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# **A Feminist Study into the field experiences of female SABC reporters**

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by

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## ABSTRACT

This study aimed to explore and describe the field experiences of female radio reporters at the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) from a feminist perspective; to ascertain *if* sexism and harassment is experienced, and if so, in what ways. The study also aimed to determine whether or not patriarchy underpins interactions with newsmakers while reporting, and if so, to what degree.

Numerous studies have been undertaken turning the lens into newsrooms and media organisations with regards to gender transformation. While more women have become part of the new machinery post democracy, studies have shown that these women still face staggering incidents of sexism and patriarchy, creating for them glass ceilings that prevent their upward progression towards news management. Studies further indicate that sexism and patriarchy are often nuances and embedded into daily newsroom interactions. Significantly, researchers argue that the problem is a societal issue manifesting within the news industry. The study therefore explores the field experiences of female reporters in relation to patriarchy and sexism.

This research was a feminist study, which employed a qualitative approach with a critical theory paradigm. The sample consisted of eleven (11) female reporters employed within the South African Broadcasting Corporation, given the extensive reach of the public broadcaster and the multiple beats covered by the radio employees.

The findings of this study detail multiple layers of discrimination and harassment experienced by female radio reporters within the SABC when engaging with newsmakers. Evidenced in the research is the manner in which entrenched societal and cultural values limit and influence the productivity of the reporters and in some instances, impede their freedom to effectively tell the story. Aside from the documented glass ceilings that stunt the upward progression of female reporters, the study posits the existence of invisible walls that stymie their transversal advancement within their designated scope of reporting.

**Key Words: Female reporters, News Media, Sexism, Patriarchy**

## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

ANC	African National Party
CGE	Commission for Gender Equality
SABC	South African Broadcasting Corporation

## DECLARATION

I, Genevieve Govender, hereby declare that the research work presented in this dissertation is my original work and all the materials used are appropriately acknowledged and explicitly referenced. A reference list is attached to the dissertation.

I also confirm that the dissertation has not been submitted in any of its part or entirety for any degree in any other institution of higher learning internationally or locally.

I therefore give permission for my work to be made available for replication and/or for re-printing, for inter-library loan, and for the title and abstract of my dissertation to be made available to other educational institutions and students that might need it.

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10 September 2022  
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10 September 2022  
Date

## **DEDICATION**

For my mother, Rebecca Lanka, who taught me to break glass ceilings and aim for the stars.  
You are my greatest inspiration...

For my daughters, Zoehannah and Rhema. May you shatter every limitation set before you and  
rise higher than I ever could. You are all my reasons...

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I hope this dissertation does justice to their stories.

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## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

### 1.1. Background and Introduction

Over the past decades, debates about the experiences and safety of journalists have gained centre stage. There are various scholars who have written specifically on the threats female journalists face when engaging with their work and as a result, there is a body of research, albeit limited, that is available focusing the experiences of female reporters on and off the field (Barton and Storm 2014; Daniels and Tarisai 2018; Lowe Morna 2018; Macharia 2020 Rao and Rodny-Gumede 2020). A vast majority of work around the experiences of female reporters turns the spotlight into newsroom dynamics. Barton and Storm (2014) for example, paint a global picture of the extent of sexual violence and harassment faced by female journalists while reporting in the field as well as within their media companies. Barton and Storm (2014) found that a significant amount of harassment and violence were perpetrated by male bosses, supervisors and co-workers.

Scholars such as Byerly (2013), De Bruin and Ross (2004), Geertsema-Sligh (2018) and Macharia, (2020) have also focused on internal newsroom dynamics, story allocations and the representation of female reporters within media organisations. This group of researchers suggest that in spite of the growing number of female reporters in the industry, female reporters face consistent resistance within newsrooms to cover stories relating to politics, sport and economics. Geertsema-Sligh (2018) particularises war reporting as the most difficult area of journalism for female reporters to break into. Geertsema-Sligh (2018) notes that while the number of female reporters engaging in male dominated beats have increased to date; research must shift from the proverbial body count of women in newsrooms to focus on gender and journalistic culture and how these limit the opportunities of female reporters in the field.

A second category of research on the experiences of female reporters in the field focuses on the vulnerability of female reporters in situations relating to conflict and war (Beiser 2018; Wolfe 2011). Beiser (2018) particularly denotes the augmented jeopardy female reporters face when reporting from war or conflict zones, during political or social upheaval and civil unrest. Wolfe (2011) further records an alarming prevalence of sexual harassment and sexual violence towards female reporters.

The third category of research magnified the gender dynamics within the South African media landscape (Dibetso 2013; Kempf and Kabwato 2012; Daniels and Tarisai 2018; Lowe Morna 2018). These scholars identified the escalating risks and inhibiting cultural and institutional norms that female broadcasters face in South Africa. For instance, Lowe Morna (2018) and Daniels and Tarisai (2018) argue that while

positive inroads have been made in relation to women in news management in South Africa, female reporters are still plagued with sexist and patriarchal attitudes. Daniels and Tarisai (2018) and Lowe Morna (2018) also identify online harassment and cyber misogyny as a growing threat to female reporters. Overall, the argument put forward by Dibetso (2013), Kempf and Kabwato (2012), Daniels and Tarisai (2018) and Lowe Morna (2018) point to the idea that female reporters continue to face limitations and risks, both on and off the field. More specifically, the body of research conducted into the field experiences of female reporters, which have been highlighted in this section and elaborated further in the literature review of this study, suggest that South African female reporters must navigate through a myriad of challenges in order to *tell the story* (Dibetso 2013; Kempf and Kabwato 2012; Daniels and Tarisai 2018; Lowe Morna 2018).

## **1.2. Problem Statement**

The freedom of the press is widely recognised by protocols of international bodies such as the United Nations and the African Commission on Human and People's Rights (Amao 2022; UN 1948). In South Africa, the freedom of journalists to report without fear or favour is enshrined in Chapter 2, Clause 16 of the South African Bill of Rights (Constitution of RSA 1996). Moreover, the freedom of journalists to carry out their duties without interference or intimidation is fervently protected by various organisations, including the South African Editors Forum (SANEF), The Press Council of South Africa and civil society organisations such as The Right2Know Campaign. These organisations, among others, advocate for the safety and freedom of reporters when engaging in their respective tasks and providing a regulatory oversight to the industry. A free and protected press is fundamental to democracy as it plays a societal watchdog role (Jebri, Stetka and Loveless 2013). The news media provides and circulates news and information, holding public bearers accountable while giving a voice to various sectors of the community (Brunetti and Weder 2003; McConnel and Becker 2002; Street 2010).

Globally, reporters face a multiplicity of challenges. According to the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ), journalists around the world continue to face gross human rights violations from imprisonment to assault, censorship, sexual harassment and murder (Beiser 2018). The CPJ further noted that around seven percent of reporters who are killed globally are women (Beiser 2018). Wolfe (2011) denotes various levels of sexual abuse and harassment of female reporters around the world. These include violent gang-rapes, aggressive physical harassment, sexual touching, and penetration by hands and being groped multiple times while working. Kempf and Kabwato (2012) further assert that threats of sexual violence and intimidation of female journalists in Southern Africa, based on their gender, is a lived reality beyond

conflict zones.

In the South African context, from the available research into the experiences of female journalists on and off the field, it is clear that female reporters also face sexual harassment, aggression from newsmakers and pressure of internal newsroom power dynamics (Dibetso 2013; Daniels and Tarisai 2018; Lowe Morna 2018). It is therefore plausible that radio female reporters face similar circumstances in the field. The extent to which the problem exists in the field and how it impact on the female reporters ability to do their work had not been fully examined by South African scholars. This study therefore aims to ascertain the field experiences of radio female reporters at the South African Broadcasting Corporation from a feminist perspective.

### **1.3. Current Research Gaps**

Recently, researchers have shown an increased interest in the field experiences of female reporters (Geertsema-Sligh 2018; Jamil 2020; Posetti *et al* 2020; Rao and Rodny-Gumede2020). Rao and Rodny-Gumede (2020) analysed the perceptions of female reporters in South Africa and India, with regards to their own roles, power within their respective newsrooms, influences over the news agenda and challenges encountered while reporting. Rao and Rodny-Gumede (2020) found that in patriarchal societies such as South Africa and India, the safety of women in public spaces remain an issue. As such, female reporters are faced with these risks while working in these countries. Rao and Rodny-Gumede (2020) further outlines the impact of entrenched patriarchal societal norms on female reporters, personally and professionally. Similarly, Jamil (2020) examined sexual harassment, threats and discrimination of female reporters in Pakistan. Jamil (2020) concluded that the main factors driving sexual harassment among female reporters in Pakistan is entrenched conservatism, religious extremism and patriarchal culture. In another study, Geertsema-Sligh (2018) explored gender representation in the reporting of news as well as women represented in news itself. The study reveals that women find it particularly difficult to break into male dominated beats such as war reporting, sport and as opinion writers. Studies have also shown that female reporters face shocking levels of online violence and harassment as a result of their work (Posetti *et al* 2020). A report by UNESCO and the International Centre for Journalists found that 73 percent of female reporters who participated in a global survey, experienced online violence, threats or harassment. Of these, 20 percent reported being attacked offline, linking to an online threat (Posetti *et al* 2020). The survey correlates with 2018 Glass Ceilings Report, which looks specifically at South African newsrooms. It also noted an increase in online harassment and cyber misogyny, an issue it found, that affected women more than men (Daniels and Tarisai 2018; Lowe

Morna 2018). The report indicates that in spite of significant gains in women representation at management levels within South African newsrooms, patriarchal and sexist attitudes still prevail (Daniels and Tarisai 2018; Lowe Morna 2018).

While several international studies have been conducted into the field experiences of female reporters, little research has been done into the field experience of female reporters within South Africa (Daniels 2014; Dibetso 2013; Daniels and Tarisai 2018; Lowe Morna 2018). It is clear from existing literature that entrenched patriarchy and sexism are fundamental challenges to the female reporter; however, the degree to which these norms obstruct the work of female reporters in the field is yet to be determined. Equally imperative is to note how these societal norms shape and influence the manner in which the female reporter is able to engage with newsmakers. Therefore there is a huge gap in existing research relating to the field experiences of female radio reporters as the current body of researchers does not exclusively delve into the area of field reporting and the interactions between newsmakers and female reporters. It is that existing gap in the current body of research that prompted the need for this study.

#### **1.4. The aim of the study**

Recent threats of sexual violence and rape against female reporters and editors necessitate a deeper understanding of the societal framework and conditions under which female reporters work. This study therefore aimed to explore and describe the field experiences specifically of female radio reporters at the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) from a feminist perspective; to ascertain *if* sexism and harassment is experienced, and if so, in what ways. The study also aimed to determine whether or not patriarchy underpins interactions with newsmakers while reporting, and if so, to what degree. The study aimed to examine the experiences of female reporters within the broadcast journalism spectrum and how newsmakers interact and relate with them in the professional space. The study further sought to understand how these behaviours, whether overt or nuanced, impacted on their personal and professional practices.

#### **1.5. Key Research objectives**

The broader objectives of the study are to:

- I.** To explore the field experiences of female SABC radio reporters from a feminist perspective.
- II.** To examine whether or not female SABC radio reporters experience sexism and harassment in the field, and if so, how?
- III.** To determine whether or not female SABC radio reporters experience patriarchy in the field, and if so, to what degree?

- IV. To investigate if sexism from interviewees compromise the ability of female reporters to generate stories, and if so, in what ways?

### **1.6. Key Research questions**

The key empirical questions guiding this study are:

- I. What are the field experiences of female SABC radio reporters from a feminist perspective?
- II. Do female SABC radio reporters experience sexism and harassment in the field? If so, how?
- III. Do female SABC radio reporters experience patriarchy in the field? If so, in what ways?
- IV. Does sexism from interviewees compromise the ability of female reporters to generate stories? If so, how?

### **1.7. Significance of the Study**

This study has been undertaken with the understanding that although the participants were within broadcast journalism at the SABC, the findings could inform the experiences of female reporters across all media newsrooms in South Africa. The findings are therefore significant in that it will provide a deeper understanding of the unique challenges faced by female reporters in South Africa. By casting the spotlight on these challenges and the context in which they exist, it will aid media organisations and lobby groups to create policies and frameworks that can better protect the female reporter. In addition, it can provide the groundwork for the education of society, particularly men, in the role that female reporters play in the industry and society as a whole. It will also add to the current body of knowledge relating to gender and media studies.

### **1.8. Study site/context**

This is a South African study that focused specifically on SABC radio reporters. The SABC is a public broadcaster that is mandated to ensure coverage of all sectors of the South African landscape. The SABC also has established newsrooms around the country with a larger pool of radio reporters to draw from, as opposed to smaller radio stations and media organisations. Therefore, the female reporters employed at the SABC would likely cover a wide range of beats across multiple communities. This would ensure more diverse experiences from which the reporters can draw from during the data gathering process.

Using purposeful sampling (Cresswell and Clark 2017; Campbell *et al* 2020; Palinkas *et al* 2015), participants were selected from within three metropolitan SABC news regions, namely Gauteng, Western Cape, and KwaZulu-Natal. The exact location has been withheld as by revealing it, it could aid in the

identification of the reporters who participated in the study. These newsrooms selected were preferred geographic regions as it served metropolitan and suburban communities, including informal settlements and rural communities. The participants working in these newsrooms have interacted with a wide range of newsmakers, across multiple backgrounds, and cover a broader selection of stories, thereby providing richer textual data. From these newsrooms, a range of three to five participants were selected, taking into account willingness to participate, availability and depth of data.

## 1.9. Definition of key concepts

**Feminist** – A singular definition of feminism or a feminist cannot be drawn, as these concepts inherently resist definitive boundaries, however scholars explain feminism as encompassing several social, cultural, and political movements, theories and moral philosophies relating to gender inequalities and women's lives (Pande 2018; Sarikakis *et al* 2014). hooks (2000) further explains feminism as anti-behaviours and patterns that restrict and undermine the growth, development and freedoms of women, as opposed to being anti-male. hooks (2000) posits that anti-sexism is at the core of feminist ideals. Sarikakis *et al* (2014) reasons that feminism emerges as a direct response to embedded and institutionalised sexist and patriarchal ideologies, which have bound women to socially sanctioned roles and responsibilities. Tyson (2015) expounds feminism as representing a multiplicity of beliefs, assumptions and analytical methodologies, despite its common grounding. Feminist theory therefore underscores diverse viewpoints, as opposed to the predisposition of a single best view. The definition of feminism is broad, spanning many years and is unpacked in the theory chapter of this study.

**Female** –Historically, the term woman was understood by many feminists as a gender term that is dependent on social and cultural factors, as opposed to a sex term (Mikkola 2022). Mikkola (2022) further notes that the terms sex and gender are understood in different ways by various feminist theorists and cannot be characterised in a straightforward and easy manner. However, Mazzuca *et al* (2020) posits that gender is a flexible and multifaceted concept that is shaped differentially by life experiences and constituted by social, biological, cultural and linguistic factors. Mikkola (2022) explains that the prevalent gender/sex distinction is that the terms male/female refers to sex while woman/man denote gender. Lawford-Smith (2021) among others, find this categorisation unhelpful. Mikkola (2022) further writes that while the 1960s distinction of sex and gender have been questioned by contemporary feminist philosophers; the most widely accepted view is that gender is dependent on social and cultural factors, and that it is in some sense, different from biological sex. The researcher in this study leaned on the

definition of the terms female in the context of biological sex primarily because of the traditional entrenched societal views of sex in relation to patriarchy and sexism.

**South African Broadcasting Corporation:** The SABC is the South African public broadcaster, which was established in 1936 (SABC nd). However, broadcasting in South Africa predates the establishment of the SABC when the first wireless broadcast was made in 1923 (Erasmus 2004). Historically, the SABC was considered the propaganda arm of the apartheid regime, particularly after the introduction of television in 1976 (Erasmus 2004). Post democracy, the SABC had transformed into a public broadcaster with a mandate to inform, educate and entertain audiences (SABC nd). In order to fulfil its obligation, the broadcaster has 19 radio stations and six television station in its stable and broadcasts in all eleven official languages of the republic (SABC nd). The SABC its license conditions are regulated through the Independent Communications Authority of South Africa (ICASA) and broadcast content via the Broadcasting Complaints Commission of South Africa (BCCSA) (Erasmus 2004).

### **1.10. Snapshot of the methodology**

This study took a qualitative approach with a critical theory paradigm (Busetto *et al* 2020; Punch 2013; Myers 2009). Using purposeful sampling (Cresswell and Clark 2017; Campbell *et al* 2020; Palinkas *et al* 2015), eleven female reporters were selected from three provinces, which were Gauteng, the Western Cape and KwaZulu. The apparatus for data collection in this study was semi-structured interviews (Smith and Osbourn 2007). Interviews were conducted via video calls and audio recorded. Reflexive Thematic Analysis was the instrument of data analysis in this study (Braun and Clarke 2019).

### **1.11. Structure of Dissertation**

**Chapter Two: Literature Review:** This chapter discusses the relevant literature that is critical to this study. The first category of research reviewed delves into the growing body of literature that recognizes a disproportionate and stereotyped coverage of women in media, both as newsmakers and as commentators (Buiten and Salo 2007; Jia, Sen *et al* 2016; Wasserman, Bosch and Chuma 2018). The second category of research looks specifically into the experience of women working in news media (Daniels 2014; Dibetso 2013; Geertsema-Sligh 2018; Lowe Morna 2018). The chapter concludes with a look at how the experiences of women in news media and the coverage of women across various media link to feminism and leads into the next chapter, which encompasses the theoretical framework.

**Chapter Three: Theoretical Framework:** This chapter maps out the theoretical framework of this study. Two theories are expounded, which is the theory of feminism and the theory of patriarchy. The



concept of feminism is explained in this chapter, tracing its history and its divergent streams (hooks 2000; Pande 2018; Parry 2020). Particular focus is placed on intersectional feminism, which is the seminal theory guiding this study (Crenshaw 1989; 2016). The concept of patriarchy is discussed (Johnson 2004) and how this concept affects South African society (Thobejane 2014).

**Chapter Four: Methodology:** This chapter presents the methodological framework for this study, detailing the research approach, instrument of data collection and sampling, means of data analysis, ethical considerations and limitations within the research.

**Chapter Five: Data Analysis:** This chapter presents the findings of the study which show a clear correlation between societal norms, traditions and culture and the manner in which newsmakers engage with female reporters. It also reveals a stark contrast in the type of interactions between newsmakers and male reporters, as opposed to female reporters. This chapter further indicates the existence of invisible walls that restrict the daily scope of work of female reporters, in addition to the glass ceilings that limit their upward progression.

## **1.12. Conclusion**

This chapter has provided a background to the study. It highlighted the importance of identifying and understanding the challenges that female radio reporters face from a feminist perspective. The chapter also presented the key aims and research objectives of the study. The chapter concluded with a brief overview of following chapters in this thesis. The next chapter will expound on the literature relating to women and media.

## CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1. Introduction

This chapter reviews literature in relation to media and women. It begins with an overview of the media landscape in South Africa. The chapter will look into research on media representation of women as well as the experiences of women working in the media industry. The chapter will conclude with a look at how the experiences of women in news media and the coverage of women across various media link to feminism

### 2.2. Overview of the South African Media Landscape

According to Wasserman (2020), the South African media landscape can be divided into three tiers; public media, commercial media and community media. Public media falls under the ambit of the South African Broadcasting Corporation, which has a mandate to serve the interest of the South African people (Wasserman 2020). The SABC owns nineteen radio stations and six television stations and provides broadcasts in all eleven official languages of the republic (SABC nd). Commercial media, as Wasserman (2020) explains, is monopolised by a few conglomerates, notably Naspers, which owns Media 24 and Multichoice; Independent Media; Arena Holdings and Caxton Publishers. The latter provides content in the community media space. Wasserman (2020) describes the community media as critical in providing content of interests to communities, particularly those in smaller towns that often do not fit the agenda or larger commercial media.

According to Roper *et al* (2019), radio and television is still the most widely accessed media sources in the country, with the SABC dominating this space. Roper *et al* (2019) lists SABC television news as the most accessed offline news consumption platform, followed by free-to-air station eNCA and radio news. The largest part of the radio news audience is taken by channels broadcasting in indigenous languages (Roper *et al* 2019). The SABC's isiZulu language station Ukhozi FM and the isiXhosa language station Umhlobo Wenene are the leading radio stations in the country in terms of listenership numbers (Roper *et al* 2019). Community radio also attracts considerable listenership numbers with as many as 8.3million people tuning into over 200 stations per week (Roper *et al* 2019).

The South African media landscape has also been influenced by growth in the digital publishing space (Wasserman 2020). According to Internetworldstats (2020), South Africa enjoys a reasonably high internet penetration, with as much as 55% of the population being able to access the internet in 2020. Roper *et al* (2019) ranks South Africans among the heaviest users of social media in the world.

Statistically, 88% of South Africans use WhatsApp weekly for general use while 80% of South Africans use Facebook (Roper *et al* 2019). WhatsApp is the most widely used social messenger application in the country (Kemp 2020). Roper *et al* (2019) has found that smartphones are the most popular devices used to access news among South African audiences. As many as 76% of South Africans use their smartphones for news consumption per week (Roper *et al* 2019). News Media have capitalised on this by extending their publications or broadcasts to online platforms or creating exclusive online publications such as Daily Maverick (Wasserman 2020).

The South African media landscape is regulated by two bodies, which are the Press Council of South Africa and the Broadcasting Complaints Commission of South Africa (Wasserman 2020). The Press Council deals with print while the latter deals with broadcast media. Both bodies provide a code of conduct to which the media houses obligated to adhere and can impose punitive measure should a media house default (Wasserman 2020). In the case of broadcast media, the Independent Communications Authority of South Africa (ICASA) can take further action if their license conditions of the station have been flouted (Erasmus 2004).

## **2.2. Media and Women: General Overview**

A considerable amount of literature has been published on media and gender (Barton and Storm 2014; Daniels and Tarisai 2018; Lowe Morna 2018; Macharia 2015; Rao 2020). These studies are often grouped into two categories of research – media reporting of women (Jia, Sen *et al* 2016; Shor, Eran *et al* 2015; Wasserman, Bosch and Chuma 2018) and women working in media production (Beiser 2018; Daniels 2014; Daniels and Tarisai 2018; Geertsema-Sligh 2018; Lowe Morna 2018). Under this heading, the researcher discusses these two types of research:

### **Media reporting of women:**

There is a growing body of literature that recognizes disproportionate and stereotyped coverage of women in media, both as newsmakers and as commentators (Jia, Sen *et al* 2016; Shor, Eran *et al* 2015; Wasserman, Chuma and Bosch 2018). Data from the 1980s and 90s show little progress in the acquisition of gender parity in media coverage. Researchers such as Davis (1982), Potter (1985), Duncan, Messner and Williams (1991) and Zock and Turk (1998) have established that women were significantly underrepresented in media. The trend continued through the new millennium, in spite of significant strides by women across various social and professional sectors.

According to Jia, Sen *et al* (2016), men were represented more in online newspapers than females, both visually and in text. The research, which entails analysis of more than two million articles collected over a period of six months from more than 950 outlets, also found that the proportion of female representation was consistently higher in pictures than text on nearly all topics and outlets. Jia, Sen *et al* (2016) concur that women feature in media for visual stimulus instead of credible news sources.

Researchers have linked media coverage of women to societal factors (Craft and Wanta 2004; Risman 2004; Shor, Eran *et al* 2015). Shor, Eran *et al* (2015) conclude that media almost entirely spotlights the higher echelons of occupational and social orders, where men continue to dominate. They agree with scholars such as Craft and Wanta (2004), De Swert and Hooghe (2010) and Risman (2004), who posit that individuals or groups within the media industry are unlikely to shift the gender imbalance, as the issue is deeply embedded in society. Newsworthiness, according to the aforementioned scholars, reflect public demand for coverage of high level politicians, sport and entertainment personalities, public officials and the like. Shor, Eran *et al* (2015) argue that these hierarchies remain the arena of men.

In South Africa, researchers such as Wasserman, Chuma and Bosch (2018) and Buiten and Salo (2007) and Hobson (2008) posit that media replicates patriarchal positions, which serve more to hinder as oppose to transform the gender narrative. Hobson (2008) further unpacks the narrative in the contemporary and digital media space as being racialized, wherein black is implied to be inferior and primitive and white is portrayed as civilized.

### **Experience of women working in the media industry**

A lack of gender parity and transformation within the news production space has been long lamented by feminist researchers (Byerly 2011; 2013; De Bruin and Ross 2004; Geertsema-Sligh 2018). In spite of growing numbers in the global industry, female reporters are often constrained to social beats, such as entertainment and education, and face with considerable resistance in covering stories relating to politics, sport and economics (Byerly 2011; 2013; De Bruin and Ross 2004; Macharia 2020). Geertsema-Sligh (2018) writes that women remain underrepresented at all levels of news organisations and further face glass ceilings when attempting to rise to top management positions. A similar finding was noted by Steyn and White (2011) in a study investigating newsroom management expectations and experiences of female journalists in Nepal, Bangladesh and Pakistan. The study found multiple barriers, which the authors referenced as ‘invisible nets’, that stymied the profession advancement of female reporters. The study posits that internal newsroom management dynamics could be explained through existent societal factors, perspectives and trends on gender and leadership.

In addition to the challenges within newsrooms, female reporters face immense risk while reporting from the field. According to Beiser (2018) and Wolfe (2011) female reporters are at higher risk of human rights violations, sexual harassment, threats of violence, murder and imprisonment than their male counterparts. The risks highlighted by Beiser (2018) and Wolfe (2011) are not just prevalent in war or conflict situations. Kempf and Kabwato (2012) pen an analysis of the risks posed to female reporters while engaging in field reporting within Southern Africa, in environments removed from war and conflict. Kempf and Kabwato (2012) state that although Southern Africa is not at war or experiencing civil discord, female journalists face severe backlash, including the threat of physical assault when reporting on political corruption. Kempf and Kabwato (2012) further contend that the risks female reporters face largely go unnoticed and unreported in newsrooms that are still in the main, male dominated. To this end, Kempf and Kabwato (2012) question the integrity of gatekeeping, whereby news organisations play down violations against female reporters in favour of more prominent news items.

In terms of numbers, South African media organisations have made considerable strides in ensuring more representative newsrooms (Daniels 2014; Lowe Morna 2018). However, the challenges facing female journalists must be contextualised in line with broader gender narratives, particularly in relation to the country's liberation struggle. Buiten (2013) writes that South Africa continues to grapple with its deep legacy of consistent, organised and intersected racial, class and gender discrimination. Post democracy, women in media in South Africa face an incongruous landscape. As a fledgling democracy, the country has championed the ideals of gender equality as a constitutional right; however, in spite of the legislative framework, discrimination of women in society and the workplace is pervasive (Dibetso 2013). According to Dibetso (2013) unequal gender norms prevalent in the workplace include, among others, jokes implying inferiority of women and crude sexual suggestions. Much of the discrimination faced by female reporters, according to Dibetso (2013), are nuanced and more challenging to combat. However, Dibetso (2013) posits that the issue of gender discrimination in the media industry is a societal issue mirrored within newsrooms.

Dibetso (2013) found that gender stereotyping is deeply ingrained in social structures, which promotes the elevation of androcentric practices in the newsroom. Dibetso (2013) further found that homosocial bonding, which is the bonding of the same sex on the basis of mentorship or friendship outside the scope of romance, created a barrier for female journalists. Dibetso (2013) unpacks the barrier as male reporters preferring to work with other men as opposed to female reporters. Dibetso (2013) also found women were often forced to assume masculine ways of communicating in order to be taken seriously in newsroom diary planning.

Gendered newsrooms and the challenges faced by female reporters are made clear in the significant and comprehensive Glass Ceilings Reports undertaken by South African Editors Forum and Genderlinks (Daniels and Tarisai 2018; Lowe Morna 2018). The 2018 report is the third edition of the study, the first two studies were released in 2006 and 2009 respectively. The 2018 quantitative study spanned 59 media companies across the country analysing data for over ten-thousand staff, including first-hand stories of ten senior female journalists about their personal experiences of sexism in the newsroom (Daniels and Tarisai 2018). From a numbers perspective, twenty-four of the media houses surveyed have between fifty percent to eight-five percent women in the staff contingent. Proportionally, the number of female senior managers increased to 46 percent in 2018 from 35 percent in 2009. There was a decline though, in the number of women on boards (Daniels and Tarisai 2018).

The report argues that the focus has shifted from numbers, to persistent sexism within newsrooms (Daniels and Tarisai 2018). The 2018 report also found that women still face a widening pay-gap, the influence of the old-boys' network and entrenched patriarchal and sexist attitudes (Daniels and Tarisai 2018). A significant factor highlighted in the report is the emergence of 'cyber-misogyny' – underlying sexist attitudes brought to the fore by the digital era (Daniels and Tarisai 2018).

The issue of cyber-misogyny as a risk is significant in the digital era. As referenced earlier, South African news media have embraced the digital era by extending their publications to online platforms (Wasserman 2020). Statistically, most South Africans use the smartphones for the consumption of news (Roper *et al* 2019). The prevalence on online platforms for news reporting has therefore expanded the journalism 'field' into the online domain, and in doing so, has introduced another dimension of both opportunity and danger to journalists, as explained by the Glass Ceilings Report (Daniels and Tarisai 2018). The Glass Ceilings Report (Daniels and Tarisai 2018) argues that cyber-misogyny threatens to silence women in media.

Rao and Rodney-Gumede (2020) in their comparative study of South African and Indian newsrooms have found similar perceptions to those documented in the Glass Ceilings reports. Both countries face historical legacies of patriarchal structures and gendered perceptions about the role of women. Rao and Rodney-Gumede (2020) notably found that female reporters in both countries perceived the newsroom as hegemonically masculine and that their influence is limited in light of pre-existing professional and societal stereotypes.

### **2.3. Media, Gender and Feminism**

The research into gender and media highlighted in this study casts the spotlight on two specific aspects: women working in newsrooms and the representation of women within news media. In both these areas, research has indicated key gaps. As news sources, women are underrepresented across various news topics (Jia, Sen *et al* 2016; Shor, Eran *et al* 2015). Women are also misrepresented as news sources (Jia, Sen *et al* 2016; Shor, Eran *et al* 2015) and as such, the misrepresentation perpetuates pervasive sexist and racialized stereotypes. In the production of news, women still struggle to break into male-dominated beats which have been monopolized by the proverbial old boys' club (Daniels and Tarisai 2018; Lowe Morna 2018).

Some researchers have documented the field experiences of female reporters in relation to war, conflict and civil unrest (Barton and Storm 2014; Besier 2018; Wolfe 2011), however there is a serious lack of research that delves deeper into the daily challenges faced by female reporters while engaging with newsmakers. The current body of work on media, gender and feminism imply a direct correlation between societal norms and the experiences of female reporters (Dibetso 2013; Rao and Rodney-Gumede: 2020). This study intends to shift the focus from within the newsroom, to the field, to ascertain the degree to which societal norms influence and affect the ability of the female reporter to tell the story.

The next chapter of this dissertation will expound further on the theoretical framework of the study.

## CHAPTER THREE: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

### 3.1. Introduction

This chapter discusses the theories that underpin the study. Two theories are discussed in these sections and their relevance to this study's analysis is further explicated. Firstly, the chapter discusses the feminist theory. Secondly, the patriarchal theory and then how these theories are applied to the study.

### 3.2. Feminist Theory: Definitions and Conceptualisations

Feminism, from its inception to date, has been unsuccessful in converging on a singular definition (Sarikakis *et al* 2014). Sarikakis *et al* (2014) quoting Bowen and Wyatt (1993) reason that a singular definition of feminism or a feminist cannot be drawn, as these concepts inherently resist definitive boundaries. Therefore feminism emerges as a direct response to entrenched, embedded and institutionalised sexist and patriarchal ideologies, which have bound women to socially sanctioned roles and responsibilities. According to Tyson (2015), the feminism represents a multiplicity of beliefs, assumptions and analytical methodologies, despite its common grounding. Feminist theory therefore underscores diverse viewpoints, as opposed to the predisposition of a single best view (Tyson 2015).

Pande (2018) explains feminism as encompassing several social, cultural, and political movements, theories and moral philosophies relating to gender inequalities and women's lives. hooks (2000) postulated that feminism is not anti-male, but rather anti-behaviours and patterns that restrict and undermine the growth, development and freedoms of women. hooks (2000) further posits that anti-sexism is at the core of feminist ideals. Sexism itself, she argues is not just a male condition, as women too can be sexists (hooks 2000).

While feminism from its inception sought to shed the moulds set for women, feminism itself evolved into various streams, each with its own labels (Parry 2020). The foremost theories are separated into eight categories; namely black feminism, radical feminism, cultural feminism, lesbian feminism, liberal feminism, Marxist feminism, materialist feminism, and socialist feminism (Andermahr, Lovell and Wolkowitz 1997; Evans 1995; Parry 2020). Parry (2020) tabulates the emergent streams of feminism below:

Liberal feminism	Focus on the empowerment and emancipation of women through political action; sees men and women as equal and women as being entitled to
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	the same rights, resources and opportunities afforded to men
Socialist feminism	Emphasis on understanding gender discrimination in private and public spaces; views gender relational systems as the root cause of women's oppression; gender relational systems include family, work and social spaces
Postmodern feminism	Acknowledges various systems of oppression; challenges dualistic narrative of gender; recognises many forms of oppression among women but does not identify with the victimisation narrative of women
Black feminism	Centres women's oppression through racism; dissatisfaction with singular feminist theory misrepresentation; black women must inform and address their own needs; theorisation of "otherness" and a focus on inclusivity of all women
African feminism	Critical of the limited, singular and homogeneous perspectives of Western feminism and its failure to take into account particularly African issues; it specifically addresses the conditions and needs of continental African women and pre-colonial history
Womanism	Considers race and class in women's lived experiences; developed and informed by black female scholarly works; basis to create forms of decolonised knowledge, but includes all racial groups of marginalised women
Intersectional feminism	Women's social identity categories (race, gender, socioeconomic status, sexuality, etc.) is

	considered to be interconnected (Crenshaw, 1989); larger oppressive institutions are understood to operate together to produce experiences of privilege or marginalisation for women
Feminist new materialisms	Diversely situated and transdisciplinary thinking that moves beyond the sole focus of the human experience, towards understandings of agency and gender inequalities by diminishing the historical authority of masculinist ways of knowing.

**Table 1.** Examples of the varying ideologies of feminism (Source: Parry 2020)

Overall, the manifold definitions of feminism and its broad acceptance of heterogeneous epistemologies is primarily suited to the study as it reflects the diverse views and intersected lives of the women the study seeks to understand (Parry 2020; Pande 2018). It also provides the latitude required to dissect how these women make sense of their experiences in relation to their sex, class and race (Parry 2020; Pande 2018).

### **3.3. Feminism: Origins and Development**

Historically, a woman’s primary function centred on childrearing and homecare; devoid of the right to make decisions on her livelihood, to own property, to manage her finances or even determine the welfare of her own children (Joseph 2021; Waithe 1991). Early writers such as Wollstonecraft (1792; 2020) wrote that women were schooled in proper etiquette so as to become cultured wives; giving further status to the men they were given into marriage to. While feministic ideals flourished through the Enlightenment period, it wasn’t until the late nineteenth century the call for women’s equal rights merged into an identifiable form or forms (Rampton 2015). Rampton (2015) writes that the early stages of feminism found a connection with the abolitionist movements. Women who fought alongside men for equal rights, particularly in the United States, found it hypocritical that they themselves were subjected to discrimination.

#### **3.3.1 Early years of Feminism**

Feminism, as a movement, finds its grounding mostly in the United States and Europe (Pande 2018). Pilcher and Whelehan (2016) explain that the analogy of an ocean or tidal wave is used to describe

feminism, as it has a pattern of rising and falling. The First Wave, from the mid-nineteenth century to the early twentieth century, focused on the attainment of equal rights, particularly suffrage (Pande 2018). The augmentation of feministic sentiment and discussion in public spaces in the United States coalesced into the first women's rights convention in Seneca Falls, New York, 1848. Here attempts to homogenize women's demands fermented into a single declaration, to model that of the American Declaration of Independence penned in 1776. Among the eleven resolutions contained in the *Declaration of Sentiments* is the audacious pronouncement of the equal status of women to men (Stanton, Anthony and Gage 1887). It further called for access to education, the de-monopolisation of the pulpit and participation in trade and commerce. However, the principal aspiration that would dominate feminism for the next seventy years was that of the right to the ballot (Rampton 2015).

While the Seneca Falls convention is widely lauded for magnifying the plight of women and giving impetus to their cause, it is equally slated for its boxed middle-class white position (hooks 2000). Critics accuse the matriarchs of the convention of emphasising the objectives of white privileged women, who sought equality with their men while neglecting the realities of women of colour (hooks 2000). hooks (2000) describes the early movement as polarised, with reformist-thinkers aiming to attain equality among the genders, whereas revolutionary thinkers were inclined to transform existing systems, so as to end patriarchy and sexism. hooks (2000) also casts the spotlight on the racist undertone of the movement, accusing white men of being pliant to the call made by white women, as a means to maintaining white supremacy. hooks (2000) is equally critical of white women in the early movement, who she asserts, cleaved to feminist politics as far as the endowment of certain privileges within the existing system. hooks (2000) accused white women in the movement of wanting the liberties enjoyed by their husbands, the decision-making power, the freedom of the vote; but not a shared equality with black women, who they still wanted to rule over. hooks' (2000) analysis is significant when mirroring the global feminist movement to that of feminism in Africa, particularly among marginalised and oppressed women of colour.

hooks' (2000) view is supported by Lori Ginzberg, who is an historian and biographer of Stanton. In an interview with National Public Radio host Steve Inskeep (NPR 2011), Ginzberg contends that Stanton may have claimed to have fought for the rights of all women, but instead fought for the rights of women much like her: white, middle-class, protestant, propertied and well-educated. In the American post-Civil War period, when the matter of the right to vote for black men was tabled, Ginzberg (NPR 2011) argued that Stanton and fellow suffragette and abolitionist Susan B Anthony took what was claimed to be a moral high ground, advocating for the universal right to vote for all American adults, as opposed to what

Ginzberg believes was the exigent need to provide black-American communities some form of franchise in the current political framework. It was clear that feminist leaders such as Anthony and Stanton had no intention to take up the cause of working class women.

Goldman (1910; 2002) denounced this myopic version of feminism that fixated on the vote as opposed to the wider context of women oppression, by postulating that the ballot would be ineffective in setting a woman free, if she did not also break free from the systems and societal cages that held her captive. However, suffrage remained the primary target and the feminist politics of Stanton and Anthony eventually gave way for the militancy of Alice Paul, who, taking a cue from her British counterpart; Emmeline Pankhurst, radicalised the movement (Bottrel 2018). Planned marches, confrontations with police and pickets heightened political pressure thereby securing the vote for American women through the nineteenth amendment (Bottrel 2018).

Post suffrage, a lack of direction and coherency of ideology diminished feminism in Europe and the United States. While suffrage provided a single, tangible goal, the attaining of it, brought into the spotlight the lack of consistent principles by which the movement can be defined. The general academic consensus, as hypothesized by Susan Kingsley Kent (1988) on the impact of World War I and the lack of accord on feminists ideology is that feminism as a distinct political and social movement ceased to exist by the end of the 1920s, as feminists understanding of masculinity and femininity were transformed during and post the war period. The vote, while a landmark victory for the movement, also failed in effecting evident transformation in the lives of women across racial and class lines. O'Neill (2017) argued that men still held commanding power in American life as only a few women were elected into office.

However sentiment that the movement had collapsed was met with scepticism from some quarters (Debenham 2013). The mobilization of women for franchise disintegrated into a number of splinter organisations focused on lobbying and education as opposed to specific feminist goals. Paul's establishment of a National Women's Party in the United States attempted to reroute attention to the removal of discriminatory legislation by means of an Equal Rights Amendment. However, white middle-class predispositions prevailed once more with opposition to specific protective laws, begging the question of whether or not women were really ready to overhaul the patriarchal machinery from which many found financial and societal rank. Debate deferred with the onset of the Great Depression followed by World War II. The recruitment of men for war created a void in the American workforce, a void that women would soon fill (Cokely 2018). Women found opportunities for participation in the military

service, work in factories and prospects within sporting codes during the war under a mass marketed campaign of patriotism and propaganda. ‘Rosie the Riveter,’ a poster initially created by J. Howard Miller in 1942 depicting a spunky white woman donning a red bandana, rolling up her sleeve, became the identifiable mass media icon associated with women in the military and workplace (Cokely 2018).

However, with the end of WWII, many women were forced to forego their newfound careers and posts, and concede them to returning soldiers (Santana 2016). Juxtaposed to the campaign of patriotism that inspired them to leave their homes and families to serve their country, they now faced a new culture of domesticity (Dicker 2008). American women, Yellin (2004) explains, were pressurised into recreating and protecting the idea of a traditional home and family. Like the mass-marketed campaign of patriotism, the domesticity campaign used mass media to lure women back into servitude, with the general thought that women’s support of men on the frontlines must translate to their care at home. Volumes of psychological literature concerning the demilitarisation of veterans were published reinforcing the notion that women were critical components in ensuring that veterans were socially readjusted (Knaff 2012).

The second wave of feminism started from the 1960s and spanned through to the early 1990s (Gray and Boddy 2010; Rampton 2015). Betty Friedan, author of *The Feminine Mystique* (1963), was a central figure during the second wave, driving much of the sentiment fundamental to second wavers. In her book, Friedan (1963) interrogates the notion that woman can only find fulfilment and meaning via childrearing and servitude to a husband. Friedan (1963) further rejects prevalent doctrines that confined women to homemaking and domestication, thereby losing their individual identities within the broader context of family. The prime philosophy of the second wave is “The Personal is Political” and took the issue of gender equality further than political rights to also include areas such as family, sexuality and work (Pande 2018). Heberle (2021), citing Nicholson (1988), argues that there are incalculable references and discussions centred on the phrase ‘Personal is Political’, therefore no single movement or theory can claim sole proprietorship to the term. However, Heberle (2021) reasons that the concept was brought into the popular lexicon by feminists, thereby becoming a reference point, albeit contentious, for feminist politics. Tracing the phrase through the American Civil Rights Movement in the 1960s, particularly among white Southern Women, Evans (1980), documents that female activists became acutely aware of how tacit conjectures on male ascendancy shaped their daily realities.

Heberle (2021) surmises that the evolution of the phrase ‘The personal is political’ within the Civil Rights Movement and all subsequent differentiating subgroups challenged those within and among those movements to identify and contend with the limitations of what they recognise as constituting the

“political”. Heberle (2021) further writes of the phrase, that, it signified authenticity in the pursuit of justice, and called for reflexivity about one’s privileges or oppression, within the given context. Through identifying one’s own subjective parameters, the phrase, Heberle (2021) asserts, rejects the imposition of an individual’s values on another in an attempt to create a participatory democracy.

The Second Wave brought female sexuality to the fore, sparking debate not only on sex and sexuality, but also issues of male dominance, coercion, gender-based violence, sexual identity and reproductive health, among others (Maxwell and Shields 2018). Feminists demanded the freedom to define, express and choose their own sexual lifestyles. By and large, the notion that women had sexual desires like men or even that they had the same right to satisfy their desires was revolutionary (Coonzt 2011). Much of this debate found vocalisation through the battle for reproductive rights (Fosbery 2019). The female liberation movement, particularly the push for sexual freedom, cast the spotlight on gender-based violence. Some schools of thought attempted to draw a relationship between the rise of sexual freedoms and the perceived rise of sexual violence (Fosbery 2019). However, Cobble *et al* (2014) argues that rape, harassment and assault predated the women’s liberation movement, however the extent to which is unknown as so few women reported such instances.

The second wave also threw the spotlight on feminist elitism - widely criticised by academics and activists like hooks (1981; 2000). Black feminists slated the fact that the movement was largely dominated by white women, who appeared as central figures, and that the popular discourse clustered around white women’s lives (hooks 1981; 2000). Gray and Boddy (2010) contend that racism and classism were fundamentally secondary concerns within the feminist narrative, this in spite of growing participation from women of colour and women in developing nations (Rampton 2015). Smith (2013) writes the schism between white middle-class and Black women’s oppression became evident in the 1960s, particularly as advocates of domestication also derided black women for working outside the home. In Coontz (2011) analysis, she describes these critics as “*Freudians and social scientists*” who accused black women of a secondary emasculation, the first through slavery, of black men through their economic independence. A 1965 report by United States Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan entitled; “*The Negro Family: The Case for National Action*” reinforced this racist narrative, positing that the American Negro family suffered a reversal of roles between husband and wife, and this ‘*tangle of pathology*’ kept Black America families in a cycle of poverty, that is out of line with mainstream American society, resulting in the retardation of black progress. This narrative propelled black feminists to scrutinize interconnectedness between gender, class and race (Crenshaw 1989; 2016).

The perceived failures of the second wave, particularly in its approach to race and class representation gave rise to the Third Wave. Snyder (2008) contends the point of differentiation between second and third wavers is the latter's tactical approach to impasses that materialised within feminist theory in the 1980s. According to Snyder (2008), the first tactical approach is the collapse of the term women as a homogenous category, focusing on an intersectional and multi-perspectival version of feminism. Secondly, Snyder (2008) writes that with the rise of postmodernism, third-wave feminists support '*multivocality*' and action over synthesis and theoretical justification. Thirdly, Snyder (2008) posits that third-wave feminism underscores sexual inclusivity devoid of judgement.

Snyder (2008) further explains that third wavers sought to claim their own version of feminism that spoke their societal contexts and challenges, particularly amid pressures from the mass media and information technology sector. Stache (2017) expounds on the goals of the third wave movement as focusing on choice and individuality, while striving to be inclusive to those from differing backgrounds and identities. However, Stache (2017) further states that the degree to which these goals are emphasised is critiqued, as it falters in creating necessary systemic change for women.

### **3.3.2. Feminism, Intersectionality and the African woman:**

Discourse around the interconnectedness between race, class and gender didn't simply emerge in the 1960s, but rather predates the waves and still prevails today (hooks 2000). Black American women since slavery lamented the layers of oppression they faced, not just as women, but as poor, black women. The well-documented speech by Sojourner Truth during the 1851 Women's Convention in Akron, Ohio, as quoted in Crenshaw (1989) paints a vivid picture of the interlacing of oppression faced by Black America slaves, in that her femininity did not protect her from abuse or forced labour. Truth's compelling oration of the reality that black female slaves faced conflicted with the nature of oppression faced by white women. Whereas black women were disparaged and subjected to racial abuse and hard labour, white women were treated as delicate and emotional beings in need to protection (Smith 2013). The layers of oppression faced by black women was aptly encompassed in the term '*Intersectionality*' coined by legal scholar, Kimberlé Crenshaw in 1989 in her ground-breaking essay, "*Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and*

*Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics.*” Gines (2011) unpacks Crenshaw’s intersectionality as

*...a term that refers to the multiple, interconnected layers of existence and identity (including but not limited to the existential, political, social, and personal - and ranging from race, class, gender, sexuality, nationality, ethnicity, culture, and religion, to one's relationship with oneself and with others). We live multiplicitous, intersectional, interconnected, and interdependent existences - our identities often operating in complex power relations with others. Gines (2011:275)*

Central to Crenshaw’s landmark 1989 paper is the fact that the oppressions and discrimination that black women faced does not easily fit into neatly packaged legal definitions of sexism, classism or racism. These boxed legal references are inadequate in identifying that black women’s woes often fit into a cross section of these terms simultaneously. She further asserts that by failing to see the interconnectedness of oppression faced by black women, black women are rendered legally invisible within the system. Crenshaw’s analysis delves into legal battles brought by black women, particularly around employment discrimination. Crenshaw (1989; 2016), upon analysing rulings in several of these lawsuits found that the court refused to permit the plaintiffs to sex-based and race-based discrimination into a singular classification of discrimination as vividly featured in the DeGraffenreid v. General Motors case (Smith 2013).

In developing countries, where systemic discrimination is a daily reality, it was the juxtaposition between white feminism and the layers of oppression faced by black women which shaped perceptions of feminism being a largely western concept (Berger 2008). Attempts to homogenize the movement internationally gained impetus through four world conferences hosted by the United Nations in Mexico (1975), Copenhagen (1980), Nairobi (1985) and Beijing (1995), providing an international stage for the convergence of global activists. Bunch (2012) writes that while the United Nations did not birth the movement, its conferences did serve to cast an international spotlight on women’s lives and rights, thus creating a platform from which feminist could engage in and enhance their sphere of influence.

However, African activists, particularly in Southern Africa, saw little relevance of feminism with their liberation movements, and their daily struggle for survival amid poverty and oppression (Berger 2008). This reflects the sentiment shared by the ANC in Copenhagen in 1980 (International Feminists Collective



1981) in which priority was first given to the racial liberation before gender liberation. It must be noted, as Ahikire (2014) posits, that African women did not simply reject feminism, however sought to re-define it according to their own diverse experiences. Some academics, such as Hudson-Weems (1998) sought to locate the gender discourse within the African identity through Africana Womanism, a concept that encompassed both ethnicity and gender, which Hudson-Weems presents as a theoretical concept and methodology that offers an alternative to all forms of feminism.

African feminism, Ahikire (2014) expounds, is inherently opposed to patriarchal orthodoxies and mainstream patriarchal power. However, Ahikire (2014:9) aptly asserts that feminism on the African continent contains varied and multiple...

*..currents and undercurrents that defy simple, homogenising descriptions.*

Ahikire (2014:9)

These '*currents and undercurrents*' are aptly located in Crenshaw's intersectionality (1989; 2016), and is particularly significant to the South African context, in which women of colour had to first seek emancipation from racial oppression before beginning to address the question of patriarchy (International Feminists Collective 1981). However, in the South African context, the ANC did concede that a singular focus on liberation without due attention to the concerns of women, was counter-productive. At the UN Copenhagen conference in 1980, the ANC focused primarily on the collective liberation struggle (ANC 1980); however by 1990 the ANC recognised the need for a focused approach to the emancipation of women.

Women, according to Geisler (2000) were involved in the liberation movement since the turn of the century, however, only gained full membership into the ANC in 1943 with the forming of the movement's women's league. A unifying dynamic characterising women activism in South Africa was *Motherhood*, as Barbra Klugman (1994) explains. Joseph (1986) further unpacks motherism by stating that in South Africa, as much as globally, specific gender privations such as the desire to acquire a better life for their children propelled women into political activism, even against male resistance. Motherism was also an instrument used by Afrikaner women, both in protest against and support of apartheid sentiments. In relation to the establishments of the Suid Afrikaanse Vroue Federasie (South African Women's Federation) and the Suid Afrikaanse Landbou Unie (South African Agricultural Union), Klugman (1994) writes that although these organisations endeavoured to address women's concerns and

motherhood, the principal focus was to enlist women into the broader Afrikaner Nationalist movement.

Wells (1993) writes of women's involvement in the struggle against apartheid, particularly in reference to the multiracial Federation of South African Women (FSAW) which was formed in 1954, was paradoxical. The federation was driven by conservative elements which saw women on one hand resisting discriminative state laws, while on the other hand, were defending traditional gender-defined roles as mothers and homemakers (Walker 1991). While Walker (1991) and Wells (1993) contend that the defence of the home and motherhood was conservative and the reinforcement of traditional gender-defined roles, Gasa (2007) labels Walker and Wells arguments as 'limited' and 'deeply flawed', asserting that the duality is redundant and fails in encapsulating the essence of black women's experiences. Gasa (2007) argues that the defence of a woman's role as homemaker and mother does not automatically translate to a defence of patriarchal practices and abuse. In the context of the South African liberation movement, she questions the notion that the defence of the family is rooted in conservatism, given the state's onslaught on black families. Gasa (2007) expounds on the harassment that young black children faced, the children of black mothers, and how their determination to protect their children cannot be disconnected from feminism.

Meer (2005) writes that while South African women engaged in the anti-apartheid mass mobilisation, they also pursued an additional struggle against sexism and patriarchal systems. Meer (2005) notes that it suited men in mainstream liberation movements to involve women, as they needed to bolster their numbers to make a significant impact on the oppressive regime. The same opinion prevailed in labour unions, wherein the required membership to effect clout at the bargaining table stood at fifty-one percent. Women counted for a substantial proportion of the workforce, thus it became imperative for unions to recruit and sustain their membership. Meer (2005) notes that by enabling the membership of women alongside men in labour and political organisations, the principle of gender equality was confirmed. In addition to the resistance, women used this platform as a springboard for other gender-specific issues they faced, such as equal-wages, maternity leave and childcare. Similarly, they also drew attention to the sexism and harassment they encountered within their movements (Meer 2005). These experiences were not peculiar to the South African struggle, but as referenced earlier, was similar to the experiences of African-American women during both the abolition and civil rights movements.

At a 1983 conference of the Federation of South African Trade Unions (FOSATU) female speakers candidly exposed their concerns. Meer (1998) lists the setbacks faced by female comrade Mam Lydia

Kompe, who accused some male comrades as being resistant to women in leadership. Other speakers also underscored the disproportionate domestic responsibilities female comrades carried. However, Meer (1998) writes that challenging the societal and cultural norms that dictated the domestic roles of men and women was not often accepted. She documents the response of one male attendee who contested the concerns raised by the women was counter-traditional, as it would be unacceptable for a man to care for children or participate in household chores. These conversations challenged entrenched patriarchal roles and aimed to redefine the manner in which men and women engaged. Meer equally documents the response of other male comrades, who agreed that in the interest of the broader liberation movement, a man can share in the domestic tasks.

The discourse around women's issues continued within the liberation movement. Women created spaces, particularly in the labour movement, to engage on matters such as equal wages, maternity benefits, advancing reproductive health, sexual harassment and domestic abuse. However, challenging the status quo on sexual harassment and proposing women in leadership roles was often met with stiff resistance. Meer (2013) found that while the majority of men in the liberation movement agreed in principle with gender equality, they were not as amiable to the challenge on their sexual behaviour or their prerogative to lead. Meer (2013) documents that a resolution on sexual harassment of women by male members was vehemently rejected at a 1989 COSATU conference. She notes that a policy on sexual harassment was only adopted seven years later.

It was not just in the labour movement that female comrades experienced resistance. Meer (2005) writes that within the ANC itself, female comrades encountered glass ceilings, particularly in as far as attaining leadership roles. Meer (2005) writes that by 1990, no female comrade occupied a seat in the organisation's six national office bearers, and accounted for a mere eighteen percent of the organisation's National Executive Committee.

Post democracy, South Africa, through its constitution, attempted to address gender disparities across all paradigms. Buiten (2013) describes the establishment of 'gender machinery' through gender-specific policies and structures as a means to redress historic disparities, with focus on gender quotas across the public and private sphere and women's involvement in decision-making bodies and processes. However, Buiten (2013) also points out that despite considerable successes in the legislative and policy framework as well as the increased level of debate and awareness around gender transformation, they are incapable of driving comprehensive change.

### 3.4. The concept of patriarchy

Johnson (2004) defines patriarchy as a myriad of symbols and ideas that constitute a culture wherein male-dominance is asserted and established as an acceptable and natural order. Manhood and masculinity, according to Johnson (2004), is associated with humanity, strength and leadership, whereas femininity and womanhood is marked as 'other' or associated with weakness and subservience. Walby (1989) clearly defines patriarchy as an embedded system within society whereby women are oppressed and exploited by men. Walby (1989) outlines six main patriarchal structures that form this system. These structures are categories as production in which a husband sequesters a woman's labour; waged labour; the state; male violence; sexuality and culture.

In South Africa, Thobejane (2014) argues that men, both pre and post-apartheid, have been benefactors of patriarchy and hold the belief that their maleness entitles them to certain powers, particularly over women. This is clearly seen in the hesitancy of men within the abolition movement in the US and in the South African liberation movement, to accept a hierarchal position of women.

The embedded system of patriarchy in South Africa was noted and lamented by the Commission on Gender Equality (1998), as cited by Coetzee (2001). The Commission (1998) acknowledged patriarchy as a non-racial system firmly rooted in the diverse cultures and traditions within the country. The Commission (1998) further stated that challenges to patriarchy are labelled as an attempt to destroy the traditions, culture or ideals in which the system thrives.

Thobejane (2014) quoting Jewkes *et al* (2002) directly links domestic violence in South Africa to patriarchy. The ideas, as listed by Jewkes *et al* (2002) are that women ought to be obedient to their husbands, give them their earnings, and accept physical abuse as a sign of love. The link between patriarchy and abuse is evident in the country's statistics on gender violence. According to the South African Police Services annual report for the 2018-2019 financial years, 17 7620 crimes against women were reported. There were 36 731 cases of sexual offences reported and 2 930 women were murdered (Merten 2019).

It appears that the fundamental disjoint between South Africa's impressive statutes, policies, commissions and legislative frameworks that advocate gender equality and the realities of women at a grassroots level is the notion that many men, while proclaiming women's rights, are reluctant to

relinquish the privileges of patriarchy, particularly when it threatens domestic norms and sexual prerogatives (Blake 2001).

### **3.5. Application of theories to the Study**

The sheer volume of research into the lives of women around the world reflects various realities. Chronologically, a case can be made for the advancement of women as both society and academic thought developed. The acquisition of the vote, vigorous discourse around women's health and policies critical to the financial and societal protection of women, the emergence of women into careers and spaces dominated by men are perhaps firm examples of female progression.

However, from the volume of literature available, it also cannot be ignored that patriarchy and sexism are a pervading reality of women worldwide, to which South Africa is not exempt. Women still battle for basic and fair recognition and rights across various sectors, in both workspaces and interpersonal relationships. This is evident in the continual battle against gender-based violence, the glaring wage gap between men and women and the lopsided representation of women in policy making.

From the body of research outlined, a clear line can be drawn between the existent patriarchal and sexist patterns in society and the experiences of women in the field of journalism. Research on South African newsrooms consistently refers to the *intangibles*, as unquantifiable but acutely vivid oppressive behaviour and unspoken systems that limit female journalists. These intangibles affect female reporters both professionally and personally, across racial and class lines. The multiple dimensions of oppression faced by the female reporter reinforces an intersectional feminist position (Ahikire 2014; Crenshaw 1989; 2016; Gines 2011).

Further to this, South African society is deeply patriarchal across most, if not all, traditional and racial divides. Women are viewed as inferior and created to serve at the behest of men. It is within this construct that female reporters engage newsmakers.

## **CHAPTER FOUR: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### **4.1. Introduction**

This chapter outlines the methodology used in this study. This research was a feminist study, which employed a qualitative approach with a critical theory paradigm. The selected research methodology is further detailed in this chapter. The research approach, instrument of data collection, selection of the sample, means of data analysis, rigour and reflexivity are particularized herein, in conjunction with the relevant academic rationale.

### **4.2. Research Philosophy and Paradigm**

A key objective in undertaking this study is to understand the experiences of female radio reporters in relation to patriarchy and sexism, and further, to unpack how they make sense of those experiences. The dynamics of power, gender, class, race and its interconnectedness within the lives of the reporters situates the study within feminist philosophy. Various feminist epistemologists and philosophers of science contend that dominant and traditional research methods and knowledge practices are male-centred and exclude women (Parry 2020). Feminist researchers have long argued that the notion of universal knowledge is fundamentally drawn from male scholarship, wherein women are rendered unknown and essentially, unknowable (Dubois 1983). Like the movement, feminist research epistemology embraces diversity in their emphasis and methods, as a single definition does not exist, neither is it desirable, given the various streams of feminist ideologies (Kiguwa 2019; Wilkinson and Morton 2007). However, there are core aspects of feminist research that distinguish it from traditional social science research.

The concept of situated knowledge is central to feminist epistemology. Anderson (2020) reflects the notion of situated knowledge as a reflection of the perspective of the knower, in particular, how gender situates knowing subjects. According to Anderson (2020), the question of situated knowledge has been explored within three approaches, which have in time converged. These are feminist standpoint theory, feminist postmodernism and feminist empiricism. Standpoint theories purport an epistemically advantaged socially situated position from which claim representation (Anderson 2020; 2011). Essentially, standpoint theory identifies the impact that one's location in society has on their ability to know (Pierre 2014). Within the scope of this theory, men and women are likely to have different experiences and therefore how and what they are capable of knowing will differ accordingly (Pierre 2014). Standpoint theory further asserts that socially marginalised individuals are more likely to be able to identify biases and disparities within knowledge production (Hartsock 1983; Pierre 2014).

Feminist postmodernism directly rejects systemic and entrenched sexist and patriarchal practices within society, particularly rallying against the notion of natural and necessary difference observable between men and women (Butler 1990; Anderson 2020). Postmodernism has found significant relevance within the feminism movement itself, in highlighting the plight of women of colour and lesbians who claimed that their concerns were in the main, ignored or side-lined (Kiguwa 2019). Feminist Postmodernism emphasises a situatedness driven by a shifting plurality of perspectives, to which there is no objectivity (Anderson 2020). Haraway (1991) explains this as a rejection of both objectivism and relativism as a means for knowers to escape responsibility for the representations that they construct.

Feminist Empiricists, according to Anderson (2020) takes into deliberation the manner in which feminist values can justifiably inform empirical inquiry, and further seeks to improve upon existing scientific methods to address gender-biases therein (Campbell 1998; Clough 2003; Nelson 2010). Most feminist empiricists' support the idea of inquiry as a social practice, in which, the subjects of knowledge may be groups or communities, while feminist empiricists like Quine (1969) assumes an individualist account.

A significant development in feminist epistemology over the last three decades is the convergence of feminist standpoint theory, feminist postmodernism and feminist empiricism in scientific inquiry. Harding (1991; 1998) both foresaw and welcomed the blurred distinction between the three viewpoints. According to Anderson (2020) initial theorising in feminist epistemologies slanted towards global questions around gender and knowledge, whereas the field has now developed a local lens from which in investigates the ways gender affects inquiry in specific studies by communities using distinct methods.

The scope of the study resonates with the feminist philosophy, under the paradigm of critical theory. A Critical Theory paradigm postulates a historically constituted social reality that is flexible by nature as it is created and replicated by people (Myers 2009). Historically, critical theory is linked to three leading theorists of the original Frankfurt School, namely Horkheimer, Adorno and Marcuse. Asghar (2013) contrasts Critical and Traditional Theories, expounding on the latter as an investigation and verification of the status quo, while the former challenges the existing conditions and advocates for social change. According to Asghar (2013), power relations within society are a core concern of Critical Theory, primarily how race, class, gender, religion and social norms contribute to a social system.

Horkheimer (1982), confirmed by Bohman (2013), observed three criteria for the satisfactory application of a Critical Theory Paradigm: it must provide an explanation of the problems with the status quo, it must recognize and distinguish an action to address the status quo and it must offer unambiguous norms for criticism and transformation. Bohman (2013) further states that philosophical approaches inclined to the

same or similar aims, such as feminism as is the case of this study, could fall under the ambit of critical theory. This philosophy and paradigm was apt as the intent of the study was to probe and evaluate the historic constructs which informs the social realities in which the women in the study ply their trade, the entrenched or pre-existing ideologies, with specificity to sexism, harassment and patriarchy, that underpin their interaction with newsmakers and the manner in which these occurrences are perceived and internalised by the participants.

### **4.3. Research design and approach**

Techniques for the gathering of data for research are in the main classified as either quantitative or qualitative (Sallis *et al* 2021). However, historically, feminist researchers argued that quantitative methods leaned towards an androcentric perspective, ignoring or muting women's voices (DuBois 1983; Oakley 1981), therefore necessitating a more critical analysis of the underpinning epistemological framework. This study delved deeper into the daily experiences of women in the journalism profession and how they internalise their perceived realities. Therefore, a feminist methodology was critical to the design of this study, with a Qualitative approach.

Creswell (2017) describe qualitative researchers to understand human behaviour, thoughts and interpretation. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) further explain that the aim of qualitative research methods is to uncover the meaning of an occurrence to those involved in it. Essentially, Merriam and Tisdell (2016) unpack qualitative research as being concerned with how individuals make sense of their experiences, how they construct their realities and the meaning they ascribe to their experiences. Farghaly (2018) affirms that qualitative researchers accept that to fully conceptualize meaning for the individuals studied; the researcher must acknowledge that multiple realities exist. The individuals participating in this study exist and coexist in the construct of multiple realities, which can impact directly or indirectly on the results of the study. This description aptly correlates with Crenshaw's intersectional feminism (1989; 2016), which is a central ideology underpinning this study. Intersectionality magnifies the experiences and voices of marginalised women, particularly women of colour (Kiguwa 2019). While there are contending views on intersectionality (Smooth 2011), intersectionality refutes the categorisation of the experiences of women as a singular entity, but rather identifies how multiple currents and cross currents of race, gender, class as examples, play in shaping the experience of the individual (Kiguwa2019).

Ollivier and Tremblay (2000) concur that there are three central principles of feminist research. The first, in opposition to traditional research, the objective of feminist methodologies include both the production



of new knowledge as well as the influence of social change. Historically, feminist researchers found that the dominance of positivist and quantitative research methods and approaches in the construction of knowledge excluded and marginalised the voices and experience of women (Wilkinson and Kitzinger 1996). Therefore, a primary concern for feminist researches is the prioritisation of women's experience and voices, not just in the social world, but also in the production of knowledge (Boonzaier and Shefer 2006).

The second principle highlighted by Ollivier and Tremblay (2000) is that feminist research endeavours to merge feminist values and beliefs into its process. Feminist research draws into attention the experiences of women and how women make sense of those experiences (Holloway and Wheeler 2013).

A third principle underscored by Ollivier and Tremblay (2000) is that feminist research approaches are both interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary, utilizing various methodologies, redefining itself along the emergent concerns and perspectives presented by women. Feminist researchers have used both qualitative and quantitative approaches; however, quantitative research approaches are in the main, considered male-centred and therefore problematic (Wilkinson 1996; Boonzaier and Shefer 2006; Harding 1991).

Central to feminist research is also reflexivity, collaboration, power analysis, and advocacy (McHugh 2014). Feminist researchers believe that by nature, research is political in its form and effect, which renders the idea of neutrality and objectivity impossible (Kiguwa 2019). The reflexive nature of feminist research approaches compels the researcher to acknowledge their own biases and inherencies as well as the dynamics and complexities of power and influence that may exist between the participants and the researcher, in order to identify the potential it may have on the research findings (Kiguwa 2019).

#### **4.4. Research Methodology**

##### **4.4.1. Sampling strategy**

According to Whitehead and Whitehead (2020), a critical stage in any research is the identification of the population and then the drawing of a suitable sample from that population for data collection. The intent is that by studying the selected group or sample, the researcher is able to attain generalised data with which the population from which the sample was selected can be compared (Whitehead and Whitehead 2020). Campbell *et al* (2020) posit that purposeful sampling, which was the technique adopted for this study, is extensively applied in qualitative research where the aim is to identify and select

information-rich cases with the use of limited resources. According to Campbell *et al* (2020) purposeful sampling also contributes to the rigour of the study and improved trustworthiness of the data and the results. Critical to successful purposeful sampling is the identification and selection of participants that are conversant, informed, experienced and are able to articulate their knowledge and experiences in a reflexive manner (Cresswell and Clark 2017; Campbell *et al* 2020; Palinkas *et al* 2015).

The participants, who are under the employ of the South African Broadcasting Corporation, were selected from three provinces using the technique of purposeful sampling (Cresswell and Clark 2011; Campbell *et al* 2020; Palinkas *et al* 2015). Diversity of race and language groups was also a consideration during the selection process, however, the final list of participants were not selected as per a rigid quota, but by availability and work experience. It is important to note that the researcher took care to ensure that the participants reflect the diverse racial, cultural and language demographics of South Africa. The race of each participant is referenced in the study but not explicitly detailed. This was done to offer anonymity to the participants. Given the concentrated population from which the participants were selected, detailing race and age would make the participants easily identifiable and, therefore, could potentially compromise their professional relationships. The participants have also not been linked directly with any regional office, for the same reasons. As an ethical imperative, to preserve the anonymity of the participants, the data is analysed broadly, devoid of specificities of location or identifiable characteristics, unless explicitly shared by the participant themselves to demonstrate a point. To add to the ambiguity of location, it must be noted that not all participants have been selected from a single regional office with a specific province, as some regions have satellite offices. It is also critical to acknowledge that the SABC underwent a Section 189 process and subsequent restructuring of the organisation in 2020, during which many female reporters were retrenched. During this process, some satellite offices were closed and amalgamated into bigger regional offices. Anecdotal data referencing specific locations such as the South African Parliament based in the Western Cape does not imply that the participants are permanently based in that regional office. The nature of field reporting at the SABC is designed such that reporters may be deployed inter-provincially or may cover stories that are located beyond their base location. All of the participants have extensive interprovincial experience across multiple beats.

The reporters were selected using purposeful sampling, as listed below under assumed names:

<b>PROVINCE</b>	<b>PARTICIPANTS</b>	<b>AGE RANGE</b>
PROVINCE ONE	Ana Celeste	35 – 46

	Greta	
	Kate	
PROVINCE TWO	Elle	35 – 45
	Fiona	
	Hope	
	Ina	
PROVINCE THREE	Bianca	33 – 45
	Donna	
	Jane	

The scope of the study centres on the field experiences of female reporters within radio input, however, the restructured newsroom and staffing constraints at the public broadcaster have necessitated bi-media, that is, reporting across both radio and television platforms. Radio reporters are thus paired with video-journalists in order to ensure single coverage over both media. However, in instances where both radio and television reporters are assigned on a single story, logistical constraints further necessitated the need for shared travelling. In such cases, a radio reporter would be accompanied by a television reporter and video journalist.

The participants for this study were approached by the researcher confidentially through emails, text messages, telephone calls and in-person conversations.

#### **4.4.2. Data collection**

The apparatus for data collection in this study was semi-structured interviews. Barrett and Twycross (2018) unpack semi-structured interviews as a common approach in qualitative research, whereby the researcher specifically and explicitly questions the participant about core elements within the phenomenon. Barrett and Twycross (2018) argue that an effective semi-structured interview locates data within the key areas of the study, while enabling flexibility for the interviewee to share their own personality and perspective. According to Smith and Osbourn (2007), semi-structured interviews enable a dialogue wherein the initial line of questions can be adapted and modified as per the response from the interviewee. The researcher is thus able to further probe interesting and important details that emerge. Flexibility was a critical component of the data collection process, as it provided a platform for the participants to engage in an evocative and unimpeded manner, while creating a rapport between the researcher and the participants.

It is imperative to note that the selected method of data analysis for this study was unequivocally Reflexive Thematic Analysis as defined by Braun and Clark (2019), however, Smith and Osbourn's (2007) clear and systematic outline of the use of semi-structured interviews as an apparatus for data collection provided a fitting and effective guide in the structuring of the interviews. It can be argued that the participants in this study have, through their career, mastered the part of the interview. During the data gathering process, it was evident that the participants were more acclimated to driving interviews than being interviewed. However, Smith and Osbourn's (2007) model for semi-structured interviews fostered a synergy between the researcher and the participant, enabling flexibility around boundaries, permitting a deeper probe into novel areas, resulting in a richer quality of data.

An important point to note is that the initial instrument of data collection designed for this study proposed in-person interviews conducted in a neutral environment. However, the outbreak of coronavirus in South Africa in March 2020 derailed attempts for face to face interactions and interprovincial travel. Instead interviews had to be conducted via video call. The benefit of remote communication was that participants were able to connect from the comfort of their own homes, elevating their sense of security. However, the disadvantage presented by this mode of communication was that the impersonal, technological barrier impeded the sense of intimacy that the researcher aimed to achieve with the participants. Disruptions to connectivity via mobile and internet devices proved a challenge. This was exacerbated by further electrical load-shedding schedules across the various provinces. Load-shedding is a programme of scheduled interruptions to power supply from the main electricity provider in South Africa, Eskom.

In line with Smith and Osbourn's (2007) model, an interview schedule, or question-sheet, was designed prior to the interview. The pre-designed schedule aided in wording the questions appropriately to extract maximum data, particularly around sensitive subject matter. The schedule itself was adaptable and allowed for the researcher to probe further into experiences and conversations that were not formally documented in the question sheet. The interviews were lengthy, between 50 to 60-minutes each. The interviews were conducted in the English medium, as the participants and the researcher were able to effectively communicate in this language. The participants often used terms and words in their mother-tongue to emphasise experiences or meaning.

Finally, a fundamental tool in data gathering process was the recording and transcribing of the interviews. Smith and Osbourn (2007) argue the researcher risks capturing only the gist of what the interviewee says, if they attempt to write down their response during the dialogue. Therefore, Smith and Osbourn (2007)

recommend that interviews be recorded so as to ensure that the details are captured and that the researcher and participant are able to sustain a good rapport during the process.

For the study, the interviewees were most comfortable with audio recordings as opposed to video recordings as it ensured a further layer of anonymity. The actual interviews were conducted via video-calling, however, only the audio was recorded. The researcher ensured annotations during the interview process, taking into consideration factors such as body language, facial expressions and non-verbalised communication perceivable through the video technology.

The use of semi-structured interviews, as Barrett and Twycross (2018) explain, are commonly used in qualitative studies methodologies. Other qualitative researchers provide their own outline of how semi-structured interviews can be used as a tool for data collection, however, Smith and Osbourn's (2007) outline of the method was simplistic and emphasised an intimacy between the researcher and the participant, hence it was the preferred method of the researcher. Feminist research provides latitude in the use of mixed methods (Ollivier and Tremblay 2000), however, Smith and Osbourn's (2007) influence relate only to data-collection, and by no means was Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis employed in any phase of this study.

#### **4.4.3. Instrument for Data Analysis**

Reflexive Thematic Analysis was the instrument of data analysis in this study (Braun and Clarke 2019), as reflexivity, they assert, is the benchmark of feminist research. Reflexive Thematic Analysis acknowledges the critical role that the researcher plays in the production of knowledge. In this study, the researcher's work as a journalist and as a woman had to be carefully examined in order to ensure that preconceived notions and personal experiences didn't overshadow or manipulate the data collected and analysed. However, the recursive process of reflexive thematic analysis provided a filter for the researcher to examine their own imperatives. This process was deeply cathartic, simulating the effect of a debriefing session.

Braun and Clarke, argue that the benefit of thematic analysis is that it is not affixed to a singular epistemological or academic perspective, and is generically flexible, suggesting that the core skills involved in the process can be employed in various kinds of analysis (Braun and Clarke 2006; 2013; 2019).

Braun and Clarke outline six distinct phases of reflexive thematic analysis, through which the data collected from the semi-structured interviews was subjected to. The six phases are

- (a) Familiarisation of data
- (b) Coding
- (c) Identification of conceptualised themes
- (d) Review of themes
- (e) Defining and Naming of themes
- (f) Writing the Report.

However, Braun and Clarke (2019) caution against the rigid and linear adoption of the six phases in this approach, as the researcher risks boxing themselves into singular choices. The sequential six-phased approach, as Braun and Clarke explain, is an iterative process involving a movement back and forth between the phases, each building upon the previous phase. Braun and Clarke further describe the sequential outline as tools that steer the analysis, ensuring that the data is meticulously interrogated and engaged.

The data analysis process thus following the sequential, recursive process outlined herewith:

- a. Familiarisation of Data.** The researcher found that this was best achieved through the process of personally transcribing the data, referencing the annotations taken during the data gathering phase and listening and re-listening to the interviews, as opposed to just reading and re-reading the transcripts. The tedious, repetitive process was resultant in a familiarisation with the data that would not have been possible had the interviews been transcribed via a third party. By repetitively listening to the interviews, the researcher was able to gauge changes in tone of voice, paused responses and nuanced reactions of the participants. These unspoken elements of communication, together with the annotations made during the video calls, provide a sub-text to the content provided, as indicated below...

Researcher Do you think their reaction would have been the same had you have been a male reporter

Bianca Definitely not, definitely not. (*emphasis. Throws head back and rolls eyes*)  
 If \_\_\_\_\_ I. (*pause, tilts head in consideration*)  
 Because the truth of the matter is, when other journalists arrived and there were camera men, camera men are usually men (*emphasis*), there are very few uhm

female cameramen, specifically here in Johannesburg. The cameramen that came, the photographers who came were all men. (*emphasis*) And then they calmed down when the men arrived, so like. So it because I was alone, I got there first, that you tried to intimidate me? (*tone change. Irritated, angry tone*)

Reading the transcript in isolation would reveal the frustration the participant felt as a professional, of having been restricted from conducting interviews by the community. It also relays the perception of the participant of the situation, in that she saw the community as being more accommodating to male reporters than her. However, by closely listening to the recordings, the researcher could decipher a change in tone as the participant related the incident, communicating anger as much as frustration. In qualitative, feminist research, these subtleties denote the multiple layers of human behaviour, thoughts and interpretation that must be investigated (Holloway and Wheeler 2013)

**b. Coding.** Coding in Reflexive Thematic Analysis is a process which requires a constant reflection of one's own assumptions in the interpretation of the data (Braun and Clarke 2019). Correctly coding themes is pivotal and Clarke and Braun (2013) caution against the labelling of themes along the general idea of the questions asked. Gibbs (2007) elucidates the process as having to classify passages from the data collected that are linked by a common thread or idea, enabling the researcher to scaffold the thematic ideas. This is only attainable through the rigorous process of familiarisation. Succinct labels were earmarked across the data which related directly to the research question, as indicated below...

Hope: My husband doesn't have that frame of reference... (Male ignorance)  
 he doesn't understand what I am talking about... (Male ignorance)  
 and I am so conditioned to it, ... (Normalisation)  
 I am used to it (Coping)  
 and I think erm, I've never ever felt, I've never felt afraid. (Reporting)  
 I've never felt (*mimicked gasp*) like I need to report it.

Ana It's just like it has become a norm. (Normalisation)  
 sometimes you do feel like you know what, you feel dirty,  
 you feel erm like you know, why am I a woman? (Coping/Internalising)

You know, sometimes you do feel like that. (Coping/Internalising)  
 But sometimes you just argh,

because it has become such a norm gen (Normalisation)

that we just like ignore some of these things. (Normalisation)

(Coping)

Given the broad spectrum of incidents related, a number of codes were initially identified. However, some codes were subsumed into more distinct codes, which were then collated with relevant extracts.

**c. Generating initial themes.** During this phase, the code were absorbed into broader identifiable patterns. While multiple codes were drawn from the data, common threads emerged. These patterns – or potential themes - were reviewed and the viability of the potential theme was examined against the data collected from each transcript.

These threads, such as the normalisation of sexual harassment, reluctance to report incidents, clothing and coping mechanism, as examples, became evident. It is from these commonalities that generalised themes were decided.

**d. Reviewing themes.** Potential themes were reviewed against the data collected to determine their relevance to the research question. A number of potential themes were initially drawn from the codes; however, not all the potential themes were pertinent to the study, as indicated below:

	<b>Transcript</b>	<b>Codes</b>	<b>Potential Theme</b>
Donna	I'm a single parent	Family responsibilities	Domestication
	so I can't travel to places,	Restrictions	
	I can't do things I want to do.	Restrictions	

In the extract, the participant lamented domestic challenges which restricted her career progression. While the potential theme of domestication relates to gendered challenges faced by female reporters, it did not relate to their experiences directly in the field in relation to their interaction with newsmakers. Therefore, potential themes were refined against their specificity to the research question. In some instances, potential themes were subsumed into a single idea, whereas in other cases, single ideas were



divided into more defined ideas, as per their significance to the study. Correlating sub-categories were also identified as imperative components in analysing the findings of the study.

**e. Defining and naming themes.** From the potential themes, a list of defined themes and sub-themes were named. Creative license was taken in the naming of the themes; however the researcher aimed to capture the essence of the concept underpinning the theme. Five relevant themes were evident from the data.

- **Societal Ideologies:** This theme was sub-divided into two categories, which addressed culture, tradition and race influences. It also delves into entrenched legacies of patriarchy.

- **Limits and Access:** This theme was further divided into three sub-themes, speaking directly to the issue of female access to assignments, potential danger zones, access to newsmakers and the issue of chaperoning, in which a male colleague accompanies a female reporter on assignment.

- **High-powered Harassment:** This theme was further divided into three sub-themes, highlighting the issue of sexual harassment and intimidation from high-profiled newsmakers. It included incidents of sexual harassment and indecent propositioning from newsmakers.

- **Dress Down, Not Up:** This theme was divided into two sub-themes, focusing on how interactions with newsmakers and incidents on the field affected the manner in which the female reporters dressed when on assignment. In addition, the theme also expounds on a mental preparation or 'dressing' that a female reporter undergoes before engaging with newsmakers.

- **Normalisation:** This theme was divided into two sub-themes, focusing on how the participants internalised the incidents experienced, their coping mechanisms and their reluctance to report incidents.

**f. Writing up.** The analytic narrative and data extracts were then constructed within the analysis chapter of the study, in relation to the existing literature.

Braun and Clarke (2019) outline six orientations in thematic analysis and within which their reflexive approach, all variations are possible. These are: an inductive approach, a deductive approach, a semantic approach, a latent approach, a (critical) realist or essentialist approach and a constructionist approach. Braun and Clarke write that inductive, semantic and (critical) realist approaches often cluster together while, deductive, latent and constructionist approaches cluster. Braun and Clarke (2019) explain the

approaches as follows:

<b>Inductive approach</b>	Coding / Theme development directed by the content of the data
<b>Deductive approach</b>	Coding / Theme development directed by existing concepts or ideas
<b>Semantic approach</b>	Coding / Theme development reflect the explicit content of the data
<b>Latent approach</b>	Coding / Theme development report concepts and assumptions underpinning the data
<b>(Critical) Realist or Essentialist approach</b>	Focus on reporting an assumed reality evident in the data
<b>Constructionist approach</b>	Focus on looking at how a certain reality is created by the data

Braun and Clark warn against an obdurate separation in the approach, however, underscore that the analysis should be theoretically coherent and consistent. Although the study has been led by existing theory, concepts and ideas, the study also adopted an inductive component in the coding and analysis, which has allowed for new knowledge creation.

#### 4.5. Pilot Study

A pilot study is an essential step in research which enables the researcher to test the feasibility, research protocols, instruments for data collection, sample recruitment process and other strategy techniques that will be employed in the larger study (Hassan, Schattner and Mazza 2006). A well-conducted pilot study can also help ensure methodological rigour and validity of the study and its applied methodology (Ismail, Kinchin and Edwards 2018). The researcher conducted a pilot test with a radio reporter who met the criteria of the study sample. The participant was a radio reporter with extensive experience in field reporting. An initial instrument for data collection included face-to-face interviews, however, as previously discussed; this had to be amended in light of the existent covid-19 protocols and lockdown measures. Therefore, the pilot study enabled the researcher to test the technical equipment and video-calling applications that would be employed in the main study for interviews and recording. After the pilot interview, the researcher identified challenges with the technical process, which included interruptions in electrical supply which affected network coverage. The pilot study also prepared the

researcher for interruptions from family members and children during the interview, as the participants connected from their homes. The pilot study further informed the researcher about the sensitivity required around the framing of the questions for the interview. The researcher had to restructure the questions to ease into topics around high-ranking newsmakers.

#### **4.6. Validity and Reliability / Trustworthiness**

The rigour or trustworthiness of a qualitative study is critical as it outlays the integrity of the findings and the process undertaken by the researcher (Polit and Beck 2014). Given the varied approaches within a qualitative study, the criteria for rigour cannot be as static as within quantitative research, as described by Ryan-Nicholls and Wills (2009). Lincoln and Guba (1985) have identified five criteria for the assessment of trustworthiness in qualitative research; credibility, dependability, conformability, transferability and authenticity. Credibility relates to the accurate identification and description of the participants (Lincoln and Guba: 1985). Dependability speaks to the stability of the data collected over time and under various circumstances (Lincoln and Guba 1985). Conformability relates to the objectivity during data collection and analysis. This aspect also relates to the need for congruency between two or more independent persons about the accuracy, relevance, or meaning of the data (Polit and Beck 2014). Transferability is founded on the premise that the findings of the study can be replicated within other settings or groups. Finally, authenticity is the extent to which the researcher justly portrays the range of realities in the study. (Polit and Beck 2014)

Rigour, as explained by Ryan-Nicholls and Wills (2009), can be attained through a thorough cataloguing of the research methods and processes undertaken. In a bid to satisfy the criteria for credibility, dependability, conformability, transferability and authenticity; all attempts to thoroughly catalogue the method employed in this study were made. This included the scrutiny of the researcher's imperatives in undertaking this study, reflexivity in identifying the researcher's position in this study and a firm view of the ethical considerations thereof. A justification of the sample was provided, including the limitation presented by the smaller and niched population size. The use of Reflexive Thematic Analysis ensured transparency and confirmability throughout the analysis process (Braun and Clarke 2019). Each phase of this research is also held against an academic framework and literary corroborations.

#### **4.7. Ethical Clearance Procedure**

The research was granted full ethical clearance from the Durban University of Technology. The Ethics Protocol number is IREC 009/20. Please see attached Appendix I. Gatekeeper Permission was obtained from the South African Broadcasting Corporation. Please see attached Appendix II. Informed consent forms were signed by each participant. Please see attached Appendix III.

#### **4.8. Reflexivity**

The role of the researcher in feminist research is significant (Braun and Clark 2019). The researcher in this study found several parallels and shared experiences with the participants. As a woman, the researcher had to acknowledge that there was a preconceived notion that all the participants, by virtue of their sex, were predisposed to the same experiences. Similarly, the participants naturally felt that the researcher concurred with their views or shared their experiences as women. The phrase, ‘you know’ was commonly used by participants, an expression of a perceived mutual accord. However, the researcher had to accept and internalise that not all of the participants had the same experiences or conceptualised experiences in the same manner. While none of the participants opposed the presence of sexism, sexual harassment or patriarchy in the field, not all participants claimed to have experienced it directly. The researcher also had to confront personal emotional baggage while undertaking the interviews and analysis. Participant A referred to her fuller body-shape, wider hips and bottom, with a smaller waistline. She explicitly recounted the reaction she received from male newsmakers or men from the generic public in relation to her body-type and the crude remarks that were forthcoming. The researcher has a similar body shape and encountered similar experiences with men, sparking a #MeToo moment. The interview with participant A was admittedly cathartic, as it helped the researcher locate her own experiences within the broader societal context. However, the interview also necessitated a conscious acknowledgment of the underlying emotions during the interview, coding, identification of themes and analysis of the data.

As a female reporter, the researcher was also bombarded with questions of ‘Did that happen to me?’ Where the experiences were overt, the answer was obvious. However, when participants reflected the more nuanced experiences, the researcher was forced into reflection on past experiences, bringing into focus interactions that appeared ambiguous. The exercise felt like a re-scaring of sorts. Again, the researcher had acknowledged the emotion in order to ensure that it didn’t influence the narrative.

The nature of the study itself is deeply emotive and provocative, therefore, the researcher engaged in a debriefing session before the analysis, in order to process the array of emotions felt. The dynamics of a

feminist study is to push the boundaries of power and disrupt the normative. The researcher found comfort in giving a voice to the participants through the study, and in doing so, possibly affecting societal change.

#### **4.9. Conclusion**

This chapter provided a discourse on the methodological framework for the study. This was a feminist study, which employed a qualitative approach with a critical theory paradigm. The instrument of data collection was semi-structured interviews. The sample was selected using purposeful sampling. Reflexive Thematic Analysis was used to analyse the data. Issues of rigour were also discussed. A reflexivity component was included in this chapter. The following chapter will detail the analysis of the data and the corresponding literary framework.

## CHAPTER FIVE: ANALYSING THE DATA

### 5.1. Introduction

This chapter expounds on the methodological framework for this study. This chapter will present and analyse the findings of the data gathered from the semi-structured interviews conducted with the eleven participants in this study. This chapter will also include a discussion on the data findings. Out of the eleven participants in this study, four participants were from KwaZulu-Natal, four were from the Western Cape and three were from Gauteng. All eleven participants were employed at the South African Broadcasting Corporation during the time of the interviews.

The aim of the study was to explore and understand the field experiences of the participants from a feminist perspective; to ascertain *if* sexism and harassment is experienced, and if so, in what ways. The study also aimed to determine whether or not patriarchy underpins interactions with newsmakers while reporting, and if so, to what degree. The study aimed to examine the experiences of female reporters within the broadcast journalism spectrum and how newsmakers interact and relate with them in the professional space. The study further sought to understand how these behaviours, whether overt or nuanced, impacted on their personal and professional practices.

This chapter will thus answer the key research questions posed in this study, which are (1) What are the field experiences of female SABC radio reporters from a feminist perspective? (2) Do female SABC radio reporters experience sexism and harassment in the field? If so, how? (3) Do female SABC radio reporters experience patriarchy in the field? If so, in what ways? (4) Does sexism from interviewees compromise the ability of female reporters to generate stories? If so, how?

### 5.2. Main Themes and Sub-Themes

An analysis of the data gathered through the semi-structured interviews revealed five specific themes, which are further dissected into related sub-themes. Each theme and sub-theme are carefully defined through the sequential six-phased approach of Reflexive Thematic Analysis as listed by Braun and Clarke (2019). The cataloguing of the themes and sub-themes in the order listed in this chapter can be debated, however, the hierarchal classification of the themes and subthemes were determined based on the significance attached to them by the women in the study, as perceived by the researcher.

The themes and sub-themes are therefore categorised as follows:

<b>THEME</b>	<b>SUB-THEME</b>
1. Societal Ideologies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Entrenched legacies of patriarchy</li> <li>- Culture, Tradition and Race influences</li> </ul>
2. Limits and Access	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Story assignments and Danger Zones</li> <li>- Gender and Access</li> <li>- The Male Colleague Chaperone</li> </ul>
3. High-powered Harassment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Unsolicited Touch</li> <li>- Body Language</li> <li>- Indecent proposals</li> </ul>
4. Dress Down Not Up	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Mastering the look</li> <li>- Dressing the personality</li> </ul>
5. Normalisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Reporting and Consequences</li> <li>- Coping Mechanisms</li> </ul>

### **5.2.1. Themes Overview**

The subsequent discussion will unpack each theme and sub-theme. Verbatim responses from the participants are included in this chapter as evidence to the data collected and to add further depth of meaning to the discussion in relation to adjoining theories and related literature.

The first four themes – Societal Ideologies, Limits and Access, High Powered Harassment and Dress Down Not Up – relate directly to the interactions of the reporters with newsmakers and their experiences in the field. These themes answer research questions one, two and three. Theme Five – Normalisation – relates to how the reporters internalise their field experiences, and how these experiences affect their journalistic outputs. This theme thus answers research question four.

### **5.3. THEME: Societal Ideologies**

Although categorised as a separate theme, the issue of societal ideologies, particularly South Africa's entrenched legacy of patriarchy as described by Thobejane (2014) and the South African Commission on Gender Equality (1998), is found to be the scarlet thread that underpins all subsequent themes and subthemes. The ideologies described by the participants in the main relate to diverse religious, cultural and traditional beliefs. The women believe that while the religion, culture and tradition may appear

different, they relate to women in much the same way in that they ascribe to women characteristics of subservience, obedience, meekness and servitude. These attributes fall within the definition of patriarchy outlined by Johnson (2004).

Reformation in policies and greater gender representation within various sectors have done little to reform deeply entrenched systems of belief, a point raised by Buiten (2013), referencing Posel (2004) and Meintjes (2003). The reporters interviewed in this study are of the view that the manner in which women are viewed, the expectations placed upon her in the domestic arena and the perceived place in which she exists on a societal plane subverts her ability to execute the tasks of watchdog effectively. Crenshaw (1989; 2016) explains the interconnectedness of experiences that create multiple layers of oppression for women, as intersectionality. A central argument put forward by Crenshaw(1989; 2016) is that the extent of the oppression and discrimination black women face cannot be boxed into a single definition, but intersect at various junctures. This aptly applies to the description the participants provided. The women either directly name or alluded to various domestic and professional roles, within which they must navigate the perceptions and dictates of society. The participants also acknowledge that their individual experiences in the field are not a phenomenon exclusive to the media industry, but a prevailing societal problem that impacts directly on the industry as it would other professional landscapes.

The participants also associated internal newsroom dynamics with societal factors. The reporters drew a direct connection between professional challenges and personal limitations during the semi-structured interview process. Participants lamented domestic challenges and marital discord resultant from the high-pressured and erratic schedules synonymous with journalism. Many also called out organisational pitfalls and managerial conflicts as being stumbling blocks, akin to the invisible nets referenced by Steyn and White (2011). While these issues appear unrelated, it does present a situatedness (Pierre 2014) for participants when engaging with particular stories. These experiences shape perspectives and create interconnectedness between personal experiences and professional engagements. The participants viewed these conditions as deeply entrenched and unlikely to change.

### **5.3.1. Entrenched Legacies of Patriarchy**

A central view put forward by the women in the study is that deep-seated patriarchal beliefs is the driving factor behind their interactions with male newsmakers. The women draw parallels between their own experiences of how society, men in particular, relate to them as mothers, wives, partners, daughters and the manner in which society then relate to them as professionals. The congruency between the



experiences can best be described as intersectional (Crenshaw 1989; 2016; Gines 2011), in that the underpinning ideology of patriarchy (see Johnson 2004; Walby 1989) converges at pivotal points. Hope highlights that even men who are considered progressive, have patriarchal tendencies:

*“I mean, even the most woke and aware man, at some level, is patriarchal. If we just look at the dynamics within the household, it’s known who plays what role and who’s expected to do what. And that is all, is all ingrained into the system....And many women are coming home earning more than their husbands are earning. And they are still coming to do the work at home. And they are still expected to behave in a certain way. And those are things that are so deeply ingrained in our society. And I honestly don’t know if ...I don’t see it changing. I don’t see it changing.”*

Transcript H, Page 14

The view put forward by Hope elucidates the issue of patriarchal privilege and resonates with the experiences of women in the South African liberation movement and the American Civil Rights movement (Meer 2013; 2005). Meer (2013; 2005) documents black women who were active in the labour unions and in the broader struggle equally had to contend with patriarchal behaviours from their fellow comrades. Meer (2013; 2005) notes that their male counterparts, while agreeing to equal rights in principle, were reluctant, even averse to women leadership and sharing the roles of domestic life. Even more significant, was the relationship of the domesticity of women with African culture and the belief that men maintained the right to their sexual prerogatives (Meer 2013). Similarly, the reporters drew a parallel between how men relate to women in their personal lives to how they relate to women in the professional realm. According to the data collected, the women believe that men would only respect their trade and support them professionally as long as it does not impede on their perceptions, whether acknowledged or not, of dominance. The topics of sexual prerogatives are further discussed in the following themes and subthemes, wherein the participants highlight incidents relating to sexual harassment, innuendos, flirtation and inappropriate touch by newsmakers, particularly men in high powered positions.

### **5.3.2. Culture, Tradition and Race Influences**

Racial discrimination, cultural belief systems and practices relating to tradition were critical to the experiences highlighted by the participants and correlates with the multiple layers of oppression discussed in Crenshaw’s (1989; 2016) theory of intersectionality. The Participants acknowledged the complexities of the diverse cultures and traditions extant in the South African landscape and how these,

for the ascribing individual, define and perceive the borders within which women should reside. As underscored by Meer (2013; 2005) in her documentation of the experience of women in the liberation movement, black men saw equality with women in relation to domestic life as counter-traditional. Women were expected to be active as comrades and unionists, as well as be able to serve and respect her husband at the same time (Meer 2013; 2005). Correspondingly, the women in the study found that their work as reporters was directly encumbered when faced with traditional, racial and cultural dictates regarding gender roles. Some traditional and cultural practices were considered superficial and inconsequential to the output of the participant, and although frustrating, they found that it was more beneficial to either ignore it or oblige it. The issue of eye contact is a prime example of this. While some participants found that the tendency for newsmakers not to make eye contact with them exasperating, participants shrugged it off and continued with the assignment for the purpose of filing the story. Kate found that by not complying with the cultural and traditional dictate of the newsmaker, the newsmaker deemed her disobedient or defiant...

*'In the Eastern Cape, we've got the Xhosas and we've got a lot of Afrikaans speaking people, you know, a lot of Coloured people. So when we speak, we look into the eyes. I see there's a difference, a shift, where the male's Zulu men. You not allowed to look at them in the eye....They don't make that eye contact, however for me personally, I do. And at times it comes across as being defiant or disobedient when it comes to the other sex, but you know at the end of the day, I am doing my job...'*

Transcript K, Page 4

Similar issues relating to religion and tradition were noted by Ana, who was assigned to cover a court story on the Shembe leadership battle. The Shembe group is a religious sect of Christianity in South Africa that also includes aspects of African tradition. Ana describes being verbally abused and demeaned in the courtroom for using pants; as followers of the religion do not believe that women should wear pants. She was also not allowed to sit with the men in the courtroom. The issue of the wearing of pants was also cited by Bianca, Celeste, Greta and Kate. The reporters all specify instances where they were prevented from speaking to newsmakers or even entering into a venue where the newsmaker was present due to the wearing of trousers. This issue also came to the fore during the coverage of the death of the amaZulu King in 2021. The amaZulu King is the royal head of the amaZulu people in KwaZulu-Natal. Ana explained that female reporters assigned to cover the death of the King were compelled to wear dresses and skirts, irrespective of their level of comfort while on the beat for a prolonged period of time,

weather, preference or practicality. Ana cites instances whereby female reporters were forced to remain in the vehicle due to their attire, which she described as professional but with a trouser. Participants noted that newsmakers were also more resistant to speaking to female reporters about the processes and procedure involving the King's planting (the customary amaZulu burial practice relating to a King), as explained by Kate:

*'I was sent to cover the King's planting. So when I was there I wanted to speak to one of the chiefs just in terms of, you know, the cultural aspect of what's going to happen now that the King's going to be planted ... and he was very reluctant to speak to me because in his mind he believed that I would not understand what he was about to say, but he was very forthcoming with information with my colleague who was a radio reporter and male. So... he said no, no, no, no, I'll speak to him. So that still tells me that there's still a lot of patriarchy'*

Transcript K, Page 2,3

These challenges were not only noted in KwaZulu-Natal in reference to the amaZulu traditional practices. Donna had a similar experience with the eSwatini King while on assignment in the small African kingdom. She reflects the experiences as follows:

*'He (the King) had come out from this cleansing ceremony, so forty days after that, women are not suppose to stand in front of him. Only males are allowed to stand in front of him. So we couldn't speak to him because we couldn't stand in front of him. We had to come from the side, but other males could go and speak to him.'*

Transcript D, Page 6

In acknowledging the diverse cultures and traditions in the country, the reporters resist the notion that these practices and belief systems should determine their professional parameters. However, Donna further explained that cultural and traditional norms varied within Africa and that it was incumbent on the female reporter to adhere to those norms in order to cover the story. Ana found that when the beliefs systems of a newsmaker and the professional sphere of a female reporter intersected (Crenshaw 1989; 2016; Gines 2011), the female reporter had to concede her rights for the purpose of getting the story. Thobejane (2014) refers to this dynamic as benefits of patriarchy derived by men who hold the belief that their maleness entitles them to certain powers, particularly over women. It must also be recognised, as in the example quoted by Ana in relation to the Shembe church, the women aligned to this world view also chastised female reporters for their dressing. hooks (1981; 2000) describes this behaviour as sexism, of

which, she posits, women are equally guilty.

Interlocking the issue of culture and tradition are race and language. The participants found an increased level of resistance with newsmakers of a different race and language group. Bianca highlights an experience in Soweto in Gauteng, in which she believes she was ignored by newsmakers because, in addition to being a woman, she represented a different race group. She explained that although the newsmakers could converse with her in English, they chose to ignore her until she was accompanied by a Black male.

*'He came to where I was in Soweto with his cousin. He spoke to them in English, and they gave me the interview when he came...He spoke to them in English. They spoke to me back in English...I just held the microphone. I couldn't even talk to them or ask them any questions because they refused to even acknowledge that I was even like a person.'*

Transcript B, Page 5 and 6

In instances where the black male newsmaker was uneasy with engaging with her, Elle found it necessary to allow a fellow black male colleague to lead the interview. This again highlights the view expressed by all the reporters that the goal is to get the story, even if it means accepting the discriminatory behaviours. Elle admits that fellow white men were more likely to engage with her due to a racial common ground;

*"... I think white men would more likely to speak to me than they would if I was black. They would be a bit more open with me. I've had some instances where I tried to interview black men and they didn't feel comfortable talking to me, so I had to get John (assumed name) to do the interview. But I think that's also a language thing. Their English not being too good; so John had to translate to them in isiXhosa. So I think ja the race thing might have a bit of an influence, but like I said I've had the same experiences with people from of all cultures, races but in general I would say that white men would be more comfortable with me doing the interview"*

Transcript E, Page 9

The discrimination documented by the women does not fit neatly into the category of gender alone; however, it also ticks off the categories of language and race – representing a triple jeopardy (Crenshaw 1989; 2016; Gines 2011). However, Kate noted experientially, that patriarchal cultural and traditional practices trumped race and language where gender was concerned.

*'I find that they (black female reporters) also receive the kind of reception that I do. Men will treat them in a particular way. I'll find that sometimes our male colleagues will be respected. I'll make an example: we went on a story and basically the radio reporter was black and myself. We were basically told to wait outside while the male cameraman was eating meat, was eating meat inside, so we had to wait. So, there's still this patriarchy when we go into rural communities that we must wear a dress, we must show respect, we must know our place and even with asking questions, we find that sometimes our cameramen are told 'no, no, no, boetie, you must speak. They must keep quiet.' We are the reporters. We are sent to the stories, but often we are told 'no, no, no, you must remain silent. Let the man speak.' And I've had this done so many times, especially in this province, where you find cameramen are asking the questions not because I can't speak your language, it's because they showing him more respect than they showing the female colleagues that are with them'*

Transcript K, Page 11

Patriarchy, as previously emphasised, is the scarlet thread interwoven into all themes and subthemes in this study. Culture, tradition, race and language represent their own challenges in a country with a fledgling democracy. However, undergirded by patriarchy, these challenges represent a deeper oppressive system for female reporters within the field, significantly because the reporters must weigh their desire to address the problem, with the more immediate responsibility of reporting on the story. Dibesto (2013) and Rao and Rodney-Gumede (2020) contend that patriarchal experiences noted by females reporters within newsrooms mirror the patriarchal systems existent in the society in which the reporters live and work. Within media itself, women are grossly underrepresented across various news topics, particularly in relation to politics, sport and leadership roles (Jia, Sen *et al* 2016) (Shor, Eran *et al* 2015). Research also indicates that when women are featured in media, the coverage often perpetuates pervasive sexist and racialized stereotypes (Wasserman, Wallace and Bosch 2018). Within news production, the literature asserts that women face monumental difficulties breaking into male-dominated beats monopolized by the proverbial old boys' club (Daniels and Tarisai 2018; Lowe Morna 2018). It can be thus argued that if women are more often than not, portrayed through a stereotyped and racialised lens in media, and are associated with softer beats as media practitioners, newsmakers are likely to perpetuate the same or similar behaviours towards them when engaging with them in the field. The study found that the reporters were less likely to directly address these issues within the newsroom, as these behaviours were embedded within the news machinery. This point is discussed further in later themes, which discuss

patriarchal practices that have become normalised within the industry.

#### **5.4. THEME: Limits and Access**

The data collected points to various factors that limit the scope of work of a female reporter and restricts her access in the field. Evidenced from the interviews is that skill and abilities are often secondary factors in light of the risks of criminality linked to certain stories and geographical locations. Female reporters have been found to be more susceptible to acts of criminality and sexual assault than their male counterparts (see Beiser 2018; Wolfe 2011; Kempf and Kabwato 2012). The reporters in the study also found that newsmakers were more inclined to liaise with male reporters than them. These are expounded upon further in the following subthemes.

##### **5.4.1. Story Assignments and Danger Zones**

The study found that while female reporters unequivocally claim to be willing to undertake any assignment, there are areas and assignments that are regarded as 'risky'. Criminality was found to be the central threat; however, participants believe that their gender predisposes them to a higher degree of peril than their male counterparts. Areas like Mannenberg, Lavender Hills and Delft in the Western Cape; KwaMashu, hostels such as Glebelands in Umlazi and Informal Settlements in the Cato Crest area in KwaZulu-Natal and areas such as Hillbrow and parts of the Johannesburg Central Business District in Gauteng were red-zoned by the participants. Participants Ana and Ina both relate incidents in which they were warned by members of the public to leave an area because it was believed that their gender attracted risk:

*'I came with my own car because the TV guys had actually gone first. So I came with my own vehicle, and it so happened that I was actually looking for them and so forth. And one of the guys were like, I mean, 'what are you doing here? Don't you know that this place is not safe especially for you as a female? I suggest that you go back to your newsroom.'*

Transcript A, Page 9

*'I would even go as far as, and it has happened to me before, where I would be in a different township like Khayaletsha or Gugulethu or even Langa, where they would come up to me and say 'You are not safe, get out', you know.'*

The two quotes above illustrate the vulnerability of women in society, but also society's acceptance of the status quo in that the reporters are advised to leave as opposed to the community willing to address the risk factors and create safe spaces for women to be in. The risks female reporters face in relation to acts of criminality is not an industry problem, but a South African problem. South Africa's alarming rates of gender-based violence as noted in the 2018-2019 South African Police Services Crime Statistics report (Merten 2019), predisposes the female reporter to a greater degree of vulnerability than male reporters. Thobejane (2014) quoting Jewkes *et al* (2002) directly links domestic violence in South Africa to conservative views of women and their role in society. Therefore, in spite of the ability of the female reporter to deliver the story, her scope of work is directly impeded by the risk of violence based on gender.

Newsroom editors face a double-edge sword in this regard. From a practicality point of view, editors are compelled to weigh the risks posed to female reporters when planning diaries. Celeste refutes the practice as gender-profiling, however admitted that gender did prove to be the determining factor when crime was the keystone. In contrast to the circumspect approach taken by some editors, in Ina's experience, the threat of criminality was not a deterrent for the assigning editor. Ina related an incident in which she was assigned to a story in a high-crime area by a female editor, during the height of a gang-battle. She claimed that she was sent alone into this area, even after police advised against any reporter, irrespective of gender, entering the area. Her expectation was that the female editor would be inclined to understand the reservations that a female reporter would have in undertaking the assignment and the accompanying risks.

The situation presents a double-barrelled gun. On one hand, the media industry faces the responsibility of challenging and resisting patriarchal and sexist norms, on the other hand, their media has responsibility to their female staff in ensuring their safety on the beat. Inasmuch as decisions to protect the female reporter from high risk stories can be defended by editors, it must also be accepted that the decision also limits her professional scope. In an attempt to mitigate the risks to female reporters, the study found that editors adopted an approach whereby they would also assign a male colleague to the story, either a camera journalist or another reporter. This point is discussed in depth under the sub-theme Male Chaperones. While the use of male chaperones may appear to be a practical and rational decision; it does raise the

question about perpetuating gender stereotypes and further entrenching patriarchal practices.

Further to crime and gender as a barrier to reporters, the study also found that gender and domesticity is equally restrictive for a female reporter in terms undertaking assignments. Jane observed that male reporters were quicker to get to the scene of a breaking story than female reporters, as female reporters often needed time to balance their domestic responsibilities. Prevailing patriarchal norms outside of the workplace insist that women must balance both domestic responsibilities with professional obligations. Jane unpacks this by stating in most instances, male reporters who are married or are fathers, are still able to get to a story quicker, as from her observation, their domestic responsibilities are undertaken by their spouses or partners. This can be related back to the privileges of patriarchy (Blake 2001), which in the case of story assignments and work commitments provides greater access to male reporters. The role women play in their households again emerges as significant. Under the theme Societal Ideologies, the issue of domesticity came to the fore as a universal challenge to women in the working arena. Meer (2013; 2005) particularly documents the restrictive nature of domesticity on women in the struggle against apartheid and in the labour movements. While it can be argued that the issue of domesticity does not relate to the field, it does however exemplify an intersectional reality and situatedness of the female reporter in contrast to her male counterpart (Crenshaw 1989; 2016; Gines 2011).

#### **5.4.2. The Male Colleague Chaperone**

Unanimous across the data was the assigning of male colleagues with female reporters as a means to mitigate risks associated with criminality. As discussed under the sub-theme *Story Assignments and Danger Zones*, female reporters were deemed more susceptible to criminality than their male counterparts. Celeste referenced the editorial motivation for sending a mixed-gender team on assignments, by stating that the presence of a male colleague diminished risk associated with an all-female team. The male colleague would either be another reporter or a video-journalist. Kate reflected an editorial decision whereby the presence of a male colleague was considered non-negotiable in light of the impending risks associated with the assignment:

*‘I had to go to the hostels and I was told, I was actually told by my editor, ‘No, no, no, you can’t go alone, you must go with a male. You can’t go with a female camera lady I would prefer that you go with a male.’*



In many instances, the decision is undertaken by an editor; although the female reporters themselves admitted that their sense of security was elevated when accompanied by a male colleague. Ana, Bianca, Celeste, Greta, Hope and Ina described male colleagues as being protective of female reporters in the field, adducing instances whereby male colleagues pulled them out of mob situations during protests and defended them when being robbed. Coetzee (2001), citing Commission on Gender Equality (1998) identified that patriarchal ideology placed men as the dominant figures in the family and in society. By implication, patriarchal ideologies portray women as weak and in need of protection. Therefore, the notion of the male chaperone presents a proverbial catch twenty-two situation. On the one hand, editors cannot ignore the contemporary risks associated with gender-based violence and the vulnerability women in South Africa face. The converse is that in an attempt to secure the female reporter, the system that created the risk in the first place is perpetuated and normalised. Hope interprets the protectiveness of male colleagues as sometimes bordering on the ‘male saviour’ dynamic:

*“But to juxtapose that, my male camera colleagues are so protective, which is a nice thing, its kind, its sweet. But it also comes from the point that ‘I need to look after Hope because she is weak, she is fragile... They feel like, I can’t do anything without them.’”*

It also must be noted that the concept of *risk* differed among male colleagues. The women in the study found that their male colleagues were more inclined to react when they were in direct physical danger, than when the threat was more nuanced, such as flirtation, sexual innuendos or challenges relating to cultural and traditional restrictions to newsmaker access. Hope and Ina posited that certain male colleagues were of the impression that their female colleagues were empowered to deal with issues of sexual harassment and gender discrimination. In contrast, Bianca put forward the argument that male colleagues were unwilling to call out sexism, sexual harassment and patriarchy because in many instances, they are protecting their own male egos and reputation. The women in the study also believed that their male colleagues were unable to recognise or call out acts of sexism, sexual harassment and patriarchy, as these behaviours were normalised and accepted in society, and in some instances, the male colleagues were themselves guilty of such behaviour in the newsroom (see Daniels and Tarisai 2018; Lowe Morna 2018; Dibetso 2013; Rao and Rodney-Gumede 2020) and in their personal lives. Bianca related an incident in which she had to conform to patriarchal ideologies, allowing her male colleague to take the lead while she was discriminated against by the newsmaker:

*“It was a highly politicised story. And it was about deep-rooted corruption within the Newcastle municipality. And it obviously involved high ranking members of the ANC in Newcastle. And I went there and my colleague had already warned me in the car before we could go because I was going to treat it as any other normal political story and dig to find out whatever is going on... I said to him before that like give me some of the numbers and stuff, let me make some of the calls because we doing the story together so you handle some of the interviews, I’ll handle the rest. He said no, they won’t talk to you. They literally won’t talk to you. So just let me make all the calls, you just come and record all the sound. So I was really irritated at that because I felt like I wanna do the leg work, like let me have the conversations with them in advance and such. Like why, why are you doing this, let me phone. He’s like, I am telling you, they won’t talk to you. Just let me handle it, because if you phone, we literally won’t get the interview. So anyway I left it. Got to Newcastle. It happened exactly the way he said. They didn’t even look at me. Look at my face. They didn’t shake my hand. They tried to intimidate us as a group. I don’t know whether it was because there was a woman there...Get into the interview, and I couldn’t even sit there. My colleague said, just sit little bit, give me the microphone; sit a little bit far... So they told him in advance that I couldn’t sit close like to the interviewee. And my colleague just said to me later on that it’s like cultural issues like you know, you’re a woman and you are not of this particular race and whatever not. We can’t change the mentality, let’s just get the sound and get out of here.’*

Participant B, Page 21 and 22

Bianca’s experience highlights a two-fold problem. The first factor relates to the scarlet thread of patriarchy that is evidently interlaced into the incident, from the attitude of the newsmaker to the reaction of the male colleague (see Johnson 2004; Walby 1989). It is simply decided and accepted that the female reporter will oblige the expectations of the newsmaker. The second glaring issue noted by Bianca is that her own skills and expertise as a reporter is diminished by the attitudes of both the newsmaker and the male colleague. She was unable to conduct interviews, probe the answers put forward or investigate the story further than what the male colleague would be prepared to do. The quality of the story she produced was thus hinged on the output of the male colleague.

To further unpack the incident, a triple jeopardy of culture, gender and race is evident; with each aspect interlocking with each other to create multiple levels of discrimination (see Crenshaw 1989; 2016). The newsmaker in the scenario related by Bianca was a high-ranking political party representative in local government. The nature of his role as a public office bearer necessitated the need for engagements with

individuals across racial, gender and cultural lines. Bianca's argument underscores those of Blake (2001) and Meer (2005), who found that in spite of elaborate pronouncements, policies and statutes advocating gender equality, many men are reluctant to surrender the privileges of patriarchy, particularly when it threatened their perceived entitlement to leadership, domestic norms and sexual prerogatives.

One possible avenue to address this problem is for a male reporter to insist on the inclusion of his colleague in the interview process. This was the sentiment expressed by all the reporters in the study. They believe that their male colleagues were best placed to address discriminatory practices. Instead of overt pronouncements or ultimatums, the reporters suggested that their colleagues simply include them in the conversation, introduce them as their equals and insist on their presence during interviews. A legitimate concern, however, is the risk of losing the story if the male reporter pushes too hard and ostracises the newsmaker. As has been established, the main objective of the female reporters is getting the story. Fighting entrenched societal norms thus becomes secondary.

The female reporters also admitted to feeling betrayed by the non-responsiveness of male colleagues to sexual harassment in the field. Ana lamented that the lack of response from her male colleagues dissuaded her from wanting to report the matter, as she believed that they would not provide witness evidence to the misdemeanour.

### **5.4.3. Gender and Access**

The women unanimously agreed that male reporters had greater access to newsmakers with fewer limitations. Bianca, Donna and Kate relate incidents which interlink culture, tradition, race and gender - creating invisible walls that restricted their access to key newsmakers while reporting on specific stories. This is unpacked further under the theme Societal Ideologies. The experiences described by the reporters correlate with Daniels and Tarisai (2018), Lowe Morna (2018) and Dibetso (2013). These are among the issues categorised as intangibles, old boys clubs and subtle gender preferences in the notable Glass Ceilings report (2018). Kate described the camaraderie that exists between male reporters and male newsmakers:

*'...but newsmakers on the ground will see it fit to give you the back story or give you more information purely because you a man and because purely it's aAmajita (the boys) thing... We, as females, we to do the groveling... Why? Because we just sit on the back burner to wait our*

*turn. And I think that we've also normalized this. That females; you are not and you will never be equal to a man. You must know your place.'*

Transcript K, Page 13

The study found that the participant encountered a greater level of resistance from newsmakers with regards to official comments, requests for interviews and information sharing than their male counterparts. Two reporters in the study are in relationships with male reporters from different media houses. They have observed that when working on the same story as their partner, the newsmaker was more inclined to oblige their partner's requests before conceding to theirs. Their observations are noted below...

**Ina** - *'...sometimes he would be working on a story and he would say, 'have you seen this?' or 'have you seen that?', I'd say yes... And then I'd still be waiting for a response and he's got a response already. And he works for a weekly newspaper and I, I've got to file in half an hour. How is this possible, you know?'*

Transcript I, Page 12 and 13

**Kate** - *'I have noticed, in fact we both have noticed, that when we are together in the field, his privileges, the things that he's able to get from newsmakers or even the information that he gets, is more than what I will ever get.'*

Transcript K, Page 13

**Kate** - *'I've been in a situation where you know John (assumed name) and I will be phoning a newsmaker and we both trying him the whole day. We get home, the newsmaker phones him, 'hey you trying to get hold of me?' Never mind the fact that I was the one to call him first. ... think it is it's entrenched in them you now uuhm that males come first.'*

Transcript K, Page 14

Kate reasons that the determinant is gender, as they both have the equivalent professional credentials. The reporters also cited cultural barriers denying them access to newsmakers, even during telephonic engagements. The reporters cited incidents of being berated on the phone or simply declined comment; however, when contacted by a male reporter, the same newsmaker would be amiable and willing to comply. The reporters believe that the root of these challenges is the layers of patriarchy that blanket

South African society (Thobejane2014).

### **5.5. THEME: High Powered Harassment**

According to the women, female reporters are more likely to experience sexual harassment, comments of a sexual nature, unsolicited touch, invitations for off-duty recreational meetings and being undermined by newsmakers occupying high-profiled positions in the political arena than from the general blue-collared man. Hope reflects a terrifying reality for female reporters.

*'The halls of parliament are full of lecherous men.'*

Transcript H, Page 3

While lewd comments and suggestive behaviour was forthcoming from men in general while conducting interviews, whether related to the story or not, the study found that the participants were more likely to encounter this from white-collared men in positions of influence. Ina and Hope were emphatic about feeling more at risk of sexual harassment in the parliamentary precinct than in public:

*'I feel more unsafe in Parliament than what I would feel in Khayalitsha or Delft or one of the... or Mitchell's plain.'*

Transcript H, Page 8

*'Most of the interactions and most of the unpleasant interactions I've had, was with political senior officials. Erm, where with political (sigh) basically political appointments, political spokespeople, and the majority of them were men.'*

Transcript I, Page 4

Participants described incidents of sexual harassment by officials across the three provinces. These incidents range from subtle, nuanced body language to the more overt and explicit interactions. It must be noted that while incidents of sexual harassment were predominately related in the context of public office bearers and officials within the political arena, incidents of sexual harassment were also perpetuated by academics and individuals holding positions in private sector organisations. The dynamic that underpins the nature of the engagement between the newsmaker and participants is power and influence. Elle for example, was kissed on the mouth by a newsmaker. She relates the incident as follows,

*‘Ja, and it was very weird context for that to have happened. It was a taxi protest. I think he was the chairperson of one of the taxi associations. We met once before where we did an interview ...he was already very friendly and touchy feely and dunno if he could see I was a bit uncomfortable, but he didn’t worry about that... I met him and I greeted him and mwah on the mouth. I was like what!’*

Transcript E, Page 3

Further to sexual harassment, gender-related harassment was also noted in public spaces like court rooms. Ana described her experience in the Durban High Court with the Shembe church as harassment. Ana also reflected that several female reporters from various media houses were intimidated while covering the lengthy court battle.

*‘Not even the judge could help us. Not even the two lawyers, whether it was the lawyers from the two factions, or anybody else from court. It was known. I mean it was known. Even though it was one of those things that we really didn’t speak about, it was known. Even with the seating arrangements, you were not supposed to sit where these males were actually seated. We had our own area.’*

Transcript A, Page 5

The reporters also raised concerns with the Ntuzuma Magistrate’s Court in KwaZulu-Natal in particular. At this court, participants cited incidents of intimidation, being ignored or spoken down to and sexual innuendos. It must be noted that Bianca cited a single incident while Celeste believes that the issue isn’t predominately within Ntuzuma, but rather reflects the *‘unforgiving court system’*. She claims to have never personally experienced gender-related issues at this court. Integral to this point, is to note that both participants Bianca and Celeste are women of the same race group. Also important to note is that while Bianca and Celeste have not had personal experiences; they do not refute the existence of such behaviour from newsmakers with fellow female reporters. Fiona and Jane however recorded nuanced cases only as cub-reporters in the early stages of their career. The reporters cited race, culture and language as dynamics that underscore interaction with newsmakers in the court, which could account for the varying experiences between the racial groups.

The findings resonate with Kempf and Kabwato (2012) who assert that threats of sexual violence and intimidation of female journalists, based on their gender, is a lived reality in Southern African countries, and is not just a reality in conflict situations. In many instances, sexual harassment is downplayed in light

of what is perceived as the imminent need to deliver the story. The interlacing of journalism, the workspace and societal norms presents an intersected challenge for female reporters (Crenshaw 1989, Gines 2011). Within the South African context, the sexual prerogatives of men (newsmakers included) is a foremost privilege of patriarchy (Blake 2001), an ideology that remains the foundation of gender interaction in South Africa. As much as the reporters believe these norms should be confronted, they are apprehensive to disrupt their careers for what is largely deemed a part of life.

This theme is further dissected into three sub-themes:

### **5.5.1. The Unsolicited Touch**

Participants found that in many instances, newsmakers made a point of touching the reporter when speaking. Celeste noted that newsmakers often touched a female reporter as part of their response. In elucidating the action, Celeste says if a newsmaker was to say ‘no’ or ‘yes’, the words would be accompanied by a touch. This was not the case when dealing with a male reporter. Participants related varying degrees of touch. Elle and Ina related more direct and aggressive encounters during which, Elle was kissed directly on the mouth by a newsmaker and Ina was aggressively pulled close to a newsmaker, other encounters were more nuanced...

*‘... you know with when you doing like handshakes and then this other guy will probably rub your inside of your palm with his finger. That happens like quite often especially if you like being introduced to this high ranking person. You’ll get a handshake and they’ll like rub their finger inside your palm...’*

Transcript G, Page 4

In most instances participants were able to interpret the touch as flirtation, but in some cases, particularly with older men, the motive appeared ambiguous. Participants doubted their construal of the touch during the engagement, but later confessed to feeling uneasy about the encounter...

*‘One old MP put his hand on my colleague. She’s got big boobs. So he put his hand like here (gesturing to the space between the breast and shoulder) but he was talking to her, but was doing this (motioning a circular movement with hand). And she was standing and looking at him like this (shocked expression). And then she came to tell us, you know what this guy just did...they play dumb.’*

Transcript H, Page 6

Donna reinforces the point offered by Hope, saying often the interaction appears flirtatious, however, as a third party witness, it is ambiguous. She also described the tendency of male newsmakers to hug female reporters after an interview as '*weird*'. Juxtapose to the unsolicited touch, Greta refers to touch borne from familiarity that develop over years of working with individual newsmakers. Greta referred to hugs and casual interaction as being acceptable in cases where there was an existent and mutually understood relationship. Incidents of solicited touch are noted as follows:

#### Encounter

- Participant was hugged without consent
- Participant was kissed on the mouth without consent
- Participant's arm was rubbed without consent
- Participant's back was rubbed without consent
- Participant witnessed fellow colleague being touched between the breast and the shoulder
- Participant's inner palm was stroked during a handshake
- Participant was yanked into an uncomfortable proximity with a newsmaker
- Participant was touched on the breasts by newsmaker's bodyguards, who attempted to shove her out of the way

Literature on sexual harassment of female reporters in the field relate mostly to war and conflict situations. In the Southern African context, Kempf and Kabwato (2012) describe sexual harassment of female reporters as being a reality outside of warzones; however, the depth of the problem has not been fully explored in the existing body of work. In relation to media, the Glass Ceilings Report (2018) and Dibetso (2013) describe crude sexual suggestions and innuendos targeting female reporters within the newsroom structure. Dibetso (2013) further argues that these behaviours reflect a broader societal issue. It can then be argued that if such behaviours are prevalent within the newsroom, they equally exist in society.

#### **5.5.2. Body Language**

The study found that in many cases, participants also referred to body language as being a critical factor, citing tone of voice, the manner in which newsmakers looked at them during engagements and gestures like the licking of the lips in a seductive manner when interviewed. These encounters reflect an intangible threat (see Daniels and Tarisai 2018; Dibetso 2013) that often cannot be fully understood by a third party, as it is something recognised within the moment by the targeted individual. Body language is also not confined to sexuality but also identified as prejudice disguised as subtle disregard of the participants



attempts at communication, snubbing an outstretched hand for a professional handshake during an introduction, refusal to make eye contact with the participant while maintaining steady communication with their male counterparts and displaying indifference to the presence of the participant in the professional space. The following experiences were noted from the data...

#### Encounter

- Newsmakers looked at the participant from head to toe, in a '*lustful way*'
- Newsmaker continually smiled at the participant although the story was of a serious nature
- Newsmaker stuck his tongue out suggestively while the participant conducted the interview.
- Newsmaker stepped into the participant's personal space after the interview
- Newsmaker avoided eye contact with participant
- Newsmaker avoided direct conversation with participant
- Newsmaker licked his lips continually during the interview
- Newsmaker changed tone of voice to sound seductive during engagements

The matter of 'eye-contact' continually emerged in the data. Participants reflected that newsmakers, often in traditional settings, avoided eye contact with female reporters. However, while this was read as dismissive, Kate acknowledged that tradition and culture was at the core of the behaviour. A further dissection of the interplay between tradition, culture and patriarchy is provided under the theme Societal Ideologies.

The reporters continually referred to how newsmakers *made them feel* as being a significant dynamic. In many occurrences, it was not *what* was said, but *how* it is said. Tone of voice, facial expression and general gestures provided the subtext to the interaction between the newsmaker and the participant. These aspects can be linked to the intangibles described by the Glass Ceilings Report (2018). Resultant from this, some participants admitted to avoiding such newsmakers. All the reporters in the study who have had this encounter did not report it to a line-manager, as it accounts for an intangible transgression that cannot easily be proven (see Daniels and Tarisai 2018; Lowe Morna 2018; Dibetso 2013). In addition, other factors also influenced their refusal to report it. This will be explored in detail further in this chapter.

### **5.5.3. Indecent Proposal**

A common practice noted by the women in the study is for a minister to proposition female reporters for

personal engagements. During the interviews, the reporters revealed that high ranking officials would use their bodyguards to approach a female reporter to solicit their numbers with the intent to engage in communication outside of the scope of the story. Donna describes how this is done...

*'I've had minister's bodyguards coming to ask me, I kid you not, minister's bodyguards coming to ask me to meet the minister somewhere. They don't tell me like it is the minister. They just approach you. You understand?'*

Transcript D, Page 4

Donna explains that often times the bodyguard will not outright divulge the suitor's name; however, the women in the study agree that it is an unspoken understanding as to who the request is for. This practice was noted in all three provinces and usually involved political figures and their bodyguards. Donna also notes the practice during conferences and forums that involve high-level international government delegations. Greta explains the trend in the following interaction:

The **Greta** - ... *But you do know that MEC's and you know these high profile politicians - they usually send their bodyguards as well to get your number?*

**Researcher** – *Really?*

**Greta** - *They do. Like 'MEC would like to get your number' and they will put it as if it's a professional thing. So they go through their bodyguards, their most trusted bodyguards. And that bodyguard will come up to you, like unsuspecting, you know, approach you, 'the MEC would like to get your number just in case they offer the interviews that he wants to do with you' [laughs]..I'm like, 'oh okay, now I see what those interviews are'...(laughs)*

Transcript G, Page 13

Reporters perceive that male newsmakers in positions of power often attempt to engage with a reporter alone. Hope and Ina found that newsmakers would invite them to their offices even though the interview could be conducted in a public space. Bianca, in her interaction with a newsmaker at a conference, revealed that after the interview, the newsmaker explicitly invited her to engage with him in his office for future stories. She understood the invitation to be an attempt at forming a relationship with her outside of the professional arena.

Studies have shown that female reporters are more vulnerable to sexual harassment in the field. Most of

this research relates to war and conflict zones (Beiser 2018; Wolfe 2011). Limited research delves into circumstances in Southern Africa (Kempf and Kabwato2012), while significant work has been done around newsroom dynamics (Daniels and Tarisai 2018; Dibetso 2013, Rao and Rodney-Gumede2020). However, the dynamics between newsmaker and female reporter in a non-conflict situation has not been sufficiently investigated. As already established in this chapter, parallels can be drawn between sexual harassment in the newsroom and sexual harassment in the field, with patriarchy believed to be the underpinning factor. It can be assumed that the male newsmakers hold the view, whether they recognise it or not, that their maleness entitles their sexual prerogatives (Thobejane 2014) similar to the views of men in the labour unions during the country's liberation movement who agreed in principle with gender equality, but were not as amiable to the challenge on their sexual behaviour (Meer 2013). Given the accounts from the reporters, this attitude appears persist among men, particularly in political spheres.

While questions can be raised about the conduct of male newsmakers, the study also found that some female reporters were complicit, benefitting from entanglements with newsmakers. The benefits, as explained by the reporters, range from news scoops and tip-offs to financial gains. Celeste, Ina, Greta and Jane were explicit in noting that female colleagues used their sexuality and gender to their advantage. Greta claimed that various reporters engaged in relationships with either newsmakers or bodyguards thereby creating an expectation among newsmakers about all female reporters. Ina also referred to a *blessor* relationship with newsmakers. *Blessor* is a term akin to a sugar daddy in that the man provides financial benefits for the courtship of a woman who is generally younger than him. Ina expounds on the point as follows:

*'I suppose the pie is only so big and everyone wants a piece of the pie. But in saying that, if you are going to sleep with a man to get a bigger piece of the pie and I'm not going to sleep with someone to get a piece of the pie, what favours are you doing me? You know. You making it difficult for the next female. Because this is what is expected of us.'*

Transcript I, Page 15

She further shares an experience with a newsmaker relating to this:

**Researcher** - *So you think that some female reporters behaviour is also impacting on how newsmakers respond to you in the field?*

**Ina** - *Very much so. One spokesperson told me, why can't you send a photo, one of the other reporters sent me a photo of themselves?*

Transcript I, Page 15

In contrast, Celeste says her cold approach and refusal to entertain interactions outside the boundaries of the assignment often meant that she was not the first with the so-called scoop.

## **5.6. THEME: Dress Down, Not Up**

Clothing, as already established, plays a considerable role in the professional life of a female reporter. The study found while participants had to factor issues of tradition, religion and culture into their choice of clothing, the reporters also selected clothing that would allow them to blend into their surroundings. The theme is further broken down into two sub-themes, which highlight a physical dressing down and a psychological 'Uglying' up.

### **5.6.1. Mastering the Look**

The study found that the reporters typically aimed for a professional and neat look when engaging with newsmakers with most choosing a look that complemented the assignment for the day. To this end, if the reporters were assigned to a story with a traditional or cultural link, then the reporters would avoid pants and opt for a conservative dress or skirt, a factor unpacked under the theme *Societal Ideologies*. Ana highlights the thoughts that she must contend with when dressing for the day:

*"I said when I wake up in the morning I have to think about what to wear depending on what story I'm going on. I usually dress myself down so I don't I don't get the unwanted attention..."*

Transcript A, Page 13

For general news stories, the reporters preferred pants, coat and comfortable pair of shoes. However, the data suggests that experiences of sexual harassment in the field have predisposed the reporters to 'dressing down' their feminine features in a bid to avoid unwanted attention. Fuller-figured reporters were more inclined to layer their clothing such that it concealed their body shape as described by Ana:

*“Sometimes Gen, even if you are decent, because most of the time journalists are decent in terms of how they dress up, you know they are normally professional, but sometimes you don’t want to wear something that will be protruding the shape of your hips, and your behind and so forth. You want to wear something that would overlap and would hide those features, you know, in your body so that the person that you are going to be interviewing, won’t actually, throw you know sexual slurs at you and so forth. And won’t make you feel uncomfortable.”*

Transcript A, Page 14

However, Ana and Hope noted that dressing conservatively didn’t always prevent sexual harassment. This, they note, was due to the prevailing mentality of the newsmaker:

*“I can wear a black bag, I can wear a sack, covered from here to here (indicating head to toe) and I will be made to feel my sexuality. I see how men look at me, I see it. No matter what I am wearing. And I feel like yes, I mean, we have to work so much harder to be taken seriously and to not just be looked at as a pretty face.”*

Transcript H, Page 15

Hope described her dress routine as *making herself ugly* in a bid to stave off sexual attention. She even went to the extent of cutting her long hair extremely short in order to become less noticeable. This, she said, liberated her:

*“I’ve always had very long hair and I’ve always been complimented about my beautiful hair long hair, but about two years ago I cut my hair so, so short. And it wasn’t feminine at all. And my husband didn’t like it, and my kids didn’t like it and my mom...none of my family liked it and were like ‘Oh my gosh, why did you cut your hair?’ But my hair was so short and I wasn’t the traditional pretty anymore, but I never felt stronger and more liberated in my life than not having, you know, the mane.”*

Transcript H, Page 15 and 16

The quotes from the reporters above are critical in understanding the pervasiveness of the situation. The reporters link the issue of dress directly to patriarchy. The reporters believe that the reactions of men in relation to the physical look of a female reporter is a product of a patriarchal mindset in which women are sexualized and men have ownership over them. Walby (1989) outlines sexuality as one of the six main structures that form a patriarchal system. Within this system, Walby (1989) explains, women are

oppressed and exploited by men. The idea of dressing down physical attributes also alludes to a more worrying factor, that is, the women have accepted sexual harassment as a part of their work experience and have thus sought to find ways to avert attention, and without directly calling out the behavior. This is unpacked further under the theme *normalization* which looks at how the reporters deal with incidents relating to harassment and discrimination.

### **5.6.2. Dressing the personality**

Aside from physically dressing down, the study found that the reporters had to purposely adopt a colder and tougher attitude when in the field. The reporters assert that an attractive physical appearance and a softer or quieter personality made them more susceptible to harassment by newsmakers. Hope expounds on this:

*“You know when women take off their bras and are so angry. I don’t think I would be able to take off my bra and walk around naked but I understand why they do it. Because it is like this is all that you understand. You need to, they need us to be ugly and raw”*

Transcript H, Page 13

Hope was expressively vocal on this point as she related an incident involving a fellow female colleague and a newsmaker who often made sexual advances at them:

*“And one day he walked passed us, and it was this also ‘hallo ladies’ but this oogh, and she turned around and like a real little gangster she went ‘hallow’ (gruff voice, abrupt). And I understood why she did that. She made herself as gross and as ugly as possible to put that out to him and I couldn’t stop laughing because I knew exactly why she was doing that.”*

Transcript H, Page 5

Fiona, Jane, Donna and Celeste did not explicitly describe a toughening up of the personality however, they admit to being naturally ‘colder’, more ‘business like’ or more ‘strict’, which they account for not having the same experiences as their fellow female counterparts.

### **5.7. THEME: Normalisation**

The study found that the reporters, while lamenting the various barriers they faced, accepted it as part of their professional experience. The reporters acknowledged that many of their experiences were tantamount to harassment, however, they acknowledged that they often didn’t recognise the full extent

of the incident until after the story was complete as they have normalised these experiences within their frame of mind. The reporters further admitted that their approach to the harassment and discrimination by newsmaker was inadequate; however, the study found that the reporters opted to forgo their personal feelings in favour of getting the job done. The response of the women in this study correlates with the findings of Wolfe (2011), who found that many of the respondents chose to remain silent about incidents of sexual harassment and intimidation, as they feared reprisal from editors and other colleagues, even news sources and police. In Jane's case, she felt that nobody would take the complaint seriously:

*"I don't know, because nobody actually took it like seriously. And I think maybe it's either something that has just become accepted and the norm where you don't start thinking anything of it or it's that actually that it doesn't matter it's just ... I would say, it's become part of nature."*

Transcript J, Page 10

### **5.7.1. Reporting and Consequences**

The study found that in most instances, participants were unwilling to pursue a formal process of reporting abuse in the field. Greta, Donna, Fiona and Celeste were forthright in saying that they would report overt cases to line-managers, however, the reluctance from the other reporters were twofold. In the first instance, from their previous experiences, line managers had trivialised, ignored or failed to action complaints. The reporters record that it is generally accepted that female reporters will have such experiences and should rather ignore it. Kate elucidated the point by relating an experience of how a newsmaker harassed her for a date and then isolated her from news information when he was rejected and reported.

*"I've spoken to my editor nothing happened. Like, I'll make an example. There was an incident where one of the newsmakers was harassing me to take me out on a date and it got so bad where he told me in a text that, 'Oh okay, so basically, if you not gonna go out with me on a on a date then I'm not gonna give you stories anymore. I'm not gonna share any stories with you.' So, I was like, but it's my choice, this is my body. If I don't want to go on a date with you, I don't have to. And I took it up with my editor at the time. Obviously the messages were shown to my editor, but nothing came of it; nothing. It was just 'Argh, you know, don't mind him. He's like that. He's tried his luck with everyone. Just forget, just ignore him.'"*

Transcript K. Page 8

The reporters refer to as a culture of ‘*get over it*’ within newsrooms, which dissuades female reporters from seeking assistance from management, a finding that correlates with Dibetso (2013) as well as the Glass Ceilings reports of 2006 and 2018. The second deterrent to reporting incidents of sexual harassment and gender discrimination noted in the study is a factor also highlighted by the Glass Ceiling reports (2006; 2018) and Dibetso (2013). As most of the perpetrators were high-ranking officials and many of the misdemeanours were nuanced, participants were of the opinion that it would be difficult to prove and it would eventually become the reporter’s word against the newsmaker with the inevitable consequence being an information blackout, as outlined by Ana:

*“Yes it will hurt your work in the field. Obviously, let’s say you report a guy from a certain department who had said sexual things to you or who had made your feel sexually uncomfortable in a way, obviously, that guy, if you report him, he would spread the news to other departments. And obviously you wouldn’t get the story. They wouldn’t want to work with you. Because if you look at these media guys who work in these departments who handle like the media, it is mostly men. Most of them are men. So I mean they wouldn’t want to work with you. I mean they all know each other. They would just spread the news that you know what; this woman has reported me and others they would refrain working with you, in a way”*

Transcript A, Page 16

Bianca, however, found that debriefing to an editor helpful in dealing with incidents, even if it wasn’t in an official capacity.

### **5.7.2 Coping Mechanism**

The study found that the coping mechanisms of the participants varied, depending on their individual personalities. Ina found that she mentally balanced the challenges she faced by acknowledging the positive influence of having a progressive husband and by focusing her energy on rearing a progressive son. Bianca on the other hand, found solace in speaking about the experience to either an editor or to her partner. However, the general coping mechanism was finding comfort in the counsel of fellow female reporters. Jane related how reporters would speak to each other within the office space. Ana preferred talking to female colleagues over a cup of coffee while at work. According to the reporters, peer interaction in an informal manner provided comfort and debriefing. However, Ana did admit that in some cases, the incident would replay while at home or during her period of rest. Hope on the other hand, was more despondent:



**Researcher:** *How do you cope?*

**Participant H:** *Am I coping? Somebody once asked... my husband fell ill...and the doctor asked him, are you stressed? And he said, 'how do I know that I am stressed?' We just learn to live with these things. So how do you actually know that you are stressed? I'm asking, 'Am I coping?' Or is it just a matter of this is our life and so I don't know. Do you know what, every time there is an article or a report about a woman being raped or another abusive incident, it hits me. It knocks me out*

Transcript H, Page 17

Most of the participants welcomed the idea of a workshop or forum that included the male reporters and editors to highlight the challenges that female reporters face in the field. However, the reporters underscored the need for their male counterparts to be involved in the dialogue for it to yield positive results, as point emphasized by Dibetso (2013). In contrast, Donna felt that there was no need for specific focus on women, but rather a holistic discourse on the challenges within the industry, as she believes the industry itself is cutthroat. Hope, however, was more cynical, pointing out that men are simply unwilling to change:

*"What do we need to talk about, what more is there for us to talk about? What, what more can I say to tell you when you whistle at me, you are degrading me?"*

Transcript H, Page 16

## **5.8. Summary of the findings**

The study found a clear correlation between the existent patriarchal and sexist ideologies in society and the experiences of the reporters when engaging with newsmakers. Blake (2001) notes a distinct disjoint between South Africa's impressive statutes, policies, commissions and legislative frameworks that advocate gender equality and the realities of women at a grassroots level (Coetzee 2001; Commission on Gender Equality 1998). The reporters noted that while many newsmakers and fellow male colleagues proclaimed women's rights, they were still guilty of acts of misogyny and sexism. This could be attributed to a reluctance to forgo privileges of patriarchy, particularly when it threatened their ego or sexual prerogatives (Blake 2001).

The findings of this study reinforced an intersectional feminist position (Crenshaw 1989; 2016; Gines

2011) in that the five themes are interconnected by a common thread that reflect South Africans diverse cultural, political, social and economic landscape. The participants were bound or limited by entrenched patriarchal frameworks that even dictated dress codes. The insistence on reporters wearing dresses and skirts before interviewing newsmakers feed into archaic practices that are discriminatory in the professional arena. The male chaperone dynamic revealed in the study presents a similar challenge. Although the safety of the female reporter was said to be central in this decision, the action was counterproductive. The reporters lamented that in many instances, particularly when dealing with cultural stories, male newsmakers dismissed their presence in favour of the male colleague. From an output perspective, the goal is to get the story by any reasonable means, therefore a newsmaker opting to speak to a male colleague is seen as a minor challenge, however; it does reinforce the normative ideologies that create discriminatory barriers for female reporters in the first place.

The Glass Ceilings Report (2018) referenced the *intangibles*. These intangibles cross through multiple layers of oppression faced by the reporters in this study, not just as journalists, but as women across class and racial lines. This study identifies the *intangibles* as societal norms, cultural practices, language barriers and nuanced sexual harassment from high-profile newsmakers.

Taking all five themes and sub-themes into consideration, the study found that beyond glass ceilings (Daniels and Tarisai 2018) that inhibited the progression of women in management, invisible walls, similar to invisible nets described by Steyn and White (2011) exists within newsrooms and society that inhibit the work of female reporters. Many of these barriers or walls have been accepted as part of the realities that female reporters must contend with. These invisible walls paired with the glass ceilings that women encounter daily have created glass houses that brick them in and that threaten the advancement of women in the field of journalism.

## **CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION**

### **6.1. Introduction**

In the preceding chapter, the findings of this study were presented and analysed with corresponding data extracts from the semi-structured interviews with the eleven women who constitute the sample group for this study. The major objective of this study was to explore the field experiences of female SABC reporters from a feminist perspective. Through the selected instrument for data collection and analysis, five major themes and subthemes were established. This chapter presents the concluding remarks, reflection on the study objectives and recommendations.

### **6.2. Reflection on the Theoretical Framework**

As a feminist study with a Critical Theory Paradigm, this research sought to understand the experiences of female radio reporters in relation to patriarchy and sexism, and examined how these reporters made sense of their experiences. A key factor unpacked in this study is the dynamics of power, gender, class, race, language and its interconnectedness within the lives of the reporters (Crenshaw 1989; 2016; Gines 2011). Power relations within society are a core concern for Critical Theorists (Asghar 2013), primarily how race, class, gender, religion and social norms contribute to a social system. The study reflected on the situatedness of the individual female reporter (Anderson 2020).

More specifically, the reporters located their experiences as gendered, but within the context of South Africa's diverse cultures, languages, ethnicities, races, religious and traditional belief systems and political views that dominate the South African landscape. Intersectional feminism (Crenshaw 1989; 2016; Gines 2011 Kiguwa 2019) provided a theoretical and epistemological framework for these diverse, yet interlocking factors that are defined by the female reporters. In correlation with feminist standpoint theorists, the reporters defined their experiences from the perspective of their gender, with the belief that their male counterparts would be unable to identify the problem as their experiences as men vastly differ.

In keeping with a Critical Theory Paradigm, the study posits a historically constituted social reality that is flexible by nature as it is created and replicated by people (Myers 2009). In the context of this study, the historically constituted reality of the female reporters is located firmly within South Africa's long history of oppression, the transition from apartheid to democracy and the diversity of cultures, races, religion, languages and traditions. The status quo (Asghar 2013) investigated and verified in this study

reveals entrenched legacies of patriarchy and gender discrimination that predate democracy and still prevail today, often in veiled tones. The researcher found that while significant progress has been made in bolstering the number of female reporters in the newsrooms (see Daniels and Tarisai 2018; Dibetso 2013; Rao and Rodney-Gumede 2020), there is a lacklustre approach to dealing with oppressive systems and patterns of behaviour that are rooted in patriarchy and sexism woven into the fabric of South African life. In order to effectively liberate the female reporter, South Africa's legacy of patriarchy must be overhauled.

### **6.3. Reflection on the Methodology**

As a feminist study with a critical theory paradigm, a qualitative approach (Creswell 2017) was necessary in order to achieve the research objectives and aims. The use of purposeful sampling proved an effective means in the selection of individuals able to provide rich data for analysis (Campbell *et al* 2020). The reporters selected through this method were conversant, informed, experienced and were able to articulate their knowledge and experiences in a reflexive manner (Cresswell and Clark 2017; Campbell *et al* 2020; Palinkas *et al* 2015).

According to Farghaly (2018), qualitative researchers acknowledge that to fully conceptualize meaning for the individuals studied; the researcher must recognise that multiple realities exist. Farghaly (2018) description correlates with Crenshaw's intersectional feminism (1989; 2016), which is a central ideology underpinning this study. The premise of multiple realities has been fundamental to the construction of the instruments for data gathering and data analysis in that it informed the type of questions designed for the semi-structured interviews and provided the foundation from which the researcher was able to reflect and examine the data.

The apparatus for data collection in this study was semi-structured interviews, as described by Smith and Osbourn (2007). As emphasised in the Methodology chapter of the study, the selected method of data analysis for this study was unequivocally Reflexive Thematic Analysis as defined by Braun and Clark (2019), however, the researcher found Smith and Osbourn's (2007) clear and systematic outline of the use of semi-structured interviews as an apparatus for data collection fitting and effective. Smith and Osbourn's (2007) model advocates smaller sample groups with emphasis on synergy between the researcher and the participant. This enabled flexibility around boundaries, permitting a deeper probe into novel areas, resulting in a richer quality of data. The trust factor was critical in this study, as the journalists are protective of their relationships with newsmakers and their perceived credibility in the industry. The

reporters needed to feel safe enough to expound on their experiences. This model fostered that relationship, however, the use of video calling technology did at points, hinder that rapport. The researcher found the latitude to use mixed methods (Ollivier and Tremblay 2000) in feminist research empowering, as the researcher was able to construct the apparatus for data collection to suit the needs of the study.

Reflexive Thematic Analysis was the instrument of data analysis in this study (Braun and Clarke 2019). With reflexivity as the benchmark, the researcher subjected the data to the six phases of reflexive thematic analysis identified by Braun and Clark (2019). The six phases necessitate a constant reading and re-reading of the data until it becomes engendered with the researcher. This process itself demands reflexivity, as the researcher is forced to determine their own imperatives in coding, identification of conceptual themes, the defining and naming of themes and the final report (Braun and Clark 2019). The repetitive and reflexive nature of this instrument of data analysis further contributes to the rigour and trustworthiness of the study. The sequential outline of reflexive thematic analysis ensured that the data is meticulously interrogated and engaged.

#### **6.4. Reflection on the study objectives**

This study was underpinned by four objectives. The foremost objective was to explore the field experiences of female SABC radio reporters from a feminist perspective. The study further sought to examine how these reporters experienced sexism and harassment in the field; to determine how they experience patriarchy in the field and to investigate how sexism from interviewees compromise their ability to do their work. In order to meet these objectives, four empirical questions guided the study. These are reflected as follows:

##### **What are the field experiences of female SABC radio reporters from a feminist perspective?**

The study found that the daily world of work for female SABC radio reporters was bombarded with patriarchal and sexist practices on the field. The reporters had to contend with discrimination across gender, racial, cultural and language barriers. These discriminatory experiences intersected (Crenshaw 1989; 2016; Gines 2011) at key junctures to create an intricate web of oppression. An alarming finding is that reporters believe that they are unable to resist the oppressive behaviours and systems, as it is entrenched in society and within the ambit of the newsroom to the point of normalcy. To counter the norm is to risk one's career.

### **Do female SABC radio reporters experience sexism and harassment in the field? If so, how?**

The study has found that sexism and harassment is indeed a reality for female SABC radio reporters in the field. As noted in the themes and subthemes of this study, the women related experiences ranging from being ignored by and undermined by newsmakers to being inappropriately touched and sexually harassed, particularly by high-ranking newsmakers. While a number of studies reflect sexual harassment in newsrooms (see Daniels and Tarisai 2018; Dibetso 2013; Rao and Rodney-Gumede 2020), there is a dearth of literature that explores the daily interactions of South African female reporters and newsmakers. The explicit divulgence of these experiences by the women in this study is critical in understanding the various factors that inhibit the work of a female reporter.

### **Do female SABC radio reporters experience patriarchy in the field? If so, in what ways?**

The study has found a number of factors directly relating to patriarchy in the field. The study found that the women were forced to remain silent when in the presence of certain male newsmakers, particularly those from a traditional or religious background. The women were also restricted from wearing pants on some stories. They were in some instances, not allowed to make eye contact with some men. In more subtle overtures, the women were merely side-lined in preference of a male counterpart. The findings reflect a broader societal problem wherein the role of women is perceived through the traditional, cultural and religious lens (Thobejane2014).

### **Do female SABC radio reporters experience patriarchy in the field? If so, in what ways?**

The study has found that the reporters are single-minded in ensuring that the story is produced, even to the point of ignoring blatant sexism, patriarchy and harassment by newsmakers. However, the study found that the behaviour of some newsmakers acts as deterrents for the female reporters. The reporters would aim to limit their contact with the offending newsmaker. The study also found that in many instances, the ability to generate the story is out of the hands of the female reporter. The reporter would be forced to wait for comments that are freely given to her male counterparts. In some cases, the reporter is denied a comment. She is only able to produce the story by requesting assistance from a male colleague.

The study has indeed met the objectives listed in chapter one of the study, having established that patriarchy, sexism and harassment is a daily part of the lives of female radio reporters at the SABC. The sample of this study was selected from the SABC, given the broadcasters extensive reach within all communities in South Africa and the public mandate, which necessitates that reporters deal with a wide range of newsmakers, across multiple beats. However, if the assertion that the problems experienced by

female reporters in this study is not unique to the industry, but reflect a societal problem, it can be assumed that the experiences listed by the reporters and the findings of this study can also relate to women across the employment spectrum.

### **6.5. Recommendations**

Given the gravity of the challenges experienced by female reporters in this study, a key recommendation would be for media houses to formulate a policy around its dealings with incidents of sexism, patriarchy and harassment targeted at female reporters. While news organisations may have their own sexual harassment policies, it is clear that the reporters find these policies incapable of addressing the perceived backlash from newsmakers, should they report these incidents to their management. A further recommendation is the creation of dialogue within newsrooms that include men as per Dibetso (2013). In many of the incidents recorded by the reporters, male colleagues witnessed the behaviour of the male newsmaker, but chose not to address the problem. As established in the study, both male and female reporters view the story as a priority so the reporters may chose not to directly call out the newsmaker, however the intra-newsroom dialogue will assist male reporters and support staff in understanding the challenges that the female reporters encounter. A further recommendation, given the limited studies into the field experiences of South African female reporters, would be further studies of a similar nature which include other media platforms and organisations.

### **6.6. Concluding remarks**

This chapter provided a brief overview of the findings of this study in relation to its key objectives and empirical questions. The study has presented a number of alarming findings in relation to the way female reporters are objectified and demeaned on the basis of their gender by newsmakers, including those in positions of power and influence. The study has brought to the fore, not just the challenges within the journalism industry, but also the entrenched behaviours of men towards women within society. The problems experienced by the reporters are found to be societal issues that have impacted on the journalism sector.

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## Appendix One: LETTER OF INFORMATION



### LETTER OF INFORMATION

**RE:** To Whom It May Concern

Thank you for your time and participation in this study. Below is an outline of information pertaining to the nature of this study, my role as a researcher and the perceived outcomes.

**Title of the Research Study:**

A Feminist Study into the field experiences of female SABC radio reporters.

**Principal Investigator/s/ researcher:** (Genevieve Govender Bachelor of Technology – Cum Laude)

**Supervisor:** Tarryn Frankish (M.Soc.Sc (Psychology) Summa Cum Laude)

**Co. Supervisor:** Dr Cary Burnett (PhD)

**Brief Introduction and Purpose of the Study:**

This study will seek to understand and explore the societal framework and conditions under which female reporters ply their trade. While sexism, harassment and patriarchy, overt or furtive, are embedded realities for female reporters across all media platforms, this study will focus specifically on SABC radio reporters, given the organisation's extensive reach, established newsrooms and public mandate. The study aims to explore and describe the field experiences of female SABC radio reporters from a feminist perspective; to ascertain *if*, and in what way, sexism and harassment is experienced and *if*, and to what degree, patriarchy underpins interactions with newsmakers while reporting.

**Outline of the Procedures:** This is a Feminist study with a qualitative approach and a Critical Theory Paradigm. Data Collection procedures will primarily be via face to face semi-structured interviews, which will be audio recorded for accuracy. The recording device will be a small, digital audio recorder. Please note that you can withdraw at any point

**Benefits:** I, as the researcher, will complete a master's thesis as a result of this study. The study may also present an indirect benefit in that the findings may aid in formulating policies at the SABC and media outlets in general to protect female reporters.

**Reason/s why You May Be Withdrawn from the Study:** You can withdraw at any point should you feel emotionally distressed or your anonymity is at risk. There will be no adverse consequences should you choose to withdraw

**Remuneration:** There will be no monetary remuneration however light refreshments may be offered during interviews

**Costs of the Study:** You will not bear any costs of the study

**Confidentiality:** Your name and identity will be withheld. During the study, all hardcopies of the data collected and audio recordings will be kept under lock and key in the supervisor's office. Digital copies will be password protected. Raw data will only be accessed by me and the supervisor. Raw copies will be kept for a period of five years and then safely destroyed of and deleted.

**Persons to Contact in the Event of Any Problems or Queries:**

Please contact me, the researcher: Genevieve Govender (082 040 3090), or my supervisor: Tarryn Frankish (031 373 6619) or the Institutional Research Ethics Administrator on 031 3732375. Complaints can be reported to the DVC: Research, Innovation and Engagement Prof S Moyo on 031 3732577 or [moyos@dut.ac.za](mailto:moyos@dut.ac.za).

**Appendix Two: PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM**



**CONSENT**

**Statement of Agreement to Participate in the Research Study:**

- I hereby confirm that I have been informed by the researcher, Genevieve Govender, about the nature, conduct, benefits and risks of this study – Research Ethics Clearance Number: \_\_\_\_\_,
- I have also received, read and understood the above written information (Participant Letter of Information) regarding the study.
- I am aware that the results of the study, including personal details regarding my sex, age, date of birth, initials and diagnosis will be anonymously processed into a study report.
- In view of the requirements of research, I agree that the data collected during this study can be processed in a computerized system by the researcher.
- I may, at any stage, without prejudice, withdraw my consent and participation in the study.
- I have had sufficient opportunity to ask questions and (of my own free will) declare myself prepared to participate in the study.
- I understand that significant new findings developed during the course of this research which may relate to my participation will be made available to me.

\_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_  
**Full Name of Participant                      Date                      Time                      Signature / Right**  
**Thumbprint**

I, \_\_\_\_\_ (name of researcher) here with confirm that the above participant has been fully  
Informed about the nature, conduct and risks of the above study.

\_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_  
**Full Name of Researcher                      Date                      Signature**

\_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_  
**Full Name of Witness (If applicable)                      Date                      Signature**

\_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_  
**Full Name of Legal Guardian (If applicable)                      Date                      Signature**

Research details must be provided in a clear, simple and culturally appropriate manner and prospective participants should be helped to arrive at an informed decision by use of appropriate language (grade 10 level

use Flesch Reading Ease Scores on Microsoft Word), selecting of anon-threatening environment for interaction and the availability of peer counselling (Department of Health, 2004)

If the potential participant is unable to read/illiterate, then a right thumb print is required and an impartial witness, who is literate and knows the participant e.g. parent, sibling, friend, pastor, etc. should verify in writing, duly signed that informed verbal consent was obtained (Department of Health, 2004).

If anyone makes a mistake completing his document e.g. a wrong date or spelling mistake, a new document has to be completed. The incomplete original document has to be kept in the participant's file and not thrown away, and copies thereof must be issued to the participant.

#### **References:**

Department of Health: 2004.*Ethics in Health Research: Principles, Structures and Processes*  
<http://www.doh.gov.za/docs/factsheets/guidelines/ethnics/>

Department of Health. 2006.*South African Good Clinical Practice Guidelines*. 2nd Ed. Available at:  
[http://www.nhrec.org.za/?page\\_id=14](http://www.nhrec.org.za/?page_id=14)

#### **References:**

Department of Health: 2004.*Ethics in Health Research: Principles, Structures and Processes*  
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[http://www.nhrec.org.za/?page\\_id=14](http://www.nhrec.org.za/?page_id=14)

## **Appendix Three: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE**

### **INTERVIEW SCHEDULE**

Tell me more about yourself, why did you choose Journalism as a career...

Talk to me about your career thus far...(how did you come into the employ of the SABC)

What do you enjoy about radio reporting...

Is there anything that you dislike about being a radio reporter (probe for elaboration)

Do you ever feel that some stories are too dangerous or risky...(what makes it risky?)

Do you ever feel that you are treated differently by certain newsmakers? (in what way)

(linked to question above) If yes, do you think this is linked to your gender?

Have you ever witnessed other female reporters being treated differently, or being harassed on the basis of their gender?

Do you think being a female reporter makes you more susceptible to risk, how so?

Tell me about your experiences interviewing high profile newsmakers...

Have there ever been instances where you felt 'my male colleague will be better suited to this story' because of the perceived risk you could face due to being a woman? (probe for elaboration)

In diary planning meetings or discussions, is it ever said, 'rather send a male colleague' due to the nature of the story or the location?



## Appendix Four: GATE KEEPER PERMISSION



Phathiswa Magopeni

To: Genevieve Lanka; Mannie Alho

Fri 2020/10/02 05:23



Hi Genevieve

Permission is granted as per your request and the associated research ethics obligations.

Kind regards  
Phathiswa

-----Original Message-----

From: Genevieve Lanka

Sent: Thursday, 01 October 2020 10:06 PM

To: Phathiswa Magopeni

<MagopeniPP@sabc.co.za>

Cc: Mannie Alho <alhom@sabc.co.za>

Subject: RE: RE: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH...

Good evening Sis Phathiswa...

I am not sure if you have had the opportunity to review this request. I am seeking permission to conduct research for my Master of Journalism thesis. This study is specifically aimed at understanding the reality that female radio reporters face daily while plying their trade and will NOT reflect on the SABC as an organisation.

My progress and full ethical clearance is dependent on permission from the SABC.

Kindly grant me permission as this qualification and

Dear Phathiswa Magopeni

[20 June 2019]

[Henley Rd & Artillery Rd  
Auckland Park  
Johannesburg  
2000]

---

**Request for Permission to Conduct Research**

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My name is Genevieve Govender, a Master of Journalism student at the Durban University of Technology. The research I wish to conduct for my Masters dissertation involves ‘A feminist study of the field experiences of female SABC radio reporters.

I am hereby seeking your consent to conduct interviews with female radio reporters from the Johannesburg, Cape Town and Durban newsrooms.

I have provided you with a copy of my proposal which includes copies of the data collection tools and consent and/ or assent forms to be used in the research process, as well as a copy of the approval letter which I received from the Institutional Research Ethics Committee (IREC).

If you require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me on [lankagl@sabc.co.za](mailto:lankagl@sabc.co.za). Thank you for your time and consideration in this matter.

Yours sincerely,

Genevieve Govender

Durban University of Technology

## Appendix Five: ETHICAL CLEARANCE



Institutional Research Ethics Committee  
Research and Postgraduate Support Directorate  
2<sup>nd</sup> Floor, Berwyn Court  
Gate 1, Steve Biko Campus  
Durban University of Technology

P O Box 1334, Durban, South Africa, 4001

Tel: 031 373 2375

Email: lavishad@dut.ac.za

[http://www.dut.ac.za/research/institutional\\_research\\_ethics](http://www.dut.ac.za/research/institutional_research_ethics)

[www.dut.ac.za](http://www.dut.ac.za)

15 October 2020

Ms G Govender  
10 Flamingo Grove  
Yellow Wood Park  
Durban  
4004

Dear Ms Govender

**A feminist study into the field experiences of female SABC radio reporters**  
**Ethical Clearance number IREC 009/20**

The Institutional Research Ethics Committee acknowledges receipt of your gatekeeper permission letter.

Please note that FULL APPROVAL is granted to your research proposal. You may proceed with data collection.

Any adverse events [serious or minor] which occur in connection with this study and/or which may alter its ethical consideration must be reported to the IREC according to the IREC Standard Operating Procedures (SOP's).

Please note that any deviations from the approved proposal require the approval of the IREC as outlined in the IREC SOP's.

Yours Sincerely

Prof J K Adam  
Chairperson: IREC

