No. MC95/2

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By

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August 1995

FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

Centre for Mass Communication Research
Leicester University Discussion Papers in 
Mass Communications

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Editorial Note:
Rachel Eyre was a student on the MA course in Mass Communications at the University of Leicester in 1992/93. She graduated formally in 1994.

The telephone number for the Centre for Mass Communication Research has changed from that shown on the cover. The new number is 0116-2523863. The fax number is 0116-2523874.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

A special thank you to all the journalists in the national and regional newspapers for consenting to be interviewed.

Also many thanks for the advice and guidance given to me by the National Union of Journalists, the Equal Opportunities Council, the Press Council, the National Council for the Training of Journalists, the National Council for Civil Liberties and the Managing Editor of the Midlands newspaper group.

In particular many thanks to Chris Newbold for his time and help in the construction of this discussion paper. Many thanks to Anders Hansen and Roger Dickinson for their advice and support. Thanks to Cathy Melia for helping with the preparation of the typed script.
Introduction.

The study was stimulated by the lack of research conducted into the experience of female journalists working in the British newspaper industry. This paper is based upon interviews conducted in 1992-1993 and 1995. The paper aims to consider the experience and influence of female journalists within the newspaper. The issues raised are analysed through feminist research.

Studies conducted by feminists within communication research have drawn their analysis from feminist theories of the 1960s and 1970s. Although the perspective incorporates a variety of theories, feminism is characterised as a whole by the recognition that:

"...when measured by standards of literacy, political participation, social mobility, occupational mobility, economic position, the status of women is less favourable than that of men". (Gallagher, 1981:15)

Any discussion of feminist issues should include reference to the scholarship of Simone de Beauvoir. Her book The Second Sex (1949) explores the implications of the experience of being a woman. She emphasises that all history has been made by men. Her comment in the second volume of her work: "...one is not born, but rather becomes, a woman" (Open University Unit, 1991:11) has influenced feminist criticism. The argument central to de Beauvoir's work is her conviction that women's role has been socially constructed in relation to men. (Walder, 1990).

The initial links between feminism and the media can be identified in the 1960s-70s, in particular the work of Betty Friedan's The Feminine Mystique (1963) and Germaine Greer's The Female Eunuch (1971).

However, Rakow argues that it was during the 1980s that American male-dominated communication research was challenged by feminist scholars. This led to a revaluation of the tradition (Communications Trends, 1982). Feminist scholars maintain that communication research had been concerned only with an examination of the powerful, public world dominated by men. The challenge of feminism addresses the very structure of the discipline, which has marginalised and disguised the importance of women's experience. Feminist research attempts to redress this imbalance by considering issues which directly influence women. In addition, the feminist challenge involves a change in
methodological procedure from a concentration on statistical analysis of the public sphere
to the investigation of private experience.

Cirksena and Cuklanz (1992) argue that feminist theory has been instrumental in
highlighting the cultural binary oppositions which place women in a disadvantaged
position to men. Therefore it is argued that in contemporary Western society we are
provided with the dominant, white male perspective which only offers a partial picture of
reality.

There is a general agreement among feminist researchers that mass communication media
plays a significant role in reinforcing the ideologies and value systems within society.
The communications network acts as a vehicle through which messages carrying
information and opinion can be articulated to the audience (Hodgson, 1984). The
population rarely witnesses what is considered to be news and thus relies on the media
for access to world events. Marxist writers, such as Althusser (Selden, 1989) stressed
the power of the media as an institution of socialisation. The media not only provide
information to audiences on interpreting facts, but also suggest appropriate ways of
living.

This research addresses questions concerning the experience of female journalists, the
amount of influence they feel they have within the newspaper, and the areas
predominantly employing these women. It is hoped that this paper will go some way
towards supporting the feminist challenge by examining an area which has been relatively
neglected in communication research. This is achieved to a large extent by providing the
journalists with the opportunity to describe their own experience.

Theoretical framework.

Under the umbrella of feminist thought can be found liberal, radical and socialist
perspectives. Van Zoonen (1994) argues that presenting feminism as typologies fails to
recognise the diversity and change in feminist debate. In addition, writers may use more
than one perspective during research and therefore prefer not to be labelled as
approaching subjects from one particular theory. However, as van Zoonen has
previously acknowledged, a description of each demonstrates the various theories
employed by feminist scholars to examine the media (van Zoonen, 1991). Therefore,
whilst recognising the limitations of categorising feminist thought it is useful to consider
these perspectives separately in order to place the present research into a theoretical context.

Liberal feminism maintains that legal provision is necessary for women to compete with men in the labour market. It is argued that a higher number of women should be able to enter areas of education and work considered to be dominated by men. In this manner women should be able to achieve equal status and eradicate the perception of a woman's 'natural' role. Change can therefore occur within the media and other institutions without disrupting the actual structure of society. As women are accepted into equal positions in employment the media will reflect this by imaging men and women in non-sexist roles. Finally, liberal feminism states that discrimination against women within the media industry could be removed by producing a greater awareness of sexism during training (van Zoonen, 1991).

Radical feminism on the other hand submits an argument which contrasts with that of the liberal perspective. This suggests that women cannot achieve equal status with men in the present structure of society. A division exists between women who are oppressed and men who are the oppressors. This system, is referred to as patriarchal, a society in which:

"... every avenue of power [within the society], including the coercive force of the police, is entirely within male hands". (Kate Millett, quoted in Open University Unit, 1988: 34)

Radical communication feminist scholars argue that the media reflect the interests of men which leads to the marginalisation of women's interests and the abuse of women through denigratory images. Therefore it is suggested that women need to form their own means of communication which will represent the interests of women.

Both theories maintain that gender is an "...inevitable consequence of sex differences...". (van Zoonen 1991) However, liberal feminism emphasises that women are: "...essentially the same as men and not equal". (op.cit.) Whereas radical feminism argues that women are: "...essentially different from men and not equal." (op.cit.) These differing interpretations highlight the conflict between the two perspectives. This research then, concentrates on assessing the journalists' experience through these
perspectives. In addition, the study also draws upon socialist and psychoanalytical feminist theory in order to examine areas of the journalist's experience.

A socialist feminist perspective is concerned with the relationship between capitalism and patriarchy. Therefore Rakow (1992) argues that research is concerned with an examination of class and gender oppression. A woman's status is seen as inextricably linked to an analysis of the socio-economic structures of society. Thus a woman's subordinate position in the private sector is seen to be vital for the maintenance of capitalism. However, it is argued that the equal status of the private with the public sphere needs to be recognised. Socialist feminist scholars argue that it is necessary to reorganise the public sphere so that neither men nor women work more than 25 hours a week (van Zoonen, 1991). This would eradicate the division between the public and the private sphere which enables the capitalist system to perpetuate the subordination of women.

Socialist feminism draws upon Althusser's work on ideology (Selden, 1989). Ideology can be understood as a system of beliefs and practices that constitute everyday life. Ideology can mask contradictions and obscure actual conditions of existence; in this sense it becomes subliminal because it constructs a world that is assumed to be natural. As a result the assumption that women do a majority of domestic chores is perceived as 'natural' and therefore affirms a gendered division of labour. This perspective considers the role of ideology in the continuation of sexual inequality in society. Feminist scholars are concerned by the manner in which femininity is portrayed in the media and argue that one solution would be the reorganisation of mainstream media which would then de-mythologise the cultural constructions of gender.

Psychoanalytic theory as used in feminist analysis may also prove useful for an examination of the construction of gender in society. An analysis of the language used in the newspaper environment exposes the workings of gender ideology. Of particular interest is the way in which Lacan extended Freud's theory of the unconscious and identified it as working in linguistic terms (Selden, 1989). He considers the unconscious to have a similar structure to language. According to Lacan a male child will identify with his father and occupy a positive position in language, whereas a female child can only occupy a negative one. Ideas of the feminine are therefore structured by a phallocentric ideology which judges the female to be lacking in masculine power. Lacan's work has been criticised by many feminists, but some scholars including Toril Mori argue that Lacan's analysis can be used to expand on theories of the construction of
sexuality. As we shall see later it is suggested within the context of the present research that the language used in the working environment can be structured in a manner which alienates women.

Method.

Feminist scholars have acknowledged that research on the participation of women in the media industry has been limited. As Gallagher says:

"Despite its pivotal importance, the relationship between producer and content remains the most under-researched element within feminist media critique". (Communication Research Trends, 1992: 11)

Although this research seeks to address the experience of female journalists through an analysis of feminist perspectives, the researcher found herself limited by the lack of information available on the participation of women in the newspaper industry. Therefore the study relies predominantly upon primary research. This research was conducted by a series of informal and formal interviews with journalists. It was felt that interviewing was the most appropriate methodology. Interviewing provided an opportunity for the clarification of the meaning of both questions and responses. This method appeared more appropriate than the methodology usually associated with this form of inquiry; namely self completion questionnaires, which are limited by non-response and misinterpretation of questions and answers.

The methodology employed was supported by journalists, as one freelance writer acknowledged:

"To be honest, say, if you had sent me a questionnaire I would probably have put it to one side and completely forgotten about it.....because I just never would have got round to filling it in". (Freelance journalist and former Lifestyle and Fashion Editor of evening newspaper in Midlands newspaper group, interviewed 31.5.93)
In order to select an interview sample a list of prominent journalists on regional and national newspapers was compiled. The choice was governed by journalists' availability and practical considerations. A total of eight people were chosen and they were the following: a General Features writer, a Women's Editor and a Fashion Editor working for a weekday evening newspaper; the Deputy Editor of a Saturday evening sports newspaper and a freelance journalist all working within a Midlands newspaper group.

In addition, a Women's Editor for a North West newspaper, a freelance journalist previously employed by a national tabloid newspaper and a freelance journalist for a national broadsheet newspaper. Different interviewing techniques were utilised to suit the working patterns of the journalists. The methodology varied from interviews which were formal in nature and relied on a restricted set of questions, to those that were informal and took the shape of a discussion.

In the situations where the women were at work (Midlands Newspaper Group and North West newspaper) a formal interviewing technique involving a structured set of questions was employed. This was because it was necessary to compete for the journalists' attention with other colleagues and the continual ringing of the telephone. While interviewing the freelance journalists a more informal unstructured interviewing technique was adopted. Although these journalists were busy they had allocated a certain amount of time to be interviewed at home, and the whole atmosphere of this environment made an informal interviewing technique seem more appropriate.

Whilst conducting the research the study often had to be defended due to journalists and editors being unsure of the researcher's intentions. In common with Beauchy (1989) who participated in a report conducted by the University of Maryland College of Journalism, it was found that some journalists were suspicious of questions addressed with regard to their experience as women working in the newspaper industry. When Lou was interviewed at the time of the James Bulger murder (February 1993) she used the incident to illustrate her feelings:

"...just because I'm a woman doesn't mean that I'm going to be more emotional than a man about some kid being killed and dumped on a railway track". (Fashion Editor, evening newspaper of Midlands newspaper group, interviewed 24/2/93)
Although the process of interviewing may appear straightforward achieving success, in terms of removing journalist's scepticism of the researcher's intentions, may prove more difficult. Lou's attitude highlighted a general feeling of suspicion among journalists towards the subject area. Lou appeared defensive and stressed that she approached stories in a similar manner to male colleagues. This feeling of uncertainty was also echoed by the Managing Director of the Midlands newspaper group who appeared concerned that the researcher may be criticising his newspaper's treatment of female journalists. In addition, some journalists preferred to remain anonymous in the study because of the opinions they intended to express. As a result all the names within the study have been altered. The researcher presented the interviewees with a clear statement of intentions, explaining that the research had been stimulated by an interest in female journalist's experience and was not intended as a criticism of journalistic practice. However, it is important to identify the reservations held by some journalists because this may influence their response during interviewing.

Moser and Kalton (Moser and Kalton, 1986) suggest that when conducting social surveys, interviewing is the most appropriate procedure. Nevertheless, they do recognise the limitations of this methodology; one of the possible restrictions being bias. Within this study it was recognised that by relying on interviews the journalist's interpretation of events was accepted and therefore the results could be influenced by personal bias. As a result it is necessary to consider the choice of research sample to determine whether they are representative of journalists as a whole. This research does fail to include alternative ethnic groups. This was not a conscious decision on the part of the researcher, but the result of these groups being poorly represented on the staff at the newspapers contacted. For example, when the Midlands newspaper group was visited it was observed that only two out of seventy or eighty employees were non-white. The study may also be limited by the fact that all the journalists interviewed were perceived to be middle class. As a result of these factors the experience of the female journalists reflects that of a certain white and middle class section of the population.

It could be argued that any research methodology that concentrates solely on anecdotal personal experience may lack scientific validity. This criticism is one that Creedon (1989) argues has been directed at many feminist scholars. She observes that:

"...ethnomethodology and personal testimony - often considered the hallmark of feminist scholarship [is] openly rejected by some scholars". (Creedon, 1989: 27)
Therefore it appears that feminist scholars do not conform to what is perceived as the dominant male structure of communication research. However, it could be argued that this is an important facet of feminist work. In common with feminist analysis, because of the concentration on the personal experience of female journalists, this research offers an insight into the possible restrictions that women feel limit their opportunities to succeed in the workplace. Such an analysis is valuable because it considers in a qualitative sense women's feelings about their employment in the media industry, and therefore offers more information than a simple consideration of statistical figures. However, it is important to recognise that more statistics on the percentage of female, in relation to male, journalists working in the newspaper industry would provide the study with a broader picture of the position of women within journalism. For example, such an exercise would determine whether the experience of journalists interviewed was indicative of the experience of a majority of female newspaper journalists in the 1990s.

Unfortunately, the researcher was unable to find the necessary statistics to provide this information. The negative response received to inquiries from various sources demonstrated the lack of data available on the number of female journalists employed in the newspaper industry. Information that was available included figures from the Guild of British Newspaper Editors stating that 70% of editors in newspapers tended to be male. Also a spokesperson at the Midlands newspaper group maintained that of 1,055 employees working for the four newspapers in the group, 767 were male and 288 were female. These statistics demonstrate the manner in which employment in the newspaper industry is dominated by men and this was supported by the testimony of the women interviewed.

Recent history.

Rhodes has criticised the lack of information available on the history of women participating in the newspaper industry. She states that:

"Historical studies of the press have focused almost entirely on influential white men and powerful news organisations, ... women's experiences have not been integrated into the values and perspectives underlying this inquiry". (Rhodes, 1992: 211)
The history of women in the media therefore appears to be one which is characterised by their invisibility. This invisibility, feminists maintain, is a consequence of media institutions being dominated by men. Feminist scholars arguing from a radical perspective maintain that all dominant positions in society are held by men. As a result men control the construction of meaning which portrays them in positive, active, rational and strong roles. Conversely, women are seen as negative, passive, emotional and weak. These binary oppositions ascribe inferiority to women, which devalues and constructs them as unequal (Greene & Kahn, 1990).

Female journalists employed in the 1960s were provided with the opportunity to articulate their opinion of the manner in which women were treated in the newspaper industry during this period. In order to examine this recent history, 50% of the journalists (those over 40 years old) were asked to reflect on their experience over the last thirty years. The women argued that they had encountered overt discrimination during this time. There was an assumption that women would only work in the newspaper until they married and had families.

Margaret explained her experience of these assumptions:

"When I started working on a provincial newspaper in 1964 women were not trained to be sub-editors. There was no question of them making a career out of journalism. It was simply a job and they didn't think beyond getting married. I realise now that we were discriminated against because the opportunities just weren't there, but what you have to appreciate is that women accepted that they would leave work to have a family."

Through the application of radical and socialist feminist theory it could be suggested that this demonstrates the manner in which patriarchal ideology was internalised by women during the 1960s. In addition, it could be argued that in the 1960s women's roles were defined by men which perpetuated the unequal employment structure in the newspaper. Margaret's experience highlights how women's private roles of caring and domesticity influenced their experience in the public sector. This is because a woman's character and identity was defined by the cultural assumptions of her traditional role in society. With hindsight Margaret realises that during this period she accepted her gender role without question.
Margaret considers the structure of contemporary newspapers has been influenced by the discrimination women suffered in the 1960s.

"I think you'll find that women of my generation tend to be mainly freelance writers because they didn't return full time to the newspaper after having children. This is why men are in the executive positions of the newspaper because they are of that generation". (Women's Editor for North West newspaper, interviewed 16.5.93)

This quote illustrates Margaret's reasoning for the unequal position of women in the newspaper industry. She considers that in contemporary society family commitments will cease to be an obstacle to women's careers. This is because it is accepted that more women work after having a family. As a result the structure of the newspaper will change with more women progressing into executive positions. Margaret's optimism is a fundamental liberal feminist stance, focusing upon the reforms in legislation which should reduce women's unequal position in employment. The belief that if more women enter the public sphere they will achieve an equality of opportunities with men. The problem with this view from the radical feminist position is that it accepts uncritically the patriarchal structure of our society. It does not challenge the status quo but seeks to accommodate women within it.

Emma describes her experience during the 13 years she worked as a member of the Science Staff and Science Correspondent on a national broadsheet newspaper (mid 1960s-1970s):

"It was right out of line with normal thinking of the time when the paper employed me. Why? Well, because I was a woman in an area [science] dominated by men ... I never told them that I had a child, because that would have been totally beyond their comprehension that anyone could have a child and do the job ... if they had known, they would have found some way of getting rid of me".
When identifying her reasons for moving to the National tabloid newspaper she said:

"I left the broadsheet newspaper because in those days the newspaper refused to pay women a decent salary. When I was Science Correspondent a man appointed as a member of staff on Education came into the newspaper on a higher salary than I was getting!" (Freelance writer and former Medical Reporter for a national tabloid newspaper, interviewed 3.4.93)

Emma’s experience illustrates the problems of unequal pay and social bias found by women attempting to combine employment and family commitments. Instead of leaving work when she became pregnant, she felt it necessary to hide her pregnancy in order to avoid ostracism in the workplace. She was concerned about being discriminated against and therefore made a conscious decision not to disclose details of her personal life. Emma exemplifies the principles of liberal feminism. She entered the public domain and achieved a senior position on a national newspaper. Nevertheless, in order to continue her career she admitted that it was necessary to hide the existence of her child.

Socialist feminist theory may suggest that the discrimination Emma encountered over unequal pay resulted from a perception of women as being primarily employed in the private sphere. The recognition of men as the mainstream breadwinner in the family provides justification for capitalist exploitation of women by a refusal to pay them an equal wage.

In addition, although Emma has succeeded in the newspaper industry, Rakow (1989:303) argues that it is not enough for a few women to have more opportunities in a fundamentally "oppressive system". She criticises the assumption that these women will be instigators of change from within the media. Rakow believes that through the process of competing and achieving with men, it will be necessary for women to adopt masculine characteristics and therefore become more like men.

Equality in the 90s?

In contemporary society the journalist’s experiences would be seen as sexual discrimination. However, in the 1960s the gendered division of labour was perceived to be "natural". When considering that women have more opportunities to succeed in
journalism in the 1990s these journalists illustrate their argument by a comparison with the discrimination they experienced during the 1960s. However, all the journalists agreed that in the 1990s women are still not participating equally with men in the newspaper industry. Women are under-represented in areas of management and over-represented in traditionally female areas of the newspaper; such as the features department. The present hierarchical structure of the Midlands newspaper group offers a good example because there are no female executives or editors of any individual newspaper within the group.

Equal opportunity is defined by the National Union of Journalists as the opportunity for men and women to receive equal rates of pay when employed in a position with similar responsibilities. Equality refers to ensuring equal numbers of women to men in all sectors of journalism. The N.U.J (1986) argue that equality also means negotiating for adequate maternity and paternity leave, childcare facilities, rights for part-time workers and job sharing.

The National Union of Journalists (1986) state that in all sectors of journalism women are entering training in equal numbers to men. Every year between 1987-1992 (except 1991) more women than men have taken the National Council (NCTJ) proficiency test. The College of Cardiff, University of Wales, offers diplomas and postgraduate degrees in Journalism Studies. The College maintain that a majority of students in each year are women. However, despite the increase in the number of women being trained, the NUJ say that they are not entering all areas of journalism in equal numbers to male colleagues and they tend to remain in lower paid jobs.

Gallagher has indicated that the problems encountered by women in the employment sector are the result of:

"... fundamental beliefs in the wider society concerning behavioural and psychological differences between men and women". (Gallagher, 1981: 36)
In practice Lou considers the gender division of subject areas apparent in her newspaper:

"At the level of general, lower reporters, a woman junior reporter will be treated the same as a man, given the nasty jobs as well as the nice ones. Higher up the scale, there seems to be more of a division; sciences, politics and business are dominated by men and women head off to the women's sections and features. Women tend to remain in these sections while men move up the newspaper".

(Fashion Editor, evening newspaper of Midland newspaper group, interviewed 24.2.93)

Sue considers her experience of working on national newspapers:

"I think a lot of it is to do with the culture of the newspaper. What the male editors expect a woman to write. The attitude is: 'well, who's good at doing an interview?' They think, 'let's get a woman because they are good at people skills'. Whereas they say to the men: 'why don't you do us a think piece about so and so?' Men can do political intellectual stuff and women can do people skills. I even once had an editor tell me to put some of my own experience into a piece. I really resent this attitude".

From a radical feminist perspective it could be argued that the construction of gender sustains the oppression of women by silencing and marginalising them; thus legitimising male dominance. The examples provided by this journalist suggest that she feels that women's opportunities have been limited by the assumptions made with regard to gender. She reveals the operation of a gendered ideology which assumes that women are "naturally" equipped to write human interest articles.

Sue's comment on male attitudes suggests her feelings that their opinion of women is a condescending and pejorative one. However, a liberal feminist argument may consider that by including female values and experience into a text this would "improve the current distanced and dehumanised news style" (van Zoonen, 1991:40). Nevertheless, could this be a paradoxical stance because it undermines the liberal feminist theory that men and women are essentially the same?
Sue continued:

"I believe that what goes on in newspapers is the same as any other institution. People that are promoted are the people who remind the boss of when he was younger, so they like these guys who seem young and all thrusting. It's a social thing, depends on who's 'clubbable' and a good laugh. I'll give you an example: when they have their editorial meetings, people have told me that the talking is done in cricketing metaphors: 'who's first to bat then?', etc. That automatically means that the women present, unless they are cricket mad, are excluded from the conversation. That's how sexism works, it's not overt but the whole atmosphere is imbued with male attitudes". (Freelance journalist on national broadsheet newspaper, interviewed 3.6.93)

Psychoanalytic theory rejects the "unified" (Communication Research Trends, 1992: 2) categories of "gender" and "women". The meaning of language is never fixed, it depends upon the ideology and historical circumstances of the speaker and the listener. A psychoanalytical-feminist reading of the language used at the editorial meetings could suggest that it exemplifies the hidden dependency of men on the need to construct their own identity. Their use of cricketing metaphors demonstrates an unconscious attempt to define themselves in terms of masculinity, which includes the exclusion of women. It is important to recognise that the journalist feels so alienated by what she describes as the "old boys network" that she would not consider applying for a staff position on the newspaper.

Jenny describes her position as Deputy Editor of a sports newspaper:

"... I got the job as much for novelty value than anything....the men thought it would be a bit of a novelty having a woman working on the sports newspaper. Will I become Editor? No, I seriously doubt it ... because I've just settled down with a man and I'm sure that if I have a baby I'll lose my job". (Deputy Editor, Saturday sports
Jenny's comments illustrate the insecurity women feel in non-traditional areas of the newspaper. Her suggestion that she was employed for novelty value is supported by her title in the newspaper as "Our First Lady of Sport". It could be argued that a psychoanalytical-feminist reading of this title would articulate the manner in which it structures the reader as masculine-subject and depicts Jenny as female-object.

Considering Jenny's comment with regard to starting a family, maternity rights can be seen as incorporated into the Employment Protection Act (1975, 1986) and the Employment Act (1980). These statutes provide for the reinstatement to the same or similar employment up to 29 weeks after giving birth. However, the NUJ (1986: 7-8) argue that many women find after returning to work that they are given a "similar" job, which in reality is of a lower status to their previous one. The NUJ state that the onus is then on a woman to prove that this position is of an inferior nature.

Perhaps it is not surprising that Jenny and other female journalists have reservations about the ability of legal provision to protect their careers. The problems encountered by journalists in the newspaper industry are recognised by a solicitor working for the NUJ:

"Men and women enter the newspapers in equal numbers but women are systematically discriminated against both in terms of experience and opportunities. Women are pushed towards features and soft stuff. Women do lose their jobs, after having children and have to turn to freelance work".

How useful therefore is statutory legislation in terms of protecting the rights of women?

"The law is only the thin end of the wedge. The problem with legislation is that women are unlikely to get their jobs back after a period of absence. Chances are they will only receive compensation. I'm afraid newspapers are quite willing to sack employees and pay for breaking the law". (interviewed 11.6.93 and 10.7.95)
These comments are revealing as they illustrate the lack of progress in the status of female journalists since the 1960s. Further research would need to address the reasons why newspapers may fail to abide by current legislation. One journalist suggested that due to the nature of the work undertaken in newspapers it was difficult for them to honour maternity leave. She argued that this was because few journalists would be willing to take on a temporary position. However, this argument could be applied to any organisation.

All women articulated their concern over the continual concentration of women in certain subject areas and the lack of women's progression into editorial positions in the newspaper. The journalists feel that the work they produce in the women's and feature sections are not valued by male colleagues on an equal level with other areas of the newspaper. As a consequence the women feel that they are not treated with the same respect as male journalists.

Pam draws upon her experience as a Woman's Editor to describe the influence she feels women have in the Midlands newspaper group.

"The idea of a Women's Page or Section is really appalling. Newspapers shouldn't have a section specially for women. I mean the issues raised in a Women's Section should be seen as important to everyone and not just women. Unfortunately we have an unequal society. If men were left to write and produce newspapers they wouldn't print articles on breast cancer, abortion etc. While inequality exists and men control the newspaper, the Women's Section will have to be written by women for women's voices to be heard. I feel this has repercussions for the position of women journalists within the newspaper".

Pam criticises a society and working environment she sees as controlled by men. She articulates her reservations about Women's Pages and does feel that placing issues in specific pages for women is perpetuating gender divisions. Her comments demonstrate an overall frustration felt by journalists in the study who work in Women's Sections. It could be argued from a radical feminist perspective that this continual marginalisation places women in a sub-culture and supports patriarchal society.

Many feminists have criticised mainstream media for the limited change which has taken place in the employment structure. It should be possible for women to participate
equally with men in powerful positions in the media. However, Creedon (1989) argues that even as the number of women working in the media industry increases (as has been the case in America since the 1970s) this will not necessarily provide women with greater power and influence.

However, Sue felt that in the future the position of female journalists will improve as more women enter the industry and market-forces influence the structure of the newspaper. She commented:

"Women need to make their presence felt more in the mainstream media. Women should be saying that we are the mainstream and we should stay here. I think that things change by example. For instance, a woman sees a female editor or columnist and thinks I can do that. Newspapers will also have to adjust to accommodate a changing readership. More women read newspapers now and all newspapers need more women to increase circulation. Newspapers are always thinking of ways to increase the readership and therefore they will have to take account of what women think". (Freelance journalist for a National newspaper)

Therefore in contrast to many radical feminist scholars, Sue sees the future for women as being in the mainstream media. Her argument demonstrates some important criticisms which have been directed at radical feminist theory. She pointed to the limited influence women would have if they formed separate means of communication. Rather than improving the experience and position of women, Sue argued that this would only serve to ostracise them even further. Her comments illustrates liberal tendencies. She suggests that female representation will improve as more women are encouraged by the example of others to enter the industry and newspapers compete to attract a larger female readership. However, if the social and cultural barriers to women's equality, which she identified, are so easily broken down it could be argued that this process would have already taken place; thus removing the problem she highlighted. In addition, Sue's analysis appears problematic when considering that she stated earlier her unwillingness to apply for a staff position in a newspaper.
Women's experience in social context.

Although women are entering the newspaper in increasing numbers, many journalists have identified the continued conflict between the public and the private sphere as the main obstacle to their future careers. The NUJ solicitor argues that:

"Women will always have to make a choice between having a family or a career until there is a change in the ethos of the newspaper industry. The industry has a dogmatic attitude about the appropriate behaviour of journalists. Newspaper organisations don't appreciate that journalists have families. Working conditions won't change until women and men demand that their private lives are recognised. Men need to admit that they have domestic responsibilities. One day a male journalist may have to pick his children up from school, at the moment he's more likely to say he's off for a game of squash than admit the truth. Legislation will not work until these attitudes are broken down". (Interviewed 11.6.93 and 10.7.95)

It appears therefore that a change in the philosophy of those working within the newspaper industry is necessary. However, such a change would involve a re-examination of the very norms and values on which society is constructed. This process would go beyond the boundaries of the newspaper industry and involve a change in the socialisation of individuals through other Ideological State Apparatuses (ISAs) (Althusser in Selden, 1989).

The NUJ solicitor suggested that the newspaper industry could instigate a greater awareness of the position of female journalists by supporting equal opportunities programmes in a similar manner to that of the broadcasting industry. A Steering Committee for Equal Opportunities in Broadcasting (1986) was established with the aim of promoting action to improve the representation of women in all areas of broadcasting. Nevertheless, it could be argued from Emma's experience that this will not be achieved while the position of all journalists in the newspaper industry is uncertain. She told me:

"I was sacked in April. The newspaper discriminated against me because of my age, at 55 I am too old. This is
not a case of discrimination against sex as the newspaper are also getting rid of male journalists of my age. The whole newspaper organisation is getting younger. While I was still there they advertised my job and the advert stressed 'young' person wanted. They're looking for young people because they can be paid less. People joining newspapers now are so happy to have the job that they take less money than we have been earning. I was lucky that they paid me off, but I do know that some of my colleagues are being forced out. If you want to freeze someone out you can totally demoralise them by never printing a word they write". (Freelance journalist and former Medical Reporter for a national tabloid newspaper, interviewed 03.06.93)

If equal opportunities for women to succeed in the newspaper industry are to be recognised it appears that economic as well as cultural factors need to be taken into consideration. Emma's comments demonstrate the insecurity felt by all journalists in the newspaper industry. She argued that competition to gain staff positions on newspapers is much greater than ever before and as a result journalists are accepting inferior conditions of employment to those agreed to by journalists of her generation. The NUJ solicitor supported Emma's comments. She argued that the newspaper industry as a whole has suffered as a result of the economic recession, which influences the employment stability of journalists. She maintains that especially in regional newspapers, wages are low and job prospects are limited.

All the journalists interviewed agree that it is necessary for women to work within the mainstream media in order to create an equality of work experience between the sexes. Sue's comment "... we are the mainstream ..." encapsulated the feelings of all women interviewed. Emma's comments were useful in demonstrating the problems encountered by both men and women in gaining employment in the newspaper.
Discussion and conclusions.

In order to explore the experience of female journalists working in regional and national newspapers this study has attempted to analyse the information gathered within a wide feminist framework. As identified earlier this project was undertaken to highlight an area which has been under-researched. The theoretical base presented provides an illustration of the variety of ways in which this subject area could be understood and critically examined by future research.

Any evaluation of the study through the different strands of theory raises some important points. The liberal feminist tradition emphasise that oppression is not necessarily a conscious control. As Althusser (Selden, 1989) maintains, ideology is not imposed from above but something experienced by everyone. This study has considered the manner in which women unconsciously internalise patriarchal values. However, it is important to recognise that men, as well as women, are subjected to the socialisation process and it could be argued that it is too simplistic to suggest that men consciously manipulate the division between the public and private sphere, the mass media or other institutions in order to promote male interests.

As we have seen, radical and socialist feminist scholars would criticise any emphasis upon equal opportunity within the present structure of the workplace. This study has measured women's opportunities and success in terms of patriarchal values and assumptions. Positive images for women were defined in terms of increased status and power within the mainstream media. However, radical and socialist feminists argue that equal opportunity is not enough. They contend that equal opportunities will never be realised while society continues to support capitalism and patriarchy. As Steinberg maintains, positive change involves "both improving women's position within the existing system and changing the terms of the system itself" (Creedon, 1989: 27).

The research has highlighted the conflict between different feminist perspectives. Scholars drawing from the liberal feminist tradition have argued for equality between men and women within the present structure of society. Whereas, those working within the radical and socialist traditions maintain that such goals cannot be achieved without a reorganisation of society itself.

As Cirkena and Cuklanz (Rakow, 1992) argue, the liberal feminist theory fails to offer an explanation for the inequality felt by women in society. The liberal feminist analysis
provides a solution. It advocates an increase in statutory legislation and the number of women entering journalism. This has characterised the major change which we see in the position of female journalists in contemporary society. It could be argued that these changes should be sufficient to improve the position of women in the workplace. However, instead of witnessing a gradual improvement in their position over the years, the journalists interviewed have identified a continual gendered division of labour. This is perpetuated by a newspaper environment that continues to hold assumptions about the position of women in society.

As a socialist and radical feminist analysis would suggest, the female journalists will continue to feel insecure in their work while society is organised in such a way that values the public domain more highly than the private, and thus continues to identify women with the private arena.

Legislation has provided for the protection of women's rights to equal pay, status and maternity benefits. Nevertheless, it appears that, in practice, the law offers only a myth of equality as statutes are particularly difficult to enforce. As a result, women's position in the newspaper continues to be marginalised as they feel that their career opportunities are limited by family commitments. Also, women are still found mainly in the features departments which are less well paid than other subject areas and this reinforces their subordinate position. It appears therefore, drawing from Creedon's (1989) work that the policy of equal opportunity rather than providing a public sphere with equal rights and status for men and women supports the present hierarchical system. In addition, journalists working for the women's section will continue to feel that their work is less respected; while men's interests continue to be defined as superior to that of women's.

Nevertheless, the solutions advocated by radical and socialist feminists in favour of changing the structure of society and social relations within it would involve a commitment on the part of men and women. It could be argued that a number of women as well as men may be unwilling to undertake such changes. In addition, this may always be the case in Western society as individuals internalise opinions and values from an early age.

Feminists have transformed aspects of psychoanalysis for their own uses. Moi has argued that feminist psychoanalysis offers a theory on the construction of sexuality, by identifying the unconscious assumptions on which patriarchy is built (Open University, 1992, audio cassette). Sue's example (freelance journalist for a national broadsheet
newspaper) demonstrated the alienation of women from the newspaper environment by the use of sporting metaphors in the editorial meetings. This would reinforce the dominant male culture which appears to continue in at least one national newspaper. The study has suggested the manner in which language is the vehicle through which images and values are transmitted. In this instance it articulates a patriarchal ideology. However, it is important to appreciate that feminist psychoanalytic theory can be criticised for accepting that individual development and the construction of the unconscious are universally human, rather than placing this analysis into the context of Western society. Therefore, the perspective makes many assumptions about human nature in general (Rakow, 1992)

When considering the unequal position of women in the newspaper industry it is important to analyse other factors. There are many issues which influence the marginalisation of women's experience within the media and these can be applied to the newspaper industry. (Gallagher, 1981)

Newspapers rely on advertising for a substantial proportion of financial revenue. Gallagher argues that commercial interests place pressure on the media to deal with established images and values in society. At the Midlands newspaper group Pam (Women's Editor) admitted that commercial factors influence her work. The Women's Section is packaged in a visually appealing manner in order to attract advertisers. Pam says that if the section was dispersed throughout the newspaper it would not produce the same amount of advertising revenue. Therefore advertising influences the construction of the women's section. However, it also has consequences for the experience of journalists working on the newspaper. Pam feels that the Women's Section is not valued as much as other areas within the newspaper. Thus, the structure of the newspaper is instrumental in isolating women's interests from other areas of news and information. In addition, the Women's Section is influenced by the newspaper readership. Pam indicated that the evening newspaper is purchased primarily by men for the sports pages. In order to cater for this readership, a majority of pages are allocated to sport. However, this ostracises a potential female readership.

Gallagher (1981) suggests that the nature of newspaper production will limit its ability to reflect the changing position of women. This is because newspapers need to be produced quickly in a manner which makes them simple to consume by readers. Information appears to rely on established stereotypes and assumptions. As a result the
media have a primary role in reinforcing values that already exist without trying to change them.

The feminist tradition continues to form an important part of communication research. However, after completing this study it is suggested that more research needs to be conducted into the participation of women in the media industry. An appreciation of the experience of female journalists provides an insight into the manner in which women are perceived by the newspaper industry. As the NUJ solicitor argued:

"... newspapers are the last bastions of traditionalism. Until major changes are made within the newspaper, discrimination against women will continue to exist".
(Interviewed 11.6.93 and 10.7.95)

This research has demonstrated that women continue to be marginalised within the newspaper industry. In addition, present trends indicate an unstable future for the employment of all journalists, as competition for staff positions is greater and the industry places increasing value on younger employees at the expense of the mature. One of the roles of the communication researcher within the feminist tradition must be to reflect upon the experiences of all women participating in the various realms of media production. In particular feminists scholars have a responsibility to praxis, that is to record, understand and analyse the historical, contemporary and future experience of female journalists.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


