you go in and you go

with whatever ever environment is on offer. It would take some kind of extraordinary personality to go in and change that.

BS12 (26-35/L/No ch.)

Thus Tara refers to herself as having been 'conditioned', suggesting an awareness of some process of socialisation occurring throughout her time as a journalist. Interestingly, Judy begins her explanation in a similar way to Hannah, intimating that journalistic working culture functions as a self-fulfilling phenomenon: the culture of the newspaper newsroom encourages new recruits who already advocate the values and practices it upholds. In addition, Judy suggests that a simultaneous process of socialisation is occurring, ensuring that individuals challenging what is framed as the 'traditional' way of doing things, may be seen as challenging what it means to be a journalist. This approach to explaining the resilience of occupational culture reflects work by Helms and Stern (2001), who suggest that whilst learning to become a member of an occupational community, new employees tend to adopt and internalise beliefs shared by colleagues.

Thus the minority of journalists who directly addressed this issue, offered two key explanations for the resilience of journalistic work cultures. There was a suggestion that a reoccurring cycle exists, whereby only those who will thrive within, and thus maintain, the dominant beliefs and practices, are recruited. An alternative

perspective was also provided in which new recruits are socialised into the prevailing ways of working and thinking about being a journalist. Both theories hold weight and are not necessarily mutually exclusive. However, whether or not their explanations are conclusive, it is important not to disregard the fact that a small number of the journalists had in fact considered the existence of a journalistic culture to the extent that they had formed at least a basic understanding as to how it might operate, and how it might affect their working lives. This emerges as significant in the context of the following chapters, when female journalists' beliefs about being a woman in journalism are addressed. An awareness of the workings of this culture might lead female journalists to question some of the cultural values and practices which may be precluding women's success.

4.3 Journalistic Self-conception: passion, pride and vocation

Twelve years ago, Aldridge (1998:111), drawing on Salaman's work on occupational communities in the 1980s, suggested that a key part of the occupational culture of UK journalism was revealed in the way that 'their self image is centred on their occupational role'. She also pointed to a vocational element of being a journalist in the sense that 'practitioners have a passionate, almost compulsive...attachment' to their work (Aldridge 1998:111). Today, a glance through the vast number of self-reflexive articles within trade publications such as the Press Gazette and between the pages of autobiographical writings by

journalists reveals that UK journalists continue to sustain a fervent pride and passion for their occupation. During the interviews, the journalists were asked to list the personal attributes and skills a 'good' journalist should have. Aside from practical skills such as creativity, shorthand and the ability to ask relevant questions, the most common theme within responses to this question, from both newspaper and magazine journalists, was the importance of possessing a pride and passion for the work. In many instances, this overarching discourse was extended, reflecting Aldridge (1998), to emphasise that journalism is a vocation which should define one's whole life and sense of self. Journalism is seen as a vocational career in the sense that it is framed as one that individuals are naturally predisposed to do³², and consequently experience passion for. As such, Sarah, a higher-level journalist working for a weekly women's magazines, suggested that enthusiasm for the job is all-important:

It's not necessarily about being a good writer because if you are a good writer but you're not really passionate about it you just aren't – it's like having half of everything that you need for that job. I think it's a simple fact that the people that are really passionate about something – that are born to do it really – well they are the ones who have always wanted to do the job. They are the ones who succeed in it. Those who want it badly enough will succeed.

³² In this context, the term 'vocational' is therefore interpreted differently to its earlier use in section 4.1.1 above.

WMg1 (20-25/H/No ch.)

Sarah thus emphasised her assertion that an instinctive passion for the journalistic endeavour is paramount, by suggesting that even the ability to write well is not as important. Interestingly, this comment was also made by many other journalists; it is possible that by avoiding aligning themselves purely with the practical teachable skill of writing, journalists accentuate the idea that there is some sort of inherent quality which marks them out as uniquely suited for this career (see Aldridge 1998). Amie, a lower-level journalist who works for a broadsheet newspaper, described what it means to be a 'good' journalist in a similar way:

I would take my boss as a good example of a good journalist. She's quite tenacious and naturally curious. She's passionate about what she writes about. She's naturally very good at what she does...Her enthusiasm rubs off on us...It's not what people think – that you have to be a great writer, because you don't...it's this in-built thing, which I'm starting to be able to recognise as I've been in the industry a few years...Something I reckon you're born with. You can't learn.

BS1 (20-25/L/No ch.)

A noteworthy theme which frequently surfaced during the interviewees' talk of being 'born to be a journalist', linked back to earlier discussion of how they started out their careers³³. Many then explained that they felt journalism is also a 'vocation' in the sense that it is a job which most decide they want to do from quite a young age. This fact strengthens the oft-referred to idea of this career choice being framed as almost predestined in nature. Jo, a lower-level broadsheet journalist expresses such a view:

I'm a total saddo really. I wanted to be a journalist when I was 14 and never looked back! So yes it's a vocation...It's true that many of us feel such a pull towards – we just love our job; it comes so naturally to us.

BS4 (26-35/L/No ch.)

When considering journalism as a vocation (in both senses of the word), several interviewees supported their argument with the suggestion that only those who felt such an innate passion for the job would endure the lifestyle accompanying this occupation. Marie, who works for a local weekly newspaper, and Gemma, a weekly women's magazine journalist, both stated this to be the case:

Interviewer: So journalism is a vocation for you?

³³ See section 4.1.1

Marie: Yes. Definitely. You've got to really want to do it because generally the pay is pathetic compared to other jobs. Probably in London it's better but still, compared to other industries -

LW5 (46-55/S.ed/2 ch.)

Gemma: You don't just fall into it [journalism]. It's a vocation. And also I think because it's such a competitive industry, people really want it. I mean you're living on nothing – you're hardly earning anything and if you didn't love it then you wouldn't do it.

WMg3 (26-35/H/No ch.)

Some of the interviewees who consequently saw a 'good' journalist as being someone who views journalism as a vocation inspired by an innate passion for the job, took such notions one stage further. Accordingly, a small number of journalists spoke of their job as an 'identity', interpreting this as implying that being a journalist has become such an important part of their life that they to some extent define themselves in relation to that role. Gail, a lower-level journalist working for a broadsheet newspaper, expresses this sentiment:

It is an identity actually...Even if you don't really believe you are a journalist – I blatantly am a journalist. It's got something to do with the kind of very quick firing synapses of a culture and you're a part of that, whereas a nine to five you're not – you're doing a specific thing and then you go home and leave it behind.

BS9 (26-35/L/No ch.)

Gail refers to being immersed in the fast-paced, long hours nature of newspaper culture which means that she views her job as defining her individuality. The strength of the journalistic culture ensures that she feels attached to her role, even outside the office environment. Gail contrasts her experiences with those in other occupations who follow a 'nine to five' pattern of working; she implies therefore that the incessant demands of being a journalist mean a blurring of boundaries between work life and private life, and consequently it is her work identity which defines her. Other journalists explain the idea of their journalistic identity in a slightly different way; this may be illustrated in the following quotes from Danielle, a higher-level journalist working for a monthly women's magazine, and Erin, also a higher-level journalist, who works for a weekly women's magazine:

Danielle: I don't think you'd be a successful journalist if it wasn't very much part of who you are. I feel it is who I am – who I have always been...I've always been proud to be a journalist...I think that the thing with journalism is that it is so hard to get into, but once you have the experience then you've got a career for life basically.

MMg4 (26-35/H/No ch.)

Erin: Being a journalist is a big part of - no it is who I am. I was born to be a journalist...I do see it as part of your identity...There's also a certain amount of pride in saying 'I'm a journalist'...it's kind of a career, rather than just a job...I'm learning new things everyday in this job. It should prepare me for a good long career as a journalist.

WMg2 (20-25/H/No ch.)

Both Danielle and Erin's comments suggest that there exists an occupational pride in being a journalist, over and above the specific organisation worked for. The idea that recognising a journalistic identity brings with it a sense of job security may encourage journalists to adopt this perspective and emphasise this pride. Thus seeing oneself as, first and foremost, a journalist (rather than, for example, a features writer for 'The Guardian') allows individuals to view themselves as a member of a wider occupational community, within which they may be free to direct their career in any direction. This aligns with the occupational cultural ethos discussed above³⁴, framing journalism as a craft in which a set of skills, acquired through 'on the job' experience, may be applied to any journalistic role (Aldridge 2001a). It is clear therefore that to some extent conflicting ideas exist concerning the ways journalists reflect on their occupation. The 'good' journalist must be naturally predisposed to fulfil this role, whilst a continued emphasis on the existence of an occupational identity actually frames the ideal

³⁴ See section 4.1.1

journalist as taking pride in a set of skills which they have had to acquire, rather than possess naturally.

Accordingly it seems that for the most part, no matter what type of publication a journalist works for, how fast-paced the deadlines are or what role is being filled, being a journalist is often viewed as a 'vocational' task in the sense that journalists are seen to be born, not made, and that they should therefore demonstrate a dedicated pride and passion for the job. Being a journalist in the UK today calls for 'the working habits and demeanour of those with a vocation' as identified by Aldridge twelve years ago (1998:123). This shared occupational belief transcends differences between newspaper and women's magazine cultures. To be a 'good' journalist is therefore to conceptualise your job as something which defines you, and take pride in the fact that you are a part of a wider community of other journalists who share your passion for the job. It is possible that with such beliefs shaping their view of experiences at work, some female journalists may be less likely to consider gender as a significant factor affecting their success, preferring to view journalism in more positive terms – *'those who want it badly enough will succeed'* (Sarah).

4.4 Conclusion

This chapter has revealed that the journalistic career is not a straightforward one. With heightened competition for jobs, entry into

the profession is complicated by occupational cultural beliefs which celebrate the need for 'learning on the job', whilst in fact many personally value the training they undertook to become a journalist. Despite the cultural conviction that journalistic organisations are run along meritocratic principles ('you are only as good as your last story'), many of the female journalists mentioned their gender as a detrimental factor when considering their working lives, with those in their mid to late thirties most likely to voice this concern. This draws attention to the significant impact that motherhood may have upon the experiences of female journalists, a subject which is consequently explored in more depth in the following chapter.

Once they have negotiated the challenging task of securing a job, the female journalist's working life may vary to a significant extent, according to the nature of the specific culture pervading her particular area of work. National newspaper culture is characterised by its individualistic competitiveness. Journalists are under constant pressure to prove their worth. While some frame this fast-paced performative environment as a positive source of job satisfaction, others point to the negative impact that such hypercompetitiveness has on their lives, in addition to displaying a distrust in the meritocratic principles it is based on. In order to demonstrate visible commitment to their job, these journalists must often work long, unsociable hours. Larger local newspaper cultures appear to mirror these national newsrooms, with smaller publications fostering less competitive, pressurised work

cultures. Women's magazine cultures of work are revealed as ostensibly focused more on the principles of cooperative teamwork, with less scope for overt competitiveness. However, as some of the journalists observed, in some magazine organisations (particularly monthly publications) there may also be an outlet for a different manifestation of individualistic, competitive behaviour, with the legitimisation of openly judging and undervaluing colleagues who fail to conform to the accepted high standards of personal appearance.

Whilst these overarching conceptions of newspaper newsroom and women's magazine work cultures are extremely valuable, the interviews also indicated that consideration must also be given to competing organisational and departmental cultures. The existence of these micro-cultures suggests that particular attention must be paid to the possible impact that a journalist's particular department or publication may have – a micro-culture may be a significant influence affecting their experiences at work. In addition, attention must be drawn to the fact that some of the journalists demonstrated an explicit awareness of the journalistic occupational culture and the way that this functions to shape their lives, whilst others indirectly illuminated its constituent parts through their description of and thoughts about their daily working lives.

A key feature of this occupational culture is the enduring pride and passion demonstrated by many of the journalists, often appearing

hand in hand with a strong belief in journalism as a vocation to the extent that it encompasses one's sense of self. The aim of this chapter was to consider the ways that female journalists experience and think about being a journalist. Ultimately many of these journalists work within an area which fosters powerful cultures of working. These have an impact upon the way that a journalist thinks about their work, as well as shaping everyday work practices. Whilst there are significant differences between these cultures, a key reoccurring theme within many of the journalists' accounts is that of individualism. When considered alongside strong vocational passion and pride, this central tenet may direct focus towards the responsibility of the individual journalist for their own happiness and success at work. Although not necessarily explicitly related to gender, it is these elements which may function to encourage female journalists to view their gender as irrelevant to their experiences at work, favouring explanations based at the level of individual agency, whilst framing the industry they feel so passionate about in a more positive light.

Having examined the journalistic career, and explored the cultural framework in which female journalists work, the following chapter directly addresses the issue of gender, with a focus on female journalists' beliefs about feminism and gender in the context of their working lives.

Chapter 5

Gender at work?: being a woman in journalism

The previous chapter discussed the experiences of the female interviewees, focussing on their perspectives of journalism in general. This chapter is drawn specifically from the journalists' considerations of gender as an issue in their daily working lives. It aims to gain an understanding of the extent to which female journalists view their potential for success as limited or enhanced by their gender. Within the structure of journalistic organisations, women are concentrated within the less prestigious fields, and dominate the lower rungs of organisational hierarchies (Journalism Training Forum 2002) However, in addition to considering the position of women within the journalistic demographic, it is important to look beyond the statistics and examine the ways in which individual female journalists demonstrate an awareness of this situation. Working within an occupational culture which upholds a widespread belief in meritocratic principles governing journalistic organisations, it is valuable to gain an insight into the degree to which this is substantiated within the day to day lives of female journalists. Previous work by Ross (2001) and Melin Higgins (2004) has suggested that although some female journalists believe they need to develop 'tactics' to survive in a male-dominated culture, others may deny that gender is relevant to explaining their experiences at work. Thus this chapter will first address the interviewees' views of the position of women in UK journalism, before considering in more

detail the ways that female journalists reflect upon gender as an issue in their daily working lives.

5.1 The Position of Women in Journalism

As discussed in previous chapters, the most recent survey of journalists in the UK found that in 2002 there were approximately equal numbers of males and females working in this field of the media (Journalism Training Forum 2002). Despite the methodological difficulties underlying this piece of research³⁵, the Journalism Training Forum statistics provide a much-needed quantitative glimpse into a complex employment sector for which there is no overall regulatory agency to collect and disseminate any form of demographical data. A cursory glance at this numerical equality may lead to the belief that any structural barriers to women in journalism are now a thing of the past. Indeed 'Women In Journalism', an organisation for female newspaper and magazine journalists, although citing the need for more women in senior positions as a reason for its conception, now claims that 'the number of women editors and deputy editors has increased significantly but WIJ...has since evolved...[WIJ is now] effective on a personal level' (Women in Journalism 2008). Thus it appears that even an organisation initially dedicated to recognising broad trends of gender inequality within the structure of journalism, now also focuses on helping women individually, providing advice to help women help

³⁵ See Chapter 1 for details

themselves. The implication is thus that women are now able to potentially succeed because a small minority have made it to the top (Journalism Training Forum 2002; Sutton Trust 2006).

However, the Journalism Training Forum statistics, along with other smaller-scale pieces of research, show that women's position within journalism in fact reflects national patterns (Labour Force Survey 2007): they tend to be relegated into lower-status roles within newspaper organisations, and despite the fact that women dominate numerically in women's magazines, management above editorial level is mostly male (Gallagher 1995; Aldridge 1998; Journalism Training Forum 2002). Previous research has also noted a slightly different aspect of gender division in UK journalism, looking at the way in which many journalists tend to work in roles which are 'traditionally' related to their gender (Van Zoonen 1998; Journalism Training Forum 2002). Women are clustering in areas such as feature-writing and women's magazines, or specialising in news areas such as education, health and family, experiencing a 'strong hostility in areas dominated by men, such as political and sports journalism' (Chambers *et al.* 2004:92).

This section will examine the interviewees' discussion centred on the position of women within journalism organisations. It will provide a qualitative insight into the extent to which female journalists attach significance to gender balance and recognise gender inequality within the structure of journalism.

5.1.1 Equally balanced?: men and women in journalism

In order to gain an impression of the interviewees' awareness of gender within the demographic of their organisation, each was asked to discuss the ratio of male to female employees they work with. The responses can be grouped according to the type of organisation the journalist worked for; it seems that, broadly speaking, similar demographical patterns exist in comparable publications.

As could be predicted, those from women's magazines reported having the most female colleagues. All described an almost totally female staff, stretching throughout the hierarchy of their magazine, with the few men being found in roles which did not directly relate to shaping the content of the articles being written, as Sarah (a higher-level journalist working for a weekly women's magazine) explained:

Our production editor is a man...They [men] tend to do the more technical jobs...Art jobs, or production, which is keeping everyone in line, and keeping the schedules and stuff.

WMg1 (20-25/H/No ch.)

Phillipa, the editor of a monthly women's magazine talked about the staff she observed in the building of the women's magazine conglomerate she works for. Her comments highlight that the

dominance of female staff within the organisation does not continue above the level of editor:

There are just so many women! There's only about 5 or 6 guys out of about 40 of us on our magazine, and that's the same in all of them...I guess it makes sense because women understand a female readership better...There are literally no male editors at all...I suppose the big bosses, they're men...They're the ones with the real power – financially, I mean. They don't really get to decide what goes in the magazines but they can still hire and fire.

Interviewer: Why do you think that that these 'big bosses' – the management – are mostly men then?

Phillipa: I hadn't really considered that before. I mean men just tend to be up there in management don't they. I do know of one woman who, when she left her job as editor, applied for a management post. But she didn't get it as they implied she hadn't got sufficient managerial skills, which, if you ask me, is rubbish – that's a key part of our jobs as editors.

MMg6 (46-55/Ed./1 ch.)

Phillipa's account is typical of many of the interviewees' in the sense that until directly asked during the interview, she says she has never thought about the demographic of her organisation involving a concentration of male employees higher up in the management

positions. During the interviews, many journalists appeared to have never considered the existence of gendered patterns within the workforce demographic of their organisation (in both women's magazines and newspapers). Such journalists may then be unlikely to view their opportunities for promotion and success as limited by their gender, if they have never considered it as an issue.

Two possible explanations for this finding will now be discussed, focussing on related elements of the journalistic occupational culture. The first concerns the way in which a 'go-getter' attitude underlying the process of entering and working in all areas of journalism means that individuals are primarily focused on working to get ahead based on their skills; as discussed in chapter four, this performative culture precipitates a view of journalism as a meritocracy. It follows that a conviction in meritocratic recruitment procedures may lessen the likelihood that a journalist may consider the existence of gendered patterns within the workforce. This theory reflects previous work on gender by Smith (1987) and more recently, Connell (2009). Both argue that gender influences everyday life, but this is frequently ignored or taken for granted. Whilst women's exploitation is prevalent in the everyday routines of their working lives, this fact remains unrecognised and consequently unchallenged.

Paralleling this however, may be the additional factor of the fast-paced culture of journalism. Looking at Phillipa's account for example:

she is an editor of a women's magazine and so is likely to have spent her career working towards this goal by working incredibly hard. As an editor, she is in regular face-to-face contact with the management of the magazine conglomerate, and yet the gendered division between editorial staff and managers at the top of the company hierarchy is not mentioned until prompted. Phillipa's counterparts in the higher echelons of newspaper organisations are even more likely to have had to work long hours, at a very fast-pace, with constant deadlines. To repeat a quotation from Gail, a broadsheet journalist:

[Journalism is all about the] very quick firing synapses of a culture and you're a part of that, whereas a nine to five [job] you're not – you're doing a specific thing and then you go home and leave it behind.

BS9 (26-35/L/No ch.)

Such a work culture, it can be argued, may not necessarily leave the individual journalist with space and time to reflect upon issues which are not seen to be directly related to daily tasks and responsibilities. Many have discussed the consequences of rising pressures of work in today's society, with an ever-increasing emphasis on speed and the need for instant results as technological advances influence the way businesses are run (Adam 1990; Rubery *et al.* 1998; Hochschild 2000; Sirianni and Negrey 2000). Indeed Virilio (1997), in his philosophical analysis of the impact of modern technologies,

suggests that the momentum of the modern workplace means that there is no time to reflect upon anything beyond the immediate. Thus it is possible that alongside the occupational cultural view of journalism as a craft in which gender is irrelevant, those interviewees who had never considered gender before, may have been so caught up in hectic daily life that they did not step back and think about their organisation as a whole. As discussed in more detail below³⁶, the interview findings corroborate the suggestion made within a 2001 survey of British newspaper journalists (Women in Journalism 2001) that the lives of women in journalism who have children may in fact be even more demanding as they try to reconcile a conflict between work and domestic responsibilities. Thus it may be that mothers in journalism, while the most at risk of experiencing the effects of gender discrimination (see section 5.2.2), may be the least likely to have the time to reflect on their experiences as part of a wider trend in which gender is a factor directly affecting their working lives.

Journalists from local newspapers generally described more of a balance of genders among staff than those from national newspaper organisations. Overall, a pattern appears to exist whereby the smaller local newspaper companies tend to employ more equal numbers of men and women (Aldridge 2007); thus the larger local daily publications are more likely to emulate the employment model of national newspapers (discussed below), with slightly less of a gender

³⁶ See section 5.2.2

balance in place. Megan, who works for a local weekly newspaper, and Emma, a local daily newspaper subeditor, talked about the gender divisions in their respective organisations:

Megan: I think in our paper it is fairly equal. There's 4 men and 3 women in the office. It's just that the men have the Editor position and the Deputy Editor position.

LW2 (20-25/L/No ch.)

Emma: Well, thinking about my building, there's one side where there's three girls and a guy. And the other side where there's four guys and a girl. So about the same number of guys and girls. And above our level, all the management above us are male, all the way up.

LD1 (20-25/S.ed/No ch.)

Accordingly, the journalists from smaller local companies did describe roughly equal numbers of male and female colleagues, but identified the deputy editors and editors as being predominantly male. Larger organisations however, with more staff, are less likely to employ equal numbers of male and female journalists. As Annie and Magda describe, both journalists working for such newspapers, there tend to be more men than women working for the larger regional newspapers:

Annie: Our paper has around 45 men and I'd say about half that of women. It's strange really how that works out. I'd say there

are more women like me, on my level, lower down the ranks, than men...I am aiming to be a Section Editor...Have tried a few times when there has been an opening but I don't hold out much hope anymore. I'm thinking of possibly leaving journalism...When I was training I never considering my sex as a problem – in fact there were more women on the course than men – now I'm not so sure...It's the money – the money's bad in local papers.

LD3 (26-36/L/1 ch.)

Magda: There are more men than women. Although thinking about it, it's about equal when you look at the lower ranks, the general reporters. But then as you look up...the ranks...[there are] more men there. It's quite depressing really. I think there's an underlying sexism to it all. Women are stuck at the bottom, on what is a really crappy wage. When you see another and then another of your male mates being promoted, you do start to lose faith a bit...Yes some of my [female] friends have left because of it. Two left journalism entirely!...One went to London to try for a job at the nationals – she's getting into quite a bit of debt while she tries, but you may as well try and be a lowly reporter in a place where you get paid more.

LD2 (26-35/L/No ch.)

Annie and Magda's comments suggest that the gender imbalance in larger local organisations may be due to the structure of such companies ultimately causing women to leave their jobs more often than men. The steeper hierarchical structure with more levels of power, accompanied by what Magda describes as 'underlying sexism', may lead to more male journalists succeeding in gaining a role of some responsibility, with the associated higher pay package encouraging them to remain in the job. Thus women who work within the lower paid roles may be more likely to feel discouraged by the male-dominated nature of the organisation, whilst earning a significantly low wage; this may explain the relatively high turnover of female staff at such publications. This dynamic may be unique to such larger local newspapers. Female reporters working for smaller publications, although also earning a low salary, are unlikely to be surrounded by many potential opportunities for promotion, aside from the roles of deputy editor and editor; thus any gender bias in recruitment may not be so explicit. Their team is likely to consist of a male editor, heading up a very small editorial staff, followed by a small number of general reporters. Larger daily publications however, employ a staff of numerous specialist reporters/heads of departments, many of which will be male. Although a similar demographic is experienced by many female journalists working at a national level, low positions are also accompanied by a relatively high salary and the prestige of working for a national newspaper. Consequently, although the high turnover of women in large regional newspapers cannot be said to be totally

exclusive to such publications, the conditions in which this takes place are unique. Less prestige and financial benefits are accompanied by a visibly male-dominated hierarchy in which numerous opportunities for promotion potentially exist but may not be equally distributed between the sexes.

The interviewees employed by national newspapers can be usefully divided into two approximate groups when discussion of the gender balance within their organisation is considered. Although none of the national journalists described a totally equal split between the sexes, overall, those who work for broadsheet publications described their organisation as employing a higher proportion of female journalists than in midmarket and tabloid national newspapers. Nina and Andrea both talked about their experiences in broadsheet newspaper organisations; Andrea, being a freelance journalist, was able to directly compare the demographic of broadsheet newspapers with that of the staff of other publications:

Nina: I have worked for two different broadsheets...It was a very similar setup for each one...It wasn't equal but maybe just under a half are women maybe. I've never really thought about it before.

BS14 (46-55/H/3 ch.)

Andrea: I think about 60:40 [ratio of men to women] in [broadsheet] - quite evenly balanced. The same with [other broadsheet]. Whereas in the [midmarket] I would say it's 70:30 or even less women than that...In the [broadsheets] it felt like a very healthy balance...[Tabloid] – well I only worked there once, when I first came to London. I didn't really get to meet all the staff so I couldn't say for sure but there seemed to be men everywhere. It was really scary! I wasn't really the numbers of men actually...[the] male atmosphere was really charged – really like heightened. The women there were really, well, hard...There weren't many [women].

BS3 (26-35/Fr/No ch.)

Andrea provides a glimpse into the impact of the gender balance in a tabloid newspaper. Her short-lived time working in this environment aligns with accounts by other interviewees, such as Tania (below), with tabloid experience. It appears that, in general, midmarket and tabloid journalism is more likely to be dominated by a significant majority of male employees:

And then reporters-wise, on the specialists' desk there's one woman - the health correspondent, which is not very surprising, and the reporters: here it's quite good because I remember when I got my job they were specifically looking for a woman

because they wanted a balance. I'd say it was about two-thirds men actually.

T1 (26-35/L/No ch.)

It is worth noting the way in which Tania, a lower-level tabloid journalist, talks about the ratio of general reporters: she believes that hiring females to fill one third of these posts is 'quite good', and views this as evidence that the newspaper management are making an effort to redress the gender balance. Tania later comments:

Working in tabloids is bound to be a bit strange [for a woman] at first. It is all-men and a very male atmosphere. That will never change. In fact when you asked me earlier about what I thought would happen should women eventually go into the tabloids, my immediate thought was – that will never happen!

T1 (26-35/L/No ch.)

Reflecting the theory put forward by others who have researched gender and work culture (McDowell 1997; Phalen 2000; Bajdo and Dickson 2001; Halford and Leonard 2001), while discussing the gender balance of their workplace, a small number of the interviewees directly suggested that this factor had a bearing on the nature of the working culture of their organisation. Helena, a freelance journalist, compared her experiences within different media

organisations, deducing that the different occupational cultures she has experienced vary according to the proportion of men and women working there:

I've worked in TV and I worked in magazines and for [broadsheet newspaper]. From what I have experienced so far, at the newspaper I work for, there is a much more honest environment. You have a really good mix of men and women. I think that's much better than all-women, which magazines tend to be. All-women places tend to be much more uptight. And in TV – well, the places I have worked – you get more men, which is different altogether.

BS2 (26-35/Fr/1 ch.)

Eleanor is a lower-level journalist working for a monthly women's magazine. Her comments exemplify the beliefs expressed by the majority of other interviewees from women's magazines. In contrast to Helena's view of the impact of an all-female staff, Eleanor suggests that in her experience, this form of gender balance has a positive affect on working culture:

It's female dominated - it's all women and women are more likely to get along. Obviously it depends on people's personalities too. When men are around it's a lot more competitive. Women are laid back. It helps us get the work done

without all this macho bravado that seems to happen in newspapers.

MMg2 (26-35/L/No ch.)

This implication that the unequal gender balance directly impacts upon the way in which the magazine company functions, also featured within some of the interviewees' descriptions of life in a newspaper. Irene is a lower-level journalist working for a tabloid newspaper³⁷:

It's totally men, men, men! It's crazy really...The sheer number of men means it is a totally masculine world. Us girls don't get a look in!

T3 (26-35/L/No ch.)

Other interviewees dismissed this possibility, drawing on their belief that journalists carry out their craft regardless of gender and that consequently fluctuations in the ratio of male to female colleagues are insignificant. These journalists were referring to their experiences in newspaper organisations:

Laura: Well I initially told you there were more women, but then I realised I was surrounded by men! So actually there's more men

³⁷ See section 5.2.1 for a discussion of the debate as to whether a rise in the proportion of female journalists in newspaper organisations, would have a significant impact upon the culture of the workplace.

than women, but not really so you'd notice. I think I work in a very un-gendered paper, so I don't really notice it

BS10 (26-35/L/No ch.)

Kelly: [At midmarket newspaper] I wouldn't call it macho but it was very male-dominated - physically more men in the room...I don't think it's to do with really them having less women. It's just a different working culture.

MMg3 (26-35/H/No ch.)

Thus both Laura and Kelly deny any direct link between the gender balance of the organisation they describe, and the nature of the working culture of that organisation. Charlotte is a journalist working for a local weekly newspaper; despite the approximately equal number of male and female employees within her organisation, she asserts that a pre-existing masculine working culture continues to dominate their daily working lives. Thus Charlotte's perspective aligns closely with Laura and Kelly's (above); all three journalists view the ratio of men and women journalists within a workplace, as unrelated to the prevailing way of working:

[In the newsroom] I think there probably is a fair mix of men and women. But you can definitely tell that there is, in a way, a male dominance, even though our news editor is a female, there is a male dominance there really...The women haven't really made

any difference. We have to fit in [to the masculine working culture] or get out...At work I would tolerate someone swearing at me – something I would never do outside of work...You get used to it.

LW1 (20-25/L/No ch.)

Charlotte's case is noteworthy, as her organisation is one of the few described within the interviews which has a genuinely equal split between male and female employees. However it seems that, at least in Charlotte's organisation, the overarching occupational culture remains unaffected by the gender balance.

Asking female journalists to describe the balance of men and women in their workplace reveals much about the differences between types of journalistic organisation in this respect. Thus some women's magazines may be initially thought of as institutions where the high concentration of female employees might exclude the possibility of gender stereotypes influencing the organisational structure. However, some not only employ an unequal balance of male and female managers, but also uphold a working culture which focuses attention away from this, as journalists may endorse a belief in their workplace as a meritocratic institution, whilst the fast pace of work may potentially contribute to this by not allowing time for reflecting upon such issues. These elements of the working culture appear to be echoed within other types of journalistic organisation (as discussed below). Talking about gender balance within the interviews also provided an

opportunity to confirm the statistical trends reported in the Journalism Training Forum Survey (2002). Tabloid and midmarket newspapers employ a lower proportion of female journalists than broadsheet publications, in general. Having gained a broad picture of the concentration of women in journalism compared to their male counterparts, the following section will focus on this important issue in more detail, looking specifically at which fields of journalism women tend to work in, and why this might be.

5.1.2 ‘Newshounds’ and ‘Features Bunnies’: gendered clustering and/or segregation in UK journalism

Having examined above the ways in which journalists talk about the proportion of men and women in their respective organisations, it is important to also consider the distribution of male and female journalists across the different areas of journalism. This follows previous research which has shown that there is a significant tendency for women and men to work within areas which have been traditionally viewed as distinctly suited to their gender (Hakim 1979; Bruegel and Perrons 1998; Bradley *et al.* 2000). All but three of the 49 interviewees recognised that to some extent, both male and female journalists tend to cluster alongside others of the same gender, often undertaking work which is stereotypically seen as masculine or feminine. This includes clustering within different departments of a single publication, or covering different types of news, or working on different publications completely. Before considering the views of the majority, it is first

pertinent to highlight that the three journalists who had not experienced this 'clustering' firsthand were all working for local weekly newspapers (Marie, Megan and Charlotte):

Interviewer: Have you noticed men and women tend to cluster in writing about different types of stories?

Marie: No. But it's a very small paper: we've got 2 female reporters and 1 young male reporter, and then 1 older male senior reporter. They've got geographic areas that each one covers, their beats, so whatever happens in that area, they report on.

LW5 (46-55/S.ed/2 ch.)

Megan: There are only 3 reporters as it is a very small paper, and all of these are female, so we all do all the types of stories!

LW2 (20-25/L/No ch.)

Charlotte: Well in terms of the stereotype that certain news gets given to the boys, we're such a small team that obviously that doesn't apply – anyone takes anything available.

LW1 (20-25/L/No ch.)

It is clear that within the smallest newspapers, which tend to be local weekly publications, there are no specialist reporting roles (Aldridge 2007) and the workload is divided regardless of gender.

Marie explains that the criteria for the allocation of articles amongst the reporters are purely geographical. In Megan's case, a lack of male reporters means that gender stereotyping is not possible – the staff will be allocated any form of news story. At Charlotte's newspaper, there is no room for gendered clustering due to the small size of the team – work is divided according to which reporter is currently free to complete it.

For the majority of female journalists however, the clustering process is a phenomenon they recognise in their daily work environments. Those from women's magazines are most acutely aware of the numerical prevalence of female members of staff in their field of work. Sarah (a higher-level women's magazine journalist), discussing the link between women's magazines and the gender of the staff working on them, asserts that women choose to work in this area of journalism because they are personally more interested in the output being produced:

Because perhaps they care more about 'How to get a better job' or '8 ways to improve your sex life' – all the kind of features like that that newspapers don't cover – I think maybe women [journalists] gravitate towards that anyway. If you grow up reading magazines, then you're gonna think 'I wanna go and work on magazines!'. Which is exactly what I've done.

WMg1 (20-25/H/No ch.)

Taking Sarah's argument (reflecting the findings of previous research into this issue: see Reed, 1996) as a starting point, it is clear that an examination of the various explanations provided by the interviewees for the clustering of men and women in certain types of journalistic work, will provide a useful insight into the way in which female journalists view their position in the UK print media. If, as Sarah does, they see clustering as due to active choices being made by individuals because certain types of journalism interest them more, then this is more likely to be accompanied by the belief that journalistic organisational structures are formed on the basis of meritocratic principles. If however an interviewee believes that clustering may be due to some extent to external forces outside the individual journalist's control, then they may also question the occupational cultural conviction that UK journalism provides equality of opportunity for all.

The perspective adopted by Sarah is representative of the overwhelming majority of women's magazine journalists. Indeed those employed in this area often saw themselves as empowered by their clustering. Many, such as Sophie (a former higher-level journalist for women's magazines), argued that their choice to go into women's magazines was an example of how women can pursue whatever they want in life:

Women's magazines are a way to show that we [women] can do what the hell we want, you know. There are so many women all

together, doing what we love and do best... We've chosen to do it and that's a good thing.

MMg1 (26-35/H/No ch.)

Although not necessarily suggesting such a strong link to personal empowerment, approximately half of the interviewees from local daily and national newspapers also espoused this viewpoint. Most had experience of internal clustering, whereby within one newspaper organisation, women tended to cluster in departments such as features or be allocated 'soft' news stories such as health, education and domestic issues. When questioned about the reason for this, these interviewees (such as Serena and Emma) expressed the view that women and men have different interests:

Interviewer: Have you been aware that women tend to cluster in what are seen as 'soft' subjects?

Serena: Yes absolutely. Yes. Women are interested in education, health, family, people stories you know – they are interested in people.

BS7 (26-35/H/2 ch.)

Emma: Yes. I think as a gender, women are more emotional – we like to write fluffy stuff – the background to everything – so Features. Whereas the guys want hard facts and they don't want to know why. And that's hard news. And women love kids, so

they're interested in Education. It's nature – nature says that's what we're like, what we're interested in.

LD1 (20-25/S.ed/No ch.)

Emma's argument aligns with Sophie's (above) when she says 'It's nature'. Both journalists imply that beyond simply pursuing an interest in particular subjects, these are topics which they, as Sophie explains, naturally 'do best'. Thus central to the reasoning behind many of these journalists' accounts is the idea that women are born with different talents to men (Fisher 2000), causing different career choices to be made, and/or influencing the news allocation strategies implemented by newspaper editors:

Tania: There are a lot of stories that girls get sent on more than the guys. They are quite open about it, they don't pretend. Girls tend to do better on certain stories, like background stories... Women tend to get a better response when they knock on a door. We are more empathetic.

T1 (26-35/L/No ch.)

Janet: I think women are probably better at doing stories about the family and education and features. And men are better at crime and politics for example. I think there's a gut thing about it. I don't know that many women that are interested in politics.

LD4 (36-45/Ed/1 ch.)

It is significant that Janet, as an editor herself, believes that there is a natural difference in the skills of men and women journalists. Her role in overseeing the newspaper places her in a key position to influence processes of news allocation to reporters; her implementation of equal opportunity policies is likely to be affected by a conviction in the existence of innate feminine and masculine skills.

Of those newspaper journalists who do not explain gendered clustering with reference to difference in talents or interests, a significant number suggested that in many cases female journalists choose to fulfil roles in areas such as features or women's magazines, simply because these jobs bring with them a working culture which is more appealing to women who plan to start a family. The topic of motherhood and its relationship to the experiences of female journalists is explored in more detail below in section 5.2.2; however it is clear here that many women are acutely aware of this issue as a factor behind gendered clustering. The suggestion that women's career paths might be affected by choices which are influenced by real or perceived difficulties in balancing family and work commitments is a clear reflection of Glover's 'balance model' theory (2002). This forms a critique of Hakim's (1995; 2000; 2002) controversial attack on the feminist approach to interpreting gender and employment issues, in which Hakim argued that childcare and housework problems have only a limited impact on women's career decisions, and that a significant

number of women are simply less career ambitious than men. Glover follows Bruegel and Perrons (1998) and Crompton and Harris (1999) in suggesting that such decisions are in fact constrained by consideration of perceived domestic responsibilities – they are therefore not free, rational choices in the neo-classical economic sense. Women’s agency is consequently limited – dependent on other social and institutional factors which direct them towards consideration of careers that are more compatible with childcare (Walsh and James 2000).

Fiona, a tabloid journalist, and Deborah, who works for a midmarket newspaper, exemplify this group. Both are in the 26 to 35 age group, and neither currently have children:

Interviewer: Have you noticed men and women tend to cluster in writing about different types of stories?

Fiona: Yes definitely. It’s difficult to know why though. I know recently one of the guys was made crime correspondent – it wasn’t ever advertised, someone was just appointed. That’s the kind of thing I’d like to do in the future. But in 2 years time when it comes up again, I might be having kids, so I guess that won’t happen. But you do think of yourself as a journalist, not a female journalist. And you do hope that others think that of you too. But women who do settle down and have kids often tend to drift towards features.

T2 (26-35/L/No ch.)

Deborah: There are more men in news at the moment...At the moment I'm based in features – there's more women there – tends to be more female-dominated, possibly because the subjects we write about are "softer" but mainly because the days are less unpredictable and more structured. I know quite a lot of women who have kids or who want to, who are in features...Thinking about it, I guess it works like that for some of the women in news too. My friend in news mentioned to me once that she likes the fact that as education correspondent it was quite predictable, what was coming up. Each year she knows when certain stories need to be covered – like the exams for example. It helps her plan her life – she has two kids so she needs all the help she can get!

MM1 (26-35/L/No ch.)

Thus this is a very different explanation for gendered clustering. The career decisions made by some female journalists may not necessarily reflect personal interests or skills, but in fact may be a reaction to the incompatibility of traditional journalistic occupational culture with the fulfilment of domestic responsibilities outside of work. Male journalists are less likely to view having a family as conflicting with work requirements, due to the social norm that the bulk of childcare be carried out by the mother (Crompton and Harris 1999). They consequently have no such considerations to bear in mind when

planning their career in journalism. It could be argued that therefore gendered clustering, far from being evidence of a divergence of natural talents or the woman's power to choose and follow her interests, may to some extent be a symptom of an inequality of opportunity for female journalists. As such, in this context it may be more pertinent to refer to gendered 'clustering' as forming part of a process of 'horizontal segregation' – for many female journalists, the freedom to choose which area of journalism to work in may be diminished by wider structural processes which function to direct them towards roles which are more compatible with family life (a factor which is much less significant for male employees – Crompton *et al.*, 2005).

The journalistic working culture is not unique in its incompatibility with the needs of working mothers. However it is significant that, as discussed above, over half the interviewees explained gendered clustering with no reference to this issue. This is an important point: it may be that the occupational culture of journalism directs thinking towards explanations which utilise discourses of personal choice, power and innate talents, diminishing the impact of arguments which focus on gender as a limiting factor.

A small number of newspaper journalists described their awareness of female reporters being subject to colleagues' stereotypical views of which news stories women could or should be allocated. Here we find many references to the idea that female

journalists are viewed as writers of 'soft' stories, while men tend to be given articles following up 'hard' news, which is more likely to be taken seriously internally, and more likely to consequently be published as a headline article (as in Keeble 2001). Thus in this context, as with the explanations considering the impact of motherhood on career choices (discussed above), it is more appropriate to again allude to a process of 'horizontal segregation', whereby gendered clustering is caused by more than free choice on the part of female journalists. Female journalists' career paths are also influenced by women's inability to gain work in stereotypically 'male' areas of work. Thus Kirsten, a higher-level reporter working for a midmarket newspaper, and Nina, also a higher-level reporter, working for a broadsheet newspaper, recounted their experiences relating to political news, which is traditionally seen as a male domain:

Kirsten: [It is] quite normal for there to be a political story to come in and they send a man even though I am standing right there [and have expertise in politics]. If it was a very boring press release about some sort of childcare thing, I'll be given it. If I see all the stories on the newsdesk, I can tell you which story I would get.

MM4 (36-45/H/1 ch.)

Nina: When I was in Westminster, when there a ridiculous story about Tony Blair's hair or about the Tory MPs wearing woolly jumpers, then I'd be sent to do those soft pieces.

BS14 (46-55/H/3 ch.)

From a similar perspective, Raihannah and Gail both described their experiences working for (different) broadsheet newspapers; they examine in more detail the processes of gender stereotyping which they believe cause segregation within newspaper reporting:

Raihannah: What they say is that you are either a 'newshound' or a sort of 'soft features bunny'. And yes, of course there are more women in features. But you are stuck with that stereotype really. It's hard for a woman to...convince them you should be seen as a 'newshound'.

BS13 (26-35/H/1 ch.)

Gail: [There is an] expectation that you don't necessarily want to engage with men on the same terms – it's lower intellectual expectations...If you look at who is commenting on the great issues of the day, they will all be men...there's a temptation to pigeon-hole women into the lifestyle category, and to assume that we really are not interested in engaging with men...I personally find that frustrating.

Interviewer: Do you ever actively challenge the stereotyping that goes on?

Gail: I hope to challenge it by...turning down commissions which I think are stupid, dull or patronising. I don't know if has always been realised that that's exactly why I'm turning them down though. I think I would like to make it more explicit...I think a lot of the prejudice is completely unconscious.

Interviewer: Maybe if you keep doing that then things will start to change

Gail: I hope so but unfortunately there will always be plenty of women who will do it – that's the nature of journalism – supply exceeds demand.

BS9 (26-35/L/No ch.)

It is first pertinent to highlight the revealing nature of the labels used by Raihannah's colleagues to categorise journalists. Whether consciously or not, the contrasting labels of 'newshound' and 'features bunny' are innately gendered: the masculine image of the hound is juxtaposed with the feminine image of a bunny³⁸. Here it is clear that what is perceived as masculine behaviour reflects what Connell (1987; 2005) has conceived of as 'hegemonic masculinity', a particular form which is held up as 'currently (the) most honoured way of being a man' in wider (Western) society (Connell 2005:832). This stereotype of

³⁸ An interesting and informative piece of research by Crawford and Gosling (2004) into female ice hockey fans known as 'puck bunnies', suggests that this label contributes to the marginalisation of these fans from the 'norm' of the more serious male fan, perhaps in a similar way to the 'features bunnies'.

idealised masculinity - in this case a thrusting, highly rational, unemotional cut-throat 'newshound' – may function to symbolically prevent women from being viewed as having the potential to succeed in the newsroom. This instructive element of newspaper culture thus illustrates the part that gender stereotyping by others within such organisations may play in underpinning processes of gendered clustering. Gail's account shows how difficult it is for women who may be aware of the detrimental effects of this phenomenon, to challenge it. Her final comment draws attention to the existence of a fundamental barrier to such attempts by individual female journalists: while others are willing to accept the labels prescribed to them, gendered clustering within newspapers is unlikely to cease completely.

Having discussed the various explanations put forward by female journalists to explain gendered clustering, it is important to fully consider the impact of this process. A significant number of the interviewees expressed an awareness of the existence of an informal internal hierarchy concerning the different areas of UK journalism. Thus not only is there a tendency for women and men to cluster in different areas, but the areas dominated by female journalists are often viewed within work culture as less prestigious (McKay 2000). Lisa and Sarah's comments (below) illustrate this point, demonstrating that this status hierarchy exists within areas of newspaper reporting and also between different types of journalism:

Interviewer: Within journalism in general, have you ever been aware of any opinions about some subjects being seen as not quite as high status as others?

Lisa: Features – yes – women tend to work in features in newspapers. And I know news editors don't see it as hard news – I mean it's not news is it, but you know what I mean. But thinking about other news areas - education or articles about the family tend to get pushed out by a crime or politics story. And certainly politics seems to be mainly men, I mean there are some women doing it but the political editors – I think I'm right in saying they're all men. And crime – I mean I think they're mostly men – I associate it as a boy's thing. And it is seen as better than, well, girls' things I suppose.

T4 (26-35/L/No ch.)

Interviewer: Have you ever been aware of any opinions within the media industry in general, about women's magazines?

Sarah: Yes! God yes! There's a lot of snobbery around. You hear a lot of 'oh she's only a mag girl' and stuff. Women's magazines are simply not seen as important as newspapers. A lot of the newspaper guys I know are always teasing me about it. It's light-hearted but it comes from somewhere... They reckon they're better than us.

WMg1 (20-25/H/No ch.)

Consequently, although there may be no innate problem with gendered clustering, especially when explained from the perspective of those who believe it is merely the expression of natural differences, it can be seen as a problem when, as a consequence, 'women's areas' are singled out as inferior to 'men's areas'³⁹. The question here, therefore, should not necessarily be concerned with assessing the 'naturalness' of sex differences, but, given that many female journalists do *believe* gendered clustering to be the result of natural, personal choice, is this belief preventing them from questioning processes of horizontal segregation which may place women in positions that are viewed as inferior – either through the incompatibility of motherhood and journalistic work, or through women's inability to gain work in certain areas of the industry. Given the prevailing cultural sentiment that a journalist is only as good as his or his last article (Aldridge 2001a), if gender stereotyping is occurring in processes of news allocation, it is men's work which is more likely to hit the headlines and bring with it the associated prestige. Equally, those who work in women's magazines are seen as less important within UK journalism as a whole. Consequently, although more attention tends to be paid to processes of vertical segregation (see section 5.1.3) when considering the position of women in journalism, gendered clustering may function

³⁹ The labelling of 'women's' areas in journalism as inferior, is reminiscent of similar findings within other areas of cultural production. Both Brown's (1994) research on perspectives of soap operas, and Radway's (1984) work looking at views of Mills and Boon literature have previously pointed to the existence of a perceived hierarchy of cultural products. Soap operas and Mills and Boon romance books, with their predominantly female audiences, are seen to be less prestigious and worthy of respect.

to form equally problematic barriers to female journalists. As Wyatt (1999:72) suggests, whilst it may be a 'blessing because it opens doors [for women in journalism. It is also]...a curse because the doors frequently open onto a cul-de-sac' where women are trapped due to gender stereotyping.

5.1.3 Vertical Segregation

Perhaps the most explicit way in which the interviewees addressed the subject of women's position in journalism was when talking about the hierarchies of journalistic organisations. Vertical segregation – the idea that women are for some reason failing to equal the numbers of men within the higher echelons of such companies, and that there are fewer men at the bottom (Charles 2002) – consequently formed a significant part of much of the interview discussion. When discussing this issue within the interviews, debates centred around the possibility that a 'glass ceiling' (Davidson and Cooper 1992; Liff and Ward 2001; Wirth 2001) may be preventing some female journalists from reaching the higher levels of organisational hierarchies. The following discussion thus examines this issue, focusing on the interviewees' awareness of and beliefs about the vertical segregation of female journalists.

The journalists from women's magazines, when asked specifically about the gender make-up of their organisational hierarchy, emphasised that female employees experienced no career restrictions due to their gender. Indeed, as discussed above⁴⁰, all were adamant that due to the nature of the output being produced, being female was an asset. Women's magazines employ a mostly female staff all the way up the structural hierarchy (Gough-Yates 2003). As also mentioned earlier however, it is above the level of editor that processes of vertical segregation may be occurring. Approximately two-thirds of the interviewees working for women's magazines described a company setup whereby the overall management are predominantly male, as did Gemma and Roberta:

Gemma: Our editor's female. But yes the people really high up the food-chain are all male. They don't really have anything to do with what's in the magazine itself – well a bit I suppose, but not as much as the editor does.

Interviewer: I wonder why it is that the people 'high up the food chain', as you say, are mostly men.

Gemma: I haven't really thought about that before. They just are.

WMg3 (26-35/H/No ch.)

⁴⁰ See section 5.1.1

Roberta: When I've worked on magazines it's mostly been with women – but almost always there were men in the managing roles – above editorial level. But men aren't going to be interested in the jobs lower down – I mean we write about what women are interested in.

MMg7 (46-55/Ed./1 ch)

Many of the magazine conglomerates described own multiple publications, most of which directly target a female audience. Given the strong cultural emphasis (by journalists such as Roberta) on the direct link between the type of product and the gender of the staff, used to explain the dominance of female staff lower down these company structures, it could be argued that one might expect to see more women in such management positions. Although Gemma points out that managing roles do not necessarily deal directly with magazine content, which might explain why men are found only in such jobs but not lower down the hierarchy, it is probable that it be more than a simple coincidence that there are very few women at all at this level. While none of the interviewees from women's magazines directly addressed the question as to why this might be, it is feasible that the explanations for vertical segregation provided by many of those who work within newspapers, where the issue is more visible and so is discussed more, may also relate to this under-explored area of gendered division within women's magazine organisations.

Approximately half of the newspaper journalists, when asked to describe the hierarchical structure of their company, initially did so with no reference to gender. It was only when prompted that they then identified gender patterns within it. This is revealing in itself – as discussed above, journalists such as Tara (below) appear not to consider gender to be a factor shaping their daily working lives, even though they do identify such patterns when their attention is drawn to it:

Interviewer: So would you please describe the structure of your organisation – who works where, who does what – that kind of thing?

Tara: [provides long, detailed description with no reference to gender]

Interviewer: So have you ever considered where the women fit within that structure?

Tara: Erm. Not really. Not consciously. Not this organisation, no. I suppose when you look at the hub where all the departmental heads sit [indicates area of office], only one of them is female, look. [Name] is head of features. But I don't think any of it is conscious. It's just the way it is. This is a great career for women.

BS6 (26-35/L/No ch.)

Earlier it was suggested that the occupational cultural sentiment framing journalism as a meritocracy (discussed in more detail in Chapter 4) may to some extent influence the degree to which some

journalists view their gender as significant within the work context. Indeed a small number of newspaper journalists denied the existence of processes of vertical segregation in journalism completely, seemingly because of this. Georgina, who works for a tabloid newspaper, and Magda, a local daily newspaper reporter, were consequently both critical of the suggestion that journalism today might not provide equality of opportunity in terms of gender:

Georgina: But now women are being given more opportunities in journalism, the prime jobs are now more open to us in that way – going up the management scale.

T5 (36-45/H/No ch.)

Magda: Compared to offices I've worked in, outside of journalism, where you're in a more traditional office environment, there it seemed a lot more sexist. The secretaries are always women and the men are the bosses. So journalism is quite equal. It really doesn't make a difference if you're a man or a woman.

LD2 (26-35/L/No ch.)

Georgina and Magda's views were among the most optimistic of all the interviewees from newspaper organisations. Approximately half of the remaining newspaper journalists, whilst demonstrating an awareness of men tending to dominate in the more powerful

hierarchical levels, also agreed that this was not necessarily evidence of the existence of any form of gender discrimination. A significant proportion of this group of journalists explained the low status of women as due to their lack of ambition. Such views frame the concentration of women towards the bottom of the journalistic hierarchy as the result of choices made by the women concerned, thus denying any external structural barriers to women, emphasising the importance of individual agency. Fiona, who works for a broadsheet newspaper, and Marie, employed by a local weekly newspaper, are among these:

Fiona: There are probably more ambitious men than women – the people I know who are the power-people, more of them are men.

T2 (26-35/L/No ch.)

Marie: So, no. I wouldn't say there's discrimination or you're treated any differently...I don't know of many women editors – I think you can go up to deputy editor or maybe even chief sub, but editors?...In our group of papers, the most recent editorship which was advertised had a huge number of applicants, not one of them female as far as I know. Women just aren't interested in that kind of job. They don't want the stress of it all.

LW5 (46-55/S.ed/2 ch.)

Thus perhaps we can consider such opinions as championing an approach to explaining 'vertical segregation' within journalistic organisations which would view such patterns as 'vertical clustering', mirroring the emphasis on personal choice discussed above in which the terms 'horizontal clustering' and 'horizontal segregation' signal different approaches to understanding this phenomenon.

Continuing this way of thinking, other journalists, whilst acknowledging the dominance of men in the upper echelons of journalistic organisations, simply expressed the view that their existing structures are based on a meritocratic system where those who would perform best in a job, are awarded it; consequently it is chance as to whether men or women are recruited in the higher positions. Interestingly, Janet, the editor of a local daily newspaper and Eileen, the editor of a weekly broadsheet, are among those, mostly higher-level journalists, who adopted such an argument:

Janet: There aren't many other women editors around. Nor are there many others in general, higher up, in newspapers. But there's nothing sinister in it. It's just chance...Most of my team are men and I work well with them. But in a few years time if you came back, you'd probably find it had changed again – that there was an all female team, or equal numbers of men and women. It's just random really. Whether a journalist is a man or a woman should be – is irrelevant.

LD4 (36-45/Ed/1 ch.)

Eileen: In this paper, there are probably not so many women in senior roles. My magazine editor is female. Home and Living, and Travel are headed by women. It is a mix really. I think it just depends who's around and who's good. It's chance...I had no problems at all.

BS16 (46-55/Ed/3 ch.)

It is particularly significant that Janet and Eileen, the only two interviewees who were newspaper editors, both viewed the vertical segregation patterns evident in their own organisations as coincidental, suggesting that there are no barriers to women's progression in journalism. Indeed at the time of the interview, Eileen was one of the highest level female journalists in the UK and firmly believed that journalistic recruitment is based on meritocratic principles. She was happy to state that there were very few women in senior roles in her organisation (providing further evidence of gendered clustering⁴¹ as she listed the job titles of those who were), and then assert that such patterns occurred by 'chance'. Both Janet and Eileen are relatively older journalists working at a very higher-level. This is interesting as in section 4.1.3 it was suggested that older, higher-status journalists are in fact more likely to *limit* their career aspirations due to their gender - many achieved a certain level and then found that, for various reasons,

⁴¹ See section 5.1.2

being female held them back. This included the incompatibility of domestic and work commitments having had children.

Having achieved the highest rank in a newspaper organisation, Janet and Eileen do not present themselves as having been affected by difficulties posed by gendered barriers such as this, if their belief in journalistic meritocracy can be viewed as evidence of this. In section 5.2.2 (below) the issue of motherhood is examined in more detail, but for the purposes of this discussion, it may be significant that Eileen had her three children very early on in her career, temporarily sidestepping into a role in commercial media (which provided a more flexible work environment) as she did so. Other interviewees⁴² described how the current older generation of female journalists were much more able to do this, as they started out into a business which was much less hypercompetitive than journalism today (Williams 1998). Thus Eileen, who is aged 46-55, may not have experienced the same difficulties with combining motherhood and work in the same way that many younger journalists do today. In fact at the time of the interview, Janet, who is in the 36-46 age group, was on maternity leave to care for her newly born first child. She explained that she:

Couldn't put it [motherhood] off any longer...I couldn't have had a child earlier – I was far too busy.

LD4 (36-45/Ed/1 ch.)

⁴² See section 5.2.2 for further discussion of this.

She implied that having children young, as Eileen did, was not a possibility which would have helped further her career in journalism. Elsewhere in her interview, Janet states that she is actually considering not returning to her job in journalism at the end of her maternity leave, and may move to work outside journalism to gain more flexibility as a working mother. Despite this, Janet does not outwardly appear to consider the difficulties of being a working mother in a higher-level journalistic position in her explanation of why there are very few women in senior roles. She, along with Eileen, views gendered recruitment patterns as coincidental. It is possible that for some higher-level journalists, their own experiences of success are seen as proof that gender makes no difference. This individualistic belief, coupled with a cultural conviction that journalism is a meritocratic occupation where gender should remain irrelevant to explaining recruitment processes, may lead to a lack of consideration of the possibility that perhaps jobs may indeed be fairly awarded to the best people that apply, but more subtle barriers, such as the potential incompatibility of motherhood and journalism, may be preventing some women from applying in the first place. In addition to this, as discussed in section 5.1.1 above, it is possible that, as editors, they have had to concentrate their efforts on the constant demands of the news-making routine throughout their career, leaving little time to consider issues such as this in any depth.

The remaining journalists (just under half the interviewees) did refer to gender as an important factor to consider when describing the

power structure of UK journalism. These were predominantly journalists in the 26-35 age group from various different types of newspaper, and their responses can be usefully divided up according to their job status. When asked to describe and explain the distribution of male and female journalists throughout the hierarchical structure of journalism, those currently working in lower-level roles were more likely to discuss the issue of motherhood as being incompatible with many higher-level journalistic jobs. In addition, these interviewees tended to be women who were nearing their mid-thirties. As already suggested in section 4.1.3, this sub-group may be more likely to be thinking about the possibility of starting a family within the next few years if they haven't done so already; as such, their views were very similar to those of many female journalists who already have children⁴³. Tania and Fiona are both lower-level journalists of a similar age, working for two different tabloid newspapers:

Tania: The Editor, the Deputy Editor and the Deputy Associate Editor are all men. Everyone at the moment on the newsdesk is male...so anyone who makes any decisions or in any position of authority are male...There was a woman who was on the newsdesk – she was the least senior of the people on there. She's gone off to have a baby....She might have been able to move up if she wanted to, but she chose to have a family...She's due back at the end of August, but whether she

⁴³ See section 5.2.2 for more details.

comes back or not is another matter. I guess in a way it's just the whole kids thing – it's a slippery pole to try and move up after that...I don't know any senior female journalists – like in their 40s or 50s in tabloids. They are all younger.

T1 (26-35/L/No ch.)

Fiona: Journalism is dominated by men at the top. So far, being female hasn't affected me much – but I think it would if I tried for a promotion above reporter level. They'd be worried that I'd want kids soon I think...Women having children is why men tend to reach more senior roles...Because I've seen it happen over and over again – women get to a certain age and then they have a child and they kind of drift away. And who would blame them, quite frankly. There's more to life. I think most of us have a fear that we might end up giving too much to the job – suddenly realising we can't have kids because we've left it too late.

T2 (26-35/L/No ch.)

As well as the recurrent issue of motherhood, other journalists explained the vertical segregation occurring within journalism as due to broader, subtler processes of discrimination against women in general. These journalists were also in the 26-35 age group, but were mostly in higher-level jobs. Kirsten works for a midmarket newspaper, and Serena for a broadsheet newspaper:

Kirsten: I think it's still quite a male dominated industry...At this paper there are actually a couple of female faces higher up – but it's still only a couple you know, and it's not in the big positions either. So the 3 or 4 managers you deal with everyday are men...[In the UK newspaper industry] there are a couple of female editors – actually I think one resigned today...She's been replaced by a man. It's not surprising. It's a male world I work in. You get by as a woman but you would never get promoted to a really high level.

MM4 (36-45/H/1 ch.)

Serena: Most newspaper editors are male. I can think of about two women editors but they are the exception to the rule. It's probably still this old-fashioned male hierarchy thing; I can't think of any reason why there shouldn't be more women at the top...Women just aren't seen as equal to men, when they try and get nearer the top, in newspapers. Obviously it's not as obvious as "oh, you're a woman so no you can't have the promotion" but there's still the sense that the old boys' club still exists. The men recruit men because they simply feel safer with an all-male boardroom. I find it very hard sometimes when I turn up to one of those meetings with mostly men – which is pretty often really. It's subtle but its there – there's testosterone in every nook and cranny!

BS7 (26-35/H/2 ch.)

It is interesting that these women who thus described subtle sexist attitudes as encompassed within journalistic organisations, are predominantly higher-level journalists. It may be that while the interviewees working at lower-levels, if they view gendered vertical segregation patterns as due to more than personal choice or as coincidental, saw motherhood as the primary explanatory factor, higher-level journalists may be aware of more complex discriminatory issues. Their experience of working alongside predominantly male authority figures on a daily basis may mean that their expectations as a female journalist have been reduced. Talk of 'old boys' club[s]' by journalists such as Serena reveals that gender stereotypes, whilst not being overtly put into practice, may still subtly influence recruitment procedures to the extent that women at the top remain 'token' (Steiner 1998) examples of equal opportunity policy implementation⁴⁴.

Thus women working across different journalistic workplaces are in fact not reaching positions towards the top of organisational hierarchies in equal numbers to their male counterparts. The interview discussions on the position of women consequently confirmed the patterns highlighted within the Journalism Training Forum Survey (2002). Beyond statistical information however, the interviews yielded valuable data regarding the ways in which female journalists

⁴⁴ For a more detailed discussion of the ways in which being a female journalist is detrimental to career progression, see section 5.2.1.

conceptualise and explain these employment patterns. Three distinct arguments can be identified here. The first utilises ideas of personal agency to echo Hakim's (1995) contested suggestion, asserting that some female journalists may be less ambitious than men, due to a desire to prioritise family life over paid work. The second appears to be closely linked to the journalistic occupational cultural conviction in meritocratic principles governing the path of women's careers, consequently arguing that it is chance (rather than choice) or perhaps natural sex differences, which determine the success of female journalists. A third strand of thought however, focuses attention away from the individual and towards the possibility of overarching processes of structural discrimination, which may shape the choices made by women, creating a 'glass ceiling' in many different ways.

5.2 Reflections on being a Woman in Journalism

Having addressed the position of women within journalistic organisations, it is also important to look more closely at the ways in which individual female journalists experience the issue of gender on a more personal level. Previous research has indicated that the experiences of female journalists do differ from those of male journalists (Ross 2001; Aldridge 2001b; Melin-Higgins 2004); this section examines what this means in more detail - from assessing their awareness of the impact that their gender may have, including a spotlight on motherhood as a critical part of this, to directly considering

specific strategies which female journalists (consciously or unconsciously) use to help them succeed at work.

5.2.1 Being Female: irrelevant or significant?

During the interviews, each journalist was asked specifically whether they believe being female has ever affected their work or the way others work with them. This aimed to assess the extent to which female journalists view gender as a factor which influences journalists' everyday experience in the UK. Previous research in this area, although limited, has suggested that the journalistic occupational culture encourages an individualistic approach to interpreting experiences at work, to the extent that many female journalists believe their gender is completely irrelevant (Ross 2001). Others are quite open about that fact that as a woman, they are working within a dominant masculine culture which frames them as an outsider, despite the increase in the number of female journalists in recent years (Aldridge 2001a; Melin-Higgins 2004). It is therefore interesting to examine this issue more closely, looking at possible explanations as to why certain journalists may not view their gender as significant, and the reactions of those who express an awareness of their gender as a positive or negative factor in their working lives. The interviewees' responses can be grouped into three broad categories: those who do not believe that being female has had any effect on them, those who

think it has helped them in some way, and those who view their gender as hindering them at work.

A small but significant proportion of the interviewees (13 out of the 49) believe that being female has had no effect on their experiences as a journalist. The majority of this group are either from broadsheet or local newspapers, in addition to a small number of women's magazine journalists. Those from broadsheet newspapers are predominantly in their early to mid-twenties and none have any children. Andrea and Amie exemplify this group; their responses discuss their experiences in broadsheet journalism:

Andrea: As far as it meaning that you don't get promoted, or you don't get the breaks in journalism I don't think that's true. I think there's an underlying meritocracy in most broadsheet newspapers, where you do your job well, you get promoted...Being female has never affected me, even before, before I was freelancing.

BS3 (26-35/Fr/No ch.)

Amie: I don't think about being a woman in journalism – neither do any of my female colleagues I think. It is not something I have ever been bothered about. Other female journalists I know have never made a big issue out of it and I don't think it has

affected my career so far at all. I don't know if it will in the future.

I wouldn't have thought so. I'd like to think it wouldn't.

BS1 (20-25/L/No ch.)

Andrea and Amie's comments, representing similar views expressed by other young broadsheet journalists, fit the trends discussed earlier in sections 5.1.1 and 4.1.3. In section 5.1.1 it was suggested that broadsheet newspapers contain a more equal balance of men and women, when compared to other types of national newspaper, possibly providing working conditions under which female employees are less likely to experience their gender as a debilitating factor. In addition, in section 4.1.3 it was suggested that there may be a relationship between age and the extent to which female journalists view their gender as an imposition. Younger journalists, having less experience and being less concerned by any imminent conflict between family and work responsibilities, may view gender as irrelevant. Indeed Amie's comments may indicate that many such journalists may not have thought about gender at all until the subject was raised during the interview process. Thus the tendency for younger broadsheet journalists to assert that being female has never affected their experiences at work may be explained as due to the correlation of these two patterns.

As also discussed above in section 5.1.2, in general, smaller newspaper organisations producing local publications are more likely to

recruit a more equal distribution of female journalists, when compared to larger national companies (Aldridge 2001b). Although male editors continue to be the norm, many local newspaper organisations tend to have a less complex hierarchical structure; it is possible that female employees may therefore be less concerned with issues of male-domination, as there are fewer positions of power to compete for. This may explain why the majority of interviewees from local newspapers do not view gender as affecting their experiences at work on a daily basis. Excerpts from the interviews with Magda, a lower-level journalist working for a local daily newspaper, and Zoë, who works in a higher-level role for a local weekly newspaper company, illustrate this:

Magda: In many ways I'd say journalism is quite an equal profession. There's a lot of women who work in it and we're all treated pretty similarly to the men. That's what I feel but I know a lot of my colleagues think differently. They think they get given the fluffy stories: bunny rabbit stories – the more girly stuff. But maybe girls are just better at doing those sort of interviews. They're more like to be able to empathise. Is that sexism? I don't think so.

LD2 (26-35/L/No ch.)

Zoë: The news editor is female and so was her deputy and it is quite female dominated, so I don't think I'm discriminated in any way...Apart from we have a male editor, there are mostly female

reporters...In terms of my experience, I don't think women are disadvantaged in journalism at all.

LW3 (26-35/L/No ch.)

Magda and Zoë's accounts of their experiences in small local newspapers clearly show their view that being female has neither helped nor hindered their working lives as journalists. Some of the journalists from women's magazines adopted a similar perspective. Sarah and Danielle are both higher-level journalists working for women's magazines:

Sarah: No I don't think it [being female] actually does [make a difference]. I think that if you choose to think it does then it can, if that makes sense. I think it's more about self-confidence. You've got to make it happen.

WMg1 (20-25/H/No ch.)

Danielle: I guess that because I work with lots of women, that they relate to me as a woman relates to a woman, so that you work together in a kind of female way; it certainly hasn't ever had an adverse effect.

MMg4 (26-35/H/No ch.)

Sarah adopts an individualistic approach to rationalise her belief. Her argument aligns with the occupational cultural conviction (as

discussed in section 4.2.1) that journalists hold the power to direct their own careers and influence the extent of their own success by making the right choices, as long as they have the skills to do so (Aldridge 1998). Thus she implies that potential difficulties caused by being female can be sidestepped by adopting the correct mindset – if you choose to succeed you will, regardless of gender. Danielle's explanation is far more straightforward: like many other women's magazine journalists, she believes that by working in a female-dominated sector of journalism, she has avoided any disadvantageous effects of being a female journalist. Despite this, Danielle, along with Sarah and other magazine journalists in this category, falls short of viewing her gender as beneficial to her career; she believes it simply has no effect at all, whether positive or negative.

In contrast to this, a slightly higher number of journalists (17 out of the 49 interviewed), viewed being female as a positive aspect of their working lives. This group mirrors the first in that the majority of these interviewees are from local and broadsheet newspapers, and women's magazines, and all are in their early to mid-twenties. These individuals can be usefully sub-divided according to the two different ways in which they justify this belief.

A significant number of this group assert that they believe being female helps them actually carry out their job as a newspaper reporter. Such arguments are bound up with the way in which members of the public react to female reporters. Megan, a reporter for a local weekly

newspaper, along with Jo and Tara, both broadsheet reporters, assert that this is the case:

Megan: I'd say possibly when I'm interviewing, people are more willing to speak to me because I'm a girl, and I'm young...So as rule, it has helped me, being female. I think it will in the future.

LW2 (20-25/L/No ch.)

Jo: I think it's usually an asset being a woman. A lot of journalism is about gaining people's trust and it's probably quite a stereotype but as a woman you're a bit less threatening. I think that it was an advantage that possibly helped me getting hired...Yeah, it helps if you've got blonde hair! If you're young and vaguely attractive – do you know what I mean? Whereas men, it doesn't make a difference...Being who I am [female] will help me.

BS4 (26-35/L/No ch.)

Accordingly, these newspaper reporters referred to their experiences when dealing with the subjects of news. Although this appears to have little to do with the gendered culture or internal structure of journalistic organisations, such experiences should not be overlooked for two related reasons. Firstly, if some female journalists are finding their gender to be beneficial due to the public's response, and gaining a possible advantage over their male colleagues as a

result, then this, as Jo implies, should in theory help more women be recruited as reporters. However, as the discussion about gendered clustering above⁴⁵ has demonstrated, men continue to dominate this area of journalism, particularly in specialisms which are valued as front page news. Thus secondly, it is suggested that some women may extrapolate from this advantage when reporting, believing that they are experiencing equal opportunities to their male colleagues in all areas of their work. For example, if a female reporter believes they are at an advantage when reporting, they may not consider the possible existence of structural processes of gender inequality if they struggle to gain a promotion. In addition, both Megan and Tara state that this advantage applies mainly to young (and possibly more attractive) women; neither consider the long-term implications of this, anticipating no problems as they get older.

Also belonging to this group are a number of interviewees from women's magazines. In a similar way to journalists such as Danielle (above), these women simply asserted that being female permitted them to work in their chosen area of journalism. They argued that the predominance of female employees in women's magazines means that had they been male, they would have found this route extremely difficult. By this logic, these individuals asserted that being female is advantageous. Sophie, who is a former women's magazine journalist, explained:

⁴⁵ See section 5.1.2

Well in a way I don't think I would have got into journalism had I been a man. I wouldn't have got into women's magazines. There are way more opportunities for women to get into mags than for men.

MMg1 (26-35/H/No ch.)

All of the interviewees from women's magazines fell into the above two groups – perceiving their gender to be either irrelevant or beneficial. Just over half the journalists interviewed from newspaper organisations however, fell into the group which expressed the belief that being female had hindered them in some way. Thus 19 newspaper journalists spoke about the ways in which they experienced their gender as a barrier to success in journalism. Despite working in a mix of different newspapers, all explained their belief as due to having a general awareness or experience of subtle processes of sexual discrimination within journalistic organisations. The journalists' accounts cover a range of different manifestations of such processes. The selected extracts below exemplify the different experiences described; all incorporate the suggestion that journalistic organisations are male-dominated institutions where female employees are at a disadvantage (Ross 2001; Melin-Higgins 2004).

A common theme found in the explanations for believing that gender is a negative issue for women in journalism, was that of the way

in which lower-level females are treated by those in positions of more authority such as editors. Charlotte, Jane and Irene describe experiences to this effect:

Charlotte: I think it hasn't helped [being female]. I never realised it in my training as such – it was never an issue really. But certainly when I started this job, I do feel that some people talk to you differently. I always used to have an open mind about equality and I just used to take it for granted, kind of naively...that everything was equal. I think certainly with the editors – they are both male – I've noticed a different treatment from them. It's normally in social situations really, when it's 'let's go out for a drink at lunchtime or something'. A few weeks ago we did that and I was the only female there and I certainly felt excluded. They were all from the company and they were all talking about work but they don't include you as much, and you kind of feel like your point isn't as valid, not the same as everybody else's. So yeah I definitely noticed in this job, for the first time, that there is a big division. I'm not treated as well as the lads.

LW1 (20-25/L/No ch.)

Jane: The woman chief-sub who I worked with for many years was brilliant – everybody had the utmost respect for her: men and women alike. But the new editor came in, didn't like her, and

just got rid of her. And there was absolutely no reason for that, other than that he does have a problem with women in senior positions. He's very traditional. He's not old or anything – just traditional. You get the impression he feels women should be at home, and certainly shouldn't be arguing with him. He doesn't seem to like feisty women. That's quite common in male editors I hear – they resent you if they see you as a threat...It's hard for women in journalism. I have definitely found it hard....You can't just stand up and point out that you've been discriminated against because people will think you're just making a fuss and that you aren't good at your job so you're blaming other people.

LD5 (46-55/H/3 ch.)

Irene: Being female in a man's world [of journalism] is generally always going to be hard. I feel like I'm constantly judged for my looks not my brain. There are a lot of sexist comments made towards us in our office. You have to put up with it really...I've noticed that all the female reporters on the news desk have large chests and I'm concerned this may be a recruiting policy at our paper, by the editors! You could never say so though.

T3 (26-35/L/No ch.)

Charlotte's negative experiences as a woman in journalism have been so significant that they have caused her to not only question the equality of male and female journalists, but also question gender

equality more generally in society⁴⁶. Jane's comments suggest that the 'traditional' view of women as unsuited to positions of power may still be prevalent within some journalistic organisational cultures. Although this belief may not be unique to journalism, when coupled with the strong cultural conviction that such organisations are run on meritocratic principles, Jane suggests that female journalists may feel unable to challenge these views of women as this would undermine the fervent individualism which shapes much journalistic thought. Irene's experiences of sexist behaviour at a tabloid newspaper may not be representative of those at other newspapers; however her reluctance to outwardly question the way that women are treated in her organisation can be seen as fitting with Jane's suggestion.

Interestingly, comments made by a few other journalists in this group, indicate that the experiences of the journalists above are not only restricted to the behaviour of male superiors. Andrea, a freelance journalist currently working for broadsheet newspapers, described the difficulties she faced due to the sexist behaviour of a female editor:

Interviewer: Have you ever been aware of being female affecting the way you work or the way others work with you?

Andrea: Yes, a couple of times, and that was with female bosses! For example, the first one was when I took over as the PA to a female editor...I'd never really experienced the female

⁴⁶ See chapter 3 for further discussion of this.

boss syndrome until then. The female editors, when they go bad, they are mean bitches! This woman was vicious and horrible and managed to get pretty much every female member of staff to either cry or leave. But only the women – she was fine with the guys. That was the first time that I ever – see I don't generally tend to look for gender discrimination in my working days. So I was very surprised to actually realise that it was not me making it up – to realise that she didn't like me because I was a young female, and specifically a young female who didn't look like a bag lady, had some intelligence. But I was no challenge to her at all! It was like 'oh, get over it, I'm a tiny little fry, trying to make her way in the world, and you don't like me because, well, you don't like women for a start'. So in many cases, I think, it is bad to be a woman, when there are more powerful women who dislike you for being female.

BS3 (26-35/Fr/No ch.)

Thus Andrea, along with a few other female newspaper journalists, provides evidence for a parallel to the behaviour shown by some male authority figures described above. This parallel Andrea labels as the 'Female Boss Syndrome'; it appears that some female journalists, having achieved some success, feel threatened by other females in the organisation. It is possible that this may be due to the small proportion of females in high-status positions in newspaper journalism: some of those that have gained such a role may resent

those who may potentially usurp their position as 'token' women. Another possible explanation may be that in the process of rising up through the ranks, some women may consciously or unconsciously emulate the behaviour of their male colleagues in order to fit in and succeed (Creedon 1993; Rodgers and Thorson 2003). This tendency is examined in more detail below in section 5.2.3; it may be that by distancing themselves from other women and being viewed as 'vicious', female journalists such as Andrea's former boss may be framing themselves as surrogate men. If this is the case, women entering the higher echelons of journalism may not be changing the existing male-dominated patterns of behaviour, but simply conforming to them (Melin-Higgins 2004). Female journalists such as Andrea may well be right to let such experiences determine the extent to which they view their gender as disadvantageous when attempting to succeed in UK journalism today.

Other interviewees in this group used examples of financial inequality to illustrate why they believe that being female may be detrimental to some journalists. Angie is a higher-level journalist for a midmarket newspaper, and Judy is a lower-level broadsheet journalist. Together, the following excerpts from their accounts provide interesting examples of pay inequality in journalism today:

Angie: When I became deputy I was given a rise and I thought that was quite good, and then when the man who is now my

deputy came to join us – I found out that he was earning more than me, although I was senior to him. And I went into see the managing editor who at that time was a female and I complained. And she went ‘my goodness, the old boy’s network’s been working here’, and gave me a huge rise – I got a £5000 rise! I was being that badly discriminated against! It was shocking. But if it hadn’t been for her – I doubt a male managing editor would have bothered that much. So, yes, being female *really does affect you.*

MM5 (46-55/H/2 ch.)

Judy: Friends of mine who have worked in tabloid newspapers have had the real hard end of it. A friend of mine was the only female executive at [tabloid], and all the other male executives below and above her pay-grade got given company cars and she didn’t! I think it is slightly easier at a broadsheet but even so, being a woman really doesn’t help you. You never quite find out what everyone’s being paid, and because of the nature of journalism, they could get away with quite a lot of discrimination if they wanted to, as they could just argue that a guy on a higher salary was being rewarded for having better experience, or having got a great story a while back. Unlike in, say, banking, where anyone can measure what salary a person should be earning quite easily.

BS12 (26-35/L/No ch.)

Although these accounts do not provide concrete evidence that incidences like these are widespread, Judy's argument that pay inequality could easily remain hidden in journalism means that the extent to which this affects other female journalists should not be disregarded. In addition, it is noteworthy that Angie's comments suggest that the issue brought forward by Andrea, above, does not apply to all female journalists in positions of power. Angie asserts that her managing editor, being female, helped her to challenge the gender inequality she was experiencing; it is clear that some women will do their best to help female subordinates.

The final theme that recurred frequently, perhaps more than any other, was that of motherhood. Many journalists felt that the difficulties that female journalists experience if they have children meant that they consequently viewed their gender as (at least a potential) barrier to their success at work. This theme is important in itself, warranting a section devoted specifically its analysis (see section 5.2.2 below). The following extract from the interview with Wendy, a subeditor working for a midmarket newspaper, exemplifies the impact that the issue of motherhood has had on the way in which many of the interviewees think about equality in journalism:

Wendy: I would have probably given a very different answer this time last year because of what's happened over the course of

this year. And I always thought [gender]...didn't really matter...But when a new editor came in last summer

Interviewer: A male editor?

Wendy: Yes. The first thing he said to me when he called in all the heads of department personally to have a chat, was 'you're a new mother just starting back at work'. At this point I'd been back for 2 years! And I thought that was a really weird thing to say. He then made it clear he wasn't too happy about my working arrangements because I worked Sundays so that I could have one weekday at home with my daughter...But even then I wasn't really aware that he wanted me to go...But he had to fill in a form to justify the redundancy and he had rated me against other people in my department – bearing in mind they had had no managerial experience – he marked me down on this!... How could he mark me down against somebody who has never been a manager, never run a department?!...I did consider...taking him to a tribunal...– for sexual discrimination. And I never thought I'd ever be in a position to consider having to do that. And I decided in the end not to because I didn't want to be known as the woman who kicked up a fuss. But at the time I started to wonder maybe perhaps it is because he regarded me first as a working mother who got stroppy about her working hours.

MM3 (36-45/S.ed/1 ch.)

Thus, looking beyond discussions of the position of women in journalism, towards the journalists' reflections on their experiences of being female, it is clear that the majority view their gender as impacting upon their working lives in some way, for many different reasons. There appears to be a loose relationship between the proportion and position of women within an organisational hierarchy, and whether those working in it believe that being female has affected them positively or negatively. Accordingly, women working for publications which employ a more equal balance of men and women, and where women hold some positions of power, may be more likely to either view their gender as irrelevant, or see it as a positive attribute. Age may also be a significant factor, with younger journalists tending to espouse a similar viewpoint; it is suggested that this may be linked to such individuals having had less experience, in addition to being at a life stage in which the consideration of the potential difficulties of raising children whilst in this occupation is not an immediate concern. Indeed, one of the key issues within the interviews, was the question of the impact of motherhood, and the extent to which not only being female, but being a mother, affects life as a journalist.

5.2.2 Motherhood as a Barrier

Throughout the interviews, when asking the women about the issue of gender in journalistic organisations, by far the most recurrent theme brought up for discussion was that of motherhood. Previous

research into the experiences of women in journalism suggests that the culture of newspaper journalism, with its long, unpredictable and unsociable hours, conflicts with the domestic responsibilities of having a family (Christmas 1997; Aldridge 2001a; Aldridge 2001b; Journalism Training Forum 2002); a situation which Ross (2001:533) describes as 'depressingly familiar' when compared with the results of a 1979 study of working conditions in the US press (Organ *et al.* 1979). There has been very little research however, focused directly on the experiences of mothers in UK journalism. A 2001 survey by the lobbying group 'Women in Journalism' hinted at the additional difficulties mothers may face, as some members complained not only about practical problems of time, but also of an unspoken knowledge among female journalists that mothers are frowned upon: the idea of motherhood may be contrary to the concept of the 'ideal' journalist who commits their entire life to their job (Women in Journalism 2001). Consequently, this section will focus upon examining the ways in which female journalists from both UK newspapers and women's magazines think about motherhood, and the extent to which they view it as potentially constraining.

The majority of the journalists spoke about the issue of motherhood for a considerable proportion of their interview as a whole, whether or not they had children themselves. Their views on the compatibility of motherhood and being a journalist, divided them into two opposing groups: those who believe that, overall, journalism is a

good career for a woman who wants to have children, and those who vehemently disagree with this.

Of those interviewees who asserted that a career in journalism would be beneficial for working mothers, approximately half were from newspaper organisations, and half from women's magazines. This included five journalists who are currently mothers themselves. Interestingly, these five mothers included three editors (two from women's magazines: Phillipa and Roberta, one from a broadsheet newspaper: Eileen). Excerpts from their interviews are used as part of the discussion below. However it must be noted that although it is encouraging that editors are among those who view motherhood and journalism as compatible, all three of these women are currently aged 46-55: they were not holding such high-powered positions during the period when their children were young and needed the most care.

In total, ten journalists who work for women's magazines (out of a possible fifteen), spoke about the ways in which their experiences had led them to believe that mothers working in this area of journalism were well supported. The comments below by Phillipa and Roberta show that they view the availability of flexible working policies as central to this:

Interviewer: So you say there's quite a lot of mothers on the staff. Phillipa: Yes. I'm very flexible about it, and nowadays

people can work job-shares and things like that, which they didn't before. So things have certainly improved a lot more in terms of mothers in the workplace.

MMg6 (46-55/Ed./1 ch.)

Roberta: I think what's happened is everybody's calming down now and it's a lot more flexible on both sides. Like the features editor came back and she didn't want to do full-time, and I said 'that's fine, you can come back part-time but you're not going to be the Features Editor' and I created a new title for her. Now a while ago people wouldn't have been happy about that. Having a woman boss is probably slightly better for women. I would say the culture of magazines is easier if you are a woman and you intend to have children, compared to in newspapers - the hours are just shorter and more predictable.

MMg7 (46-55/Ed./1 ch)

The women's magazine journalists' accounts are very revealing. Each individual describes the ways in which their company allows their employees to choose more flexible working patterns if they have children; this includes options to work part-time and job-share. However, all three journalists imply that such allowances are made at the discretion of individual magazine editors. Thus, as discussed in section 4.2.3, different magazines may have different organisational cultures, shaped by the standards set by the editor. Phillipa comments

that she is 'very flexible about it' and implies that other magazine editors may not choose to be so lenient on mothers requiring adaptations to the way they work. Roberta's discussion of the way she personally deals with such requests for reduced hours is also revealing. Although she frames her comments around the implication that improvements have been made regarding the way in which flexible working is negotiated today, looking closer at the interview extract uncovers a subtle message concerning the status of those working mothers who take up such offers. Roberta suggests that when an employee returns from maternity leave, she may be offered a part-time role, but this will effectively involve other women who perhaps do not have children, and who are able to work full-time, taking their former position. The implication is that the substitute role will not be equal in status to their original position. In the example discussed, there is a definite allusion to this, as the woman involved loses her prestigious title as Features Writer. Consequently, although any efforts to respond to the needs of new mothers by providing more flexible working options should not be trivialised, it may be that in women's magazines, those employees who are not mothers themselves, or who have had children very early on in their career, may be more likely to succeed.

Despite this, Roberta's final comment that overall, the possibility of shorter and more predictable working hours is more likely within a women's magazine remains an important argument. Thus even if an editor is less than forthcoming with her allowances for flexible working,

when compared to the working life of a newspaper journalist, mothers in women's magazines are more likely to find it easier to plan childcare arrangements around work, which continues to be a significant problem with many newspapers' long-hours cultures.

A fourth interview extract from a women's magazine journalist, Sarah, is shown below. Sarah's comments provide an insight into the fact that certain types of women's magazines tend to employ a specific demographic of staff, and have working cultures which may or may not provide space to be considerate of young mothers' needs:

Other companies – if you work on a magazine like [names 2 monthly glossies which are aimed at age 30s readership], it's actually a lot easier because it's an older team and it's much more relaxed and it's more flexible. And quite a lot of the people – probably 80% have got children.

WMg1 (20-25/H/No ch.)

Thus Sarah assesses the way in which her own magazine, which has a younger staff, differs from other companies which are producing a publication for a slightly older age group. This link between the nature of the output readership and the magazine staff demographic has also been discussed above (see section 4.2.2). Sarah's argument extends this point, suggesting that within magazines which employ women of an age at which motherhood is more common, those who do become parents may find that their requests for flexible

working are more likely to be supported than if they worked for a magazine with a younger working culture. Thus, women's magazines may be better than newspapers for female journalists who are mothers, dependent on the beliefs of the editor in charge and also on the overall staff demographic.

Ten newspaper journalists also saw journalism as a career in which options are provided for mothers to help them successfully balance domestic and work responsibilities. Of these, three were mothers themselves, but, being of the 46-55 age group, their children have all left home. Nine of the ten journalists in this group work for either local or broadsheet newspapers. This fits with the trends described above: it seems that women who work for local weekly and broadsheet newspaper organisations are less likely to view their gender as a factor which holds them back as a journalist; motherhood may be an aspect of this.

A number of female journalists working for local weekly newspapers spoke about how they see parenthood as being easier for women working in such smaller organisations. Zoë's comments encompass such perceptions:

It would be fine at my current job because they are very aware of these issues and allow job-sharing. We're small so they're very flexible I guess. And the weekly deadlines help. I don't

know with the national and daily papers – I doubt there's much opportunity to be flexible.

LW3 (26-35/L/No ch.)

The longer lead times involved in the production of a weekly newspaper, as opposed to a daily publication, may in some cases mean that there is more scope for job-sharing to be a possibility: the culture of working tends to be at a slightly slower pace, which appears to lend itself to more flexible working patterns overall. For journalists who have young children to care for, job-sharing provides an opportunity for maintaining a role on a part-time basis, allowing time to fulfil domestic responsibilities. However, as Aldridge (2007) points out, in smaller local newspaper organisations, the advantages of less frequent copy deadlines may be counteracted by the pressures of having a very small team of reporters often covering a large area, and the need to, for example, attend local council meetings in the evenings.

Four of the interviewees, when asked about whether they felt that journalism is a good career for women anticipating motherhood, referred to working in features departments as an important option. The predominance of a more flexible working culture in this area of journalism, as described in section 4.2.3 above, contributed to this belief. More predictable and sociable working hours mean that outside childcare planning is less problematic, and many found that the predominance of female colleagues in their department encouraged a

female-centred micro-culture which was more supportive of mothers' needs at work. Tara, a lower-level journalist working in the features department at a broadsheet newspaper, expressed this view:

There are lots of mothers on features, and also columnists. They'd probably love it if I was a single mum as I could write a column about it! In news it's a bit different but not impossible. Lots leave for maternity leave there, but don't return. You probably just want to give up and spend time with your baby. That's why features is great – you could in theory work from home!

BS6 (26-35/L/No ch.)

It must be noted that Tara is not currently a mother herself. Eileen however, the editor of a weekly broadsheet newspaper, has had three children whilst working as a journalist; she also considered moving into feature writing to be a beneficial approach for mothers in journalism:

There are sorts of things you can do [as a mother in journalism], for example going into features...a great route. It gives you more scope to work flexibly. Many of my women have chosen that route. And that's why journalism is a great career for a woman...you can do it different ways. I went off into commercial media and had lots of flexibility that way.

BS16 (46-55/Ed/3 ch.)

Eileen's implication that selecting a job in a female-dominated area of journalism such as features is one of many different options which a mother could select to counteract the potential difficulties involved in attempting to combine motherhood with working in news, is echoed in comments made by other newspaper journalists. Some highlighted sub-editing as a role which is also suited to journalists who are mothers. Jane and Marie both talked about their experiences as mothers working in the subediting departments of local newspapers:

Jane: Even when I had my children [during her previous job as a subeditor]. - I had my first child when I was 27; I'd been here for about a year and I was promoted while I was on maternity leave! Subbing's great for mothers. It means you can plan your life.

LD5 (46-55/H/3 ch.)

Marie: I prefer subbing now because...although my kids are now school-age...I can now have regular working hours and leave to go home at the end of my shift.

LW5 (46-55/S.ed/2 ch.)

As both Jane and Marie describe, the more rigid shift system in sub-editing teams, where a subeditor can leave immediately at the end of a shift, without the danger of having to follow up a news story that

has been assigned to them, or deal with breaking news as the news reporters often do, means that mothers can more easily fulfil their domestic commitments by planning in advance.

Freelancing is the final area of journalism which both newspaper and magazine journalists suggest is favourable for mothers. Five interviewees discussed this option; many recommended that a female journalist would find it beneficial to plan their career so that they could leave their full-time position in a journalistic organisation when they became pregnant, and then continue their career from home, balancing childcare with freelance contracts. Amie and Grace both assert that the ever-present possibility of 'going freelance' is fundamental to the way in which women view journalism as a career which is compatible with having children:

Amie: Balancing home and work isn't massively a problem but that's because I don't have a family...it doesn't matter if I have to stay late. I'm lucky...If I had a family, I could go freelance. That's the great thing about journalism that it has that option.

BS1 (20-25/L/No ch.)

Interviewer: So have you considered whether you could do your job and be a mother, if you wanted to?

Grace: Oh yes. It would be ok. I'm my own boss. That's what's great about freelancing. It's why so many women go into journalism, I think.

BS5 (26-35/Fr/No ch.)

Proportionately more journalists fell into the second group, variously arguing that female journalists face difficulties if they start a family, experiencing motherhood as a barrier to their success at work. Two different elements can be identified behind this assertion; the first is concerned with the practical difficulties involved in combining work as a journalist and the responsibilities of childcare, especially with younger children who need more care. The second is centred on less explicit difficulties: those which may arise from the discriminatory attitudes of others who work in journalistic organisations. Overall though, it must be noted that out of the 29 newspaper and women's magazine journalists who saw motherhood as potentially problematic for female journalists, 13 are mothers themselves (out of a possible 18 interviewees with children); this appears to indicate that most mothers in journalism view motherhood as to some extent inhibitive. Also included in this group are all the journalists from the interview sample who work for tabloid newspapers; this seems to suggest that this area of journalism is one of the more difficult environments in which to combine a journalistic career and motherhood. This aligns with the discussion above (section 5.2.1), which indicates that there is a link between the overtly male-dominated working culture in tabloid

newspapers, and the significant extent to which women experience their gender as a limiting factor in such organisations. Finally, this group of interviewees includes the majority of those who are higher-level journalists. It can be argued that perhaps those who have attained more prestigious positions within journalistic organisations may be more likely to have an awareness of such difficulties as they are likely to be older, with a peer group of journalists who are parents themselves. They may also be more likely to have reflected on issues of gender discrimination in journalistic organisations as they rise up the hierarchy and have increasingly less female colleagues⁴⁷.

A principle practical difficulty with combining motherhood and a continued career in journalism appears to be a financial one (Women in Journalism 1998). Many interviewees from different types of organisations complained that most roles in journalism were relatively low-paid; this factor has been addressed above in chapter four. The price of childcare is something which inevitably must be considered when a female journalist wishes to continue working when she has a family, and the poor pay conditions of journalism mean that for some, it is simply not possible to continue working without a husband or partner's financial support (Aldridge 2007). Those working in women's

⁴⁷ However, it must be noted that this conflicts with the suggestion in section 5.1.1 that journalists in high-powered positions may in fact be less likely to consider gender an important factor within journalistic organisations as their fast-paced, intensive working life may mean they have no time to reflect on such issues, in addition to having spent a longer period of time surrounded by an occupational culture which upholds a belief in journalism as a meritocracy. Both explanations hold weight, and may be considered as equally viable explanations for the opinions of different journalists.

magazines and local newspapers were those for whom this issue was felt most strongly, as they are likely to be earning lower salaries compared to those at national newspapers (Women in Journalism 1998; Journalism Training Forum 2002). Sarah, a higher-level journalist from a weekly women's magazine described the experiences of colleagues who had encountered this problem:

I know a lot of people have gone on maternity leave now and they're not sure how easy it is to come back because in magazines you don't get paid as much as in newspapers, so you can't afford a nanny, can't afford childcare.

WMg1 (20-25/H/No ch.)

As also discussed in chapter 4, the low pay in magazines is compounded by the huge amount of competition to get into this area of the media; there is not incentive for the employers to pay more as there will be a ready supply of women willing to work for low pay. This is underlined when one considers one of the most popular entry routes into women's magazines: many demonstrate that they are not simply interested in the salary when they voluntarily work for free during extended periods of work experience (O'Hara 2002). Nevertheless, despite the relatively higher wages earned in national newspapers (Journalism Training Forum 2002), Gail and Georgina explained that this issue also affects these journalists too. Gail is a lower-level

journalists working for a broadsheet newspapers, and Georgina is a higher-level journalist for a tabloid newspaper; neither have children:

Gail: One of my worries about being in this job, is that I won't be able to compete with people if I ever have family responsibilities. Obviously if I have a supportive partner that will make a big difference, and/or if they earn enough to help you pay for a nanny, but normal journalistic rates are not going to allow that, so unless you're lucky enough to have a partner who earns more than you do, then there is going to be a big question around childcare.

BS9 (26-35/L/No ch.)

Georgina: I think another reason why women would have kids later in journalism is 'cos they have to get a better rate of pay to be able to afford the childcare to be able to do it...I'm on a fairly decent wage but even I would struggle to be able to cope with childcare in London.

T5 (36-45/H/No ch.)

Georgina's account may contribute towards explaining why the vast majority of the interviewees with children were in fact higher-level journalists or editors. Age cannot be disregarded as an explanatory factor here too (with higher-level journalists tending to be older); however from the journalists' accounts it is clear that the financial

implications of starting a family may mean that, even in national newspapers, many women will postpone having children until they have gained a salary raise, in order to pay for the childcare arrangement which will enable them to return to work. Although no interviews were conducted with male journalists, it is reasonable to suggest that men are less likely to experience this financial pressure to the same extent, due to the social norm that many women will give up work to look after their offspring, necessitating no financial outlay to pay for a day nursery or nanny (Charles 2002).

The second practical issue arising from the discussion of motherhood by the interviewees, concerns the hours that many journalists are required to work. The long hours culture of journalism, addressed in chapter 4, is rarely compatible with the needs of mothers. Many journalists highlighted this point; the difficulties involved in planning childcare around often unpredictable, lengthy work shifts, mean that female journalists who are mothers are more likely to struggle to fulfil both work and domestic commitments. Andrea, a higher-level journalist working for a broadsheet newspaper, and Alice, a higher-level journalist working for a local weekly newspaper, commented in this vein:

Andrea: I'm just trying to think about friends in offices who have kids. There aren't that many. I think the thing with journalism is that there are no fixed hours. Even if you're working 9 to 5 on a

staff job, you are expected to, if a story breaks and somebody needs help, or they need a piece rewritten or they need something doing, you are expected to stay and if you don't your career in journalism is going to be really short.

BS3 (26-35/Fr/No ch.)

Alice: I do worry actually about the longer-hours culture that is coming into workplaces more now...young women with children, having undue pressure put on them to do that extra mile, when they can't. I remember at [local paper], the editor was a bloke, and the news editor there was a young woman. She was coming back you work after having a child, and the editor said to her 'Is there no way you can get in before 7?', and she said 'Yes, if you don't mind me bringing the baby, but the nursery doesn't open til 7'. He wasn't happy at all with her.

LW4 (46-55/H/1 ch.)

Andrea intimates that mothers who are unable to prioritise work over caring for their children when dividing their time between home and work, will be unlikely to keep their job as a journalist for very long. The recent changes in the way that journalistic publications are run, with the shift to increased online content alongside a tightening of budgets and staff numbers, means that the corresponding time commitment involved in being a journalist continues to increase (Keeble 2005; Allan 2006). As Alice suggests, it is the newest

generation of women entering journalism who are facing this issue more and more. As they start to have children, it seems even less likely that their career paths will be as straightforward as their male colleagues: conflicting time demands may be an increasingly central reason for this.

When the interviewees were talking about the difficulties of time management for mothers in journalism, a few linked this to the debate as to whether such women could in theory do their job part-time, and/or as part of a job-share. Very few journalists reported that their organisation allowed this option, with these referring mainly to features departments and a small number of women's magazine companies. However, aside from whether this option is offered by the organisations, it is useful to examine whether or not the interviewees believed it would be feasible for a newspaper reporter (as one of the more demanding roles in journalism, in terms of time commitment) to carry out her job successfully on a part-time basis, if this was offered to mothers. van Zoonen thus argues that mothers in newspaper journalism may be losing out by having to adhere to a full-time, long-hours work culture which she describes as 'professional mythology rather than organisational necessity' (1994:53). Annie, a lower-level journalist working for a local daily newspaper, suggested that part-time work would in fact be a viable possibility for a news journalist:

I personally think that it should be possible to work part-time in news, because really nobody goes into work 7 days a week. And although people work long days there is the night-time when the night reporters are on...So although people say it's a 24/7 culture, it's not actually... everyone is working less time than news is happening. So I think it should be possible to say, for example, 'I'm going to do 3 ten-hour days but I'm not going to do 5 ten-hour days, and adjust my wage accordingly'. And as long as outside of those days, you were keeping an eye on the TV, noticing what was going on, I really think it should be possible to continue working. The fact that it's not, I think is more to do with attitude than the actual requirements of the business.

LD3 (26-36/L/1 ch.)

Annie, a mother herself, argues that the journalistic routine is, in theory, conducive to providing flexible working arrangements to suit employees with family commitments. The shift system which is a pivotal part of the way in which journalists ensure that the news-making process is a continuous one, could be perhaps more easily adapted than the working patterns found in many other types of commercial organisation. Nina, who works as a higher-level journalist for a broadsheet newspaper and has had three children during her career, offers a similar insight:

Interviewer: Quite a lot of people have suggested that job-sharing just isn't feasible in news.

Nina: I don't really see why it shouldn't be. You could just take on less shifts. Of course job-shares are complex...you have to not compete with your partner, so you have to get rid of a certain amount of ego I suppose, and maybe even professional pride. And journalism is quite a lone-wolfish type of trade – people usually work on their own and are often not very good at teamwork. Maybe it's easier for a correspondent – doing a job-share I mean...I was certainly the first person at this paper to do it [a job share], and also the first at Westminster. But a lot of women just move out of news when they have kids.

BS14 (46-55/H/3 ch.)

Nina is a correspondent for the newspaper she works for; this means she is responsible for covering a finite number of stories each day – her reporting work is restricted to writing about the area in which she specialises. During the time when she was caring for young children, she persuaded her editor to let her job-share with another female journalist. It is possible that the specialist nature of her work meant that she, and her job-sharing colleague, were more able to work as a team and personally reject the individualistic, 'lone-wolfish', approach to work which journalistic culture advocates. Thus Nina argues, along with Annie above, that it is mainly the traditional cultural attitudes embedded in journalistic practice, that make it so difficult for

mothers to gain permission to work part-time. There appears to be a reluctance to change the current way of working in a manner that would encourage more women to stay working as news journalists when they have a family.

However, other newspaper journalists argued against the ideas put forward by interviewees such as Annie and Nina, asserting that there are too many practical problems with news journalists working part-time to make it a viable possibility and that therefore the reluctance to offer this option to mothers is grounded in a reasoned argument. The most significant point made is that there is more to the long-hours culture of news journalism than simply taking on numerous shifts. As discussed earlier in chapter 4, newspaper journalistic working culture is all encompassing: a news reporter will be unlikely to relinquish the role of journalist, simply because he or she has left the office. Thus for such an employee to work part-time, they would need to continue to be 'on call' during the rest of the week when they are officially off duty. This would not be favourable for mothers who need to spend that time with their children. Tania, a tabloid news reporter, and Gail, a broadsheet news reporter, are both aged 26 to 35 and are currently single with no children. They both recognised that as they get older and maybe wish to start a family, they may have to leave their jobs as they wouldn't be able to continue to do them satisfactorily if they wanted to spend some time with their children:

Interviewer: Are you aware of any opportunities to maybe go part-time or have more flexible hours if you had kids?

Tania: No I don't think that they would let you do that. You can't really switch off. Even all over the weekend I take calls about stories, and in the evenings too. You can't just stop being a journalist. And in terms of the news, you do have to be on top of it....Or sometimes, if something big happens, they'll just cancel leave – they'll say 'right, everyone who's due off has got to be in'. And they can just do that. You've got to be able to drop everything. I'm fully aware that this job is fine for me at the moment, because I'm single and my whole life revolves around work, but at some point I might not want that to be the case.

T1 (26-35/L/No ch.)

Gail: As a feature writer I think it is completely plausible to go part-time. As a reporter it won't be possible. It would be difficult to set the limit and say 'well I'm only available from 10 until 5pm, 3 days a week'. Because while editors may want you on those days, they may very well want you at other times...I mean you'd just say no, but it means that when you have a reputation for not being available all the time, then you're not the first person that editors call anymore, and as a journalist that's always key – reliability is one of the things above all. I think there's generally a feeling that those who are mothers are not quite – I think we compete almost equally until we have children...Assuming you

start here at say, 25, and you're advised not to have kids after age 35, that doesn't give you very long to build up your career before you are immediately being thought of as a potential childbearer and therefore not necessarily a good idea to promote.

BS9 (26-35/L/No ch.)

Gail's argument links her conviction in the practical impossibility of working part-time as a newspaper reporter, to a wider journalistic cultural trend that, as a result, female journalists of a certain age are viewed as potentially less reliable workers because the number of years that they can dedicate their lives to their job is short-lived if they wish to start a family while it is biologically recommended to do so. This ties in closely to the discussion of vertical segregation in section 5.1.3. If, as Gail suggests, female newspaper reporters are judged to have career trajectories which may only last up to ten years, then women in newspapers are unlikely to be considered equal candidates for promotion, when compared to their male counterparts. This inequality may be solely grounded in the practical conflicts which arise when women try to combine news journalism and motherhood. In which case, unless there is a radical change in the way in which newspaper organisations function, some of the interviewees would argue that this form of gender inequality is inevitable.

Such an argument focuses only on practical difficulties of time and money; these elements remain important issues, but should not completely overshadow consideration of the possibility that there may be more subtle discriminatory beliefs embedded in journalistic culture, existing above and beyond the realm of the practical. With this approach to looking at gender inequality in journalistic organisations, even if, (as Gail, Georgina, Annie and Nina suggest above), it may be feasibly possible to deal with the practical problems by combining motherhood with part-time shift work, and/or by being financially supported by a partner, a female journalist may still experience discriminatory stereotyping within her organisation. Many of the interviewees complained, as Gail did, that even if they did not have children, their gender meant that they were at risk of being seen solely as 'potential mothers' as they got older. In fact, such complaints were not limited to journalists with experience of news journalism, but came from many different organisations including women's magazines.

The views expressed by journalists who saw motherhood as a symbolic barrier to success for women in journalism are encapsulated in a statement by Wendy, a subeditor working for a midmarket newspaper, with one child:

I think that there isn't prejudice against women in journalism, but there is prejudice against mothers in journalism.

MM3 (36-45/S.ed/1 ch.)

Wendy's comment draws attention to the idea that a female journalist who has children is likely to be treated differently to her colleagues who are not mothers. Many of the interviewees felt very strongly that they themselves (as mothers), or other female journalists who have families, were subject to subtle processes of discrimination within the journalistic organisations they work for. Journalists who have children are often made to feel that their employers, and indeed some of their colleagues, view them as uncommitted to their job and simply less appropriate candidates for possible promotion, regardless of the efforts made to challenge this stereotyping, by the journalists concerned. The extent to which this prejudice directly affects mothers' daily working lives in journalism, varies slightly according to the working culture of the organisation the journalist works for. Nina for example, a mother of three working as a higher-level broadsheet journalist, suggested that within many broadsheet newspaper organisations, such discrimination is much more subtle than within a particular midmarket newspaper she has experience of:

At [midmarket] they almost want to punish you for being pregnant. They send [pregnant] women out on ridiculous jobs. You really hear horrible stories about the way they treat you and there's just very little leniency. At [current broadsheet], as with most of the broadsheets, I'd say mothers get a slightly better deal.... You just know you won't necessarily be seen in the same light as the childless women. They'll be the ones who still get to

be one of the lads – get to play the macho game – get the good promotions. However hard we work, we will always be seen as just that little bit less dedicated...In journalism in general I would say there's sort of an elastic ceiling for women: you can keep going and then you try having children, and unless you pretty much contract out their care to someone else – and even then, as I say, I think people regard you differently.

BS14 (46-55/H/3 ch.)

In her description of the way in which she feels somewhat excluded as a mother in journalism, Nina alludes to colleagues without children as being able to 'play the macho game' and 'be one of the lads'. Thus along with many other journalists from various different newspaper organisations, she suggests that becoming a mother accentuates her femininity to the extent that others may begin to define her solely by this aspect of her identity⁴⁸. As discussed in chapter four, within the journalistic work culture is embedded a distinct idea of the ideal journalist: a stereotypical image of the cunning (male) hack (Aldridge 1998). Whilst recognised as a caricature which is reminiscent of the early days of UK newspaper journalism when there were very few female reporters, such mythology continues to influence the work culture of many newspaper newsrooms: the importance of 'being one of the lads' was a recurrent phrase when discussing newsroom culture in many of the interviews. Kirsten, a higher-level journalist working for a

⁴⁸ For further discussion of this issue, see section 5.2.3 below.

midmarket newspaper, expressed a similar awareness of motherhood changing the way others viewed her at work. At the time of the interview, she was on maternity leave with her first child:

I've been a ball-breaking, blokey woman all these years. I've been one of the lads. And suddenly having a child, people look at you like 'oh I never thought you were the sort'...I'm now concerned that I'm going to be perceived as a weak, different sort of woman and not be taken as seriously.

MM4 (36-45/H/1 ch.)

Kirsten's use of the phrase 'ball-breaking' is particularly instructive here, illuminating the persona she has relied on to gain acceptance at work – characterised by her aggressive, go-getter attitude, and in stark contrast with the nurturing connotations of being a mother. Other interviewees, from both newspapers and women's magazines, spoke about maternity leave as a controversial issue for women in journalism. It was repeatedly suggested that when female journalists took time off to have their children, often even taking six months maternity leave⁴⁹ was resented by colleagues at work, to the extent that some women postponed having children simply to avoid the subtle repercussions of taking this time off work. Georgina and Judy

⁴⁹ At the time of writing, UK Maternity Leave provision includes the following: 2 weeks Compulsory Leave (the legal minimum), up to 6 months Ordinary Maternity Leave, plus up to 6 months Additional Maternity Leave (some of which is unpaid).

are both higher-level journalists who were aware of this issue within a tabloid and a broadsheet newspaper respectively:

Georgina: But in terms of sexism now, the only thing that I would seriously say does bother me is the maternity issue. I've not got children – that's totally down to my lack of any ambitions in that field. Sometimes I've wondered, has it been affected by the fact that I couldn't have done my job, and my job's my baby almost...And do I think I could continue being a reporter? No. And are there bad attitudes about it? Definitely. Reporters going on maternity is resented. I've heard it; I know it for a fact...It will have repercussions, even though legally it shouldn't. So that's the biggest and most dangerous sexism...It's sad though: we've lost a lot of good reporters.

T5 (36-45/H/No ch.)

Interviewer: So have any of your colleagues in features got kids?

Judy: No. I'm not sure our paper is any better than anywhere else in this regard – it really should be...There's no crèche; they are nominally sympathetic but actually I think they are not. They really don't like women to take more than 6 months; they let it be felt, without actually breaking the law and saying so, that if you do, you're damaging yourself in the eyes of the management, which is really shocking. They think you don't care any more. So

most women want to come back even before 6 months...you're not supposed to make them feel like that...I mean the depressing thing is that you look at our company and you see that all the women there either don't have children, or they had children in their early 40s. and they've waited as long as they possibly can, until they feel that they are high up enough that they feel they can't be penalised for it. And then they pop a couple of them out, and then never see them.

BS12 (26-35/L/No ch.)

Thus as well as dealing with being viewed as excluded to some extent from the mainstream ideas of what it means to be a journalist, some complained that female journalists are discreetly made aware that having children may damage their potential career path as taking maternity leave may be viewed as a sign of apathy towards wanting to achieve more within the organisation, regardless of whether this is the case. Indeed this framing of motherhood as demonstrating a lack of commitment to the job, may extend beyond the issue of maternity leave. Many of the interviewees who discussed their awareness of prejudice against mothers in journalism, talked about the strong assumption within journalistic culture that when a woman becomes a mother, she will spend less time working and be a less productive worker. This trend was reported within all the different types of newspaper and women's magazine organisations. Brenda who works for a monthly women's magazine, and Angie and Kirsten, both

midmarket journalists, discuss their experiences as mothers in relation to this issue:

Brenda: When you have children, the problem is that you may end up doing exactly the same amount of work that you were doing, but the idea is in people's heads, that maybe you aren't doing much. It's a stereotype.

(Freelance journalist working for a monthly women's magazine – 29/MMg/46-55/F/3/M)

Angie: When I was at [midmarket]...I can remember that my ex-husband had appendicitis and...I was dependent on him and my child minder. But he was in hospital. But they wouldn't let me off work. And yet there was this other guy there who 'oh my car broke down I've got to get it fixed' – 'ok no problem' they said! And years later I spoke to the guy who was in charge of that desk and I said 'do you recall that?'. And he said 'we like bums on seats'. And I said 'my bum was on my seat! His was rarely!'. And he just could not see it. And it was the perception you see: woman has child therefore she's off a lot – and it wasn't true! Shocking!

MM5 (46-55/H/2 ch.)

Kirsten: There is a 'well you're obviously not going to be committed once you've had a child' idea. Like in my office,

there's the women who've got babies – and they a couple of times a week have to leave at 5 to sort childcare, but they get in about 8.30 in the morning. And it's quite normal to start at 10.30. And they don't go for lunch. And the editor actually had a go at them...he was saying 'you don't do the hours' and she pointed out that he got in at 10.30, and then went to lunch at half 12, and then got back at 4, and then worked til 7. And she was doing at least 10 hours a week more than him!

MM4 (36-45/H/1 ch.)

These examples, when gathered together, serve to highlight that such experiences are unlikely to be isolated incidents, but may be part of a wider trend within journalistic culture. Indeed, as some of interviewees pointed out, stereotyping of mothers in journalistic organisations is not simply carried out by some male management. During the interviews there were countless examples of women being treated in a negative way when they became mothers, sometimes at the hands of other females. Catherine's discussion (below) of being passed over for a promotion within her (broadsheet) newspaper organisation, possibly due to being pregnant, aligns with Helena's account of the way in which mothers may be treated in certain women's magazines: in both cases, it is other female journalists who appear to be discriminating against mothers in their organisation:

Catherine: When I was at [midmarket], the editor of the magazine left and I applied for her job...I was 6 months pregnant. And when I was interviewed, the first questions I was asked were what my childcare plans were going to be...a third of the interview was taken up with those kinds of questions. Even though the interviewer was female.

Interviewer: So did you reassure her that childcare was in-hand?

Catherine: Well when you are six months pregnant, childcare isn't in-hand...you can't have anything lined up that early! That wasn't her sole reason for not giving me the job, but I did feel that those questions were inappropriate at the interview...I think it was discriminatory.

[Higher-level journalist working for a broadsheet newspaper – 30/BS/46-55/H/1/M]

Helena: The reason I'm disdainful of women's magazines is because... it's not women-friendly...That's very deceitful because that's not how they portray themselves...The cases of most extreme sexist behaviour I know about in the media world – have always happened on magazines. I mean [large magazine conglomerate] is terrible for that: people getting pregnant and not having a job to come back to. They get away with it because you don't think you can call actions carried out by other women, sexual discrimination!...I have one friend at the moment who has recently been through an extremely traumatic pregnancy,

and has had her baby. And she works on a glossy magazine – she’s a fashion director. And she said that she went back to work and nobody even asked her how the baby was. And she says that ‘I have to go to Milan; it’s inconceivable that I don’t go’. And it’s almost like you have this baby – which is a life-changing event – and it’s like it’s not allowed to happen, because you have to hush it over. She suffers so much trying to do both – but she can’t admit it to them.

BS2 (26-35/Fr/1 ch.)

Interestingly, it is possible that within this discussion of the ways in which mothers may be treated differently in journalistic organisations, we have come full circle. The earlier examination of the way in which some newspaper journalists report difficulties with the way they are perceived at work after they have had children, may also apply within women’s magazines. Although there is no overtly macho culture within women’s magazines, Helena’s account suggests that the male model of work whereby an employee must separate their domestic and work life (Jenson 2000; Glover 2002) may also apply within these organisations, despite having a predominantly female workforce. Thus it is not simply a case of individual male journalists within newspaper organisations perpetuating negative ideas about mothers in journalism. It may be that journalistic work culture as a whole is shaped so that employees who are mothers do not fit the model of the ideal journalist and may consequently be viewed in a

negative light, regardless of efforts made to reintegrate after having a child. Consequently, some journalists such as Helena's friend, attempted to limit this lack of fit between motherhood and being a good journalist⁵⁰, by playing down their status as a mother.

Thus while over half the interviewees view motherhood as to some extent incompatible with the role of being a journalist, a significant number believe that for a woman, choosing a career in journalism will not conflict with the responsibilities associated with having children. This is for a number of reasons. It seems that journalists working for certain women's magazines with an older staff or small local newspapers, as well as those who work as newspaper feature writers, subeditors or freelancers are more likely to view their job as well-suited to the demands of motherhood. The ability to choose to work within these sectors of journalism also prompted some interviewees from national newspapers to agree that any potential problems could be sidestepped by changing career path and opting to join a field in which there are less difficulties posed for mothers in journalism. However, the interviews also yielded compelling arguments from journalists with many different backgrounds (several of them mothers themselves), asserting that this situation is nothing to be celebrated. The fact remains that when a journalist becomes a mother, her options are, for the most part, reduced. Many of the areas of journalism which arguably provide opportunities for mothers to maintain

⁵⁰ For further discussion of the 'good journalist' see section 4.3.1 above.

a career, whilst they should not be dismissed, are noted for their lower status and prestige.

Not only are there practical difficulties with a lack of time and money to perform as well as male counterparts, but many journalistic organisations appear to play host to an occupational culture which frames a mother as antithetical to the idea of the ideal journalist. Persistent occupational mythology upholds a male model of working which lays the foundation for discriminatory beliefs against mothers in journalism. As several interviewees suggested, especially within the more prestigious newspaper organisations, before starting a family, many female journalists succeed in being accepted into what continues to be a 'macho' working culture by working long-hours and often playing down any feminine traits⁵¹; once they become pregnant however, this avenue is no longer available to them as domestic needs clash with those of their employer, and their links to their children cause difficulties in being accepted as 'one of the lads'. In section 5.1.2 above it was found that the journalistic areas that women tend to cluster in, such as women's magazines, feature writing and freelance work, are viewed by many in the industry as less prestigious. However, it is working in these areas that many female journalists identify as women's best option, if they wish to successfully combine their career with having a family. It seems the suggestions made by Ross (2001) and in the Women in Journalism survey (2001) nine years ago, hold

⁵¹ See section 5.2.3 below

true today: motherhood is a barrier to the success of many women in UK journalism.

5.2.3 Being ‘Girly’ or ‘One of the Boys’: succeeding as a female newspaper journalist

Melin Higgins (2004:197) identified key ‘tactics’ used by women working in what she describes as the ‘male bastion’ of UK newspapers: changing behaviour to ‘become one of the boys’, choosing to work in stereotypically feminine areas such as ‘soft’ news and features, or leaving newsrooms to work in a freelance capacity. She consequently draws attention to two contrasting routes for women: incorporation into the dominant ‘macho’ culture – choosing to ‘fit in’ by avoiding stereotypically feminine traits, or retreating from it through either entering the accepted feminine ‘micro-culture’ of feature-writing, or leaving to become a freelance journalist. During my interviews with female newspaper journalists, the ‘retreat’ option was frequently mentioned as a sensible choice for those who wished to avoid the time-constraints and pressures associated with working in a newspaper newsroom⁵². This section explores the ‘incorporation’ option, looking at the ways in which some newspaper journalists saw their (gendered) behaviour at work as affecting their chances of cultural inclusion. Building on Melin-Higgins’ (2004) idea, two key ways of attempting to achieve this goal are identified: being ‘one of the boys’, and also,

⁵² See section 4.2.3

accentuating feminine traits to draw attention by emphasising gender difference.

Many newspaper journalists drew attention to the way that some female journalists deliberately underplayed any feminine traits by mirroring, and possibly even exaggerating, the way in which male colleagues stereotypically approach their work⁵³. Being 'one of the lads', as discussed above, is something that many try to achieve:

This [female] editor used to be at [midmarket] and at her leaving speech there...the editor said that he could give her no greater complement than to say she was an honorary man!...And all the men were going [mimes applause],...that was the greatest compliment anyone can pay you, is that you're one of the boys. It's shocking.

BS13 (26-35/H/1 ch.)

Magda also recognised that some women display masculine characteristics which helped them to succeed in a very different way to emphasising their gender:

We had one woman on the newsdesk, and she was like a man anyway...Maybe to...stay ahead of the game she did adopt that

⁵³ This is a trend not exclusively found within newspaper journalism – many have previously pointed to similar developments as women find ways to succeed within other male-dominated work cultures (Wajcman 1998, Maddock 1999).

quite aggressive male attitude. But the irony was she was more aggressive than any of the men! It worked though – she was doing quite well for herself, until she got pregnant! Then they seemed to realise – they treated her differently, even though she took the minimum maternity leave, and hardly ever saw her kid.

LD2 (26-35/L/No ch.)

Instead of aiming to stand out from the crowd, such female journalists may be able to play down their gender to the extent that they are not necessarily distinguished as different from male colleagues. However, as Magda herself points out, disguising your gender in this way, whether deliberately or not, may only be a short-term solution. Pregnancy meant that her colleague was inevitably defined by her gender once again.

Acting aggressively is one example of the ways in which stereotypically feminine behaviour was described as being concealed by some journalists. Hiding emotion appears to be another important part of being a woman in newspaper journalism, according to quite a number of the interviewees. This reflects work by Collinson and Hearn (1996) who suggested that the 'ideal' worker is framed as displaying stereotypically masculine traits. They argue that characteristics such as 'rationality' and logic (perceived as masculine characteristics), are valued over sentimentality, irrationality and emotional behaviour - seen as undesirable feminine traits. Raihannah told me about her experiences in her early days as a newspaper reporter; she explained

that she learnt very quickly to appear to have a thick skin, and to downplay her sensitivity. Other female colleagues were less adept at this:

I remember there were a couple of [female] reporters who were seen in the newsroom in tears because it had all got too much and they had been ticked off for something, and that was really frowned upon, and their reputation completely changed in the space of seconds, because they showed emotion – they couldn't handle it.

BS13 (26-35/H/1 ch.)

Experiences like Raihannah's were frequently recounted by many other journalists when they described their first few days in journalism. It seems that as well as learning how to do their job, many female newspaper journalists reported having to learn to fit into the dominant way of behaving at work. In an organisation which is likely to be male-dominated to a greater or lesser extent, this acceptable behaviour aligns with the stereotypical male way of interacting with others. Erin thus portrayed her first few weeks as a news journalist at a news agency dominated by men:

They were all blokes and it was the kind of a place where you had to be one of the lads to get through. Otherwise you appeared a bit fragile and you know, you got shreds torn off you

in the office if you made a mistake...And you'd be like telling yourself 'I'm not going to cry'...And I think it helps because I think that's why I'm a bit more pushy and I'm good at my job. It was an absolute baptism of fire. You just had to learn on the job. It was a nightmare, my first few weeks – I went home and cried every night because it was that hard. No-one helped you.

WMg2 (20-25/H/No ch.)

In addition to being tough and unemotional at work, a further approach to playing down gender as a female journalist in a male-dominated newspaper organisation appears to be to facilitate being accepted as 'one of the lads' by showing an interest, or at least appearing to develop an interest, in stereotypically masculine pastimes such as sport. Thus Janet explains why she feels she was accepted by a boardroom full of older, more experienced, male journalists when started her current job as the editor of a local daily newspaper, and Serena describes the ways some woman avoid the negative implications of being a woman in a male working culture:

Janet: There were still certain of the older crew that found taking orders off a woman difficult. So there was a bit of that at the start, but considering some of these people are old enough to be my grandpa, it went very well. I think that was because - One: I have a huge love of sport so all of that, you know; I'm not a girlie

girl. And two: I had an interest in business...and made sure I showed that I did.

LD4 (36-45/Ed/1 ch.)

Serena: Yeah I think – I would say there is a problem before you've got children, but that women get round it by pretending to be like men. They just basically conform to what's expected, which is drinking – a bit, not as much as used to be the case 10 or 20 years ago, because there's far fewer staff so there's a lot more pressure on everyone to account for where they are. But there is still a culture of going to the pub...I would say that it is more acceptable to come in late because you've got a hangover from some event that you were at with other journalists, than because you were helping a family member or going to the doctors. That's what I mean about it being a male culture...Football is very much a lingua franca, and sport generally...It'll be accepted in our newsroom that when there's a big game of rugby, cricket or football, the TV will go on loud and everyone will be assumed to be stopping working and watching it. Whereas if it was a Sleeping Beauty ballet production or something I can't imagine a woman asking to turn it on. So women fall into that kind of thing – you can become interested in things if you have to. You'd find in a news office there'd be a higher proportion of women claiming to be football supporters, because it's a way of having a conversation with the men.

Both Janet and Serena thus credit having shared interests as a way for women to fit into newsroom culture. A direct comparison of the two excerpts however, highlights a difference: Janet implies that she may have succeeded in this way, because of pre-existing interests she happens to have, which align closely with those acceptable within a male working culture⁵⁴. Conversely, Serena argues that some women deliberately adopt traditionally masculine interests in order to appear to fit in. Thus perhaps both explanations are correct: some interviewees, such as Serena, Raihannah and Erin (above) assert that such female journalists are strategically choosing to behave in a certain way, whereas others point to the fact that some women's path into journalism may have been eased by the fact that their personality allows them to fit into journalistic culture with ease. Accordingly, Jo and Tania's accounts of life in the newsroom of a broadsheet and a tabloid newspaper respectively, show that in many cases, a process akin to 'natural selection' has taken place, with some female journalists' characters aligning closely with the dominant way of working within a particular organisation:

Jo: The four most senior women are all variously described as 'oh she's a total bitch' etc, in a way that men wouldn't be called

⁵⁴ See Connell's 1989 work, highlighting the importance of overtly liking sport as a sign of acceptable hegemonic masculinity.

that...And maybe those are the innate qualities that you need to get to the top: you need these sharp elbows. I don't think they've developed this consciously. I think they've been like that since they were born. All of the top women I would say are very aggressive.

BS4 (26-35/L/No ch.)

Tania: But I think generally that girls who work on national newspapers are quite feisty anyway so they give it [sexist banter] back. I mean there's nobody who is really gonna end up crying in the toilets.

T1 (26-35/L/No ch.)

During the interviews, many of the journalists both from local and national newspapers, summed up their experiences as female journalists in the form of advice for other women who wish to succeed in their particular field. A common theme within this guidance involved dealing with sexist remarks at work. Many, such as Erin and Kirsten, suggested that any sexist comments made within journalistic culture should be accepted as inevitable, and either ignored or reciprocated with light-hearted banter:

Erin: I would say the most important thing is to just accept what goes on. At the news agency...it was like 'right this guy is a bit of a leech – wear a skirt and tight top tomorrow and we'll send

you down there'. It sounds awful but... You have to roll with the punches a bit, have a bit of banter, be a bit of a one of the lads, not be offended by the sexist joke... It's never bothered me so I think I'm ok with it but I know a lot of women find it very offensive.

WMg2 (20-25/H/No ch.)

Kirsten: You need to just learn to deal with a massive amount of sexism... I just give it back. I don't sit and get offended by it. When I was at [broadsheet]... there were very few female reporters, and once myself and another happened to be on for the night shift. And 2 or 3 of the men asked us 'what are you doing?', and we said 'well we're just doing the night shift'... 'What both of you?'. And I couldn't work out what he meant as there were always 2 reporters. And what he was commenting on was the fact that it was 2 women. And this was in 1999! And I said 'Oh, I see your point, we might both have to change our tampons at the same time and there'll be no-one to answer the phone'. That sort of thing goes on all the time: it's a part of journalism I guess. If you just ran off crying they'd think you were pathetic.

MM4 (36-45/H/1 ch.)

Thus responding with a cutting remark is seen as a way of dealing with sexism so that the woman concerned is viewed as a self-

confident individual who makes an effort to fit in with the daily repartee taking place in the newsroom, and not take offence easily. This reflects previous research by Collinson and Collinson (1996) which found that female managers in insurance sales (a male-dominated occupation) often responded to sexist comments at work with cutting remarks whilst not 'taking offence' at the nature of the comments themselves. This is seen as a way of dealing with sexism so that the woman concerned is viewed as a self-confident individual who is making an effort to fit in with daily office repartee, whilst not posing a challenge to this 'acceptable banter'.

In contrast to this, a small but noteworthy minority (6 out of the 36 newspaper journalists interviewed) expressed an awareness of the way in which some female newspaper journalists either consciously or unconsciously accentuated their femininity whilst at work, to help them stand out within a predominantly male workforce. For example, Magda described female colleagues working at her local daily newspaper, while Tara talked about her own experiences at both a broadsheet and a tabloid newspaper:

Magda: You do get some young women who will exploit their sexuality to get an easier life, and that brings out the feminist in me: I hate it. I get respected by my male boss, I feel, because I get on with him as a person...But some girls get round bosses by being girls: being girly, being pretty, being flirty, being a bit

needy, wearing short skirts. That's what winds me up because that just sets feminism back. You can't complain one minute about wanting equal rights, and the next minute moan because you don't want to go out in the rain and get your hair wet!

LD2 (26-35/L/No ch.)

Tara: There is a certain degree of sexism in a place like this [broadsheet] too. You do get kind of classed as the young blonde, and I do find myself playing up to that role. I sometimes think to myself, maybe I should be doing more serious pieces...[At tabloid I was] advised to 'wear a low cut top' for my job interview! And I remember it was the Christmas lunch and the editor standing up and saying something about my breasts!...But I think the job itself was given over to that. You had to clack around in high-heels, even in the office. And I think the idea of it was like empowering women but actually I'm not sure. I certainly used to be giggly a lot more, and flirty.

BS6 (26-35/L/No ch.)

It is possible that women who emphasise their femininity may be aware that they can take advantage of the male-female dynamic by appealing to (male) bosses in a flirtatious or ultra-feminine manner, as Magda suggests. However, as Magda also argues, such a strategy may prove successful for some, but there may be over-arching negative consequences. By accentuating the differences between male

and female journalists, gender becomes more of a prominent issue: women may be defined in terms of gender stereotypes as opposed to being judged on individual merit. It is likely that if such journalists are drawing attention to their attractiveness to get ahead as a woman in journalism, they may lose this advantage as they get older and can no longer 'be girly'. Tara complains that although she plays up her femininity as a young blonde female, she recognises that this may be preventing her from being allocated the more serious news pieces (see section 5.1.2 for further discussion of horizontal clustering processes). Her previous experiences working as a gossip reporter for a tabloid newspaper also heightened her awareness of the disadvantage of accentuating her gender and youth at work. In this case she explained that her specific role was deliberately set up for young female journalists to 'look good' in photographs whilst at events such as celebrity parties. Thus, whilst embarrassed at the time, Tara is not surprised that this stereotype legitimised the editor's comments about her body. Even accentuating her femininity by wearing suggestive clothing at her job interview, there is a clear link between Tara's accentuation of her femininity at work through her actions ('be[ing] giggly...flirty), and the embodiment of this through the way she dressed. This is also seen in the excerpt from Magda's interview: the women she describes are not only 'flirty' and 'needy'; they 'wear short skirts' to work.

In journalism, whilst 'giving it back' is a popular response, this was very much framed as a method of integrating into dominant newsroom culture: perhaps to some extent accepting rather than directly challenging the fact that in many respects, the normalisation of sexist comments is unlikely to further women's success in journalism overall. Consequently gathering the advice given by various interviewees concerning how to succeed as a woman in journalism, paints a picture within which many female journalists may be subtly penalised for accentuating their gender: the 'male as norm' culture is likely to ensure that by drawing attention to feminine stereotypes, the individual may be pigeon-holed into areas of journalism typically associated with women, and which are seen as less prestigious. Adopting a more masculine approach at work could be a time-limited solution, as the discussion above shows: having children conflicts with any previous efforts to downplay gender difference.

5.3 Conclusion

This chapter has examined the extent to which female journalists view their potential for success as affected by their gender. Asking the interviewees to discuss the position of women within the structure of the journalism industry has drawn attention to the different contexts in which female journalists are working, as well as highlighting patterns in the way that gender is viewed as variously both a help and a hindrance. When considering gender as a potentially influential factor

in shaping the journalistic workforce demographic, it is clear that a significant number of female journalists turn to alternative explanations for men dominating in the more powerful and prestigious areas. When directly asked whether their gender makes a difference to their working lives, the majority replied that being female helped them, or was disregarded as irrelevant.

It is national newspapers in which the women were most likely to express an awareness of their gender as an impediment. In contrast to other interviewees, emphasising their freedom to direct their career regardless of gender, a notable number of newspaper journalists pointed to beliefs and practices enshrined within journalistic occupational culture which appear to prevent female journalists achieving equal success to men. Their agency is seen to be limited by such structural barriers, one of the most important of these being the difficulties imposed by motherhood. Thus for some female journalists, notably those working in the more prestigious areas (national newspaper newsrooms), being a mother is framed as virtually incompatible with sustaining a successful career, as practical problems are entwined with symbolic difficulties caused by discriminatory beliefs. Unfortunately, it appears that the barrier of motherhood has far-reaching implications. For those female journalists who have developed strategies to facilitate their acceptance within what has been described as a 'macho' newsroom culture, being 'one of the boys' or playing upon their feminine attractiveness may be effective only up until

the point that they wish to start a family. To repeat an earlier quote from one of the interviewees:

I would say there's sort of an elastic ceiling for women: you can keep going and then you try having children.

BS14 (46-55/H/3 ch.)

However, as a significant number of journalists do not express any awareness of this phenomenon, future attempts to ensure that the current numerical equality between male and female journalists translates into an equal chance of building a successful career regardless of gender, are liable to be hindered.

Chapter 6

Talking about gender equality: from content to (social) context

Having explored, from the female journalists' perspectives, the impact of gender on their everyday working lives, this chapter spotlights their beliefs about gender equality in general. This will include consideration of both their views of the way/s women are portrayed within output (and the associated implications regarding gender equality), and a direct focus on attitudes towards feminism and feminist beliefs. By looking at both within the context of what has already been revealed about the lives of female journalists in the previous two chapters, this chapter ultimately aims to investigate links between beliefs about gender equality and the nature of both journalistic output and journalistic work culture.

6.2 Beliefs about gender equality in journalistic publications

This section explores the ways that female journalists view the media's portrayal of women and the (implicit and explicit) beliefs contained within journalistic output about gender equality today. Following previous research into the impact of media production routines and values (de Bruin 2000; Aldridge 2001a; Aldridge 2001b), this is preceded by an examination of the existence of a potential

relationship between output content and the culture of production, as revealed within the interviews.

6.2.1 Talking about gender in output

Previous feminist researchers and cultural theorists have drawn attention to 'post-feminist' messages with today's media output (Rhode 1995; Adkins 2004; Gill 2009; McRobbie 2009; Walter 2010). Explored in greater detail in chapter 2, such tendencies involve an implicit rejection of feminism, with output based on the underlying premise that the conditions for gender equality have been achieved (McRobbie 2007). Female empowerment is seen to be enacted through the choices women make. Such messages are found in their most explicit form within output created for female audiences, such as women's magazines (McRobbie 2009). The 'correct' consumer choices are heralded as a clear path towards living out this freedom (Gorton 2007; Tasker and Negra 2007; Walter 2010), as well as choosing to exhibit one's body as an object of sexual attractiveness (in an ironic display of defiance against feminist values viewed as outdated - Genz, 2006). This section examines the female journalists' reflections on their own products, assessing the ways they see women as being portrayed in the media today.

When the journalists were asked their thoughts on the media's portrayal of women, the majority (approximately two-thirds) focused their discussion on media output as an important source of positive images, often potentially implying the achievement of gender equality today. Such views were particularly prominent among journalists from women's magazines. Many of these interviewees, such as Eleanor, talked about their perception of journalistic output portraying women as powerful agents, demonstrating this power through their freedom to make choices:

We wouldn't outwardly say 'we're a feminist magazine' but we do talk about powerful women and things being equal. It's the issues that are being talked about rather than the term...We feature successful women...It's all about choice. We can choose who we want to be.

MMg2 (26-35/L/No ch.)

Eleanor's comments reveal that the women's magazine she works for is rooted in the premise of gender equality having been achieved, and the redundancy of the term 'feminism', played out by drawing attention to women defined as successful. The 'success' of women today, perceived to be evidenced by the power to direct their life through their ability to make choices, was central to the women's magazine journalists' discussion of media output. Within this theme, interview talk centred on two key areas – consumer choice and the

choice to express women's power by exhibiting the female body as an object of sexual desire.

Jessica, a weekly women's magazine journalist, and Kelly, working for a monthly women's magazine, also referred to the 'successful woman' in magazine output, emphasising a prominence of ideas about the freedom for women to choose. This success is defined mainly in terms of consumer power – an independence framed by the capacity to make decisions based on economic self-sufficiency:

Jessica: In our magazine...we're all about showing the reader how they themselves can be as successful as the women, they can look up to – aspire to be, you know?

Interviewer: And how would they do that?

Jessica: Well every woman has the potential to be a success. We just guide them...It's all about fulfilling their potential. We advise them in terms of what to buy, what to wear etc. Women these days have so many choices...They can control their own lives...[Women] can be and do anything if we make the right choices.

WMg6 (36-45/H/2 ch.)

Kelly: I guess what I'm trying to say is that I don't think there's not a place for feminism any more, but certainly in a magazine like ours, we don't use the word 'feminist issue' but we do try and embrace what it is to be a 21st century woman. Addressing a powerful woman of today. A successful women. If you're a woman and you're earning a certain amount of money and you're independent, you can spend that money helping people in the third world, or you can spend that money on a pair of Gucci shoes; you can work or you can stay at home – I think it's a choice thing...I think what the magazine is about is aspiration – allowing women to have choice to think about what they want to and buy what they want to. And we know that they do – they've already made the decision to do what they want to do. So that's a form of feminism. These days women are very well educated, they know what they want...Women are some of the biggest consumers – big buying power and independent incomes.

MMg3 (26-35/H/No ch.)

Jessica and Kelly's observations again draw upon the rhetoric of choice, interpreted within the output of the magazines purely in terms of consumer power: the freedom to choose what to spend money on. Kelly joins many other women's magazine journalists in pointing out that there are no direct references to feminist beliefs within her

magazine. There is no overt rejection of feminism as a concept – more an implication that its aims are now fulfilled through the demonstrated economic independence of ‘successful women’. The magazine she works for is clearly aimed at young career women with disposable incomes. She consequently refers to output which encourages and celebrates the spending power of a specific female demographic: women who are perceived as having no need of feminism as they are achieving empowerment by utilising their consumer agency.

Such suggestions align closely with recent work from feminists and media scholars, examining the extent to which ‘post-feminist’ ideas are found within popular culture in the UK (Whelehan 2000; Genz 2006; McRobbie 2009; Negra 2009; Walter 2010). They suggest that post-feminist ideas frame media output such as women’s magazines, fuelling messages which encourage women to embrace a neo-liberal, individualistic approach to interpreting their lives, consequently depoliticising feminist goals through the suggestion that consumer lifestyle choices are both evidence of, and the expression of female empowerment (Macdonald 1995; Negra 2009). Thus when the journalists talk about choice as an implied site of female agency within women’s magazines, and as a proxy for gender equality, feminists and cultural theorists such as Genz (2006) and McRobbie (2009), argue that this rhetoric effectively masks persistent gender inequalities, directing women’s focus towards the private lives of individuals (with consequently less consideration given to the possibility of structural

inequalities). An ethic of female freedom and autonomy found within media outlets such as women's magazines, and particularly within advertising aimed at a female audience, encompasses the idea that empowerment can be achieved through 'correct' lifestyle choices (Lindner 2004). Thus post-feminist ideas elide with female empowerment and consumer choice (Gorton 2007; Tasker and Negra 2007; Walter 2010) through the commodification of female agency: women's lifestyle choices are advocated as potential paths to accessing a state of gender equality which is implicitly assumed to be already in place (McRobbie 2009). Given that around 38% of consumer magazine revenue comes from the advertisers themselves (McKay 2000:190), it may not be surprising that women's magazine output must not only appeal to young women, but support the messages of the advertisers, encouraging readers to buy their products as a way of actualising individual success as a woman.

The second, related, theme arising in the women's magazine journalists' discussion of women within output, focuses on women as sexually powerful, interpreting images and articles featuring partially clothed women in sexual poses as a celebration of sexual freedom and choice for women. Sarah and Gemma both work for women's weeklies:

Sarah: There are many magazines, like [names monthly glossy, aimed at 20s-30s readership] has gone down a very kind of 'girl power' route. It's doing a lot of burlesque stuff. Sexy shots, you know.

WMg1 (20-25/H/No ch.)

Interviewer: Do you think that feminist ideas – maybe not under the label of feminism – would ever appear in women's magazines? Gemma: Not in my magazine! Even though inadvertently my magazine could be seen as feminist because it's all about girls going out and getting what they want. It's 'girl power' – so go out and get that man, sleep with that man – it doesn't matter...And in terms of like Page 3 girls, which I know is an issue people get heated about in terms of women in the media – the women look strong. They may not have any clothes on, but look at their faces! They aren't victimised in any way. They are earning a fortune. I just think we've gone past that and women know what they want.

WMg3 (26-35/H/No ch.)

Sarah and Gemma also directly refer to the concept of female choice, both drawing on a popular phrase from 1990s pop culture: 'girl power' (Budgeon 1998; Taft 2004; Zaslou 2005), which entered mainstream culture as a marketing catchphrase for the UK girl-band

the Spice Girls, subsequently gaining general popularity as a maxim symbolising and celebrating the achievement of gender equality and a self-reliant attitude among girls and young women, manifested in ambition, assertiveness, and individualism (Munford 2007). As mentioned above, for both Sarah and Gemma, female freedom to choose is in fact directly related only to the decision to position oneself as a sexual being, whether it is aspiring to emulate burlesque culture or simply implementing the power to 'go out and get that man, sleep with that man', as Gemma describes. Whelehan (2000), among others (Faludi 1992; Genz 2006; Munford 2007), asserts that post-feminist ideas such as 'girl power' undeniably objectify and commodify the female form. As Genz explains, 'irony [is used] as a get-out clause to make women buy into the old...stereotypes that tie them to their feminine/sexual appearance' (2006:346). McRobbie, in her examination of what she argues is a 'feminism undone' (2009:17) also speaks of this process in media content today. Drawing on McRobbie's argument, from Sarah and Gemma's point of view, the images of semi-clad females they identify in the media may contain a self-conscious subtext which refers the reader back to a time when topless modelling, for example, was seen as objectifying women. Now however, the post-feminist rhetoric of individualistic choice is paramount - to make such an objection may be running the risk of ridicule. Objection is pre-empted with irony' (McRobbie 2009:17), and potential feminist concerns are branded as outdated. Indeed Gemma is quick to assert that her magazine output is not intended to portray a feminist message;

any rhetoric of female power and freedom (albeit limited, it seems, to sexual matters) is not rooted in feminist aims.

Thus the majority of the journalists from women's magazines, when asked to discuss the ways in which their publications portray women and deal with issues surrounding gender equality, emphasised the notion of individualised freedom to choose, as a proxy for female empowerment within UK society today. This is accompanied by the underlying implication that achieving gender equality is a matter of personal agency, and is easily attained by women through following the guidance provided within the magazine output, with feminism discarded as irrelevant (McRobbie 2009).

A significant number of newspaper journalists, mainly from broadsheet publications, also suggested that their output is based upon the assumption that gender equality is an unquestionable reality within our society. As a consequence, this group did not view gender politics as a particularly relevant issue when discussing newspaper content, beyond a basic guiding principle that therefore women should not be treated any differently from men as subjects of newspaper articles.

Amie: The female editor doesn't have a female agenda. We try not to make such a massive issue out of it. Especially when we're trying to reflect the workplace – women's issues do come up occasionally but we also try to be even. So if we are referring

to a hypothetical boss, we'll say 'she said' and 'he said' – we just try to balance it. We don't have a separate bit for women or anything. We've never found it necessary...The best way to represent and reflect equality is by treating everything in the same way...that's the way we think.

BS1 (20-25/L/No ch.)

Janet: As an editor, for example, once there was a story about a celebrity. There was a point to the story but we showed her breasts in a photo. There was a view from my [male] boss that it was offensive and exploitative to women...And my view was: 1 – it's not: we've gone beyond that sort of thing, 2 – women like looking at women just as much as guys do. She chose to be like that, whoever this person was. And also we're addressing an intelligent audience and it's for them to make up their mind, rather than for us to. We never portrayed women in the sense that the world owed them something. And also I didn't like stories that were about some moaning old woman that she was being hard done by. I wouldn't have gone to town covering stories about Heather McCartney for example. Whereas the guys would have run it. The world's sick of it: women moaning on about how supposedly hard done by they are.

LD4 (36-45/Ed/1 ch.)

Thus both Amie and Janet suggest that their newspaper content is shaped on the assumption that concern with gender inequalities is a dated practice. Amie intimates for example that their practice of ensuring that male and female managers are referred to in equal amounts is an attempt to *reflect* a gender balance within the higher echelons of the UK workforce. Janet's conviction that women and men are equal, influences the newspaper content in such a way that, as an editor, she is reluctant to print articles which focus on the plight of individual women, and argues that printing topless women does not contribute to their objectification. She draws upon a similar narrative to the women's magazine journalists, focusing on the freedom of women to choose as evidence of their equality.

However, the majority of journalists from midmarket and tabloid newspapers demonstrated a more negative view of the ways women are portrayed within journalistic output. Angie is a higher-level journalist working for a midmarket newspaper; her critical position is rooted in her awareness of gendered stereotypes within the text and images used in her newspaper:

The other day it was an article about the head of the London Stock Exchange, who is female. And the comment written about it was terribly well written but totally sexist because it was all about suitors and wooing and her love life, and I said you

wouldn't have written that if she'd been a man. And he went 'point taken!'. So we do have those conversations...And sometimes I'll say I don't like a picture because it's sexist. I feel a duty to make sure that if I can take out the sexism then I should. And also I try to get good, positive images of women in the paper - successful women, because there's so many negative pictures – you know: 'This woman with 10 children, scrounging.' etc...I feel duty-bound that if there's something positive that can go in, I'll do it.

MM5 (46-55/H/2 ch.)

Thus Angie is concerned about a tendency for potentially positive portrayals of successful women to be framed so that their gender symbolically ties them in a negative way, to the domestic sphere (Douglas Vavrus 2002). Nevertheless, Angie seems to be able to dispute this approach in her daily role at the newspaper; her position of power allows her the ability to influence, albeit in a relatively small way, the output being produced. Angie is therefore one of a very small number of interviewees who not only mounts a critique of the ways in which gender is addressed within journalistic output but also feels able to actively contest this at work.

Fiona is a tabloid journalist; her response to questions about the way that her newspaper portrays women is typical of many such

comments from interviewees working for both tabloid and midmarket newspapers:

We quite often get asked to write picture captions, and there'll be some celebrity in a bikini...and you have to write – 'oh look at her wonderful curves' stuff. And then...I got asked to write one about a footballer – it was a photo of him wearing a pair of really tight pants, and he wasn't leaving anything to the imagination! So I just wrote quite a cheeky caption, and they went berserk! And it was a woman sub-editor who said 'you can't say this, it's really suggestive!'. And I just thought 'God that's ridiculous' – they wouldn't have even batted an eyelid if it was a girl I was describing. But working for a tabloid you just get used to it.

T2 (26-35/L/No ch.)

It seems that many journalists from such newspapers are aware of the ways in which men and women are portrayed very differently within output, and some are critical of this. A common topic of discussion was the representation of women purely as sexual objects, an element of post-feminist culture recently criticised by Walter (2010:5), describing contemporary gender relations as characterised by a 'narrow vision of femininity...that sees women's sexual allure as their only passport to success'. Fiona's account appears to demonstrate that other female journalists working in such organisations

may continue to focus on adhering to the traditional reporting style of their particular newspaper, and remain uncritical of such practices. It may be that the dominant working culture within such newsrooms discourages deviation from the accepted gender stereotypes within output.

Thus female journalists from women's magazines and broadsheet newspapers were more likely to make a more positive judgment regarding images of women in output, drawing on the rhetoric of choice and many demonstrating an underlying conviction in gender equality having already been fully achieved. It is clear that both broadsheet newspapers and women's magazines broadly portray women differently to other newspapers (Carter *et al.* 1998; Gallagher 2001), and this may be a significant factor in shaping the beliefs of the journalists involved. However, it is valuable to also consider the impact of working culture - the context in which this output is produced. Fiona's account (above) suggests that her views may be out of the ordinary within her work culture: she must 'just get used to' the way that women are written about in a tabloid newspaper. We cannot ignore the conclusions of chapter 5, suggesting that tabloid and midmarket newspaper organisations may foster more male-oriented working cultures. This may perhaps explain why, despite more obvious gender stereotyping within such publications (Gallagher 2001), female journalists such as Fiona's sub-editor are seemingly uncritical of such

tendencies. The following section consequently explores the journalists' awareness of any possible link between working culture and output.

6.2.2 Gender in journalistic output: the influence of journalistic working culture

Having discussed the ways female journalists think about the portrayal of women within output, it is pertinent to consider the extent to which female journalists believe journalistic portrayals of women and the state of gender equality today may be linked in some way to the nature of the journalistic working culture. Previous attention to this issue has centred around the dominant cultural belief in journalistic autonomy and the extent to which individual journalists are able to influence output - whether cultural routines and practices shape behaviour to the extent that the guiding principles of production are somewhat predetermined (de Bruin 2000; Manning 2001). Manning (2001:54) proposes that the 'broader ideological climate' of news media functions above and beyond individual journalists, shaping journalistic content. With similar conclusions, others have approached this issue in the context of assessing the impact of rising numbers of female journalists, particularly within news journalism (de Bruin 2000; Aldridge 2001a; 2001b). They suggest that the gender demographic of a news organisation does not necessarily directly impact upon pre-existing news-making values and routines as the link between culture

and content exists above and beyond the personal influence of individual journalists. Whilst others are more tentative when discussing this link, asserting that personal characteristics of individual journalists should not be entirely ignored (McQuail 2005; Sutton Trust 2006), there are few who discuss the possibility that this relationship may also function in the opposite direction. Gallego *et al.* (2004) are among the small number who have considered this, suggesting that the male-dominated culture of many news organisations in Spain is caused in part by the gender stereotypes often used when representing women in output. This section will now examine whether the interviewees themselves expressed any awareness of a relationship between output and working culture.

When talking about the journalistic work culture, some journalists referred directly to a link between this and the nature of the output being created. A small group (from various different journalistic backgrounds) spoke directly about journalistic working cultures contributing to shaping publications. Serena for example, who is a higher-level journalist working for a broadsheet newspaper, described how she felt that 'ironic' sexist comments, viewed as 'normal' banter between her work colleagues, become translated onto the pages of the newspaper, where they may be viewed in less ironic terms:

In newspapers, the type that's joked about is the 'don't care about anyone'...the kind of tabloid model: 'get the story, who cares about anybody else? Who cares about the real world, just get this paper out. And that...that's the prevailing ethos, and that means that there's quite a lot of sexist talk about women and women's bodies, as if it was a joke and being ironic. But it's a question of 'is it for real?'. It then goes in the paper and it is true.

BS7 (26-35/H/2 ch.)

Others also discussed this link between working culture and output, but in contrast to journalists such as Serena, saw the rise in the number of women in journalism to be making a positive impact on work culture, and consequently on output. Jo is a lower-level journalist working for a broadsheet newspaper:

The features editor would definitely describe herself as a feminist and she believes in positive discrimination. She's changed things a lot around here. For example once there were two column slots in the edition...Two men had been chosen to do them. She went 'no you can't have that, you've got to change one into a woman'. So she's not only changed the way we work, but obviously that then affects what the readers get.

BS4 (26-35/L/No ch.)

A larger group of journalists, also from a cross-section of different publications, provided accounts which support the idea that the relationship between journalistic working culture and output content may in fact be two-way. Many suggested that the nature of the publication being produced also influences a journalistic organisation works by shaping the behaviour of the journalists employed there. Nina and Phillipa (who work for a broadsheet newspaper and a monthly women's magazine respectively) both believe that the messages contained within the content of their product help to ensure a more woman-friendly working environment:

Nina: I went to the editor and asked to do this [job sharing]. And I came back with various ways that it might be done, and I at the time was covering lot of stories about flexible working – this was the late 90s and it was a big policy issue – and we'd run stories saying 'this is very poor; we must work differently'...So it was quite difficult for them to say 'no, get stuffed'. So I think I had embarrassment on my side, and I've never under-estimated the power of embarrassment as a tool for getting what you want!

BS14 (46-55/H/3 ch.)

Phillipa: Obviously you are in a business that produces women's magazines and so you have to be respectful towards women...and we are flexible.

MMg6 (46-55/Ed./1 ch.)

Thus Nina and Phillipa's comments build upon the contributions from other interviewees, suggesting that to a greater or lesser extent, there exists some sort of relationship between journalistic output and work culture. However, it is important to note the existence of a counter argument put forward by a number of journalists who have had experience of working on a women's magazine. In contrast to Phillipa's assertion, some interviewees such as Helena and Marie, argued that there is in fact a disparity between the messages contained within magazine output, and the treatment of female employees within magazine culture:

Helena: I don't like magazines from an internal point of view because the cases of most extreme sexist behaviour – of sexual discrimination – have always happened on magazines for me. And I think that that's appalling, really bad. I mean I've heard about women being pregnant and them being kicked out – and yet they like to present this image – and they'll even write a story about, you know, 'girl power' – but they don't practice that. God forbid! So I definitely think they're not very female friendly magazines.

BS2 (26-35/Fr/1 ch.)

Marie: I'll tell you though, for 7 years I worked on a women's magazine with an all-female staff: 50 women. It was a glossy fashion mag, with one or two hard-hitting news and features; it came out monthly. There was much less freedom and much less understanding for childcare problems...The problem wasn't so much in-house: it was the company that owned the magazine – it was still very male-dominated. My editor probably didn't have the freedom to give us flexible hours. But I did find that very ironic: in that environment where they were forever publishing articles about women's rights and stuff, it wasn't like that in the company at all. The articles were very much supportive of women power and that kind of thing. It was very hypocritical.

LW5 (46-55/S.ed/2 ch.)

Thus it seems that the situation is complex; a significant number of journalists view journalistic culture as in some way related to the output being produced, despite some arguments to the contrary. This is a noteworthy finding; providing a clearer understanding of the ways female journalists view their everyday lives, and the ways in which journalistic content is produced.

Having explored female journalists' perspectives on gender issues within output, followed by an examination of the extent to which this output is seen to be related to everyday journalistic working

culture, this chapter will now directly address the interviewees' personal beliefs about gender equality and feminism (before revisiting consideration of feminist ideas within journalistic work culture in section 6.2.2).

6.3 Beliefs about gender equality in society

Many have drawn attention to the seemingly steadfast decline in the number of women who will readily identify as feminist today (McCabe 2005; McRobbie 2009; Power 2009; Banyard 2010; Walter 2010). Despite the declaration that feminism has established a 'third wave' in its development (Garrison 2004), with the growth of the post-feminist zeitgeist it has become commonplace for both men and women to express a firm belief in the existence of full gender equality, and in the subsequent irrelevance of feminist thinking today (Adkins 2004; Lotz 2007). This section focuses directly on the beliefs about gender equality and feminism expressed by the female journalists in this study. It aims to provide a clear overview of the different perspectives which emerged, before exploring the acceptability of feminism and feminist ideas within the context of journalistic work culture through the experiences and perspectives of the journalists themselves.

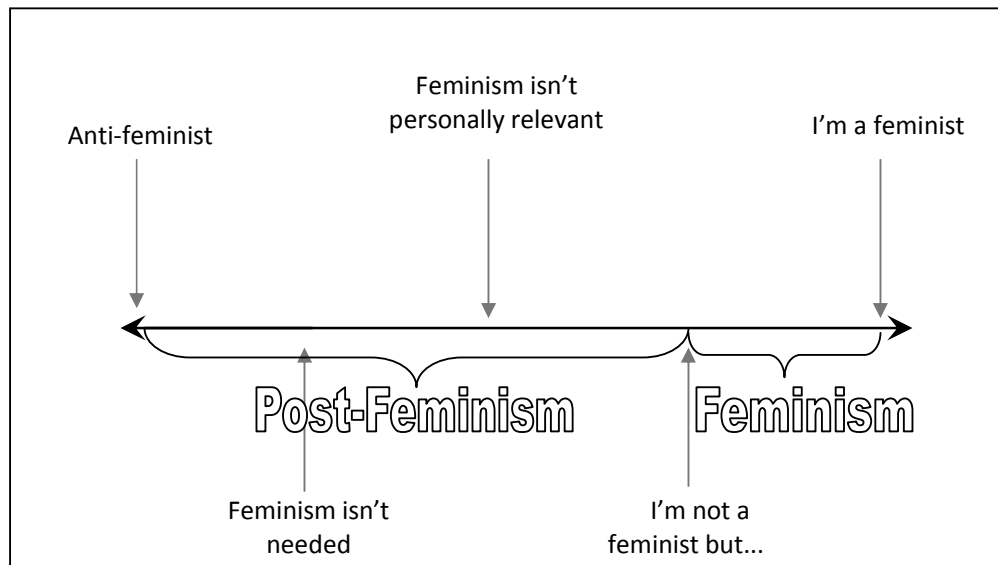
6.3.1 Reflections on feminism: a spectrum of beliefs about gender equality

The semi-structured interview format provided each journalist with the opportunity to reflect at length upon what they associate with the term 'feminism', and consequently to what extent, if any, they personally view themselves as a feminist. For many journalists, a positive discussion about the merits of abstract feminist ideas did not necessarily translate into self-identification as a feminist when they were questioned about this. However it is important to note at this point that many of the journalists' reactions to 'feminism', discussed below, are not necessarily based around a conception of feminist thinking which is fully engaged with current feminist theory. It is likely that many are reactions to an exaggerated popular (and media-supported) construction – a post-feminist caricature/image of feminism which is unlikely to align closely with advanced feminist thought (Church-Gibson 2004).

As such, this discussion will reflect the approach taken by other qualitative researchers in this area (Aronson 2003; Peltola *et al.* 2004; Perrier 2006) and focus on identifying broad similarities in the interviewees' beliefs about gender equality in the UK today, using as a focus the ways in which 'feminism' is interpreted and responded to. Consequently, five groups are identified, forming a linear spectrum

from expressing a total opposition to feminist beliefs at one end, to espousing 'feminist' ideas at the other (see Figure 6.1). This is not an attempt to label or 'pigeon-hole' each interviewee, but simply a tool to gain a better understanding of what female journalists think about gender equality in wider society, and the extent to which, however feminism is interpreted, it is viewed as still relevant today.

Figure 6.1: A Spectrum of Beliefs about Gender Equality and Feminism



The first group of responses can be broadly portrayed as those who would strongly disagree with any suggestion that (what they consider to be) feminist ideas are relevant and useful when thinking about gender equality today, to the extent that their beliefs could be described as 'anti-feminist'. A small number of mainly higher-level journalists from a mixture of different backgrounds responded in this way. A recurrent theme within their talk centred on the idea that

feminist beliefs are not only rooted in an inaccurate perception of the persistence of gender inequality, but also that an 'anti-male' feminist stance exists, which is so aggressive that men are now suffering. Sarah, who is a higher-level journalist working for a weekly women's magazine, and Janet, the editor of a local daily newspaper, both put forward this view:

Sarah: I remember seeing this thing that Michael Burke did a couple of years ago, about how men are now becoming completely de-masculated. And he said that the male suicide rate has gone up like 70% or something. You know, women are doing everything. They can do anything now...and it just becomes very stressful, and they end up taking it out on the men...I think it [feminism] has just gone a bit too far. And like, if any woman editor says 'I'm a feminist', you've got an immediate picture of her haven't you...as hating men and wanting to be better than men, and being really bitter and pissed off.

WMg1 (20-25/H/No ch.)

Janet: But the things that do wind me up are those women who complain about sexual harassment and have massive great lawsuits. You shouldn't get wound up about it, it just doesn't matter...I think now some women are using their position negatively – 'we can get more of this and we can get more of that'. Feminists...are fighting a battle that isn't there

really....they've gone too far and are making a fuss about nothing. But it's more than that – I associate feminism with – well – just bra-burning men-haters really. Hating men for threatening their chance to be equal, but what they don't realise is that women are now more of a threat to men! Women try to take on too much and they are taking over men's roles...A woman can now choose to do anything, if she wants to.

LD4 (36-45/Ed/1 ch.)

It is possible that Sarah and Janet, as women who have both achieved higher-level roles within their organisations, are extrapolating from this experience of personal empowerment, leading to the belief that all women can potentially achieve equality with men in all areas of contemporary society. This individualistic interpretation has led both women to assert that feminist calls for action against gender inequality are not only redundant but also damaging, as they give vent to stress and anger, causing men to suffer, alongside Janet's further implication that men's traditionally assigned social roles are being taken from them. The examination of the individualistic beliefs held within journalistic occupational culture (discussed in section 4.2.1) dovetails closely with this view, leading to the possibility that within the higher-level roles of journalism, some women's preconceptions about the utility of feminist ideas may be confirmed within the belief structure prevalent in their workplace.

Attention must also be drawn to the way in which Sarah and Janet talk about feminism. Both describe feminists as 'men-haters', while Janet refers to 'bra-burning'. This stereotypical view of feminism was frequently drawn upon when many journalists thought about what they associate with feminism. Rooted in a popularised but false description of the actions of feminist protesters at a 1960s Miss America beauty pageant, the term 'bra-burning' has become a phrase which reduces feminism to a radical second-wave stereotype of angry, men-hating women (Church-Gibson 2004). Cultural theorists and contemporary feminists view the rise in popularity of such ideas as part of a post-feminist attack, encouraged partly by the media, which positions feminist ideas as outdated and extreme, well as antithetical to fashion or beauty standards of any kind (Genz 2006; Negra 2009; Banyard 2010).

Janet's suggestion that women are usurping 'men's roles' was a recurrent theme within this group of responses. Grace is a freelance broadsheet journalist and Emma is a subeditor at a local newspaper. Together, their views exemplify this argument:

Grace: We don't have to fight for anything anymore. We can choose our own path. We've got everything we need so now we

can concentrate on finding out who we are. We can do what we want. That's the general theme of Western society as a whole. We've realised actually that that kind of 'them and us' thing doesn't work. It's not productive. It's boring, it's still causing friction; it's old arguments. You just need to get on...do whatever you want to do, and bugger the status quo really! I think there's a lot of over-emotional rubbish talked about. I know women put up with a lot. But we're [women are] also infinitely clever and valuable – God I sound like a bloody feminist now! We know that the greatest gift of all is that we can be mothers and bring up families. That's nature...Let the boys go off and do their thing, that's fine. I just wish people would stop comparing, because the minute that people start comparing is the minute something goes wrong. We're all in this life together – never mind 'men' and 'women'. We should appreciate the differences.

BS5 (26-35/Fr/No ch.)

Emma: [Feminists are] women who want to use the placard of feminism to get what they want, who think that women should be equal to men: 'Oh yeah, we want the same pay. We want the same hours. We want to be treated the same' even though we're not the same. Or they'll say that and then next minute they'll be like 'boyfriend, why are you so unchivalrous?'. Well if she's equal then she can open the door for him! I think

feminism's ridiculous...I think everyone is equal in terms of their importance in the world. But I also think we're different. We've got different traditional roles. Women, like I said, are more emotional and emotive – and that's good...Women are physically different to men – they can have kids! So both emotionally and physically they are different. So yeah, we're equal but different. We've got different roles to play...In terms of feminists saying 'I can lift this ten tonne weight just as good as a man!' – it's physical, you can't! Some jobs women can't do. They should just admit it!

LD1 (20-25/S.ed/No ch.)

Thus for journalists such as Grace and Emma, there is an underlying assumption that the feminist principle of striving for gender equality has caused natural, or traditional, differences between men and women to be abandoned, with negative consequences. It is interesting that both interviewees draw attention to motherhood and the care of children as an area where the feminist cause has led to the neglect of previously clear-cut gendered role allocation, as neither woman is a mother herself. As a freelancer and a subeditor - both identified as jobs which allow more flexibility and predictability of working hours (see section 5.2.2) - perhaps Grace and Emma are lamenting the fact that some other women in society (including some of

their female colleagues in other areas of journalism) are choosing to prioritise work demands over domestic responsibilities.

A second group of interviewees can be identified as those who maintained that feminists are pushing for an equality that has already been achieved. With 15 of the 49 journalists responding in this way, this was the most common belief about gender equality in contemporary society. Unlike the interviewees' views discussed above (in the first group of responses), these women did not necessarily see feminist ideals as misplaced or excessive, more that they are dated today. Journalists from a mixture of different newspaper and magazine publications expressed such a view, the majority being in their early to mid-twenties. Megan is a local newspaper journalist and Gemma works for a weekly women's magazine – both are in this younger age range:

Megan: I would say that it seems like things have become more equal. I mean in terms of the population in general – all that stuff that feminists still go on about – it isn't really, well, applicable anymore... We have a female photographer and she was telling me that when she first started there were hardly any female photographers. Things are changing now... It seems like we've made so much progress. We're just ironing out the last few inequalities.

Interviewer: What sort of inequalities would they be?

Megan: I'm not that well up but isn't there some kind of debate at Wimbledon - the male players get paid more than the females? And someone said that's practically the last instance where men are paid more than women...I think feminism is in danger of out-serving its purpose and maybe it isn't so relevant today. If women keep fighting and we go too far, then I think women will stop being seen as people to respect and support and they'll just be seen as a nuisance.

LW2 (20-25/L/No ch.)

Gemma: I think of strong women fighting for rights when I think of feminism...Feminists always kind of scare me a bit. I think 'oh God there's no need to go quite that far anymore – it's not that bad for us girls these days'. It's a bit outdated...We've achieved it so there's no real point. And people bang on about how 'this is bad' but I think it's not actually that bad. We're not tied to a kitchen sink; we've got all these rights. I just think it's a bit of an old term now really. It doesn't really apply.

WMg3 (26-35/H/No ch.)

Thus Gemma and Megan both dismiss feminist goals as positive but historic achievements, confident in the existence of gender equality both in the workplace and more generally ('we've got all these rights'). As noted above, most of the women who expressed similar views were

of a comparable age. One of the key observations emerging from the discussion in section 5.2.2 was that it was mainly journalists with children who were more likely to suggest that many journalistic organisations, whilst maintaining a veneer of gender equality, were in fact structured and culturally biased to ensure the success of male and/or childless employees. It would therefore make sense to suggest that younger female journalists, who as a peer group are less likely to have directly considered the difficulties experienced by mothers in journalism (in addition to any other potential problems with rising up the ranks as a female newspaper journalist), may also be more likely to see their gender, and consequently feminism, as irrelevant⁵⁵. As is noted in within chapter 2, the Journalism Training Forum survey found that most UK journalists were aged between 20 and 29 – a pattern which is reflected in my own sample. This finding, when considered alongside the 77% which were found to have no dependent children, adds weight to this issue: it may be that the majority of female journalists are of an age and/or at a lifestage which leads them to be more likely to reject feminist explanations and take gender equality for granted (Journalism Training Forum 2002:7).

Before discussion moves on to addressing the third group of responses, it is critical to mention that in addition to younger journalists,

⁵⁵ It is also possible that there is a generational issue to consider here, with younger journalists growing up in a 'post-feminist' culture which denies the relevance of feminism today. See below for a further discussion of this.

one of the older interviewees with an extremely high-level job – Eileen, editor of a national broadsheet newspaper – expressed a view which placed her in this group:

It [feminism] has a historic feel to it now. I think originally what one thought of with feminism is a sort of move for equal rights and a fair deal for females. I think that was achieved long ago really. It doesn't really mean very much now. Outdated...I have been the beneficiary of the battles that they fought so I don't think there is a need to be a feminist. If there was still a battle then I'd be a feminist.

BS16 (46-55/Ed/3 ch.)

Eileen's case does not fit with the suggestion that motherhood and/or experience in a higher-level newspaper role changes female journalists' views on feminism. As discussed in section 5.1.3, it may be significant that Eileen had her three children very early on in her career, temporarily sidestepping into a more flexible role in commercial media – an option which is less viable now for young female journalists; today's hyper-competitiveness means that returning after a break for childcare is less easy. However, as one of the most powerful women in newspaper journalism, the significance of Eileen so strongly believing that feminism is no longer applicable must not be underplayed. The work culture of journalism is maintained and shaped

to some extent by those in power; for a national newspaper editor to fiercely reject both feminist arguments and the existence of gender inequality draws attention to two important points. The first is that it is possible that having spent so many years working within and championing the dominant individualistic journalistic work culture, some female journalists may be unlikely to consciously reconcile this with feminist beliefs which question a view of their organisation as a meritocracy. The second is that, as discussed in section 4.2.3, those with power may have the ability, to some extent, to influence the dominant culture of their particular organisation. Some interviewees described editors as highly influential, suggesting that cultural beliefs and practices may in some cases be shaped to a significant extent by the policies of particular higher-level individuals. It is clear however that at least in the case of Eileen's organisation, it is unlikely that having a female editor will have encouraged recognition of the existence of gender inequality or the relevancy of feminism for female journalists.

A third set of responses can be identified by their shared view of feminism as something which, although may still be needed in society as gender inequalities may exist elsewhere, is not personally relevant to their own lives. There are two distinct explanations given for this within the group's discussion of gender equality. The first is that the journalist concerned asserts that she has never felt discriminated against because of her gender, and consequently resists any personal

engagement with feminist thought. This opinion tended to be expressed by a small number of younger, lower-level journalists such as Amie, a broadsheet journalist and Tania, who works for a tabloid newspaper:

Amie: I wouldn't describe myself as a feminist because...I've never had any problems being a woman – it has never stopped me doing anything, and in my profession I don't think women get a raw deal at all. We are all our own agents, fighting for our own success...So in terms of journalism I wouldn't call myself a feminist because I don't think there's that much need for it. In the work of work in general, there is a need for it. Women still are vastly in the minority on company boards and in senior positions and they tend to hold the lower-paid jobs...It doesn't bother me that much although I am aware it is important – I am where I want to be – I don't have a problem, but I acknowledge that there are still areas of society where it is still needed.

BS1 (20-25/L/No ch.)

Interviewer: Would you describe yourself as a feminist?

Tania: No I don't think I would actually. I do believe that women should have equal rights, but in my own life and in the work that I do, I find that I don't have a problem. I think I am treated as an equal and it's never been an issue. It's my own fault if I haven't

got quite as far as I'd like to, really. I mean I can't blame being a woman can I?! God, everyone would laugh at me!...No, I don't think I've been deliberately overlooked; I don't get paid less for being a woman as far as I know. So I don't feel that I need to campaign to turn it around...But I think if I was in a job where I felt that I was considered to be inferior in some way because of my gender then I would probably try and do something about it. And I guess then I would be labelled, or call myself, a feminist.

T1 (26-35/L/No ch.)

The excerpts from Amie's and Tania's interviews underline the possibility of a direct link between the ways in which journalists interpret their experiences as women in journalistic organisations, and the extent to which they embrace the feminist message. As chapter 4 examines, and as is discussed above, the strong individualistic occupational culture (seemingly reflected in comments such as Tania's 'It's my own fault if I haven't got quite as far as I'd like to...I can't blame being a woman can I?!...everyone would laugh at me!') appears not to encourage female journalists to consider their gender as a factor shaping their working life. This seems to be the case even if there is an acknowledgement of gender inequalities elsewhere. Amie, for example, points to processes of vertical segregation in other industries as evidence of gender inequality elsewhere, but stops short of identifying similar processes within journalistic organisations. If this is so then,

using Tania's explanation as a model, female journalists may be more likely to, at the very least, dismiss feminist ideas as not personally relevant, or at most express anti-feminist views. As suggested elsewhere in this thesis, there are other factors which may also shape the journalists' view of gender equality (such as age, generation, publication, being a mother etc.); however it seems that an individualistic interpretation of life as a journalist continues to stand out as a significant factor.

A second explanation given for the argument that feminism is not personally relevant is rooted in a consciously lower level of career ambition. A small number of journalists, expressing an awareness of gender inequality limiting women's potential for reaching more powerful jobs in journalism, did not aspire to reach higher-level roles. As a consequence, this group of three journalists, all of which were mothers working for newspaper organisations, do not identify with feminism on a personal level. Marie and Magda, both working for local newspapers, articulated such a view:

Interviewer: So would you call yourself a feminist?

Marie: No I haven't needed to be. I would be very resentful if I felt discriminated against but I haven't really experienced that so I haven't really needed to be militant about it...See I'm not an

ambitious person – I have always wanted to focus my attention on my kids. I wouldn't want to be editor or anything like that higher up, but if I were, I might be more of a feminist because of that glass ceiling.

LW5 (46-55/S.ed/2 ch.)

Interviewer: Would you call yourself a feminist?

Magda: I don't know. Hmm. It's a difficult question...I would never want to be a career woman. I'd much rather have a family and live a traditional life. I don't feel I've got anything to prove, and I'd be really disappointed if my life turned out that I'd put myself and my career first, because that doesn't mean that much to me...So in that respect I'm not a feminist; I don't feel I pave the way for other women. If I was really ambitious I might feel differently, but I have no desire to get up there [hand gestures imply that she is talking about getting a higher-level role].

LD2 (26-35/L/No ch.)

Thus Marie and Magda, along with one other mother, feel that their choice to prioritise their domestic lives over their working lives, and therefore limit their ambition compared to some of their other female colleagues, means that they have sidestepped the need for feminism. Both recognise however, that had they in fact wanted to reach a higher-level role, then they may have encountered difficulties

attributed to processes of gender inequality and as a consequence, would be more likely to acknowledge a direct need to fight for equality along feminist principles. This group of mothers are the minority however, including only three out of the 18 journalists with children interviewed. As discussed below, although many mothers talked about their experiences in relation to promotional restrictions, most framed being in lower-level roles not necessarily as a deliberate life choice but more of a reluctant reaction to the conflict between motherhood and being a journalist.

The fourth group of responses can be encapsulated by the phrase 'I'm not a feminist, but...' (also found in work by Taylor 1996; Aronson 2003). Seven journalists, younger women (non-mothers) mainly from women's magazines, suggested that although they would never self-identify as a feminist, they actually support many of the underlying feminist principles. There seemed to be a reluctance to align themselves in any way with the term 'feminism'. The following excerpts from interviews with Sophie and Samantha (both women's magazine journalists) exemplify this view:

Interviewer: What do you associate with the term feminism?

Sophie: Greenham Common. Burning bras. Quite divisive, old-fashioned views. I think of lesbians as well actually if I'm honest. The word feminism is quite scary...There's almost a taboo around it. The issues are still very relevant but the term is very

derogatory now. It denotes slight man-hatred: all men are bastards. But even in journalism, men are still paid more for the equivalent job that women do. I have feminist ideas but I'm not a feminist. There should be another word for it.

MMg1 (26-35/H/No ch.)

Samantha: I'm afraid the term feminism carries rather too strong an image of hairy women in dungarees for me. I really can't be bothered arguing over whether I'm Mrs or Ms or whether I should use my maiden name or my husband's name...But the really important feminist issues - pay, equality of opportunity in education and employment, violence against women and stuff like that - of course these are as relevant as ever.

Interviewer: So would you call yourself a feminist?

Samantha: I'd avoid that name, that label.

WMg4 (26-35/L/No ch.)

In a similar way to the journalists' responses which were identified as fitting with the first group (discussed above), both Sophie and Samantha appear to associate feminism with stereotypical views of radical second-wave feminists. They are aware that feminism is seen by many today as tantamount to a derogatory word. However what distinguishes these interviewees is their articulation of apparently

reconciled contradictory beliefs. Despite their, in many cases vehement, rejection of the term itself, these women defend the underlying feminist tenet that gender inequality exists and should be challenged. It is noteworthy that this group is comprised of mainly women's magazine journalists. As discussed in section 6.1.1 above, women's magazines often contain messages of female empowerment (Gauntlett 2002; Massoni 2004; Gill 2009), but mainly on an individualised basis. Perhaps this group of magazine journalists (which make up approximately a third of the interviewees from women's magazine) have been in some way influenced by or attracted to such ideas; thus although they have identified a need to fight against gender inequality, they reject collective action in the form of feminism. However, even if this is not the case, it is important to highlight the fact that the majority of the women's magazine journalists interviewed did not acknowledge the usefulness of feminism (to a greater or lesser extent)⁵⁶.

Thirteen journalists' responses form the fifth and final group. These women all identified themselves as feminists, however they define feminism. In discussing this group, it is firstly informative to examine which of the interviewees considered themselves to be feminists, before moving on to address what they perceive feminism to be.

⁵⁶ This issue is discussed further, in the context of the working culture of women's magazines, in section 6.2.2 below

Seven out of the 10 interviewees from the 46-55 age group self-identified as feminists when asked. All of these women have children; however in addition to motherhood, their similar ages cannot be dismissed as irrelevant. From the explanations given by many of these journalists, it may not necessarily be just their age which should be considered a factor here, but more specifically, a generational effect appears to be in place. Phillipa is the editor of a monthly women's magazine and Jane is a higher-level journalist working for a daily newspaper; both are in this age group:

Interviewer: What would you associate with the term 'feminism'?

Phillipa: I would just say it was equal opportunities for women with men. Simple. I'm a feminist and I don't understand any woman who wouldn't call herself a feminist. But I see it as a younger generation thing – they maybe haven't felt disadvantaged in the same way, so therefore they have this negative idea of what feminism is. But feminism is only about being accepted on equal terms as men and having the same rights, chances and opportunities – how can you not be a feminist if you're a woman?..But I guess people of my age – we've grown up with earning different money to a male colleague... It's not as bad as it was...So maybe they haven't

had the same injustice really. We're all women here, so its really not a problem anymore.

MMg6 (46-55/Ed./1 ch.)

Jane: Well I was born in the 60s so I'm a feminist through and through. I find it totally incomprehensible that people go 'oh yes I think women are equal. But I'm not a feminist' – I don't understand that. Because of course, if you want equality, then you're a feminist...But younger women - from younger generations, they've grown up in a different environment haven't they – all 'girl power' and such. They find it hard to see what's right in front of their nose!

Interviewer: Which is?

Jane: Well, you know – they don't recognise that actually we're not equal, and that scares me.

LD5 (46-55/H/3 ch.)

Phillipa and Jane both explicitly refer to the idea of generational differences between women. Along with many other women in this age group, they draw a distinction between themselves and younger women who are more likely to dismiss feminism as irrelevant. They display an awareness of growing up during a time when feminism may have been viewed by many as more significant – a period often referred to as the 'second-wave' of the movement (Gillis *et al.* 2007).

Nevertheless, there is a subtle yet potentially significant difference in the way that the two journalists talk about this issue. Phillipa asserts that younger journalists have grown up in a society with less acute gender inequalities, causing them to reject the need for espousal of feminist beliefs. Conversely Jane, whilst also identifying a trend for younger generations of women to be influenced by the prevalence of post-feminist 'girl power' rhetoric, contends that such ideas mask the reality of persistent gender inequalities, arguing that feminism remains as applicable as ever, despite the fact that younger women reject it. This difference in perspectives was also found within the interviews with other magazine and newspaper journalists from this age group. Thus the contrast between magazine and newspaper journalists' responses in this group may indicate that whilst the generation a journalist is from may play a part in influencing their attitude to feminism, the occupational culture of the publication they work for must also be considered a factor. It is possible that, as previously suggested, the journalists' experiences working within the predominantly female demographic of women's magazine organisations, coupled with messages of female empowerment within the output, may deflect attention from the extent of gender inequalities in society today.

Of the 13 journalists in this group, 10 are mothers (out of a possible 18 interviewees with children). Nina and Raihannah are both broadsheet journalists who have children; at the time of the interview,

Raihannah was on maternity leave with her first child, and planned to return to journalism only as a freelance:

Nina: I think there's enormous naivety among younger women about the levels of equality that we have, or the meaning of that equality...To the younger journalists I now say 'Look around you if you are supposed to be a journalist; ask yourself why there are very few women older than you with young kids'...They are obviously in for a bit of a rude awakening!...It did take me a while to realise though. When I first started, before I had the kids, I really wasn't sure about feminism – quite cynical about it really to be honest...That's all changed now!

BS14 (46-55/H/3 ch.)

Raihannah: I suppose it did cross my mind [when first started as a journalist] that 'God, there's very few women here in this newsroom!'. But I didn't really think too much about it to be honest. I had never thought about being a woman in that way – never thought it made a difference. I guess looking back, if someone had asked me if I was a feminist, I might have – and this makes me cringe now – I might have just laughed at them! But as I got older, and quite a few of my friends started getting to that age that they were having babies...I stopped and thought about it...There are hardly any women in the highly paid jobs in

journalism, and I'm sure that's partly to do with the way they treat you as a parent. You are pretty much forced to, well not literally forced, but the situation means that it makes sense to just leave and go freelance...Anyway, what I was trying to say was that that's when I realised that maybe feminism has a point. It's not fair that women have to leave when they want a family.

BS13 (26-35/H/1 ch.)

Continuing the examination of motherhood in section 5.2.2 and above, the interviewees' comments suggest that when a female journalist has children, her experiences at work may lead her to identify with the feminist goal of combating gender equality, if she does not already do so. This also supports the suggestion that attitudes to feminism among female journalists are to some extent related to their experiences at work in journalism – and that consequently, for many journalists, disregard for gender as a factor affecting problems relating to inequalities at work (prompted by dominant occupational cultural beliefs) may continue unless questioned as a result of personal experience.

Building upon this suggestion, a significant number of the journalists who self-identified as feminists described how they felt that their experiences at work as a journalist directly inspired them to recognise gender inequalities and consequently align themselves with

the feminist movement. Charlotte works for a local weekly newspaper; Hannah and Catherine are both broadsheet journalists:

Charlotte: I was quite naïve before I started this job – you hear about all these women that have achieved what they want to achieve, and I used to think ‘well things are equal now and women do have a chance’. But now I realise that – I mean we do have more of a chance really, but we do still have to work towards that, so I don’t think equality is completely established yet...I’d say I’m a feminist now.

LW1 (20-25/L/No ch.)

Hannah: When I was at uni I campaigned against having a Women’s Officer on the union exec! I was an unfeminist as you could get. And I think that is because when you go through school and university, it seems to be like a level playing field. Obviously women are succeeding more than men, academically. But then you get into work and suddenly you realise that actually you were wrong. And also that whole thing about childcare has got to be a part of it – journalism is especially bad for that...I haven’t encountered it myself yet but I do imagine that what happens is that a lot of people, like me, realise suddenly that feminism might have had a point! It’s sad because we’re being

sold this idea that it's over and the war's been won, and that everything was achieved in the 70s, when actually it's got worse. And this means women are even less likely to fight back because we're being sold this idea that if you think there's inequality then you are just being silly...So you believe it. And it's just not true.

BS11 (26-35/L/No ch.)

Catherine: I think feminism is simply the belief that there should be equality of the sexes – equal right to things like opportunities, pay, and I don't see how you could argue with it really. I think that it is definitely still relevant today. The pay gap is in just about every sector! There's still lots of battles to be fought...Those people who are so young they think we have 'girl power' now and feminism isn't relevant – maybe when they get a bit older and their male colleagues are rising up the pay scale and they're not, they might change their minds, like I did.

BS15 (46-55/H/1 ch.)

Such comments build upon the argument that for some female journalists, experiences at work can shape views on the existence of gender inequalities, and subsequently on the relevance of feminism in contemporary society. Drawing together the opinions of all the

interviewees who support the feminist cause, there appear to be two key themes emerging from their talk about feminism. The first is a description of feminism as a perspective which believes in the need for equal rights and opportunities for women. Catherine (above), and Angie and Wendy (midmarket journalists, below) all view feminism in this way:

Angie: I suppose feminism is equal rights, equal pay...It's still relevant today. We haven't achieved it all at all...if you asked if I was a feminist I would definitely say yes. I would mainly associate feminism with equal pay, which I think is a huge, huge issue, because I think if you grant that, quite a lot of other things follow. And I would associate it with rights to healthcare and education...But there's this idea now that we can kind of be ironic about it now and wear stocking and suspenders and do pole-dancing, and it's empowering rather than just buying into a male fantasy, and I do wonder what happens if you're fat, or just shy, or disabled and you want to have sex? Where is your sexual identity then? Where is your empowerment? We need to work together to fight it, you know. We can't do it on our own.

MM5 (46-55/H/2 ch.)

Wendy: You see it in the broadsheets quite a lot, you know: 'there's nothing left to fight for' and I don't agree with that. I think there's a stigma around the idea of feminism and a lot of young

– well, maybe any-age women – would be reluctant to label themselves as feminists. Not me though! I don't really understand why women would have a problem with saying that they are. I guess that's just the way that the media's portrayed it...But there's a lot to fight for still. We simply don't have equal rights do we, in so many different areas!...I think it's important to fight for what you believe in. We all need to pull together and work together. And to do that we need to at the very least be able to say that we are feminists – see it as a positive thing.

MM3 (36-45/S.ed/1 ch.)

Both Angie and Wendy thus see feminism as a way in which rights such as equal pay regardless of sex might be achieved through collective action. They both also identify a cultural opposition to feminism and what it is perceived to stand for, within wider society. Angie's comments in particular, stand out as an attack on the more individualistic approaches to contemporary gender identities, popularised today within media publications such as women's magazines where female empowerment is said to be demonstrated, for example, by women actively seeking ways to turn themselves into sexual objects – 'ironic sexism'. Such output contributes to creating a climate whereby feminist goals are either dismissed, or believed to be fulfilled through individual freedom of choice for women. It is therefore unlikely to be coincidental that, of the women describing themselves as

feminists, most of those working in women's magazines included some element of this in their interpretation of feminism. Kelly is a higher-level journalist and Roberta an editor, both working for monthly women's magazines:

Kelly: I wouldn't want to abide sexism, if that's what feminism means. I suppose in magazines it's a really positive example of how an office can be run successfully by women. A great example of women who are empowered – that's what feminism is. Women these days are interested in politics and also handbags! I think today there's nothing wrong with embracing your girlie feminine side and also talking about serious issues, or being a mum. That's why the mag is great...I would never say we're a feminist magazine, but we do try and embrace what it is to be a 21st century woman...Addressing a powerful woman of today. If you're a woman and you're earning a certain amount of money...you can spend that money helping people in the third world, or you can spend that money on a pair of Gucci shoes; you can work or you can stay at home...allowing women to have choice to think about what they want to and buy what they want to. And we know that they do – they've already made the decision to do what they want to do. So that is a form of feminism. These days women are very well educated, they know

what they want. Women are some of the biggest consumers – big buying power and independent incomes.

MMg3 (26-35/H/No ch.)

Roberta: I'm definitely a feminist...Feminism is all about choice for me – women should be able to make their own choices in life. You can't judge them too much. Otherwise you turn into Germaine Greer who dismisses the life choices of so many young women. And that's wrong.

MMg7 (46-55/Ed./1 ch)

Thus the prevailing understanding of what feminism means is rooted in the idea of female empowerment and above all, choice. The concept of 'freedom to choose' appears to frame the discursive limits of their world, in that everything can be explained by it. This post-feminist rhetoric reflects the discourse identifiable within the product they produce, supporting the suggestion outlined in chapter 5 and above that there may be a link between the beliefs of female journalists (and consequently to some extent the prevailing occupational culture) and the output being produced. This link may not occur in all cases; other variables such as motherhood and age/generation (to use the examples discussed above) may also play a part. However the occupational culture of journalistic organisations cannot be dismissed

when considering the beliefs of journalists about gender equality and feminism.

6.2.2 Feminism at Work in Journalism

As the discussion above demonstrates, the interviews prompted a variety of different responses to feminism from the female journalists. In order to further explore the extent to which these interview responses might reflect ideas about feminism expressed more generally within the culture of journalistic organisations, the interviewees were asked to think about any examples of occasions when feminist ideas were foregrounded within discussions in their workplace.

Responses to this request divided the journalists into two groups. The first group was the largest, with the majority of interviewees suggesting that gender equality debates and feminist ideas were only referred to in derogatory terms at work, or else not at all. Journalists from every different type of publication, and at every job level, were well represented in this group. For example Sarah, working for a weekly women's magazine and Tania, who works as a tabloid journalist, both refer to a widespread recognition of feminist ideas as simply not relevant today. Their comments consequently suggest that the view of feminism as old-fashioned, expressed by many other

individual female journalists within the research interviews (discussed above), is mirrored in mainstream journalistic occupational culture:

Sarah: We just don't really talk about it [feminist ideas]. If there was ever a situation where something came up and we found out that a guy that was Junior Writer was earning £80,000 or something, then we'd discuss it – but that really wouldn't happen would it – these days?!...But it doesn't really ever come up. It's not relevant to our lives really. Not now. Everyone would think I was stupid to mention it.

WMg1 (20-25/H/No ch.)

Tania: I actually think that if I was to walk into my office and I said 'I am a feminist', I'd probably get laughed at because: 'what does it mean? Has she gone mad? Or gone back in time?' I think they'd be saying. People would expect me, if I was a feminist, to be sitting outside with a placard, demanding something...it's quite an old-fashioned thing. In everything to do with my life - that's not a term that is needed in any way...Everything's equal; I don't think we need to be pushing for those sort of stories in our paper...But if I met you in 10 years time I might have different view, because a lot of it does so depend on your social situation. I can see it would be really hard

to have kids in this industry, which does explain why all the senior journalists do tend to be men I guess.

T1 (26-35/L/No ch.)

Tania's comment ends with a disclaimer; in her mid-twenties now, she acknowledges the possibility that as she gets older, subsequent life experience might cause her to start to question the accepted perspective on feminist beliefs prevalent within her organisation. Although, along with Sarah and Tania, many of the journalists in the first group of responses talked about the disregarding of feminist ideas within journalistic occupational culture in an uncritical way, other journalists were more critical. A significant but small number of older interviewees (aged 36+) were personally supportive of feminist ideas. However they suggested that because the dominant discourse within journalistic culture foregrounds the irrelevance of feminism so strongly, they consistently find it difficult to express this view, even when their personal experience indicates that it may be beneficial to champion feminist ideals. Thus this group's responses focused on the difficulties they felt when their views conflicted with those of other (often younger) journalists. Wendy is a midmarket subeditor, Jane and Kirsten are higher-level journalists working for a local daily and a midmarket newspaper respectively:

Wendy: As a mum in journalism, deep down you get to know it's all rubbish – all that talk among the younger girls about how campaigns for women's rights and feminism and that...Not that I'd ever admit it really. It's just something you know – you feel...It's funny. When I said I was meeting somebody to talk about women in journalism, my boss who is actually female and a single mother, said 'well there's not much to say really is there?'

MM3 (36-45/S.ed/1 ch.)

Interviewer: So what about the other females in the office. Do you think they'd agree with you on this?

Jane: I think they'd probably go more on the line that feminism's not relevant anymore, a lot of them, because they are mostly in their 20s, so they see things differently to me.

Interviewer: Would you ever discuss your views [on feminism] with them?

Jane: God no! Not even with the other women around my age really, either. It's just not done...not something you talk about in public, at work, feminism.

LD5 (46-55/H/3 ch.)

Kirsten: No, feminism is definitely a no-no in terms of discussion topics at work. Seen as outdated really. And you have to just go

along with it...But they've not fought the battles yet, the younger women, so they don't have that little angry question mark in their heads every time someone makes a joke and implies that fighting for (women) to be treated equally is something from the history books...When I have my morning meetings, the only other woman in the room's the secretary!

Me: Do you think they'll change their minds ever?

Kirsten: Yes definitely if they have kids. They will suddenly start realising and silently struggling away...But also it's an age thing. I'm 38 but if you're 23 you're not a threat to anybody because you're so low down...You have no power. But once you're on a level with more power, you're a threat. And when that happens, they might suddenly start wondering why it's OK for everyone to dismiss feminism as something from the past.

MM4 (36-45/H/1 ch.)

The older journalists' comments build upon the discussion in Chapter 5, centred around issues of motherhood and the vertical segregation of women in UK journalism. Again, it appears that in many cases, older journalists are more likely to have experienced first-hand, the many difficulties of being female within an organisation where male colleagues often find it easier to succeed. However, as the interview excerpts show, any consequent personal disagreement with the dominant cultural view of feminism within journalistic working culture is

often downplayed. Although the interviews highlight that this is a conflict affecting many older female journalists, it seems that many do not feel able to even discuss their experiences amongst themselves. Their knowledge is therefore fragmented as well as subordinate to the dominant cultural assumption that feminism is irrelevant.

The second group of responses should in fact be considered a very small minority as they were from only five journalists, four of which worked at the same publication. It seems that the specific organisational culture (see Parker 2000; Priola 2007) of one broadsheet newspaper has shaped an atmosphere whereby it is very acceptable to publically support feminist ideas, as Serena's (lower-level) and Laura's (higher-level) comments illustrate:

Laura: [Feminism is] not a dirty word in this building. No. I'd be extremely surprised if I spoke to a woman here who said she wasn't a feminist. I'd find it strange if I spoke to a man who said he wasn't a feminist actually! But having said that, if I went to other papers and said that, I think I'd get quite a different reaction...It's fairly unique, this company culture.

Interviewer: Do you think this newspaper attracts journalists who support those sort of things before they arrive?

Laura: Yes to a point. It's the type of paper it is. If you work here then you are probably pretty tolerant and into equal opportunities for everybody. But also it's the culture I suppose.

BS10 (26-35/L/No ch.)

Serena: I think because it's quite an intelligent place I'd guess that people here would assume all women were feminists. But they might mean different things by it. They'd certainly think that all the women expected to be treated equally.

BS7 (26-35/H/2 ch.)

Following a similar perspective, differences in the organisational cultures of some women's magazines were highlighted by Danielle, who works for a monthly magazine for a slightly older readership. When discussing whether she feels comfortable talking about feminist ideas at work, she asserted:

Yes I do, but I think that it depends on the magazine. I think that there's kind of a trendy idea that feminism is outdated and that women have got equality and we're already there. And you might get that attitude on some magazines. But certainly the people I've worked with would say they were feminists. It has something to do with the sort of magazine they work for, to

some extent. The younger mags are all on about girl-power etc. So maybe their staff would be more likely to subscribe to the trendy idea of feminism being irrelevant. Whereas we like to think we're a little broader minded, being slightly older. We sometimes look at women's rights and stuff, in our articles.

MMg4 (26-35/H/No ch.)

Danielle thus suggests that her magazine is staffed with female journalists who may be more likely to reflect the values of the readership demographic, and who are therefore likely to attach importance to a feminist point of view, shaping an organisational culture in which feminist ideas are accepted as more than a subordinate knowledge.

Thus despite the wide range of beliefs about gender equality/feminism personally expressed by the female journalists during the interviews, in which a relatively significant number of interviewees viewed 'feminist ideas' (however these were interpreted) in to some extent a positive light (see 6.2.1 above), when talking about whether they felt able to discuss these opinions within the context of the journalistic working culture, only a minority felt that they would, could or should. Knowledge gained from their experiences as a women in journalism (especially as an older woman and/or as a woman with children) is therefore more likely to lead to an internal conflict whereby

colleagues may criticise or discount feminist values but it is not seen as viable to dispute this. These women may be 'silently struggling away' (as Kirsten explains); their knowledge is not publically shared knowledge. Their experiences thus remain hidden behind the more accepted experience of their non-feminist colleagues.

6.3 Conclusion

This chapter has investigated beliefs about gender equality and feminism, examining links between the ways that women are portrayed and the implicit messages contained within journalistic output, the personal beliefs of female journalists, and the dominant ideas present within journalistic work cultures. It appears that the majority of female journalists expressed an awareness of positive images of women in media output, drawing on post-feminist rhetoric of female empowerment and freedom to choose. When discussing the relationship between such output and the nature of journalistic work culture, the journalists' responses suggested that there may exist a recursive cycle, whereby output is likely to be to some extent shaped by journalistic culture, which in turn may be somewhat determined by the output being produced.

The majority of female journalists did not identify as feminists, with only a small group of mainly older interviewees doing so. The remaining journalists' perspectives were usefully viewed along a spectrum of beliefs, with most containing elements identifiable as post-feminist (see Figure 6.1 above). The final section of this chapter revealed that when at work, only a small minority of the female journalists wanted to and felt comfortable enough to discuss feminist ideas. It seems that the post-feminist messages found within output are also found within journalistic culture – strengthening the likelihood that the two are linked. Those female journalists who did express a conviction in the need to fight for gender equality in general terms (whether identifying that fight as 'feminist' or not), were reluctant to draw on these beliefs within their workplace environment to shape output, and more generally. Gender equality is therefore held up as an unquestioned reality, with the interviewees much more likely to turn to explanations which fall within the post-feminist framework to interpret their lives as female journalists.

Chapter 7

Conclusion

This study set out to examine the experiences and beliefs of female journalists in the UK. More specifically, it looked for similarities and differences in the journalists' accounts, identifying significant patterns which revealed the way/s that these women, who are employed within an industry which contributes to the perpetuation of post-feminist ideas, interpret their working lives. The research therefore encompassed a focus on the journalistic occupational culture, as well as examining the beliefs about gender equality espoused by the women involved. It thus also provided an overview of the extent to which female journalists viewed being female as influencing their experiences at work, as well as their attitudes towards feminism and feminist ideas. This chapter will discuss the outcome of this research, drawing together and critically examining the key findings. The chapter concludes by addressing the contribution of these findings to different fields of knowledge, before reflecting on the research project as a whole.

The research centres around the following overall research question: 'Employed to assist in the creation of a product which often contributes to sustaining a post-feminist discourse, how do female journalists experience and understand their lives, in terms of gender equality?'. This central focus was then examined through the use of

three key research questions; the following discussion will address each of these questions in turn.

Research Question 1: How do female journalists experience and think about their occupation?

Journalism in the UK is an industry with a strong occupational culture. The participants' accounts reveal many similarities in the ways that they describe their working lives, both when talking about their experiences and also when reflecting on journalism as an occupation. Journalism is viewed as a job which one should have an innate passion for; it is framed as a vocation that many wish to follow but in which only a lucky few actually manage to work. A considerable number of the interviewees expressed a shared conception of journalism as a fast-paced, dynamic environment, with equality of opportunity for all. Many viewed working as a journalist as a privilege and were keen to focus talk towards praising the industry, invoking a strong sense of belonging and pride, ultimately framing journalism as a good career for women. Alongside such views also lingers a cultural repertoire which implements a discourse of choice. A key theme within the interviewee's views of working in this industry was thus the way that journalists are able to, and in fact are *required* to, take an active role in directing the path of their own careers. Rooted in the idea that journalism fosters a meritocratic working environment whereby career success (and failure) is crucially seen as dictated by personal talent and effort, the central

tenet is that anyone can succeed if they push themselves hard enough, and are good at their job. Thus the occupational culture of journalism is strongly individualistic, with references to journalists' autonomy and power to choose appearing frequently in explanations for the relative position of men and women within the demographic of journalistic organisations.

This study is also valuable in drawing attention to differences between newspaper and women's magazine work cultures. As discussed above, journalistic culture can be seen to be extremely individualistic. However, this tendency appears to be manifested in slightly different ways in newspaper and women's magazine cultures. Individualism within daily life at a newspaper (particularly within the newsrooms of national publications) is often exhibited through hard-nosed, 'dog-eat-dog', competitiveness. Many women referred to this acute competitiveness, often described as 'cut-throat', as a character trait which held the key to 'getting ahead' in journalism. Thus this dominant occupational culture functions to place the most value on what are constructed as inherently masculine traits. Siedler asserts that 'within modernity the masculine is defined in opposition to the feminine, for we (men) have to constantly prove...that we are not 'soft' or 'weak'' (1997:42). The everyday lives of these journalists are thus shaped by powerful cultural ideas which frame women as treated equally to men, whilst at the same time rewarding those who conform to ways of working which are also antithetical to being feminine.

Female journalists working for women's magazines however, revealed that tendency towards individualism may be less conspicuous within their working environment. Nevertheless, many of the women's magazine journalists (especially those from monthly publications), whilst emphasising a strong sense of teamwork, did refer to an inherent 'bitchy' element within their work culture, whereby women are judged on the choices they make. This mirrors the post-feminist messages intrinsic to much women's magazine output (Budgeon and Currie 1995; Gill 2009). This, whilst different to newspaper culture, may still be seen as somewhat individualistic in the sense that the journalists are framed as having the freedom to choose, despite these choices being constrained by shared perceptions of what is the 'right' and 'wrong' way to choose to behave, dress etc.

The research findings also highlighted that occupational cultures of newspaper and women's magazine journalism should be viewed as competing with co-existing 'micro-cultures' found within individual departments and organisational cultures unique to specific publications. However, only a minority of female journalists perceived their work culture in this way, with most instead viewing their working lives in the context of common experiences shared by other journalists. Thus whilst these 'micro-cultures' need to be taken into account when considering factors influencing journalists' experiences of work, shared cultural characteristics are seen to be dominant in most cases.

Perceptions of being a female journalist in the UK are thus shaped by a sense of belonging to a wider community of journalists, with an emphasis on commonality of experience and shared attitudes to work.

In addition to pointing to the role of occupational culture in shaping the working lives of female journalists in the UK, this study contributes to existing research which previously suggested that women in journalism were not experiencing equality (Gallagher 1995; Women in Journalism 1998; Journalism Training Forum 2002), but instead encountering barriers to their success. Despite there being approximately equal numbers of men and women, vertical segregation appears to be occurring whereby women tend to be found in positions with less power and privilege. In addition, a further confirmed structural barrier functions to horizontally segregate women, with most working in areas which produce output for women and/or are traditionally associated with 'soft' output, such as features or women's magazines. A third barrier also identified is that of motherhood, which in fact functions in such a way as to propagate both vertical and horizontal clustering. Being a mother both symbolically and practically excludes women from accessing the same potential for success available to their male counterparts and childless women. The time and financial constraints associated with having a family mean that women with children are less likely to achieve their potential at work. They may find alternative solutions such as going freelance or working within less prestigious, less pressurised roles. However, this study has found that

even if a woman does not currently have children (and 77% of journalists did not have dependent children in 2002 – Journalism Training Forum, 2002:7), their sex may mean that they experience discrimination as the journalistic occupational culture frames them as *potential* mothers, with the associated assumption that women will consequently be less committed to their careers than men. The nature of journalistic occupational culture (particularly within newspaper culture) means that some women may succeed by sidestepping being framed in this way: either by accentuating their feminine attractiveness, or changing behaviour to fit in as ‘one of the boys’. However, if these individuals wish to then start a family, they may be unable to avoid being viewed first and foremost as a mother and increasing the chance of experiencing discrimination as a result. With newspaper culture encouraging and rewarding those who follow the path of the ‘good’ journalist – an ideal type which is constructed around stereotypically male characteristics, motherhood may be viewed as undermining competency when at work in this ‘dog-eat-dog’ world.

Research Question 2: What are female journalists’ beliefs and understandings about gender equality?

This study has provided a valuable insight into the way that female journalists think about gender equality and ultimately, feminism, as an issue. The majority of the female journalists identified positive images of women within journalistic output, with messages which frame

women as both powerful and equal (with mainly tabloid and midmarket newspaper journalists not fitting this pattern). Thus many female journalists maintain an awareness of what can be seen as post-feminist output within the product of the journalism industry. The majority of the participants also demonstrated that they personally espoused post-feminist ideas, with a common conviction in the existence of gender equality today. Only seven actively identified themselves as feminists, with a significant number attacking feminism as outdated despite the fact that the women also saw a continued need to fight for gender equality in society. As suggested in chapter 6, many of the journalists' reactions to feminism seemed to be reactions to an exaggerated popular (and media-supported) construction – a post-feminist narrow caricature which views feminists as extremists with no function in today's society other than to cause problems.

Thus many female journalists viewed their gender as an irrelevant or positive factor to some extent, often co-opting the watchwords of feminism such as 'choice' and 'female empowerment' to describe the way that they see women as experiencing gender equality. There is however often a blurring of feminism and post-feminism – whilst they might use the language of feminism, these women frequently detach it from its original meanings. Instead of talk of being 'empowered' through collective political and economic equality, these rights are assumed to be already in place; discussion of equal pay or fair maternity rights has been replaced in many cases with an

emphasis on the individual. 'Freedoms' such as consumer and lifestyle choice were repeatedly used as evidence for gender equality today:

Eleanor: It's all about choice. We can choose who we want to be.

MMg2 (26-35/L/No ch.)

Whilst not all the interviewees thought this way, the fact that a significant number did should not be disregarded as either coincidental or harmless. As discussed in more detail below, should these women experience discrimination or be treated differently at work due to their gender, they may be more likely to disregard feminist ways of thinking and instead embrace post-feminist explanations which reduce the experience to one of chance or choice, rather than seeing it as part of a larger structural pattern of gender inequality.

Research Question 3: Is there any relationship between the two?

- a) What is the nature of this relationship?*
- b) To what extent is a distinctive occupational culture of journalism a significant factor in this relationship?*

Research Questions 1 and 2 investigate two seemingly disparate elements of the interviewees' lives: their experiences at work as female journalists, and their beliefs about gender (in)equality. A clear parallel can be seen between these however. The individualistic

discourse which many journalists use to frame their understandings of their working world (shaped by the shared occupational culture), has much in common with the 'choice' rhetoric which permeates prevalent (post-feminist) beliefs about the state of gender equality in UK society today. A significant number of the journalists interpreted their working lives with a focus on individual agency, viewing journalism as a meritocratic occupation. They work within an industry which prides itself being a 'craft' – being a journalist is seen as ownership of a set of transferable skills which allow all to compete equally for success. Many of the women thus explained away gendered patterns within the demographics of journalistic organisations in addition to experiences at work that could potentially be seen as evidence of sex discrimination, often framing these as either isolated or coincidental occurrences.

Whilst many, especially older, journalists were not necessarily optimistic about their future career success, a relatively small number directly referred to gender when asked to consider why this might be. Over half the journalists interviewed viewed their gender as having no impact at all on their working lives, or else saw it as helpful rather than a hindrance. Many did so by utilising a rhetoric of choice. They consequently framed their career success (or lack of) in the context of a view of journalism as a career within which one can achieve almost anything they choose if they have the talent – each individual is seen to be judged purely on his or her skills and hard work. Furthermore, many of those who were sympathetic to the feminist cause revealed that

journalistic culture is very much resistant to such beliefs. Applying feminist principles to interpret experiences at work would be seen as irrational, since there is an inherent rejection of structural explanations of inequality built into the post-feminist perspective.

It is likely that the parallels that can be drawn between the post-feminist ideas which characterise many of the female journalists' beliefs about gender (equality), and the individualistic nature of journalistic culture are not coincidental. The findings of this study suggest that these two elements may be interrelated, with each justifying and sustaining the other's existence. Thus journalistic occupational culture dovetails neatly with post-feminist thought, with both furthering a rhetoric of equality of opportunity, choice and personal empowerment – a discourse which frequently appeared when the interviewees talked about both their experiences at work, and about gender equality more generally.

Journalists are also key players in producing cultural products which themselves have been identified as containing post-feminist ideas (Aronson 2003; Gill 2003; Banyard 2010; Walter 2010). As discussed in chapter 1, Banyard (2010:12) recently blamed the UK media for contributing to what she describes as the ever more persistent 'illusion' of gender equality in our society today. If, as has been suggested, 'journalism is not produced in a vacuum' (Harcup 2004:12), the significance of this factor should not be underestimated.

Despite the growing numbers of women in UK journalism (Journalism Training Forum 2002), through the accounts of the journalists involved in this study can be glimpsed three (interrelated) structural barriers to equality experienced by female journalists (as discussed above). However, many of these women are unlikely to engage with feminist interpretations of their experiences at work. Feminism itself is viewed by many as outdated and irrelevant; post-feminist ideas - prevalent within the journalistic product and popular within general society today – fit well with accepted individualistic beliefs about the journalism industry's meritocratic barriers and a shared view of what it means to be a journalist. Female journalists are thus more likely to access and adopt explanations of their experiences at work which frame them as free agents with the power to direct their own lives through free choices, as opposed to addressing the possibility of gendered structures that may be functioning to constrain those choices.

Having examined the study's main findings through revisiting the key research questions, the discussion will now turn to address the contribution of the research to three areas: knowledge about journalism as an occupation, the study of work and organisations, and contemporary feminist thought.

As a study of journalism as an occupation, a central value of this research lies in revealing the power and impact of journalistic occupational culture, whilst also directing attention towards persistent structural barriers to success for female journalists in the UK. Whilst differences between different areas of journalism continue to be of importance and should be taken into account, the shared elements of work culture mean that many journalists working for newspapers and women's magazines actually experience and interpret their working lives in a relatively similar way. As discussed above, beyond creating a shared sense of belonging among journalists, it appears that within newspaper and women's magazine journalism, post-feminist ideas may be given precedence to the extent that female journalists may be more likely to disregard feminist arguments which frame their experiences in the context of persistent gender inequalities.

Changes within journalism in recent years have seen journalists subject to increased pressure to succeed, with an intensified workload and much job insecurity. This year, the editor of *The Guardian* (broadsheet newspaper), speaking about the state of the journalism industry today in the context of the current recession, asserted that 'insecurity is [the] condition of [this] journalistic age' (Ponsford 2010:1). The interviews in this study were conducted during 2006/07 (before the recession began in 2008). These recent developments are likely to have only intensified the sense of individualism inherent within journalistic culture, as journalists compete internally to remain in

employment. This study's findings consequently suggest a need for continued research into the impact of the changing economic climate on women in journalism. At a time when many will be anxious about their jobs, it may be that the individualistic element of occupational culture might gain in strength as competition for jobs increases.

This study is also valuable when viewed within the context of the wider field of the study of work organisations. At present the UK government is pushing for further recognition of the existence of gender inequalities at work in its Equality Bill (2009); included in this Bill are proposals to encourage more women to enter male-dominated professions. This research however, suggests that creating gender equality is a much more complex process than simply encouraging a more equal numerical split between male and female workers. The UK journalism industry can be seen as a case study in this regard, with its approximately equal numbers of men and women within what has previously been a male-dominated industry. Three powerful structural 'barriers' have been identified however, with female journalists experiencing both horizontal and vertical segregation, in addition to the 'barrier' of motherhood (which in fact functions to strengthen the existence of the first two barriers). This study consequently highlights the importance of drawing attention to the existence of powerful structures which may inhibit progression towards true gender equality within such organisations. The Equality Bill's success may therefore be

limited if it fails to address these issues and relies instead on the agency of individual women to make their own success.

This thesis also makes a significant contribution to recent debates surrounding the plight of feminism and the impact of post-feminism on the everyday lives of women. As many have already pointed out (Whelehan 2000; Tasker and Negra 2007; McRobbie 2009), feminism is now having to fight three battles at once: it must continue to attack the causes of gender inequality, it must fight against a continued backlash against feminism, and it must now also struggle against those who assert that gender equality has already been achieved. Indeed, only a small minority of my participants self-identified as feminist. Aside from those who used this label, there were still quite a few who did view being female as detrimental to their success at work, with some also recognising the existence of gender equality more generally. However, the study also reveals that the post-feminist undertones within the occupational culture of journalism meant that this knowledge was often subordinate to dominant understandings framing journalism as a meritocracy. Many of the women did not feel free to express their awareness of the impact of gender with colleagues at work.

Consequently this study contributes to recent work from feminists such as McRobbie (2009), Banyard (2010) and Walter (2010), who suggest that whilst there is still a need for feminism to

combat continued gender inequalities, this task is increasingly complicated by the rising popularity of ideas which effectively undermine it. Whilst there have always been challenges to feminism over the years, today's feminists must fight against claims that their goals have already been achieved, as well as popular cultural sentiments which frame them as outdated radicals who are making a fuss about nothing and maybe even creating more problems for relations between women and men. This post-feminist discourse is made even more difficult to contest as it includes a widespread focus on the ability of individual women to take advantage of the perceived level playing field by choosing to do whatever they want to. Whilst such a message does not initially appear to be contrary to feminist goals, on closer inspection it is clear that women are being encouraged to focus on themselves and only on themselves. The post-feminist cultural climate is therefore encouraging the assumption that gender inequalities are no longer shaping lives, whilst also promoting an individualistic sentiment in which the starting points for feminist action - shared experiences and collective thinking - are pushed back, replaced by a focus on the abilities and responsibilities of individual women to create their own success (and thus also take responsibility for any failure to achieve this). It is here where the post-feminist rhetoric functions to fracture feminism: collective actions cannot take place when structural causes are viewed as being caused by individual agents. Thus this research also reemphasises the significance of the structure/agency dynamic. Whilst the actions of individuals are not

completely determined by social structures, it is important that, especially when studying the impact of gender on our lives, they are not neglected as a key focus.

Feminism needs to fight back. The female journalists in this study are not cultural dupes who are the isolated victims of a false consciousness, they are actively making sense of their world in a way that fits neatly within the widely accepted post-feminist interpretation of the impact of gender on women's lives today. Feminists must begin to redress the balance by contesting exaggerated stereotypes of their movement and communicating its continued relevance to women today. The research findings suggest that there is no 'quick-fix' way of doing this, revealing the extent to which many women are effectively cut off from feminist interpretations of their lives due to the dominance of cultural discourses that offer alternative explanations.

Banyard (2010:207) suggests that feminist activism can be renewed only by moving 'firmly into the mainstream' and ensuring that it is 'recognised as one of the most important movements for social justice of our time'. The fight against post-feminism, as this study shows, must take into account the real life experiences of women today and the true impact of cultural beliefs and understandings about gender on the way these experiences are interpreted. Banyard's book is one of three of its kind (Power 2009; Banyard 2010; Walter 2010) published within the last year by feminists (for an audience which extends outside

of academia) who are directly addressing what they argue is a need for a refreshing of feminist politics, engaging with the everyday lives of women today. All three books received positive reviews and attracted some, if limited, media attention. They also resulted in/coincided with debates over the past year about the state of gender equality and the relevance of feminism within at least one broadsheet newspaper (The Times 2010), as well as BBC radio and television documentaries about feminism today (Radio 4 2009; BBC 4 2010). At a time when, as Power (2009:3) argues, 'we (women) are supposed to think that everything is just fine', perhaps it is publications such as these which might signal the beginning of a renewed attempt to fight back, encouraging women to consider the significance of feminist politics within their own lives.

I recognise that the findings of my study may not be generalisable beyond my sample of female journalists. The research took place at a specific point in the history of journalism and it is possible that, as suggested above and as is the case with much qualitative work, a similar project undertaken now would yield different results. The sample itself was not statistically representative of all UK journalists. However, due to the broad mix of different journalists included in the sample, the study should be viewed as providing a valuable and in-depth insight into the beliefs and experiences of female journalists from newspapers and women's magazines in the UK. The validity of my findings is also supported by the fact that I ensured that I continued to interview more and more journalists until I was certain that

the same key points were being communicated to me again and again, with only personal details changing. Thus whilst this study is not statistically generalisable, the central findings are a valuable starting point for a larger-scale version of this project, accessing a bigger sample of female journalists. In addition, a larger study may include the resources to use similar research questions to investigate the perspective of *male* as well as female journalists. It would be extremely worthwhile to be able to compare the sexes in this way, to discover whether male journalists experience the occupational culture of journalism differently, and examine the extent to which their beliefs about gender equality correspond to those held by their female counterparts.

This research has revealed that for many women in journalism, as for many women elsewhere in UK society, post-feminism has become a part of everyday life, 'placing the blame for women's subordination squarely back in the hands of women...sisters must do it for themselves' (Ross 2001:533). Female journalists however, work in an industry which fosters a distinctive occupational culture, one which also inherently undermines feminist thinking through its individualistic outlook, whilst framing journalism as 'a great place for women to work' (Tara - *BS6/26-35/L/No ch.*). It is only through examining these issues through the eyes of female journalists themselves that the true impact of post-feminism on their lives has been revealed.

Appendix 1 Cold-calling email template

Dear

Journalism has always been portrayed as a career with long and irregular hours, great pressure to succeed and much internal competition. In the past it was very much a male-dominated industry; now more women than ever have joined the profession. In the Journalism of today, does being female make a difference?

I am a PhD researcher at the University of Nottingham, and am hoping that you might be able to help me with my research about women working in UK journalism. [I obtained your email address via XXX], and you are one of 40 journalists I am contacting, in order to assemble a reasonably representative sample from around the UK.

My research, which is funded by the Economic and Social Research Council, involves me talking to individuals working for newspapers and women's magazines about their experiences of being a woman in journalism. It would be great if we could arrange to meet up and talk about your experiences. This would not take longer than an hour, and your anonymity would be ensured in anything published from the research.

I am based in Nottingham but will travel to meet you wherever is most convenient, at any time, as I realise journalists have extremely busy schedules. I would really appreciate your help with this. If you have any questions feel free to contact me, and if you would like to verify my identity, please contact my academic supervisor at the university (details below). I will telephone you within the next couple of weeks to ask if you are willing to contribute to my research.

Best wishes,

Anna Williams

My Details

Supervisor's Details

Appendix 2: Interview Schedules

Newspaper Interview Schedule – general themes/questions

Part 1: Working in Newspapers

1. Tell me about how you started out/career so far
2. Tell me about your current job
 - a) A 'typical' day at work? Hours/flexibility.
 - b) Day-to-day atmosphere at work? [Competitive? Pressured? Relaxed? Fun? Emphasis on Teamwork? Or more self-reliant independent working?]
3. Would you describe your job as an important part of your identity? [A vocation?]
4.
 - a) What are the best and worst aspects of your chosen career?
 - b) What makes a 'good' journalist?
5. Career plans for future?
6. Creative freedom in newspaper production: are there any external influences in terms of content of the newspaper?

For example: in magazines there tends to be pressure from advertisers:
any equivalent? Pressure from editors?

Part 2: Being Female - working in Newspapers

1. Do you believe that being female has ever affected your work and/or the way others work with you?
2.
 - a) Gender Balance in your workplace: numerical equality/variations by departments?:
 - b) Do you feel your work is equally valued to your male colleagues'?

3. Do you think that the gradual rise in the numbers of women working in newspapers has, or will, make a difference to the content of newspapers being produced?
4. Do you think areas of the media which are staffed by mostly females (such as women's magazines), are perceived of as equal in status to others areas where there tend to be more male employees [e.g.: other magazines, and newspapers]?
5. Have you ever been aware of any experiences of prejudice or sexist behaviour towards you or any of your female colleagues, because of your gender?
6. Any personal experiences of the difficulties of balancing home and work?
[Any colleagues with problems with conflict between motherhood and career?]

Part 3: Reflections on feminism and gender equality [no right or wrong answers]

1. What do you associate with the term 'feminism'? Relevant? Are we equal?
2. Do you think your opinions about gender equality/feminism have changed at all since entering the profession?
3. Have you ever been aware of any opinions about feminism/gender equality expressed by colleagues at work? [Typical in the industry as a whole?]
4. Have you ever considered the role of the media in portraying ideas to readers, about women, gender equality or the relevance of feminism?

Any Questions?

I was also wondering, if you don't mind, whether you knew any of colleagues, or other female journalists, who you think might be willing to be interviewed? Obviously I realise you might not want to give me any details now, without checking with them first, but if you could possibly think of anyone, I'd be grateful

Magazine Interview Schedule – general themes/questions

Part 1: Working in Women's Magazines

5. Tell me about how you started out/career so far
6. Tell me about your current job
 - a) A 'typical' day at work? Hours/flexibility.
 - b) Day-to-day atmosphere at work? [Competitive? Pressured? Relaxed? Fun? Emphasis on Teamwork? Or more self-reliant independent working?]
7. Would you describe your job as an important part of your identity? [A vocation?]
8.
 - a) What are the best and worst aspects of your chosen career?
 - b) What makes a 'good' journalist?
5. Career plans for future?
7. Creative freedom in women's magazines: are there any external influences in terms of content of the magazine?
For example: Pressure from editors?

Part 2: Being Female - Working in Women's Magazines

7. Do you believe that being female has ever affected your work and/or the way others work with you?

8. Gender Balance in your workplace: numerical equality/variations by departments?:
9. Do you think areas of the media which are staffed by mostly females (such as women's magazines), are perceived of as equal in status to others areas where there tend to be more male employees (e.g.: other magazines, and newspapers)?
10. Have you ever been aware of any experiences of prejudice or sexist behaviour towards you or any of your female colleagues, because of your gender?
11. Any personal experiences of the difficulties of balancing home and work? Any colleagues have problems with conflict between motherhood and career?

Part 3: Reflections on feminism and gender equality [no right or wrong answers]

1. What do you associate with the term 'feminism'? Relevant? Are we equal?
5. Do you think your opinions about gender equality/feminism have changed at all since entering the profession?
6. Have you ever been aware of any opinions about feminism/gender equality expressed by colleagues at work? [Typical in the industry as a whole?]
7. Have you ever considered the role of the media in portraying ideas to readers, about women, gender equality or the relevance of feminism?

Any Questions?

I was also wondering, if you don't mind, whether you knew any of colleagues, or other female journalists, who you think might be willing to be interviewed? Obviously I realise you might not want to give me any details now, without checking with them first, but if you could possibly think of anyone, I'd be grateful

Appendix 3 Interviewee Consent Form

University of Nottingham, School of Sociology and Social Policy

Consent Form

Title of Project:

Gender at work: women in journalism

Researcher:

Anna Williams

lqxalw@nottingham.ac.uk



The University of
Nottingham

FOR THE PARTICIPANT:

Please read this form and sign it if you agree with the following statements:

- I voluntarily agree to take part in this study.
- I have been given the opportunity to ask questions and discuss the study with the above investigator on all aspects of the study and have understood the advice and information given as a result.
- I authorise the investigator to disclose the results of my participation in the study but not my name, or any other identifying details.
- I understand that information about me recorded during the study will be kept in a secure database. If data is transferred to others it will be made anonymous. Data will be kept for 7 years after the results of this study have been published.
- I understand that I can ask for further instructions or explanations at any time.
- I understand that I am free to withdraw from the study at any time, without having to give a reason for withdrawing.

Participant's Name:

.....

Address:

.....
.....

Telephone number:

.....

Email Address:

.....

Signature: **Date:**

.....

FOR THE RESEARCHER:

I confirm that I have fully explained the purpose of the study and what is involved, and have provided a copy of this form to the participant.

Researcher's Signature: **Date:**

Study Participant Number:

.....

Appendix 4: Key to Interviewee ID Codes

Each interviewee was allocated an ID code, as well as a pseudonym to protect their identity. These are listed above. Each ID code includes:

| <u>Type of Publication:</u> | <u>Job Status:</u> |
|------------------------------|--------------------|
| T Tabloid newspaper | Ed. Editor |
| MM Midmarket newspaper | H Higher level job |
| BS Broadsheet newspaper | L Lower level job |
| LD Local daily newspaper | S.ed Subeditor |
| LW Local weekly newspaper | Fr Freelance |
| WMg Weekly women's magazine | |
| MMg Monthly women's magazine | |
| <u>Age group:</u> | <u>Children:</u> |
| 20-25 | No ch. No children |
| 26-35 | 1 ch. 1 child |
| 36-45 | 2 ch. 2 children |
| 46-55 | 3 ch. 3 children |

| <u>Pseudonym</u> | <u>ID Code</u> |
|---|--------------------------------|
| <u>TABLOID NEWSPAPER JOURNALISTS (5)</u> | |
| <i>Tania</i> | <i>T1 (26-35/L/No ch.)</i> |
| <i>Fiona</i> | <i>T2 (26-35/L/No ch.)</i> |
| <i>Irene</i> | <i>T3 (26-35/L/No ch.)</i> |
| <i>Lisa</i> | <i>T4 (26-35/L/No ch.)</i> |
| <i>Georgina</i> | <i>T5 (36-45/H/No ch.)</i> |
| <u>MIDMARKET NEWSPAPER JOURNALISTS (5)</u> | |
| <i>Deborah</i> | <i>MM1 (26-35/L/No ch.)</i> |
| <i>Lynne</i> | <i>MM2 (26-35/L/No ch.)</i> |
| <i>Wendy</i> | <i>MM3 (36-45/S.ed/1 ch.)</i> |
| <i>Kirsten</i> | <i>MM4 (36-45/H/1 ch.)</i> |
| <i>Angie</i> | <i>MM5 (46-55/H/2 ch.)</i> |
| <u>BROADSHEET NEWSPAPER JOURNALISTS (16)</u> | |
| <i>Amie</i> | <i>BS1 (20-25/L/No ch.)</i> |
| <i>Helena</i> | <i>BS2 (26-35/Fr/1 ch.)</i> |
| <i>Andrea</i> | <i>BS3 (26-35/Fr/No ch.)</i> |
| <i>Jo</i> | <i>BS4 (26-35/L/No ch.)</i> |
| <i>Grace</i> | <i>BS5 (26-35/Fr/No ch.)</i> |
| <i>Tara</i> | <i>BS6 (26-35/L/No ch.)</i> |
| <i>Serena</i> | <i>BS7 (26-35/H/2 ch.)</i> |
| <i>Holly</i> | <i>BS8 (26-35/S.ed/No ch.)</i> |
| <i>Gail</i> | <i>BS9 (26-35/L/No ch.)</i> |
| <i>Laura</i> | <i>BS10 (26-35/L/No ch.)</i> |
| <i>Hannah</i> | <i>BS11 (26-35/L/No ch.)</i> |
| <i>Judy</i> | <i>BS12 (26-35/L/No ch.)</i> |
| <i>Raihannah</i> | <i>BS13 (26-35/H/1 ch.)</i> |
| <i>Nina</i> | <i>BS14 (46-55/H/3 ch.)</i> |
| <i>Catherine</i> | <i>BS15 (46-55/H/1 ch.)</i> |
| <i>Eileen</i> | <i>BS16 (46-55/Ed/3 ch.)</i> |

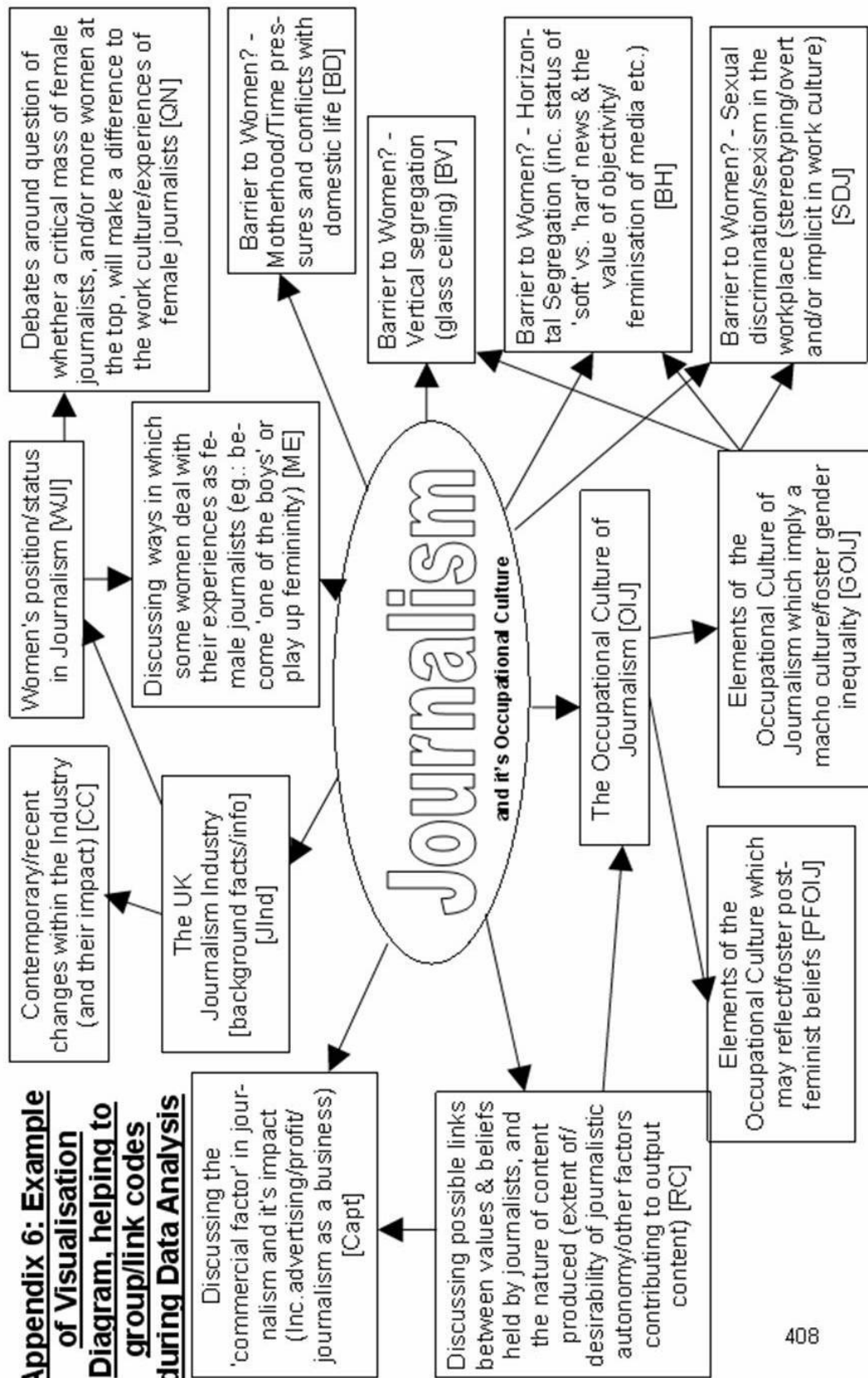
| <u>Pseudonym</u> | <u>ID Code</u> |
|--|-------------------------|
| <u>LOCAL DAILY NEWSPAPER JOURNALISTS (5)</u> | |
| Emma | LD1 (20-25/S.ed/No ch.) |
| Magda | LD2 (26-35/L/No ch.) |
| Annie | LD3 (26-36/L/1 ch.) |
| Janet | LD4 (36-45/Ed/1 ch.) |
| Jane | LD5 (46-55/H/3 ch.) |
| <u>LOCAL WEEKLY NEWSPAPER JOURNALISTS (5)</u> | |
| Charlotte | LW1 (20-25/L/No ch.) |
| Megan | LW2 (20-25/L/No ch.) |
| Alice | LW4 (46-55/H/1 ch.) |
| Zoe | LW3 (26-35/L/No ch.) |
| Marie | LW5 (46-55/S.ed/2 ch.) |
| <u>WEEKLY WOMEN'S MAGAZINE JOURNALISTS (6)</u> | |
| Sarah | WMg1 (20-25/H/No ch.) |
| Erin | WMg2 (20-25/H/No ch.) |
| Gemma | WMg3 (26-35/H/No ch.) |
| Samantha | WMg4 (26-35/L/No ch.) |
| Rosie | WMg5 (26-35/Fr/No ch.) |
| Jessica | WMg6 (36-45/H/2 ch.) |
| <u>MONTHLY WOMEN'S MAGAZINE JOURNALISTS (7)</u> | |
| Sophie | MMg1 (26-35/H/No ch.) |
| Eleanor | MMg2 (26-35/L/No ch.) |
| Kelly | MMg3 (26-35/H/No ch.) |
| Danielle | MMg4 (26-35/H/No ch.) |
| Brenda | MMg5 (46-55/Fr/3 ch.) |
| Phillipa | MMg6 (46-55/Ed./1 ch.) |
| Roberta | MMg7 (46-55/Ed./1 ch.) |

Appendix 5: Coding Scheme

| <u>Name of Theme</u> | <u>Description of Theme</u> |
|---------------------------------|--|
| Typical day and time | Info on typical day/week...slow or fast paced/24hr culture/monotonous or varied |
| Occupational Culture - General | Other info about occupational culture of Journalism |
| Identity | Is being a Journalist part of your identity? |
| Money | Any talk about pay etc |
| Good Journalist | What makes a 'good' journalist - in their opinion |
| Creative freedom | What influences copy content? How much freedom do they get in terms of what they write and how they write it? |
| Sexism | Any reports (or not) of sexist behaviour/discrimination |
| Like a women | Any reference to playing up femininity/female qualities to survive/get ahead |
| Like a man | Any reference to women behaving 'like a man' in order to survive/get ahead |
| Gender balance and impact of | Info on gender balance of org, in terms of numerical equality - and perceived impact of this |
| Clusters | Discussion of Reasons why men and women cluster in certain areas of journalism |
| Vertical segregation | Reference to more men or more women being higher up in an organisation |
| Gender in Output | Reference to any awareness of ideas about gender inequality and/or women and/or feminism being made within J output |
| Link between output and culture | Any reference to relationship (or not!) between output content and what is part of the occ. culture. E.g.: output says 'girl power' but culture disadvantages mothers/Output |
| Role of media | Discussion of what they think the role of the media is in society (e.g.: a mirror/educational/just gives readers what they want etc.) |
| Meritocracy | Reference to whether they view their industry as a meritocratic/valued for skills |

| | |
|---|---|
| Always wanted | Always wanted to be a Journalist |
| Didn't always want | Didn't always want to be a Journalist |
| How to get into Journalism | Explanations of how they got into the industry. E.g.: work |
| Learn on the job | Learn on the job |
| Career aspirations | Any talk about plans for future career and how going to get there |
| How to get promoted & succeed | More specific info as to tactics to get on in Journalism/how not to behave e.g.: be pushy/be willing to work 24hrs |
| Individualism | An emphasis on individualism and internal competition in the occupational culture |
| Teamwork | An emphasis on teamwork being seen as an important aspect of the occupational culture |
| Best parts | ...of the job |
| Worst parts | ...of the job |
| Being female not affected | Doesn't think that being female has ever affected way she works or way others work with her |
| Yes- negatively affected | Thinks to some extent that being female has affected - in bad way |
| Yes- positively affected | Thinks to some extent that being female has affected - in good way |
| ...women affect output | Impact of increased no. of women affects output content (or not!) |
| ...women affect culture | Impact of increased no. of women affects work culture |
| Hard for mothers | Any reports of it being a problem, to some extent |
| OK for mothers | Reports of it being ok to be a mother and a Journalist |
| Initially associate positive things with feminism | What comes into their head with the term 'feminism' (if it is a positive reaction) |
| Initially associate negative things with feminism | What comes into their head with the term 'feminism' (if it is a negative reaction) |
| Anti-feminist | Those who are very much anti any feminist ideas in principle (no just because we have equality now so it's not needed) |
| Feminism not needed now | Idea that yes, feminism was a useful thing but now we are equal so it's not needed anymore |
| Feminism not personally relevant | Those who say that they haven't personally thought about feminism as it's not relevant to their lives (even though they agree it may be useful for other women) |
| Not a feminist but | Those who agree to some extent with the principles but not use label |
| Identifies as feminist | Is happy to label herself as such, however she defines feminism |
| Feminism in office | Discussion about what female (or male) colleagues think about (or don't think about) feminism |
| Industry Changes | Discussion of recent/pending changes in the industry (eg.: increased use of internet) |
| Insecurity | Reference to any sort of job insecurity and its cause |

Appendix 6: Example of Visualisation Diagram, helping to group/link codes during Data Analysis



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