To make a mark
A qualitative study of female journalist’s working conditions in Ghana
B.A thesis in journalism written by Åsa Secher

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Abstract

This is a qualitative study based on fieldwork carried out in Accra, Ghana April 3 – May 29, 2010. The aim was to shed light on how a selected number of female Ghanaian journalists experience their working conditions from a gender based perspective. The material consists of eight semi-structured interviews ranging from 20 minutes to 1 hour 12 minutes. The interviewees are female, Ghanaian journalists between 23 and 46 years old working in print or broadcast media in Ghana. The interviews were analyzed thematically resulting in seven sub-headings, all relating to my research questions, which were:

- Is being a female journalist in Ghana today in any way a disadvantage/advantage?
- How do female journalists in Ghana experience their opportunities to advance and be promoted?
- Do female journalists in Ghana experience any differences between them and their male colleagues? Do they report on different kinds of subjects?

My analysis conclude there are a number of disadvantages being female within the media in Ghana: there is a perception of female journalists being flirtatious and less professional than male journalists, it is challenging for female journalists to start a family since journalism is a very time-consuming profession and the responsibility for domestic work is still primarily on the woman and, finally, the interviewees experience they have to distinguish themselves from their male colleagues and make their mark as competent and professional to really be taken seriously.

Concerning the opportunity to get promoted there is a contradiction; the interviewees all experience they have the opportunity to get promoted as long as they work hard, nevertheless they recognize a male-domination among their executives and expresses an awareness of gender based promotions.

The interviewees claim they can report on whatever subjects they want, but they all express an awareness of the distinction between topics primarily covered by women and others by men. This contradiction is similar to the one articulated above.

To sum up, there is a discrepancy between how the interviewees felt about their own situation and how they perceive the inequality issues surrounding them.
Acknowledgments

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MFS (Minor Field Studies) is a SIDA funded scholarship program for field studies in developing countries. It is intended for students at universities and university colleges with an international interest wishing to gather material for their Bachelor or Master dissertations for periods of between 8 to 10 weeks. It aims at providing Swedish students with the opportunity of building up their knowledge of developing countries and development issues (Letter of introduction)

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Abbreviations

• GJA Ghana Journalist Association
• GIJ Ghana Institute of Journalism
• WOMEC Women Media Change
• MFS Minor Field Study
• NGO Non Governmental Organisation
• MDG Millennium Development Goal
• National service After taking a degree at university you are obliged to serve your nation for one year
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1. Introduction

In 1981 the United Nations published Margaret Gallagher’s *Unequal opportunities – the case of women and the media*. The preface of the book states four basic questions: What are the issues? What do we know already? What has been done so far? What remains to be done? Although it has been almost 30 years I am utterly convinced there are a number of issues still waiting to be dealt with, and that the answer to the very first question in many ways hasn’t change much since 1981. I am also convinced that these questions have not been addressed equally in all parts of the world, a developing country like Ghana just being one of many overlooked countries. Feminist media studies are increasing, but feminist media studies from a developing country’s perspective are still conspicuously absent (Roxberg, 2010). The conditions for a female journalist in Sweden and a female journalist in Ghana are in many ways alike. But they are also vastly different, and the conclusions we draw from our own experiences in Sweden cannot simply be transferred and apply to female journalists in other parts of the world. And that is what makes it interesting to look further into the working conditions of Ghanaian female journalists.

But why Ghana? Reporters without borders’ 2009 world ranking of press freedom puts Ghana in the top 30 (rsf.org¹), ahead of European countries such as France and Spain. Amongst African countries Ghana is number one. So it makes me wonder if a country so well aware of the importance of press freedom, also is equally aware of the importance of gender equality within the media?

My personal reasons, research objectives aside, for applying for a minor field study scholarship and choosing to focus on the working conditions of female journalists are far more idealistic and perhaps a bit naive; I wanted to go to a developing country and discover that the opportunities for male and female journalists are the same. I wanted to believe that my study was going to show that Margaret Gallagher’s 30 year old words no longer applied, that the struggle for gender equality is winning points by the minute, that promising developing countries like Ghana has put gender equality on the agenda within the media.

2. Purpose of the study & Research questions

The aim of this study is to investigate, analyze and describe how a selected number of Ghanaian female journalists experience their working conditions from a gender based perspective, i.e. if they feel that their sex in any way affects their opportunities, their abilities and/or the way they are being treated by colleagues and interviewees.

More specifically my research questions are:

- How do female journalists in Ghana experience any possible disadvantages/advantages based on gender?
- How do female journalists in Ghana experience their opportunities to advance and be promoted?
- Do female journalists in Ghana experience any differences between them and their male colleagues, and if so in what way?

3. Material & Limitations

The empirical material for this thesis consists of eight interviews with female journalists in Ghana, working in both print and broadcast media. The interviewees were selected using a snowball sampling method, a non-probability sampling technique often used when research objects are hard to locate. The interviewees were all female journalists currently, or in one case formerly, working as reporters, not editors, producers or any other kind of executives.

The purpose of this study has never been to be able to present vast generalizations about the working conditions of female journalists in Ghana, but rather to offer insight into how it is for some of them, and by that help broadening gender issues within the media to also include a developing perspective.

I set out to do between five and ten interviews and ended up doing eight. The semi-structured, informal interviews are ranging from 20 min to 1h 12 min, depending on the interviewees’ willingness to expand and evolve their answers. The interviews were all carried out in Accra, the capital of Ghana, where most Ghanaian media houses are located, between April 3 and May 29 2010, due to the time limitation of the MFS-scholarship. In addition to the eight interviews with female journalists I also did a research interview with WOMEC (e-mail) which can be found in the appendix.
The theoretical framework and the previous research presented in chapter 5 focuses on a feminist approach, covering among others Liesbet van Zoonen, Margaret Gallagher and Maria Z Roxberg. Developing perspectives, seeing as Ghana is a developing country, is not represented in a sector of it’s own. Some of Ghana’s development issues are however described in chapter 4 and have been taken into consideration during the analysis. Nevertheless I encourage all readers to bare these facts and conditions in mind throughout the thesis.

4. Background
In order to better understand the issues of gender equality in Ghanaian media and further on to fully understand the context of my analysis, one should know a few things about Ghana, Ghanaian media, women and media in Ghana and gender equality in general in Ghana.

4.1 Ghana – history, ethnography and development
Ghana is a small developing country in West Africa, just over half the size of Sweden, but population wise it inhabits more than twice as many; approximately 23.8 million people (cia.gov²). Bordering the Sea of Guinea Ghana was soon discovered by the Europeans in the 15th century and turned into a lucrative trading place, the commodities being slaves, gold and ivory (ne.se³). Since the middle of the 19th century the British controlled the country, but after the second world war the demands for independence among the African elite grew stronger. In 1947 Kwame Nkruma established the United Gold Coast Convention and in 1949 he moved on and formed the Convention People’s Party, demanding immediate independence. Even though it took ten years, Kwame Nkruma managed to reach his goal in 1957 when Ghana was born (ibid.).

There are about 70 different ethnic groups in Ghana and the diversity in language and religion is wide. A majority of the population is Christian, especially in the south where the European’s have been the most influential. In the north of Ghana most

³ 2010-09-18: http://www.ne.se/ghana/historia
people are Muslim and around ten percent of the population are traditionalists, a section that is shrinking in favour of Christianity and Islam (landguiden.se⁴). The official language however is English, even though many Ghanaians especially in the north only speak local languages (cia.gov⁵). The literacy rates have increased the last decade, but the difference between men and women is still significant, in 2008 72,3 percent of male Ghanaians 15 years old or over could read and write, the comparable rate for women was only 59,3 (worldbank.org⁶).

Ghana’s main natural sources are gold and cocoa, in 2009 they were the world’s second largest cocoa producer and Africa’s second largest exporter of gold. In the early 2011 the oil production is expected to expand significantly after the discovery of a major oil deposit outside the Ghanaian coastline. Even so, in 2006 an estimated 28 percent of the population were living below the poverty line. (landguiden.se⁷) Nevertheless Ghana is considered to be most likely among the Sub-Saharan African countries to fulfil United Nation’s Millennium Development Goals and reduce poverty with 50 percent in 2015. According to The World Bank (2010) Ghana could possibly turn into a middle-income country by 2015.

4.2 Ghanaian media since independence 1957

Ghana is one of only seven Sub-Saharan African countries marked “free” by the organisation Freedom House, based on a number of criteria, some of them being electoral process, political pluralism and freedom of expression (freedomhouse.org⁸). When measuring freedom of the press, Ghana is one of only five Sub-Saharan African countries qualifying for the highest degree of freedom of the press (ibid.⁹).

⁴ 2010-09-18: http://www.landguiden.se/ Chosen country: Ghana
⁷ 2010-09-18: http://www.landguiden.se/ Chosen country: Ghana
Ghana’s media has been described by the BBC as one of Africa’s most unfettered and is as mentioned earlier ranked number one of all the African countries by Reporters Without Borders. Ghana has come a long way since independence in 1957. The former British colony suffered through several military coups after independence leader Kwame Nkruma was abolished in 1966 and not until almost 30 years later free, multiparty elections could be held. When the Fourth Republican Constitution was established in 1992 the freedom and independence of the media was declared in chapter 12. Since then the media has developed into a major industry and the number of newspapers, radio stations and TV-stations are growing by the minute; in 2009 the organisation Freedom House estimated a total of 272. The radio is the far most popular medium in Ghana, according to Ghana Broadcasting Corporation in 2004 approximately 82 percent of all Ghanaians listen to broadcast radio at least once a week. The immense popularity of the radio is explained by poverty and illiteracy.

For a long time, one of the major issues in Ghanaian media was the criminal libel law that enabled prison sentences for journalists being prosecuted with slander. In 2001 the criminal libel laws were repealed, but several civil libel cases have ended up with major fines against the media, and this is unfortunately upholding and encouraging an increasing amount of self-censorship.

When Ghana Anti Corruption (local affiliate of Transparency International) conducted a study of the media’s role in the fight against corruption in 2009, the results shed light on several issues. One of them being the lack of investigative pieces, another being problems with incorrect language.

10 2010-09-18: http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/country_profiles/1023355.stm#media
4.3 Women and the media in Ghana

Charity Binka, head of the NGO WOMEC says that “Women in the media in Ghana are playing a vital role in the development of the industry” (Binka, 2010). However, she is concerned by the fact that very few women manages to reach top positions. Having more women on leadership positions is the only way, according to Binka, media policy can be effectively influenced and eventually become more gender sensitive. She also says that even though women in the media are not per se subordinate to their male colleagues, it is her experience that many of them suffer various forms of discrimination in the newsroom on account of their gender (ibid.).

When looking into specific media, radio is of great interest seeing as it is the most popular media amongst Ghanaians. Journalism in Ghana is generally a male-dominated profession, and the radio is no exception. Despite the fact that a majority of the students studying journalism are women, in 2007 only 33 percent of the full-time positions on Ghanaian radio-stations were occupied by women. That means that a lot of the female journalist students either don’t go into journalism or don’t stay in journalism. (Whaites, 2008)

Furthermore, the representation of women’s issues on the radio have been deeply underrepresented. In 2005 only 0,8 percent of the weekly programming time was dedicated to issues concerning women such as women’s rights. (Whaites, 2008)

On a more general note, the awareness of the underrepresentation of women within Ghanaian media is growing. When Ajoa Yeboah-Afari, editor of the Ghanaian Times, former BBC correspondent and former GJA president, gave a speech at the African University College of Communications (AUCC) during the celebrations of Women’s week in 2008, she said: “I would say there are not enough women in the high levels of the profession, but I do not believe that in Ghana, there is a glass ceiling or a deliberate attempt to keep women journalists down” (modernghana.com16). She also talked about the ongoing problem of negative portrayal of women in the media and referred specifically to print media exposing the female body in order to sell newspapers (ibid.).

4.4 The Millennium Development Goals & Gender equality in Ghana

One of the United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDG) to be reached in 2015 is gender equality. The goal includes levelling the ratio of girls to boys in primary, secondary and tertiary education; increasing the share of women with paid employment and increasing the proportion of seats held by women in national parliaments. (mdgmonitor.org\(^{17}\))

When it comes to education Ghana is doing relatively well, the ratio of female to male in primary education enrolment is 99 percent, in secondary education 89 percent and in tertiary education 54 percent (100 percent being completely gender balanced). (worldbank.org\(^{18}\))

Other indicators of how Ghana is doing when it comes to gender equality:

- Seats held by women in parliament, 2009: 8 % (Sweden: 47 %).
- Share of women employed in the non-agricultural sector, 2000: 31,7 % (Sweden 50,1 %).
- Maternal mortality ratio per 100 000 live births, 2005: 560 (Sweden 3) (ibid.).

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\(^{17}\) 2010-09-18: [http://www.mdgmonitor.org/goal3.cfm](http://www.mdgmonitor.org/goal3.cfm)

5. Previous research & Theoretical framework

In the following chapter I will highlight theories and previous research applicable in the analysis of my own material. Except for Pierre Bourdieu’s field theory, the theoretical framework and the previous research presented below relates to feminist theory.

Feminist theory is in many ways connected to critical theory in the sense that feminist theory is criticising the prevailing social order and aiming to change it. Within feminist theory this criticism specifically focuses on gender inequality. (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2008: 352)

5.1. Family relations

A very important part of gender equality is family law and family circumstances. Although family law may have changed over the years, certain gender based traditions within the family have not. In Women and law in West Africa (2003) one can read that married women in Ghana are expected to perform various roles and that these roles are performed from a position of subordination to their husbands. Above all they are designated to take care of the household when it comes to cooking, cleaning and taking care of the children, and even though this makes women the primary caretakers of the children, if a decision about custody has to be made, the decision is most likely to favour the one parent with more resources, which is usually the father. (Kuyenhia, 2003: 5-6)

Another study called Family and societal influences on the conduct of conjugal relations is presented in Women and law in West Africa (2003). The authors make a preliminary assumption that conjugal relations are influenced by cultural values and perceptions, societal attitudes and expectations and finally opinions from the extended family. More specifically, among many other things, they have recognised that when it comes to division of labour within the family the general perception is that all household duties are suppose to be done by women. One older man is cited: “The role of the man in to work and earn income and not to sweep and cook in the house”. (Fayorsey et al. 2003: 12-15)

In modern time and especially in the cities, the number of women working outside the home has increased. This development threatens the traditional division of labour in
the household since a full time working woman has less time for sweeping, cooking and cleaning. However, the perception that women are more suitable to take care of the household seems in many ways to be maintained, so the solution for lack of time is usually to have grandmother stay with the family. This however, having grandmother helping out, according to the study has a way of breeding conflicts within the family. (Fayorsey et al. 2003: 22)

Another important factor in family relations is money. Who is responsible for providing for the family? And how does that responsibility affect the relationship between the one who does provide and the one who doesn’t? According to several interviews with Ghanaian men and women, it is the responsibility of the husband to provide money for the family, and any man who’s not able to live up to this cultural expectation is not regarded as a man. So when a woman contributes more to the family income than a man, this changes the order of things and the men and women interviewed for the study shared the belief that when a woman has a high income she becomes less respectful to the husband. They concluded that men probably find high-achieving women threatening or less desirable as wives. (Fayorsey et al. 2003: 21-22)

In every culture, being a good mother involves different things. In Ghana, being a good mother among other things includes cleaning the house properly and taking care of her husband making sure his food is ready on time (Kuenyehia & Aboagye, 2003: 49). One can assume that for women who are working it can be hard to meet these expectations.

5.2 Gender, journalism and colour in South Africa

Swedish doctoral student Maria Z Roxberg has investigated the relation between gender, ethnicity and class in her study “Rapport från regnbågsredaktionen” [Report from the rainbow office – my translation] (2010). When interviewing black, female journalists in South Africa, among many other things, she concluded that the interviewees experienced they were being treated differently at the office and by their interviewees (Roxberg, 2010: 61).

In South Africa the government issued a law against discrimination in 1998 (The Employment Equity Law), unfortunately the legislation did not have the desired affect. In 2008 The National Gender Policy Framework concluded that women are
still among the poorest groups in society, physical and sexual violence against women is widely spread and women are still, compared to men, having a hard time reaching well-paid positions. (Roxberg 2010: 62)

When the South African NGO:s Gender Links and Misa carried out a content analysis of 12 different media, the results were striking; only 22 percent of the articles were written by women, and these articles were mostly on the subjects health and entertainment. The study also showed that women within the media in South Africa are most likely to get a job working in television. Not so encouraging though was the fact that only eight percent of all politicians being interviewed were women, even though South Africa has one of Africa’s most gender balanced parliament. (Roxberg, 2010: 63)

Another study that Roxberg refers to asserts that the development towards gender equality in South Africa has been extraordinary slow within the media compared to other fields of employment. It says that South African newsrooms are still suffering from “patriarchy, inequality and sexism” (Roxberg, 2010: 62). When looking at gender issues within the media, one must remind oneself not to focus too much on numbers, because the number of women working within the media in South Africa has increased, but what else has changed?

To be able to draw conclusions from her interviews, Roxberg has performed a content analysis of the material ending up with five themes.; men (male journalists, interviewees, executives), culture, whiteness, loneliness and struggle. The first theme addresses the subordination of women in the field of journalism in South Africa. Women rarely hold executive positions at the office, and when they do they are most likely to be subordinate to a male colleague. The female journalists Roxberg has interviewed attest that certain assignments consistently are being given to men; sports, politics and crime. Further more, several women have experienced a lack of respect from their male colleagues, for example when they receive comments on how they are dressed. One of the interviewees says the comments and the disrespect at work mainly comes from her white, male colleagues. Outside of work there are black men being sexists instead. (Roxberg, 2010: 66-67)
The male-domination and the subordination of women often stems from cultural traditions and ways of thinking; women always need to treat men with a certain amount of respect, even if she is a journalist and hoping to do an interview. For example, if a male politician, black or white, decides he doesn’t want to answer any questions, he might just sit there all quiet, or even ask the female journalist to leave. For many women working within the media, adjusting and changing things like looks or accent is often a way to advance or get promoted. And in South Africa these changes often means trying to be more white. One journalist tells Roxberg how she was asked to change her accent, another says a male colleague always recorded the speakers for her stories since her accent wasn’t good enough. (Roxberg, 2010: 67-68)

Being treated differently without really knowing why (because of colour? because of gender? because of lack of competence?) would affect anyone’s confidence. Not surprisingly women who are given an employment because of their colour and/or gender ( = allocation of quota) often start doubting themselves; are they good enough at what they do? One of the female journalists interviewed in the study says:

If it’s because I am a woman or if its because I’m colored, I don’t know [...] And I know I said that I not necessarily think it’s because of race and gender but, if I’m really honest, I can’t say for sure that its not, you know.” (Roxberg, 2010: 69)

One of Roxberg’s conclusions is that female journalists in South Africa struggle with the same issues as female journalists all over the world; gender prevents them from accessing top positions and they constantly have to fight traditional preconceptions about women. But if gender, and to some extent class, are two parameters affecting the dynamics in the newsroom, in South Africa there is yet another factor; the colour of your skin. (Roxberg, 2010: 69)

5.3 Field theory & Tactics and strategies

According to Pierre Bourdieu journalism, like academics and politics, can be defined as a field (Bourdieu, 2005: 30). A field can be described as a “competitive system of social relations which functions according to its own specific logic or rules” (Moi, 1991: 1021). The competition, or rather the struggle, is referring to the agents on the field seeking to obtain maximum power and dominance within it (ibid.). When having obtained dominance within the field, one is able to control the legitimacy of others,
legitimacy defined by Bourdieu as follows: “An institution, action or usage which is tacitly accepted, is legitimate” (ibid.).

Each field, may it be journalism or any other kind of field, generates what Bourdieu calls a habitus: “a system of dispositions adjusted to the game of the field” (Moi, 1991: 1021). Toril Moi explains it as “the totality of general dispositions acquired through practical experience in the field. At one level habitus is practical sense” (ibid.).

Symbolic violence is another one of Bourdieu’s concepts. He argues that when direct violence (economic violence for instance) is impossible to use, one has to settle for symbolic violence instead. This is according to Bourdieu a very common tactic within the educational system but can also be seen as responsible for sexual oppression (Moi, 1991: 1030). Toril Moi describes the connection between symbolic violence and sexual oppression as follows:

> To believe that the so-called biological ‘facts’ of reproduction, for instance, are the causes of the sexual division of labour, which hands ‘important’ tasks to men and ‘low’ or ‘menial’ tasks to women, is precisely to be in grips of phallocentric thought. Far from ruling our social life, Bourdieu writes, our perceptions of the biology of reproduction are the effects of the thoroughly arbitrary social construction of gender divisions which they are suppose to legitimate or explain. While the invocation of biology allows the social construction of sexual difference to appear motivated or ‘natural’, its real function is to mask the true, socially produced power relations between the sexes, to present social gender divisions as doxic, that is to say as that which cannot be questioned. For Bourdieu then, sexual oppression is above all an effect of symbolic violence (Moi 1991: 1030).

As quoted, another of Bourdieu’s theories is doxa, simply put it is the way we see the world and ourselves. And within every field there is a specific doxa, a prevailing perception of reality, certain tacit assumptions that every member of the field accept as natural (Bourdieu, 2005: 37). Bourdieu calls it “[the fields] naturalization of its own arbitrariness” (Moi, 1991: 1026).

The journalistic field is like all the other fields a very competitive arena. Every journalist is positioned in a hierarchic manner. Dominating and dominated groups both fight for the symbolic power which will give them the opportunity to define social reality within the field (Melin-Higgins, 2003: 55). This, Melin-Higgins, points out, is very similar to Simone de Beauvoir’s (1949) concept of gender as a social construction and a hierarchic system of power where the most powerful participant
can define reality in terms of opposites: dominance – subordination, male – female, black – white, and so on (Melin-Higgins, 2003: 54).

The dominating group with the symbolic power is also the group with the highest symbolic capital. In general one could say that “femaleness” is considered to be negative capital. However, the impact of this negative capital:

[…] may be assumed to decline in direct proportion to the amount of other forms of symbolic capital amassed […] although a woman rich in symbolic capital may lose some legitimacy because of her gender, she still has more than enough capital left to make an impact on the field (Moi, 1991: 1038).

Toril Moi further argues that if feminists tend to overemphasize the importance of gender, it is a tendency to be indulgent with since the great majority of every other intellectual discipline tends to massively repress it (1991:1037).

Margareta Melin-Higgins and Toril Moi both claims that Bourdieu’s theories are very useful when combined with the feminist perspective (Melin-Higgins, 2003: 55; Moi, 1991: 1018), and to better understand how these concepts may apply to feminist research I will give a short summary of Margareta Melin-Higgins study (2003) investigating the journalistic culture in Britain 1992/2002.

Melin-Higgins interviewed 33 journalists in 1992, 17 men and 16 women. In 2002 she interviewed 25 of them again. One of her first conclusions were that there is an obvious distinction between “hard” news and “soft” news that all the journalists being interviewed agreed on. This distinction is linked to the status of different subjects within the field, and the status in turn is closely linked to gender; hard news have high status and are associated with masculinity while soft news have lower status and are associated with femininity. (Melin-Higgins, 2003: 56)

The doxa of the British journalistic field is in many ways comparable to the general situation in western Europe; there is a strong belief in objectivity, the importance of time, competition, obsession with routines, anti-intellectualism, focus on elite nations and elite people and general conceptions of what is good and what is evil in society. (Melin-Higgins, 2003: 57)

Bourdieu focuses much of his writing on the conflicts within the fields, the competition, and most importantly the way different groups choose to handle these
conflicts by using different strategies against each other. Analyzing her interviews Melin-Higgins chose to characterize strategies used by the dominating group (the male journalists) and tactics used by the subordinate group (the female journalists) (2003: 58). The male strategies consisted of gatekeeping, making sure nearly exclusively men from “the old boys network” were advancing in their careers; routines where the doxa is turned into journalistic practice with the sole purpose of maintaining the status of certain distinctions (for example during morning meetings the soft news are given to the female journalists) and finally the officeculture where popular subjects of conversation were typically football, cricket, sexist jokes and depreciatory comments (ibid.).

The female tactics were either used to try and challenge the prevailing situation, or to blend in and create space to develop on your own. Melin-Higgins calls the four tactics one of the girls, use your femininity, one of the boys and escape the office space. Being one of the girls means that you oppose the lower status of “soft” subjects by trying to increase the attention given to them and defending them as important, valuable subjects. Using your femininity is a way of playing along, not causing any trouble and by that creating space to evolve within the “female” sphere of journalism (i.e. fashion, health, entertainment), eventually building a career. Being one of the boys means that you try to infiltrate the superior culture, i.e. try to be more like your male colleagues. The fourth and last tactic is to escape the office, either by going in to web publication being able to work at home, or becoming freelance, or switching to teach journalism instead of actually practicing it. (Melin-Higgins, 2003: 59-63)

5.4 The gender of journalism
The best way to pin down the effects of female subordination on female journalists, is to ask female journalists themselves. How do they experience their situation? Do they feel powerless? Do they feel discriminated against? Liesbet van Zoonen refers in her article One of the girls?: The changing gender of journalism to a study made in Norway in the 1980’s. Female journalists were asked how they experience working in a male dominated environment. Many of them answered by saying “I think I have been accepted as one of the boys” (van Zoonen, 1998: 33). This short sentence tell us that media is defined in male terms. That female journalists need to adjust to
masculinity in order to feel included. A comparable study was made in the Netherlands, and the results were similar (ibid.).

Van Zoonen further argues that the news has been increasingly filled with so called “human interest” topics and angles, which are generally referred to as “feminine” (see figure 1). By assuming female journalists are superior when it comes to producing the “feminine” angles, this change in the news genre is an opportunity for more female journalist to enter the profession (van Zoonen, 1998: 35). But what are the reasons for this sudden change in genre and are there any other implications?

*Figure 1:* The gendered nature of journalism according to van Zoonen (1998: 36):

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<th>Feminine</th>
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In the western world, van Zoonen writes, news has become a commodity like anything else. They are almost completely market-driven, the decisions are based on what research say the audience want instead of “professional journalistic imperatives of what would be in the public’s interest” (van Zoonen, 1998: 40). Van Zoonen claims this to be one of the reasons for human-interest angles to be increasing; human interest, audience needs and desires, emotional investment and sensationalism are the key terms of commercial journalism. But they are also closely related to the features both male and female journalists associate with female journalism. Van Zoonen calls it the “unnoticed gendered subtexts and implications of market-driven journalism” (ibid.: 41). Being one of the boys could easily turn into being one of the girls, as “feminine” features turns out to be commercially viable. But as femininity becomes closely linked to marked-driven, commercial journalism, the popularity of
commercial journalism also will affect the popularity of feminine journalism. And as we all know “most traditional news journalists, women and men alike, despise the consumer orientation“ (ibid.: 46). The result being that feminine angles and female journalists, essential components to the market-driven journalism, end up being despised in the same way and consequently women’s way into journalism turned out to be yet another road to subordination. But van Zoonen is not surprised, “in our patriarchal societies most things women do and like are not valued very highly, and the contempt for market-driven journalism should very surely be seen as part of this patriarchal scheme” (ibid.).

5.5 Unequal opportunities
Margaret Gallagher goes all the way back to ancient Greece, and philosophers such as Aristotle, to better understand the position of women in western society. Aristotle defined the female as a sort of mutilated male and firmly believed in psychological as well as biological differences between men and women. The roles and functions were to be separated; women should stay at home and thus stay away from all public or political engagements (Gallagher, 1981: 12). This Aristotelian distinction judged certain roles and functions of the sexes as natural, and although much has changed some perceptions have prevailed:

It is a polarization which underlies the entire historical problem of the differential social status of the two sexes. Most political theories, for example, have an ontology which is male: after Aristotle, Rousseau, Hobbes, Locke, Hegel, all explicitly exclude women from their theoretical models and assign them a ‘different’ (and disadvantaged) social status, based on their reproductive role (Gallagher, 1981: 12).

Fast-forwarding the tape from ancient Greece back to modern time, this early polarization of men and women has accumulated in a number of differentiations. For example, a large percentage of the world’s women are not reached at all by the mass media. There are a number of reasons for this – first there are distribution issues, particularly many developing countries don’t have the means nor the technology to spread the mass media to the people, second there are a lot more women than men that suffer from illiteracy. This piece of information fundamentally changes the perspective of the subject ‘women and the media’ – in order to be able to discuss subordination, inequalities and powerlessness within the media, we need to bare in mind that first, these issues are not substantial problems in countries where women
are not even given the chance to learn how to read, second these issues appear only when women are not only part of the audience but also part of the mass media, as producers of media content (Gallagher, 1981: 23-25). As Gallagher writes:

Discrimination against women’s access to decision-making posts within the media is hardly a problem in countries where only a handful of women enter the media professions in the first place” (Gallagher 1981: 28).

However true this might be, Gallagher later points out that the differences between developed and developing countries are extensive when it comes to media distribution and media access, but the subordination of women within the media is universal (Gallagher, 1981: 28).

Stating the facts presented above, we need to ask ourselves to what extent the media are either agents of social change or reinforcing status quo (Yunjuan, 2007: 281). Gallagher claims that mass media systems are a reflection of distributions of power and control. That the “mass media’s role is primarily to reinforce definitions and identities set in a framework constructed for and by men” (Gallagher, 1981: 30). This framework is part of the modern society, and referring to society in this context equals referring to political and economic systems. The media’s relationship to the political economic system is much more that of reinforcing status quo than that of an agent of social change. To enhance women’s status one would therefore have to turn to the political and economic structures – not the mass media. Although, as Gallagher points out, media has a way of lagging behind when it comes to changes in a broader social system – but “even if the media cannot be expected to initiate change, they can certainly be expected to reflect it” (ibid.).

**Female journalists – the participation of women in the media**

There are two main reasons for the concern of women’s participation in the media: women should have the same opportunities as men entering any industry of choice, there should be no obstacles preventing women specifically from entering the profession of journalism. Second, media content reflects the composition of the editorial staff and the under-representation and sometimes complete absence of women, especially in decisions-making positions, result in media content reflecting only male concepts and interpretations. (Gallagher, 1981: 79)
The participation of women in the media industries, according to Gallagher, also needs to be discussed within the context of working class women more generally (Gallagher, 1981: 82). Among other difficulties, women often have dual responsibilities; domestic work and employed work. This affects their ability to compete with men on equal terms because they have a greater number of tasks to make time for. Another aspect, as have been brought up earlier, women in many countries do not get the same chances as men do to educate themselves (ibid.: 82-86). When it comes to women’s participation in the media industry specifically, it is widely known that women generally have a hard time reaching top positions since they are obstructed by what is called a glass ceiling (Carter et al. 1998: 1).

5.6 The power relations of the newsroom

The press is powerful. It has an impact on people and on public opinion. But equally important and powerful as media content, is the process behind it; the selection and the organizing of information. Linda Steiner has studied the power of the worksite – the power relations of the newsroom. And more specifically, how are these conditions and circumstances gendered? To find the answer Steiner has studied autobiographies written by female journalists who worked in newspapers both in Britain and the USA in the early and mid-twentieth century. (Steiner, 1998: 145)

It was in the late nineteenth century that objectivity, for several reasons, became important in news reporting. At the same time the notion of women being unable to be objective emerged. Women were said to be “inherently embodied”, the “subjectivity attributed to women is not convertible into objectivity” (Steiner, 1998: 147). The consequences for female journalists, revealed in their autobiographies, was a constant struggle to be taken seriously, to be treated as professionals. As a female journalist you were indisputably a woman first, a journalist second. No matter if they tried to suppress their femininity or allow themselves being treated as feminine, they could never escape the fact that men had the power to position them as women (ibid.: 150). However, the most interesting part of Steiner’s review of the autobiographies, is the fact that most female journalists made sense out of this never-ending struggle, the constant fight for a professional identity. It was part of the job (ibid.: 152).
6. Method
This study has a qualitative approach, which is often the case with feminist research (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2008: 356). The quantitative researcher’s goal is to isolate and define categories before the study is carried out, whilst the qualitative researcher’s goal is to isolate and define categories while the study is being made, allowing and expecting the categories to change in the process (McCracken, 1988: 16). For my study I wanted to learn more about how Ghanaian female journalists experience their working conditions and I wanted to learn through their eyes. I also wanted my research to aim for a greater understanding, rather than vast generalizations, and for this kind of analytic purposes the qualitative interview is a superior instrument since it allows us to get a glimpse of the interviewee’s lifeworld (McCracken, 1988: 21).

Sampling
I found my interviewees using snowball sampling. This means I reached out to any connections I made once in Ghana, asked them to help me find my first interviewee and from there on relied on my interviewees to refer me to other journalists I could interview. This technique is problematic in several ways (see 7.1), but since I had no previous connections in Ghana and all my attempts to contact Ghanaian journalists by e-mail from Sweden failed, this was the most reasonable way to find interviewees.

Even though I gladly accepted all the help I could get to be able to get in touch with female journalists, I decided on an early stage to limit my selection to female reporters, not editors, producers or any other kind of executives. This conscious choice was made based on experiences made and shared by Maria Z Roxberg, currently writing her PhD on female journalism in southern African countries. The interviewees could be of any age and from any part of the country but had to be female journalists working in print or broadcast media.

Semi-structured interviews
The eight interviews that were carried out with eight female Ghanaian journalists were semi-structured, i.e. based on an interview guide (see appendix) consisting of themes. The semi-structured interview makes it possible for the interviewee to get sidetracked and leaves room for personal thoughts, and these possibilities tend to give
more nuanced answers (Östbye, 2004: 103). The semi-structured interview also allows the researcher, if necessary, to change how the questions are formed and the order in which they are asked, to be able to do a proper follow-up on any answers the interviewee might give (Kvale, 1997: 117). Since the study took place in the field I was never able to perform trial interviews, which made the flexible, semi-structured approach even more suitable.

Data processing and analysis
The eight interviews were all recorded and transcribed. I chose not to take notes during the interviews unless it was something I wanted to ask later on and had to write down in order to remember. In the transcriptions pauses have been marked “…” and hesitation with the words “hmm” or “uhm”. Throughout the analysis, whenever a citation has been shortened for lack of relevance to the study, it has been marked with […]. This may not be preferable in all fields, but within communication studies it is considered acceptable since the original material is available on tape (Ekström & Larsson, 2000: 64). Errors in grammar have only been corrected when it was absolutely necessary for understanding the context.

The transcribed interviews will be analyzed thematically, which is a common method within qualitative research (Widerberg, 2002: 156). To be able to crystallize different themes I have read the interviews taking notes on reoccurring subjects (ibid.: 137). Consequently, the final themes have been chosen from an empirically close perspective, which is suitable in explorative studies (ibid.: 144). The analysis of the chosen themes will be carried out closely linked to the study’s theoretical framework (see chapter 5) and research questions (see chapter 2).

6.1 Method Discussion
Some scholars have argued that measuring validity and reliability is irrelevant when it comes to qualitative research, since the purpose is not to be able to generalize the results but rather create an understanding for dynamics in a cultural and social context (Östbye, 2004: 120). However, it is still important to discuss how the data has been sampled and processed and in what way it may or may not affect the results and the analysis. When it comes to the validity and reliability of this study I have chosen to address the following issues:
• The validity of the interview guide

• The reliability of the snowball sampling

• The reliability of the interviewing process; how my role as a Swedish, young, white woman affects the interview, the surrounding conditions for the interviews

• The reliability of the transcriptions of the interviews

The interview guide
The validity of the interview guide comes down to whether I have asked the right questions to fulfil the purpose of the study; to investigate, analyze and describe how female Ghanaian journalists experience their working condition from a gender based perspective. Before leaving for Accra I sent numerous e-mails to newspapers, organisations and journalists acquiring assistance and information, but none of them were answered, so unfortunately I had no means to do any trial interviews or any extensive research on local circumstances before I arrived in Ghana. So there are reasons to believe that the interview guide that was written in Sweden was not completely adapted to the Ghanaian context, and although obvious misconceptions were corrected after the very first interview, one should bare in mind the lacking circumstances under which the original interview guide was produced.

A non-representative selection?
The snowball sampling is problematic in several ways. Initially it raises the question whether I interviewed the most suitable journalists, could I by using another method have found journalists specifically interested in the issues my study concerns? Maybe. But due to the difficulties in finding interviewees I don’t really see how it could have been done any other way. The second question regarding the sampling technique is how much it affects the results that a majority of the interviewees were close in age. The instinctive assumption says it does matter how many years of working experience you’ve got when it comes to reflecting on your working conditions from a gender based perspective, and that your age and maturity possibly also affects your confidence and ultimately your willingness to speak openly about work related gender based issues. A more representative selection would have consisted of equal parts
young female journalists and middle-aged female journalists. Though once again I will have to refer to the circumstances in the field and regrettably admit that selecting a more representative group of female journalists was difficult, but more importantly I will keep these notions in mind in my analysis.

**Cultural factors**
Regarding the reliability of the interviewing process there is always a risk of different sources of error to affect the results, for example misunderstandings, self-deception and dishonesty (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2008: 460), but above all, in this case, the cultural differences between Sweden and Ghana are likely to have affected the interviews. One conscious choice I made was to not start with the interviews right away when I arrived, but to give myself a chance to learn more about the Ghanaian culture before I started contacting people. By spending time in Accra I slowly unveiled the most important behavioural distinctions, for example how they greet each other (by shaking hands and snapping their fingers as they let go) and that Ghanaians dress up for everyday occasions to a much greater extent than Swedes. Regardless of my efforts to adapt to the Ghanaian culture one should reflect upon how much it actually affected the interviewees that I am a young, white, woman from western Europe.

Something else to take into consideration concerning the interview situation is the fact that I gained more knowledge about my subject for every interview I performed. Even though I did my best trying to stay neutral and ask the questions in a similar way every time, there is no such thing as complete objectivity and increasing knowledge tends to change your view on the subject.

**Interview location**
Something else that may have affected the eight interviews respectively is the surrounding conditions where the interviews took place. My first interview was carried out in the garden outside of the office, far from any possible disturbance. Others took place at The Ghana Institute of Journalism or at The Ghana Journalist Association and were also free from disturbance. Some of the last interviews on the other hand unfortunately took place in the office amongst colleagues and executives, which may very well have affected the interviewees to respond more carefully.
During one interview I felt that the interviewee paid some attention to how her colleagues reacted to what she said, and there was one occasion where one of the male colleagues commented on the subject being discussed by me and the interviewee. These circumstances were not representative for the majority of the interviews but still very unfortunate. How much these unequal environments may or may not have affected the respondents is difficult to determine.

**Transcribing the interviews**

The time consuming job of transcribing the interviews took a lot longer than expected, mostly because of the sometimes really bad sound quality. My first interviews I used only a small recorder which I placed as close as possible to the interviewee. For the consecutive interviews however I attached a proper microphone which I held closely to the interviewee. This improved the sound quality, but instead made it really difficult to hear my own voice in the recordings since I was not nearly as careful making sure I put the microphone close to my own mouth when asking the questions. Fortunately I have been able to make out the questions using the interview guide.

The problem of having trouble transcribing your interviews either due to bad equipment or to bad circumstances is however (unfortunately) common within qualitative research (Ryen, 2004: 59), and I believe that I have done my best in order to reduce the loss of material and that all the interviews that I made contributes to my study, despite inaudible parts.

**Ethical aspects**

*Humanistisk- och samhällsvetenskapliga forskningsrådet* has determined a set of guidelines, one of them called *individskyddskravet*, that states four principles every researcher should bare in mind while carrying out his/her research (Kaijser & Öhlander, 1999: 51). The first one concerns the information you give to the people you are interviewing. It is very important that the participants fully understand their part in the study (ibid.: 51-52). The second principle concerns the informants giving their consent without any means of pressure from the researcher. When I approached my interviewees I made sure that I explained my intentions very carefully and
emphasized that any participation was completely voluntarily and of course anonymous if they wanted to. The third principle concerns the utmost importance of storing your material safely since you need to make sure it is only used and shared according to the information you have given the participants (ibid.). The last principle states that the information the participants share will only be used in research purposes that have been described previous to the interview (ibid.). My experiences though were all very straightforward, not a single journalist turned me down, none of them wanted to be anonymous and they all agreed on letting me record the interviews.

6.2 Field work in Accra
Going to west Africa for the very first time, by myself, was challenging in many ways. Everything was very different; the weather, the food, the means of public transport. And when I first started out with my interviews I had no idea what to expect. I was not sure how the journalists I was interviewing was going to react to the subject of gender issues. I did not know whether they would feel obligated to answer in favour of their employers since almost everyone of the interviews were carried out in their workplace, I did not know whether this was something they felt comfortable talking about at all with a perfect stranger. As it turned out all my interviewees were open-minded, helpful and interested in the subject and none of them gave the impression of feeling uncomfortable with the questions. I however did from time to time have some problems understanding the Ghanaian English accent which is very different from the American/British accent we are used to in Sweden. I did my best asking the interviewees to repeat themselves or explain with different words when I had trouble understanding, but inevitably there were details from time to time that I did not comprehend.
7. Results & Analysis

As stated in chapter 6 the interviews will be analysed thematically, consequently I have read the transcribed interviews to unwind a number of themes. Each theme relates to one of my research questions presented in chapter 2, and will be presented accordingly. None of the interviewees has required to be anonymous, but out of respect for the risk of them feeling exposed I will refer to them by first names only. The transcribed interviews can all be found in the appendix (10.3). Before presenting my analysis I will however introduce the interviewees very brief:

Eva is 30 years old and was born in Accra. She is currently studying law but has been working as a sports journalist for several years and still participates in TV-panels when approached. She has a diploma in journalism from GIJ and a degree in English and linguistics form University of Ghana. She is not married and has no children.

Ashley is 23 years old and was born in Accra region. She went to GIJ for four years and has been working as a reporter ever since she graduated. Ashley is not married and has no children.

Esther is 26 years old was born in Accra. Next year she finishes her degree in marketing, she also has a diploma in journalism. She has been working as a reporter for four years. She is not married and has no children.

Esi is 30 years old and was born in Accra. She has a diploma in journalism from GIJ, in total she has four years of university education. She has been working as a general reporter since 2002.

Gloria is 28 years old and was born in Tema, about one hour outside of Accra. She has a diploma in journalism and is about to finish her degree. She has been working as a general reporter for four years. She is married and has an 8 months old child.

Helena is 24 years old and was born in Tema, like Gloria. She has been working as a reporter for three years and specializes in court reporting. She went to university for three years.

Lucy is 46 years old and was born in Kumasi, Ghana’s second biggest city. She has a diploma and a degree in journalism and has been working as a reporter since 1988. She is divorced and has one child.
Ivy is 37 years old and was born in Accra. She has a diploma in journalism and a degree in sociology. She has been working as a reporter for almost ten years, before that she worked as a ticketing officer. Ivy is not married and has no kids.

7.1 Advantages and disadvantages

Being a woman has its advantages and disadvantages in any line of business, the media is no exception, and it was clear to me that the perception of women being the subordinate sex was familiar to several of the interviewees:

I: Because women are seen to be weaker, that’s the general perception. And as I say it’s a perception. In Ghanaian society and African they want the male in general […]

Ivy

Previous research has shown that within the media women are often obstructed by the so called glass ceiling (Carter et al. 1998: 1); because of their gender they rarely reach top positions. There may be several explanations for this lingering discrimination, one of them possibly being the culturally deeply rooted apprehension that women in general are different from men, having been assigned a disadvantaged social status (Gallagher, 1981: 12). Another way of explaining it would be the apprehension that there in fact is no glass ceiling. There is an awareness of gender imbalance, but a prevailing opinion that it is not because of a general discrimination against women:

I would say there are not enough women in the high levels of the profession, but I do not believe that in Ghana, there is a glass ceiling or a deliberate attempt to keep women journalists down (Editor of the Ghanaian Times Ajoa Yeboah-Afari, modernghana.com19).

One can only assume that these kind of opinions are slowing down the efforts towards increasing the number of women in top positions within the media.

“Loose morals” and other perceptions of female journalists

When I asked the interviewees if they ever felt they were being treated differently because of their gender, a reoccurring theme was the perception of female journalists

as a bit flirtatious. They often felt they had to try really hard to make a professional impression, otherwise the (male) interviewees might miscomprehend their intentions:

I: In Ghana today… What I would say is that… you get the information fast but sometimes people tend to think that female journalists in Ghana are, for lack of a better word, flirt or prostitute. That’s what people think in Ghana
Q: That female journalists are… easy?
I: Yes, easy. Because they come in contact with different kinds of people, so people think that… unfortunately most of them are not really married
Gloria

One of the other interviewees expresses a similar observation:

I: Loose, more, yeeeah! I think that in the past some of our predecessors haven’t really done much, did not really do much, to erode that perception, I can put it that way. I guess on authority don’t they, those men who make those assertions, maybe because of experiences they’ve had with previous journalists, in previous times who have exhibit loose morals.
Q: Is that perception still alive?
I: Oh definitely, especially in the sports field, every, excuse me, idiot, tries to make a pass at you in the performance of your duties.
Eva

There is a difference between interviewees not acting professionally and your male colleagues making a pass at you at work. Regarding the latter Eva has her own theory:

I: But I mean it’s basically cause men feel threatened you know, when they believe that they built their own world and they are cocooned in there and all of a sudden find females, you know they feel you’re trespassing, so they come up with all these preconceptions, it just frustrate you sometimes. You’ve got to ignore those things and do what you have to do
Eva

Either one of the situations described above can be related to theories of Linda Steiner presented in chapter 5; female journalists will always be women first and journalists second (Steiner, 1998: 150). And one can find the same results in van Zoonen’s more recent study where Dutch, female journalists attested they feel they are primarily being treated as women, and secondarily as journalists (1998: 37). Especially when they on a daily bases feel they have to tackle both friendly heterosexual invitations and less friendly sexual harassments (ibid.).

For the most part though, my interviewees seemed to accept the fact that they were having a hard time being treated as professionals, this was something they were used to. I can recognise this from the autobiographies cited in Linda Steiner’s study, where
as mentioned most female journalists simply made sense out of this never-ending struggle, the constant fight for a professional identity (Steiner, 1998: 152).

Another aspect of disadvantages for female journalists in Ghana is the impact it might have on your social life. One of the interviewees was convinced that this in fact was the biggest challenge for female journalists. By impact on your social life she referred to the long and irregular working hours:

I: [...] say I work 24 hours in the week, you can imagine if I’m going out and have a boyfriend, it wouldn’t be easy. Cause at a point he would feel you are not being honest, you are hiding something, you know, cause you go to work at dawn, as early as 1 am, and you get back half eleven pm. Something may come up even when you’re not working and sometimes when you are at work you’re not finished. If you start at 1 am I’m suppose to close at nine, but you have to cover an assignment and it depends how long it takes and you have to go back to the office and write

Ashley

One should not forget though, that being a woman and being recognized for it also may have its advantages, depending on how you define advantages:

Q: Have you ever experienced that you’ve been treated in a certain way because you are a woman?
I: No
Q: Never?
I: No. Actually when you go on an assignment they give the female more attention than the guys, wherever you go it’s like that
Q: Why do you think it’s like that?
I: I don’t know
Q: Do you think it’s good?
I: Yeah, extremely good [laughing]

Helena

Wife, mother and journalist
Apart from the perception of women being flirtatious and “easy”, nearly all women that I interviewed recognised combining work with family life as the biggest challenge for female journalists in Ghana. All of them seemed determined to eventually get married and have children though, but possibly at the expense of a successful career:

I: [...] I am not the kind of person who is too concerned with my career, where my career ends, cause I believe that once you decide you want to be a family woman or a mother, then you should put you children first, but it depends on if I decide I want to settle down

Ashley

I: Yes, yes that is also another. Cause you have to look after the children and the house, before coming to work. The duties in the house are also a type of work, a fulltime work.
So that means that females are taking up two jobs, and they have to manage their time and that is challenging

Ivy

Q: Do you experience that it is expected of women to take care of the children, cook, take care of the house…
A: Oh that’s in the Ghanaian culture, so if you try to do any otherwise people look at you as somebody who’s trying to be bossy or something and here the women are not allowed to… I don’t know the right word, but to be seen as being bossy, you are always suppose to be submissive to the man

Lucy

Journalism is a time-consuming profession often including early morning shifts, but no matter your working hours, as a woman in Ghana you are often the one taking care of house and children (Fayorsey et al. 2003: 14). From a western, feminist point of view this outspoken gender imbalance is practically taboo, even though women all over the world to a large extent experience the same lack of shared responsibility when juggling domestic work with employed work. As has been brought up earlier, the dual workload is due to affect women’s ability to compete with men for top positions, since they have a greater number of tasks to make time for (Gallagher, 1981: 82-86).

All of the women that I interviewed agreed that it is the responsibility of the woman to take care of the children. Although some of them could see that it’s changing, slowly, especially in the cities where educated men nowadays are more willing to compromise and share the responsibility, and they had different opinions on what made this change happen. However, no matter how imbalanced and unfair they experienced their domestic life, on some level they all thought it was very important that women have enough time to spend with their children. The children should be taken care of mainly by their mother and no one else. So in a way there is a contradiction between wanting a more gender balanced domestic life, but still wanting to be the one to care of the children:

A: It’s not also just the way it is, it’s not entirely on the woman, but personally, it’s a personal choice, I feel that as a mother, you should be more close to your children […] But if I’m not there and they always complain about me not being there, so by the end of the day we decide to have someone to take care of our home. And I don’t like that.
Q: You don’t like that?
A: No
Q: But do you think the responsibility should be balanced?
A: It should be balanced. If I’m working and I’m not able to pick the children up, he should be able to make up for that, if they are not eating he should be able to go into the
kitchen to cook. If I’m there I have to cook, I will cook. But it shouldn’t be entirely on one person.

Q: But do you think it is, today?
A: Yeah it is. Because I know educated men, who still believe that the kitchen is for the woman, even if they both work.

Ashley

Figuring out how to manage your time between domestic work and employed work is one thing, finding a husband who understands your working conditions is another. One of the interviewees expressed these difficulties, arguing that jealousy caused by the fact that you as a journalist have to talk to a lot of people and some of them being of the opposite sex, was one reason why it was hard having lasting relationships as a journalist:

A: Some men don’t understand why [inaudible] after close of work, the normal workday in Ghana is to 5 pm, but we are journalists, there is no way we can close at 5 pm. And sometimes when they see you talking to many people from the opposite sex, they don’t understand why you should talk to them. If you are not able to get someone who understands the work there is always a tendency for disagreement, argument and if the relationship is not the solid type, it’s possible to break.

Lucy

**To make a mark**

Being a woman in a male-dominated profession can be difficult at times. Several of the interviewees gave the impression they felt they had to achieve more and make an extra effort to earn the same credit as their male colleagues. One of them, working with sports reporting, may have experienced this even more than the others, seeing she was the only female reporter on her desk:

Q: Do you ever feel that the demands are higher because you are a woman?
A: Obviously, because you see when you go in there, people are suspicious of your motives for entering that field. I mean they feel, probably they feel threatened, and some of them probably think “oh you lost your way or what?” you know, “what the heck are you doing in here”, so you know you get those curious looks from the guys, so it’s an incumbent on you to make a point and make a mark, you only make a point by showing how good you are at what you do, so once you’ve made your mark, you earn their respect and you get that recognition […] I mean initially you get that cold shoulder from the males especially, and because of that you need that x-factor, you need to make an extra effort to prove to everyone that you know what you’re about.

Eva

This kind of reasoning is familiar from previous research and brings us back to van Zoonen’s study carried out in the 1980’s concluding that a lot of female journalists feel they have to be one of the boys to be accepted (van Zoonen, 1998: 33). Although
van Zoonen describes the phenomena very carefully, she never answers the question why journalism is defined in male terms.

When I had done a few interviews there was one aspect that kept coming back; women were sometimes excluded from certain types of assignments. Eva partially disagreed since she had not experienced this where she worked, but she recognized the phenomena:

I: […] Generally, it all emanates from the fact that generally as a people the female sex is deemed to be the weaker sex, which always needs to be patronized, you know, cause I don’t see it as protection, I see it as patronizing… they don’t seek to protect us, they seek to patronize us
Q: In general or in the media specifically?
I: No, in our society, the Ghanaian society, it’s purely patriarchal, I mean male-dominated, they are always trying to patronize you, the females
Eva

Eva is not the first to blame the patriarchal society for the subordination of women. But how come this global inequity survives? Toril Moi refers in her article *Appropriating Bourdieu* (1991) to how Bourdieu opposes the division of human beings into two sexual categories, meaning that this is just an arbitrary cultural construction (1991: 1030), a construction upon which we constitute the power relations between men and women:

It [sexism] aims to ascribe historically produced social differences to a biological nature functioning like an essence from which every actual act in life will be implacably deduced (Moi, 1991: 1030)

7.2 Equal opportunities?
One of my research questions was how female journalists in Ghana experience their opportunities to get promoted. Do they ever experience the promotions to be gender based?

*Gender based promotions – an inconsistent story*

The interviewees generally felt confident about getting a promotion, that it was based on experience and hard work. At the same time however, several of them did recognize the fact that most executives were male and they also said that promotions sometimes are gender based, but this always concerned someone else. More specifically three of the journalists I interviewed expressed this contradiction; they all experienced they had equal opportunities to get promoted, on the other hand they
could see that the promotions often were gender based. The other five were convinced promotions were based on experience and hard work, the reason why more men than women are occupying executive positions varied. They all agreed that they had to work hard, make an extra effort and do really well to be considered for promotion. So there is a discrepancy between how the interviewees see themselves and how they understand the general circumstances.

These contradictions could possibly be translated into the previously presented concepts of doxa and symbolic violence. The doxa being the way the female journalists see the world, and specifically within the journalistic field they see a system of promotions based on hard work and experience. But they can also see that most executives are male and that women often are sidelined. So how come they don’t draw the conclusion that they are also being sidelined, that the promotions are in fact more often that not gender based? One explanation could be that they have been exposed to symbolic violence. Once again in Toril Moi’s words:

For Bourdieu, sexual oppression is above all an effect of symbolic violence. As such, the traditional relationship between the sexes is structured by a habitus which makes male power appear legitimate even to women (1991: 1030)

One of the interviewees who expresses consciousness about gender based promotions seeks an explanation in women eventually going on maternity leave. But she also consequently uses “they” and “them” talking about women, indicating she does not include herself in this group:

I: Women… and even generally in the whole world, I think women are not given the chance. Or should I say they look down on female, because they don’t give them the opportunity to rise, anything that comes up is given to the male. I think they think, or I don’t know if they think they would be putting stress on the female or… and one thing also is I think is very [important] is the female at one point in time will be having a family and will have maternity leave when the job should be on. So by picking the male the male is there, they will not go on maternity leave or anything of that sort

Ivy

**Another future**

Every interviewee were asked to explain how they see their future in journalism. Will they stay in journalism for the rest of their career? Surprisingly none of the them were certain they were going to stay in journalism. Four of them said they wanted to
change profession if they could, mainly because “journalism in Ghana doesn’t pay”. Three of them wanted to combine journalism with something else, preferably law. One wanted to stay, unless she happened to get a job that was better paid.

A: Ehm, future wise, I definitely am not going to do journalism for the rest of my life. Esther

Q: What do you think about your future as a journalist, can you go back to working as a journalist? Or maybe you’ll try to combine them?
A: Yeah, yeah, yeah, I’ll try to combine them, Eva

Q: And, what do you think about your future in journalism?
A: Eh… I don’t think I will stay long, practising as a journalism

Q: Why not?
A: Ehm… because the salary is not encouraging. Journalists are not well-paid in Ghana Gloria

Q: And what do you think about your future as a journalist?
A: I wish I could stop tomorrow [laughing]

Q: What do you want to do instead?
A: I want to go into administration

Helena

Q: And what do you think about your future, will you stay in journalism?
I: In fact, I don’t think I will stay

Q: Why?
I: Cause journalism is just not paying in Ghana

Ivy

Several of the interviewees are determined to change profession due to the allegedly bad salary. The importance of money is very present in the Ghanaian society. Wherever you go people are selling things, on the streets in the cities, along side the gravelled roads in the rural areas, at the bus station, at the beach. And those who are buying are constantly trying to bargain. Seeing as a lot of Ghanaians still are living below the poverty line (28 percent in 2006, landguiden.se20) it might not be all that surprising that money is a big issue. What surprises me though is the correlation between the importance of money and the cultural tradition that says women in Ghana generally are not expected to provide financially for the family, that is the main responsibility of the husband (Fayorsey et el. 2003: 22). The reason why female journalists still feel it’s important to make more money could be because a lot of them are not married. Only one of my eight interviewees were married, one of them was

20 2010-09-18: http://www.landguiden.se/ Chosen country: Ghana
divorced. And this seems to be common within the media, according to my interviewees. Which takes us back to the difficulties of combining working as a journalist with being married and having a family. One of the interviewees claims a lot of female journalists wait a long time before they settle down because of the impact your work has on your social life, and she is not only referring to working hours and jealousy but to the way female journalists act in a relationship:

Q: So it’s hard to combine a social life with this time consuming profession?
A: Very, very difficult. And when you are in a relationship the men feel that because you are a journalist you think you know everything [...] When we don’t allow them to overcome us in decision-making or in arguments, it’s like “your wife is too loud”. They feel you have to be submissive. And most of the female journalists end up growing old before they settle down, 30-40. Some don’t at all, because of these problems.
Ashley

This kind of reasoning, only concerning money instead of knowledge, as you’ve read, can be found in Fayorsey’s study on *Family and societal influences on the conduct of conjugal relations* (2003). Ghanaian men and women that were interviewed all concluded when a woman has a high income she becomes less respectful to her husband. Being educated and well-informed might have the same consequences?

Reading the quote above from a western, feminist point of view, for one I would not think settling down at 30 would be considered late. Second, I believe that actually settling down, getting married and having children is not all that indisputable in many western countries. In Ghana this however seems to be the plan for most women, and when the possibility of a career might interfere with that plan, it’s considered to be a problem. Maybe it is about to change as Ghana is taking steps towards becoming a middle-income country, maybe it is the universal patriarchal discourse exercising influence, only in a more outspoken way than in the western world:

To believe that the so-called biological ‘facts’ of reproduction, for instance, are the causes of the sexual division of labour, which hands ‘important’ tasks to men and ‘low’ or ‘menial’ tasks to women, is precisely to be in grips of phallocentric thought. (Moi, 1991: 1030)

7.3 Same same but different
I asked all my interviewees if they thought there is a difference between male and female journalists. Almost instinctively they all said no. Talking about it a bit more
though some of them did see differences in the way female and male journalists go about their work, but mostly they all emphasized that female journalists are equally competent and talented as their male colleagues (which gives the impression they thought I was asking if men are better, more qualified to be journalists than women). One of the differences mentioned was that male journalists seem to think they have a right to work as journalists while female journalists always have to work really hard to accomplish the same acceptance (see 7.1).

**Health vs. politics – the gender of journalism**

On the subject of male and female journalists reporting on different topics, the answers were similarly contradictory as to the question of who gets promoted. All of the interviews did feel they had the opportunity to report on whatever they liked, but all of them could also see that for the most part, women reported on health, women’s issues and children’s rights, while their male colleagues reported on business, sports and politics. To better understand this incoherency I have divided a quote from one of the interviews into three parts:

Q: Do you feel that there is a pattern as to who reports on what?
A: A pattern… No, I don’t think so. Actually at my place the only desks we have are business, sports… but with the rest of the desk you can report on what you like, it actually comes naturally. But you don’t really decide when you want to report on something cause we have some assignments coming in

Q: How many women and how many men are working in say the newsroom?
A: I’d say the majority are women

Q: And what about the sports and the business desk?
A: Majority male
Ashley

So, there are admittedly no pattern as to who reports on what, still the business desk and the sports desk are both male dominated.

Q: I have done some previous interviews and some of them have said that there are certain subjects that women are not assigned to, because they are women. Specifically if there is a demonstration or something a little bit more violent or challenging, do you experience that too?
A: No, no I don’t experience that at the GBC. As I said earlier it depends on your competence. Recently they called me, I went on a chieftaincy issue, and it was actually violent, because the Gaa palace was attacked. And I was assigned. And you can imagine the risk involved.

Q: And that’s not unusual?
A: No, it’s not.
Ashley
The interviewee clearly feels this perception of women not being allowed to take on assignments involving risks does not correspond with her experiences.

Q: And you don’t feel that there is anything they wont let you do because you are a woman?
A: Yes, there are some things they don’t let you do because you are a woman, for instance when it comes to sport. And when there are presidential assignments, I don’t know why they do that, but most presidential assignments are covered by male journalists. But I don’t think they do it intentionally, because as I said the female journalists we have in the newsroom are more than the male, so there is no way they would want to assign a male when they don’t have the number, with gender we don’t have any problems where I work
Ashley

At this point, she exposes her awareness of women rarely being given sports and presidential assignments, but not without adding that this might very well be a coincidence and not something the editors do intentionally. Different interviewees had different explanations to this subject division between the sexes, the common denominator being there actually is a legitimate reason for this distinction.

Dividing subjects between male and female journalists is a well known phenomena within the media industry. Some subjects for some reason seem to be more suitable for women to cover (van Zoonen, 1998). As can be seen in figure 1 (p 19), subjects considered to be more feminine are “human interest” topics (Ghana: women’s and children’s rights), consumer news, culture and social policy (Ghana: health insurance). Topics considered to be more masculine are politics, crime, finance and education and upbringing, which also cohere with the experiences of my interviewees:

I: Soft journalism, yeah that’s true. Cause aside the newsroom work, and yeah even in the newsroom, and I need to call on Joy FM again cause that’s my background, in the newsroom you see that the head of the business desk is a guy and most times the guys do a lot of the business stories. So I mean you still have those stereotypes in the newsroom, if it’s a health-issue you are likely to get a female reporter, cause we are talking about child birth, infant mortality, maternal mortality, you are likely to have a female coming up with those reports
Eva

But van Zoonen (1998) does not just talk about the division of subjects between men and women, as mentioned she also discusses the gender of journalism, and she concludes that it is within the definition of newsworthiness, angles, professional norms and values that journalism is in fact characterized as masculine (van Zoonen,
1998: 35). This once again brings us back to the fact that when professional journalism is defined by characteristics considered to be masculine, respectively the characteristics considered to be feminine are less coherent with the definition of professional journalism and potentially less worthy of attention (ibid.: 37). As stated before this was also the conclusion of Melin-Higgins (2003) after interviewing both male and female journalists in Britain; there is a clear distinction between “hard” and “soft” news and this distinctions is closely linked to status within the field of journalism and in turn to gender. “Soft” news have lower status and are associated with femininity (Melin-Higgins, 2003: 56).

In extension this was in fact the case in Ghanaian radio programming during 2005. When Canadian NGO Journalism for Human Rights looked into how much time of the weekly programming was actually dedicated to issues considered to be of feminine character, mainly because they concern women, the result was only 0,8 percent. Strictly subject wise topics such as health, sanitation and children’s issues were given 1,3 percent per week (Whaites, 2008).

**Fighting inequality**

Several of the interviewees expressed an awareness of differences and/or inequalities at the office and in the field. They however had different approaches on how to overcome them. One of the interviewees, working with sports, stressed the importance of getting accepted by her colleagues:

Q: Do you ever think about the fact that you are a woman while you’re working?
I: Never, I never let it operate on my mind because I saw it as a hindrance, an excuse not to excel, and I didn’t want that. I just saw myself as a journalist and I believed that whatever the men could do, I could do equally so all I was interested in was to prove myself, and make sure that I rub shoulders with the guys and even be better than them at what I do, and that’s all that mattered to me, cause I thought, I felt that having always at the back of your mind that you are a woman is a defeatist attitude, so I didn’t want any of that […] I try to have fun while doing it so I mean I think one thing that has helped me along is that I bond easily with guys, I mean maybe I’m a Tom-boy character.

Eva

This way of thinking closely relates to one of Melin-Higgins (2003) tactics presented earlier, used by female journalists to gain symbolic capital within the journalistic field (2003: 59-63). The tactic coherent with the quotation above would be *one of the boys,*
seeing as the interviewee is trying, consciously or unconsciously, to be more like her male colleagues (ibid.).

More generally speaking though, the tactics, or strategies if you will, to overcome inequalities experienced by the interviewed journalists are less specific. Charity Binka at WOMEC requests women who can put up a fight against gender inequality (Binka, 2010). Several of my interviewees expressed similar opinions and one of them tried to explain why *women* need to take a lead, not men:

> A: Think of it, if you are the one who’s affected and you are not interested, why should I be bothered? And it serves their purpose that you are down there, so they can also be up there, so it’s in your own interest as a woman, to engender discussion on women’s issues, so I think that the few influential women in our newsroom, must be making a case for people to appreciate the women’s point of view.

Eva

Most interesting about this quote is her recognition of female subordination as a strategy for prevailed male domination. This takes us once again back to Bourdieu and the competition on the field. When Melin-Higgins is using Bourdieu’s concept of a field in conflict, apart from distinguishing female tactics, she also describes the strategies used by the dominating group; the male journalists. In total she outlines three different strategies, gate keeping, routines and office culture (Melin-Higgins, 2003: 58) and two of these seem applicable in the Ghanaian context; gate keeping and routines. By gate keeping Melin-Higgins from a British context refers to executive men exclusively recruiting from “the old boys network”. How the appointments are carried out in Ghana is hard to say, however a number of sources (Binka 2010; Whaites, 2008) attest the majority of managing positions within the media belongs to men. So one could argue that to be able to keep women “down there, so they [men] can also be up there” men are acting as gatekeepers (Melin-Higgins, 2003: 58).

When it comes to the strategy of routines, Melin-Higgins argues that the dominating group turns the doxa into journalistic practice and by that maintaining the status of previous mentioned distinctions; the “soft” news are given to women during morning meetings (2003: 58.). How the morning meetings are in fact carried out in different media houses in Ghana is impossible to say without the empirical data of close observations, however the quote by Eva suggests that there is a discourse in the office
aiming at prevailing the existing order of things and nothing will ever change until women themselves try to do something about it.

8. Discussion & Conclusion

The aim of this study has been to investigate, analyze and describe how a selected number of Ghanaian female journalists experience their working conditions from a gender based perspective. More specifically I have tried to find out if they feel gender in any way affects their opportunities, their abilities and/or the way they are being treated by colleagues and interviewees.

Disadvantages, unequal opportunities and the gender of journalism

Although the discussions concerning advantages and disadvantages for female journalists were at times contradictory, it is clear to me that in a number of ways it is a disadvantage to be a woman within the media in Ghana. First, several of the interviewees do experience a perception of female journalists as flirtatious and less professional than male journalists, i.e. they are women first and journalists second. Second, it is hard for female journalists to combine domestic work with employed work since journalism is a very time-consuming profession and the responsibility for domestic work is still primarily on the woman (Fayorsey et al. 2003: 14). And third, to be accepted and respected as a female journalist in a male-dominated environment several of the interviewees feel they have to work hard and preferably distinguishing themselves from their male colleagues and most importantly – make their mark as competent, professional journalist. As mentioned, this relates to the concept of having to be one of the boys (van Zoonen, 1998), but when looking for a more thorough explanation one might want to refer to Bourdieu who is opposed to the division of human beings into sexual categories since these are simply an arbitrary construction (Moi, 1991: 1030).

How do female journalists in Ghana experience their opportunities to advance and be promoted? There is an illustrated contradiction in the answers to this question. On one hand, they all experience they have the opportunity to get promoted as long as they work hard, on the other hand they recognize a male-domination among their executives and expresses an awareness of gender based promotions. The explanations given by the interviewees to this discrimination vary, some of them believe it is
because women eventually will start a family and be less available, one of them believe there are simply not enough available positions. Once again, this contradiction could be an example of what Bourdieu calls symbolic violence, because according to him “the traditional relationship between the sexes is structured by a habitus which makes male power appear legitimate even to women” (Moi, 1991: 1030).

None of the interviewed journalists were certain they would stay in journalism for the rest of their career and most of them were discontent with the salary. Since all of them but one were not married one can assume they had to take a more extensive financial responsibility (when you are married it is primarily the responsibility of the husband to provide financially for the family). But not wanting to stay in journalism might also be an effect of not feeling appreciated and considering the experienced subordination maybe it’s a possible explanation.

My last research question was whether female journalists in Ghana experience any differences between them and their male colleagues and if they feel any distinctions between the topics covered by male and female journalists. The interviewees all said no when I asked them if they thought there is a difference between male and female journalists, nevertheless some of them did experience that male colleagues appeared to feel they had a right to be there, a right that female journalists to a larger extent had to earn through hard work.

When defining differences as reporting on different subjects, the interviewees at first said they had the opportunity to report on whatever subjects they wanted, but later on they expressed an awareness of the distinction between topics primarily covered by women and others by men. This contradiction is similar to the one articulated concerning who gets promoted and on what grounds. The distinction between “male” and “female” subjects demonstrably corresponded with examples from previous research and this distinction, as has been established before, stems from a masculine definition of journalism making characteristics considered to be feminine less coherent with professional journalism and therefore subordinate (van Zoonen, 1998: 35).
Contradictions and the responsibility to change

One of the most interesting results from my analysis was the discrepancy between how the interviewees felt about their own situation and the awareness of inequality issues surrounding them. They all feel they have the same opportunities as their male colleagues to get promoted, yet a majority of their executives are men. They feel they do have the opportunity to report on whatever subjects they like, yet almost without exception women report on health issues and men on politics. How come the interviewees very rarely include themselves when describing gender based inequalities? A fundamental question still lacking an answer.

The most gratifying part of my results however is the confidence and hope that most of the interviewees expressed. Rather than blaming their male colleagues they requested more determination among women to put women’s issues on the agenda and rather than doubting their ability they emphasized their potential:

A: It’s about time to start pushing issues that affect women, because issues that affects women, affects the nation. So, we need to pay particular attention, and women need to champion discussions and we have to do it for ourselves.
Eva

A: You know female are versatile, they can do anything, they can work anywhere, provided you give them the chance.
Ivy

I believe women within Ghanaian media have the ability to raise their voices and I believe that if Ghana continues to reach for gender equality on a political level, change will happen, but women themselves have to take the lead. I’ve always believed that awareness is the first step towards change, without awareness, nothing will ever improve. And although a significant amount of discrepancy and contradiction revealed itself during the interviews, there was also an unmistakable sense of awareness. An awareness which undoubtedly will not go away but rather develop into a forceful determination to keep reaching for gender equality.
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Gloria - Interviewed on Wednesday April 28, 2010 12.15 pm
Helena - Interviewed on Wednesday may 19, 2010 2.15 pm
Ivy - Interviewed on Wednesday may 19, 2010 1.45 pm
Lucy - Interviewed on Tuesday may 18, 2010 3.15 pm
10. Appendix

10.1 Interview guide

1. The interview will start with a few biographical questions:
   - How old are you?
   - Where were you born and raised?
   - Would you say you were privileged growing up?
   - What kind of education have you got? How many years of university studies?
   - For how long have you been working as a reporter?
   - Have you been working somewhere else as a reporter except for your current job? If yes, did you do any other kind of reporting than you are now? News, feature, entertainment?

2. The second part of the interview will consist of questions about your way into journalism and your relationship to journalism:
   - When did you decide to become a journalist?
   - Why did you decide to become a journalist?
   - Was it an easy choice to make?
   - Did you get any reactions from your friends and family about your choice of profession?
   - How did you get the job you have today? (Internship, contacts)
   - What do you think is the medias main task – to be agents of social change or reinforces of status quo? Should the media lead the way or just reflect on what is going on?

3. The third part of the interview will focus on your current working conditions:
   - What kind of reporter are you? Do you specialize in anything? If yes – how come?
   - Describe a normal workday!
   - What kind of subjects do you report on?
   - How do you experience your opportunities to report on different subjects?
   - Can you see a pattern as to who reports on what?
   - During my previous interviews I have been told that there are certain subjects that male reporters more often get assigned to, demonstrations for example. Do you think the reporting on demonstrations would be different if more women were doing it?
- How do you experience your opportunities to get promoted?
- Can you see a pattern as to who gets promoted?

4. The fourth part of the interview will focus on your experiences on being a female reporter:

- Are you married? Kids? If no – would you still be working as a reporter if you were?
- How would you describe yourself as a reporter? Are you forthcoming? Pushy? Shy?
- Do you feel there is a difference between male and female reporters? If yes, what?
- Would you say there is such a thing as female journalism and male journalism? If yes, how would you characterize them?
- Would you say the status of a female reporter is the same as the status of a male reporter?
- Scholars have argued that media content reflects the composition of the editorial staff – would you agree on that?
- Do you ever think about the fact that you are a female reporter? If yes, when?
- Do you ever experience that it affects your work that you are a woman? For example the way your are being treated/perceived by male interviewees? Taken seriuos?
- What would you say are the main challenges for female reporters in Ghana today?

5. Final questions:
- What do you think about your future in journalism? Is it bright?
- Do you think your future as a reporter is affected by the fact that you are a woman? Would you see a different future for yourself if you were a man?
- Is there anything else you think we should talk about on the subject women in the media?
- Is there anything you would like to add?
Tell me about WOMEC! What are your goals?

-Women, Media and Change (WOMEC) is a registered local non-governmental organization founded in 1994 and duly registered under the laws of the Republic of Ghana in 2000. Four (4) professional women in response to the realization that, there is a need to promote a more effective use of the media by women for their personal and collective advancement started it. Additionally, it was born out of a vision to bring about change in women’s lack of awareness about the power of the media in shaping and pursuing their goals.

WOMEC’s vision is to bridge the gap between rhetoric and action in addressing issues on gender and empowering women to gain public voice and visibility as well as have control of their lives.

The underlying principles of WOMEC are based on the following beliefs:

- That not only do women belong to the planet, but the future of the planet depends on women
- That women and men must be given equal space to develop their full potential
- That to accelerate development, both women and men must be part of the decision making process at all levels of national life
- That the media are crucial for recording activities of men and women and constitute our collective memory
- That the trend of excluding women’s issues and activities from media content has adverse implications for societal progress and therefore should be halted.

WOMEC’s priority areas include the following:

- To promote a more effective use of the media by women for their personal and collective advancement.
- To bring about change in women’s lack of awareness about the power of the media in shaping and pursuing their goals
- To create awareness on HIV and Women and empower women to adopt measures to control the disease.
• To empower women to participate and play active roles in decision making to play active role as change agents and advocates for gender equality.
• Equip women with Information communication Technology (ICT) skills for advocacy and to network globally.

It says in your brochure that WOMEC was formed in response to the need to promote effective use of the media for the advancement of women - in what way do women need to advance in the Ghanaian society?

- Women need to empower themselves as leaders and decision makers. What is greatly lacking is the inability of women to assertive without being aggressive. Until women begin to insist on their rights as a collective as well as individuals, the quest for equality will take a longer time to achieve. Formal education is key but not enough for women to get into leadership positions or into politics. There is the urgent need for political will on the part of the Ghana government to pass legislations and fulfill international commitments to gender equality. There is also the need to tackle traditional and cultural practices that perpetuate the gender inequalities that exist in our society. Ultimately, however, we need a critical mass of women that can push to put the issues of women on the national agenda.

What projects are you working on right now?

- Currently WOMEC is working on the second edition of “The Female Parliamentarian”. An ICT workshop for female journalists has also been planned for June. WOMEC is also looking for funds for to organize gender training workshops for journalists on the forthcoming District Assemble Elections.

How would you describe women's role in the Ghanaian society? Would you say women are equal to men? If not, in what way and why?

- Women form the majority of the Ghanaian society are the pillars on which the Ghanaian society rests. Women play key roles in national economy, community, security and development as they are better in reconciliation, and are known to be less corrupt as compares to men. Unfortunately, they are not recognised as such. Despite all these challenges, the few women in leadership and politics are not daunted and are giving very good account of themselves. Women have always been equal to men even
though they are not recognised as such. By law women and men have the same rights and responsibilities. It is discrimination, lack of political will and cultural perceptions that tend to push women down.

**How would you describe women in the media in Ghana? Do you have the impression that they in any way are subordinate to male reporters?**

- Women in the media in Ghana are playing a vital role in the development of the industry as they are found in key positions as managing editors, editors, news editors, producers and programme hosts. Over the years, their numbers have increased generally. The women in the media are not subordinate to their male counterparts even though they suffer various forms of discrimination in the newsroom on account of their gender. The number of women at the top also remains very few. There is the urgent need to get more women into leadership positions within the media. It is only then that they can effectively influence media policy and make it more gender sensitive. Studies have shown that the coverage of women’s issues in the media is very low. The situation could improve if more gender sensitive women are the gatekeepers in the newsrooms.

**Are you under the impression that female reporters in Ghana find it hard to combine journalistic work with family life?**

- Indeed women in the media, like their other professional women, face many challenges as professionals. Media work is particularly challenging and female journalists have to work three times as much as their male counterparts in balancing work, career and motherhood. It is the responsibility of media owners and managers to ensure that female journalists do not suffer unduly as a result of their reproductive roles. I’m of the strong conviction that women in the media have to fight for their rights and to ensure that media organizations have gender policies that respond to the needs of all employees regardless of their gender.
10.3 Transcribed interviews

10.3.1 Interview with Ashley, reporter at The GBC (Ghana Broadcasting Company)

*Friday May 28, 2010 8 pm, Osu*

Å = Åsa

A = Ashley

Ashley is 23 years old and was born in Accra region. She went to Ghana Institute of Journalism for four years and she’s been working as a reporter for four years, only at GBC.

Å: When did you decide to become a journalist?

A: In senior high school, when I was 16. But I started journalism when I was 13

Å: In what way?

A: I joined a teenage broadcasting group, so I was like a child writer

Å: And then you decide to become journalist?

A: I changed my mind, at first I wanted become a lawyer, but I changed my mind cause I felt that issues were not getting as far as I wanted them to. You know when you see issues on TV they don’t treat them as I expected so why not if I want things to change I should be there myself

Å: Was it an easy choice to make? You said you first wanted to be a lawyer?

A: Yeah, I still want to be a lawyer, in fact I’m going back to school next year

Å: So that’s another four years?

A: Yeah

Å: So did you get any reactions from friends and family when you decided you wanted to be a journalist?

A: Yes, my mum wasn’t happy and my dad wanted me to be a nurse

Å: your mum was not happy?
A: Yeah, she wanted me to be a lawyer cause she’s already a journalist. She said you wanted to be a lawyer so go ahead, and I was like “no, I really want to be a journalist now, I can be a lawyer at any time”. When you are talking about extended friends, they were happy, you know, they were like “when I’m in trouble I can call you” [laughing]

Â: But why didn’t your mum want you…

A: She wants me to be a lawyer cause she thinks I’ll do better there, she knows… it is actually a place I know I belong

Â: The job that you have today at the GBC, how did you get it?

A: I got it through national service after school and then you stay on

[…]

Â: What kind of reporter are you? Is it general reporting or…?

A: I’m a general reporter, but I take interest in gender issues, rights of children and women

Â: Is that by your own choice or is it management?

A: It’s by my own choice

Â: And how come?

A: I told you earlier, I just love justice, and sometimes I feel that we should give the credit when it’s due and to home. Children for instance, you know in Ghana here, when I was growing up when there are issues to discuss you have to just stay quiet, even if it concerns you, and sometimes people don’t send the right signals, so why not invite the children, yeah I agree they are really not matured, but when a child wants something, whether good or bad, they still want it, so you could have that child telling you exactly what he or she wants and guide him or her, rather then you deciding or dictating what the child needs. So I think that is basically why I love rights of children and women were basically abuses some years back but now I think that is changed

Â: Abused in what way?
A: In a home for instance and a husband and a wife, he would feel supreme, the head of the household, and they wouldn’t want to involve the woman because they are suppose to make all decisions. I know women are suppose to be helping, helping her husband, like master and slave almost. But that’s how it used to be, women were not allowed to take up some positions in some offices

Â: By regulation? You mean they were not allowed?

A: Not by regulation, but individualistic it’s just generally accepted that women are not suppose to head the man. So wherever there is a man and a woman the woman should be set first. I don’t know if it’s everywhere but we say something like what a man can do a woman can do even better. And women are doing so well at high places, so why do you necessarily have to surpass a woman even though she is capable and qualified for the position?

Â: But do you feel that it is changing?

A: It is, cause even in our parliament we have I think 16 or more women

Â: And how many in total?

A: 296. We have women ministers and it’s changing, so I know we will get there

Â: How would you describe a normal workday, at the GBC?

A: Hrm, a normal workday… You know, I am really not, I don’t know what to call it or how to describe it because everyday is a working day, every time is a working time. It’s very tiring and very tedious but if you have passion for it you don’t feel tired. The competition, there is great competition, cause it’s a state-owned and before you are employed they make sure you are actually qualified not just by education but as a person, what you can do, what you can deliver. So you tend to work with more qualified people, and you definitely have to be ahead if you want to succeed, so it’s challenging

Â: How do you experience you opportunities to report on different subjects? You said you have an interest in certain subjects, but do you feel that you can report on anything you would like to?
A: Yeah, why not. There are times when certain issues become interesting even if you are not that reporter. If there is something you feel passionate about you should be able to do it, even if it is not necessarily your field

Å: Do you feel that there is a pattern as to who reports on what?

A: A pattern… No, I don’t think so. Actually at my place the only desks we have are business, sports… but with the rest of the desk you can report on what you like, it actually comes naturally. But you don’t really decide when you want to report on something cause we have some assignments coming in

Å: How many women and how many men are working in say the newsroom?

A: I’d say the majority are women?

Å: And what about the sports and the business desk?

A: Majority male

Å: I have done some previous interviews and some of them have said that there are certain subjects that women are not assigned to, because they are women. Specifically if there is a demonstration or something a little bit more violent or challenging, do you experience that too?

A: No, no I don’t experience that at the GBC. As I said earlier it depends on your competence. Recently they called me, I went on a chieftaincy issue, and it was actually violent, because the Gaa palace was attacked. And I was assigned. And you can imagine the risk involved.

Å: And that’s not unusual?

A: No, it’s not.

Å: And you don’t feel that there is anything they wont let you do because you are a woman?

A: Yes, there are some things they don’t let you do because you are a woman, for instance when it comes to sport. And when there are presidential assignments, I don’t know why they do that, but most presidential assignments are covered by male journalists. But I don’t think they do it intentionally, because as I said the female
journalists we have in the newsroom are more than the male, so there is no way they would want to assign a male when they don’t have the number, with gender we don’t have any problems where I work

Â: And the managing positions? Is it both men and women?

A: As I said, we don’t have any problems with gender at our office, but when it comes to challenges we face as female journalists it boils down to our social life, say I work 24 hours in the week, you can imagine if I’m going out and have a boyfriend, it wouldn’t be easy. Cause at a point he would feel you are not being honest, you are hiding something, you know, cause you go to work at dawn, as early as 1 am, and you get back half eleven pm. Something may come up even when you’re not working and sometimes when you are at work you’re not finished. If you start at 1 am I’m suppose to close at nine, but you have to cover an assignment and it depends how long it takes and you have to go back to the office and write

Â: So it’s hard to combine a social life with this time consuming profession?

A: Very, very difficult. And you when you are in a relationship the men feel that because you are a journalist you think you know everything. So even asked you giving a decision on something, they won’t allow it, cause you know you know everything, “why should I come to you discuss something simple with you at the end of the day we will look stupid” So it creates problems in relationship. We don’t allow them to overcome is in decision-making or in arguments, it’s like “your wife is too loud”. They feel you have to be submissive. And most of the female journalists end up growing old before they settle down, 30-40. Some don’t at all, because of these problems

Â: Just so I get you right, as a journalist you’re confident and you know a lot of things so you don’t allow your husband to be superior?

A: Not really superior, but when you’re sure you know and you think you’re right they still want you feel what you’re saying isn’t right but you find a way to argue it out…

Â: You’re too clever?

A: [laughing] Yeah, that is it, it’s hard to say you’re too clever for your partner
Å: Why do you think that is? Is it culture?

A: Yes, it’s the Ghanaian culture. I said that earlier that women are usually not involved in decisions and all that, if your husband calls you, you go like yes daddy, you know [inaudible] he has got a problem with someone you don’t have to interfere, that’s what they think. It’s just with a few educated young men they know what it’s about and the don’t violate you’re rights too much [inaudible]

Å: You are not married?

A: No, I’m not married. All my relationships have failed because of time you know, because I wasn’t there and they need me. I would never allow [inaudible] to my right. When I know I’m not wrong, I mean sometimes you just have to accept that you’re wrong even though you’re not, but there are some instances when you have to make your partner know that no, you are wrong. And you are not supposed to say that, you know you know too much for them.

Å: Do you think it would be different if you were married?

A: It wouldn’t be

Å: And if you do get married, do you think you will still work as a reporter?

A: Yes I would. I don’t know but I have my future planned [inaudible] then I have to go to law school. So I’ll be working as a reporter part time and then I’m in school.

Å: But when you finish law school, that is a very time consuming profession as well, no?

A: [laughing] yes, it is, but I think it’s not as time consuming.

Å: Ok, so how would you describe yourself as a reporter? Are you shy or are you forthcoming?

A: Initially I was shy and tensed… initially. You know there are some men that don’t give the respect, as they should to women. So when you show up as a reporter, even before you open your mouth to tell them you’re a reporter they look down on you

Å: Why?
A: Cause you are female

Å: And that’s reason to…?

A: They don’t even see you, but when you are confident… I have a trick! When I go to a place and I see that the people there are not so welcoming, I have a way of approaching them. But I get tired in a way… but if they are not welcoming you just don’t have to throw yourself at them. There is something important you have to do, you just have to go there more officially, take what you want and just leave. But in a more relaxed way you don’t have to be too official sometimes when reporting, you have to be more relax. But there are some people who [inaudible] and you try to talk to much and it looks like you’re getting on their nerve

Å: Do you often experience that you are being treated in a certain way because you are a woman?

A: Not often

Å: But it happens?

A: Yeah, it does. And sometimes that even watch colleagues from other media houses, they come to report on the same thing, male and female reporter but from different media houses. They just have a way of communicating, or a way of… which is the word… interacting.

Å: Differently?

A: [inaudible] they make it look like you don’t know what you’re about, that you are so green. But I don’t allow that

Å: Would you say that there is something called female journalism? When you research gender equality in journalism in the academic field, you often come across the term female journalism as if there is a type of journalism that is more soft and therefore more female, would you agree?

A: No, I wouldn’t agree. Because we even have women in the army. So if you think [inaudible] just for a woman, train her, give her some self-defense training I mean I believe women can even do better than men! So I don’t believe there is anything called female journalism
A: And subjects-wise?

A: We have female sports journalists, we have female political journalists. If that is the areas they are scared of we have females there doing it and doing it well. So we can all stay in the same classroom, pass the exam, why not? We can equally do the same things subject-wise, I don’t think it should be difficult.

A: And would you say that the status of a female reporter is the same as of a male?

A: Yes, please. Sometimes they even do better.

A: Is that a general perception or is it just your perception?

A: Well that’s my perception, with the few female journalists that I have as friends, I think we all agree.

A: Would you say that the media content reflects on the composition of the editorial staff, if there are more women working at the GBC, does it have an effect on the content?

A: No, it doesn’t.

A: Do you ever think about the fact that you are a woman when you are working? Does it cross your mind that this happened because I’m a woman or…

A: Yeah.

A: Do you have any examples?

A: Uhm… for instance you cover a story, a fellow colleague who’s male has covered a story [inaudible] you know as a female journalist they complain more. Who ever is in charge, the news editor or something, complains more, but if it is a male they don’t.

A: The editor complains on your work?

A: Yes, even if it is something that could just go they wouldn’t let it. And sometimes I’m happy they do that, they challenge you, and you know the next time if I don’t go this way this man will definitely complain, but with the male they don’t, and I haven’t deserved that. You know sometimes you see a lazy work done, and they don’t complain, but with us they always complain, they want to argue.
Å: Does it matter if the editor is a woman or a man?

A: Yes

Å: And what’s the difference?

A: When it’s a man, as I said earlier they complain more on female, but if it’s a female, they complain alright but the male they male they are not able to, they just say you have to take a second look at your story, that’s what they say. But when you are female they just call you, I don’t know females are like that, when they are addressing their fellow female they are more aggressive, more confident, but when they are addressing male they tend to be a bit more sober

Å: We’ve been talking about that too, but is there anything else except for these social issues, that is challenging for female reporters in Ghana today?

A: In my office… there are not much challenges for female reporters. But my colleagues in other media houses they give you the problems that the other male colleagues look down on them, and too they have problems with program organizers. You go for a program, and you write your contacts and the next thing is the other person calling you and asking to have lunch or drinks or something

Å: It’s not professional?

A: It’s not professional at all. And when you don’t, they give you a different name, and when you do they go ahead to say things that aren’t even true.

Å: And these are the people you are interviewing?

A: Yes

Å: So, male interviewees don’t act professional…

A: That is after the interview. And there are some that feel that women are just [inaudible] and it shouldn’t happen, they wouldn’t do it to a male reporter, so why should it happen to a female reporter?

Å: So why do you think they do it?
A: They just see women as sex tools, you know, female journalists. As a female journalist you know you act in a way that should be [inaudible] When you are a female journalist you actually do things that will please your interviewee, I shouldn’t get you upset, if I would get you upset you wouldn’t give me the information I need. Yeah, so in terms [inaudible] well actually we have female journalist that go as low as allow themselves being used, and [inaudible] they sleep with their interviewees, the sleep with ministers for stories.

Å: They cross the line?

A: Yeah. And I think it’s a big challenge

Å: How can you solve the problem, so to speak, how can you as a female reporter try to change that?

A: It’s very difficult, cause even if I don’t do it the other person will and there is a problem. You know we have different personalities. It’s just something I don’t think we can get rid off. But if we could all come to terms with that if you have a relationship with someone it should be outside your work. It would help.

Å: What do you think about your future? You talked about going to law school so you don’t plan on working as a reporter your whole life I assume?

A: I can do that, you can go to law school and you can report on legal issues, so it’s possible. But now I have not decided, but I can change my mind, cause I was thinking, I am not the kind of person who is too concerned with my career, where my career ends, cause I believe that once you decide you want to be a family woman or a mother, then you should put you children first, but it depends on if I decide I want to settle down, if I should it would mean I have to change a whole lot of things with my career, so I would have time with my family.

Å: Do you feel that is a gender equality issue, that the responsibility for the family is on the woman?

A: …

Å: Or is it just the way it is?
A: It’s not also just the way it is, it’s not entirely on the woman, but personally, it’s a personal choice, I feel that as a mother, you should be more close to your children and when you give your husband a reason to believe that my wife is there whenever you need her for our children, but even if he wants to cheat on you or do anything outside your home, he will feel guilty [inaudible] so I always say that we give men the chance to rule us. Your working, I’m working, I pay more attention to our family, and you should do the same, because we are both working. But if I’m not there and always complain about me not being there, so by the end of the day we decide to have someone to take care of our home. And I don’t like that.

Â: You don’t like that?

A: No

Â: But do you think the responsibility should be balanced?

A: It should be balanced. If I’m working and I’m not able to pick the children up, you should be able to make up for that, if they are not eating you should be able to go into the kitchen to cook. If I’m there I have to cook, I will cook. It shouldn’t be entirely on one person.

Â: But do you think it is, today?

A: Yeah it is. Because I know educated men, who still believe that the kitchen is for the woman, even if they both work. But there are some who believe that they should help women. And it all depends on training, the upbringing. We have men who’ve been helping since kids, but some men are not trained that way

Â: Is it changing?

A: I don’t think it is changing cause you still don’t see the parents train the male kids how to cook. But in some villages they have norms, the men is not allowed to go in the kitchen. I met this lady I was interviewing, it was about [inaudible] education, and she was telling me didn’t get a chance to go to school because her father told her, her place was in the kitchen [inaudible]

Â: Is there anything else you think about on the subject women and the media?
A: Ahm… women in the media are not in the media for so long, because of these social issues. And those who stay find themselves doing less work than they used to, but the male journalists they are able to do anything at any age. So I think with time when we are age our strength is reduced, and there are certain things you are not able to do, you can’t go that extra mile

Å: Which you have to do more when you are a woman, or?

A: Yeah, I don’t think it should change… if health wise you are not able [inaudible]. I mean if you come to my office there are some things that older more experienced journalists won’t do, even though they are not too busy they wouldn’t do like features. And that is a problem if you still have the energy, the passion, why should age stop you? They feel old, going to the field is for the young

Å: Anything else you would like to add?

A: No

10.3.2 Interview with Esi, reporter at Net2 Television. Monday April 19, 2010 1.00 PM, Ghana Journalists Association in Accra, Ghana

Å = Åsa

E = Esi

Esi is 30 years old, she was born in Accra. She has a diploma in journalism and has done a training program in radio broadcast. She is now finishing her degree at Ghana Institute of Journalism.

[...]

Å: Ok. And, are you married?

E: I’m not married

Å: No kids?

E: No kids

Å: And for how long have you been working as a reporter?
E: Oh, since… 200… 2, when I started my first national service after my diploma

[...]

Å: What kind of reporting do you do, feature, news?

E: I do feature, I’m not much into entertainment reporting, mostly I do human-interest stories and social issues. Sometimes I go to hospitals to find out what is going on there

Å: So are you like a general reporter?

E: Yes, I’m a general reporter, but I like reporting most on social issues, I like rural reporting, so every weekend I go out, but because of school I’ve had to cut down on that, but I used to go out during the weekend with a crew, out of Accra, to do rural reporting

Å: And is it by your own choice or is it management?

E: Sometimes management, sometimes I decide to. When I get a story idea, I want to go to the rural communities, sometimes even when I set out I don’t know the particular place I’m going, you know, so just by the main road you see this other road so you go to the interior and you get stories, so it’s not always management has to give you...

[...]

Å: When did you decide to become a journalist?

E: [...] I remember when GTV, the state broadcaster, they would have this program announcement and this news stories they would have always the writer behind the screen reading, so it was inborn

Å: And why did you want to become a journalist, what was so appealing about it?

E: Ah… I would say it was this screen… I wanted to come on screen and the passion is there right from my infancy when I would sit behind the TV and watch programs. The programs that I really liked was the programs where you would get the writer on the screen and then you would read it, feature stories
Å: Did you get any reactions from friends and family when you decided to go into journalism?

E: [...] When I came back to Accra and started with the radio, everyone was very interested, very appreciative of that I had gone that far

Å: And, we talked a little bit about that already, but how did you get the job that you have today? Was through an internship or…?

E: When I got the admission to the institute of journalism [GIJ], I was still working with the radio and I got an offer, they took my application and looked through my CV and what I had been able to do and so I got the job

Å: What would you say is the most common way here to get a job as a journalist? Is it through internships or contacts or…?

E: It’s through internships, most of them are through internships, you go there, you prove yourself, but some people go there and they don’t know how to write a story, but if you have it in you, you are willing to learn, you learn from your senior colleagues, and by the end of the day, cause most people come and by the end of the day they can only take two or three people, they can’t take all the people, so they pick the few they feel they can work with

Å: And you have already told me what kind of reporter you are but does a normal workday look like for you?

E: Ahm, you know I’m schooling now, and I’m working, that is something I enjoy doing, I always want to put myself in a situation that… I will get to a time, I know I will get to a time when it wouldn’t be that difficult for me, you get married, you’ll be working, promoted, have a program on your educational background, so I’m schooling now and I’m working as well, sometimes if I’m on for the morning shift the car picks me at 3 am, 4 at the latest, we have a business program, so you go do your reporting to 7.30, and then my lectures start at 8.40 and from there to this place, I almost always miss 10 or 20 minutes of my first lecture

Å: You said there is a business program, do you host it?
E: Yes, but there are three of us […] so they come and pick you, you go to school and then you go back to the office and you have to do voiceovers and then read the major news bulletin

Å: Do you work and have school every day?

E: Everyday

Å: And what kind of subjects do you report on, we’ve been talking a little bit about that but could you give me some examples maybe?

E: Education in the rural community, I’ve done stories on maternal mortality and I have attended, we’ve had a number of international conferences here in Ghana and I’ve attended some of them

Å: Do you do any political reporting?

E: Political reporting I don’t do much […]

[…]

Å: How do you experience your opportunities to report on different subjects? Do you feel you can report on anything you like?

E: I don’t understand

Å: If you wanted to report on something you normally don’t report on, would that be a problem or would it be up to you?

E: I don’t think it would be a problem, it’s up to you. Every morning before a program we have a meeting, a morning meeting, when all the reporters will be around, so once I was supposed to report on something I had never reported on before and so I asked around and we had a meeting and everyone helped me and gave made suggestions like when you come there ask this and look out for that, so…

Å: And how many reporters are you?

E: Around ten plus

Å: And that’s business and news?
E: Yes

Å: And how many are female?

E: I think we outnumber the men, I don’t know the number but we outnumber the men

[…]

Å: And can you see like a pattern as to who reports on what?

E: I don’t understand?

Å: I mean if you report on social issues and maternal mortality, maybe the male reporters report on business and sports, maybe the young reporters report on something else and so on, can you see a pattern there, if you know what I mean?

E: […] If I get assigned an entertainment story I will do my best, but at the end of the day when the editor looks at it we know someone else could have done a better job, so you know the editors know our capabilities. So if you feel you could do this sports report even if you’ve never done one, they see it in you

Å: And how do you experience your opportunities to get promoted?

E: I’m waiting for the day when I complete school, that is the day when I would take any opportunity to get a promotion in the office, but right now I don’t think I would add up to it

Å: But when you finish school you feel like you would have the opportunity?

E: Yes, I have.

Å: And once again, can you see a pattern as to who gets promoted? Is it based on experience or what is it based on?

E: Experience counts, and then your input in the office also counts. Sometimes people go beyond what they are suppose to do, so if there is any opportunity or chance some way, and that they think what you are doing you can qualify for that position, they will give it to you

Å: How would you describe yourself as a reporter?
E: Ah, I’m the best reporter! [laughing] I would say I like challenges, I always want to challenge myself and I want people to challenge me as well so I always go beyond the limits, always do things extra, get up in the morning, think of something to come and do in the office. You are told to do this, you add to what you have been given to do. I always try as much as possible to put in an extra effort, no sleeping, I go beyond that.

Å: Do you experiences any differences between male and female reporters?

E: [hesitation] Yes, I would say that… there are some assignments that the editors think that the ladies cannot do, these ones are for the men, especially demonstrations, they try as much as possible to not assign female reporters.

Å: Why is that?

E: I don’t really know, but I think they feel it’s something for the men, chasing these protesters around, going up and down with them. But I remember I was assigned to, I opted to, follow one of the male reporters to cover the 2008 elections, no, it was a conference… And I can recall when we went there, there was no place for the press, the only place for the press was this wooden structure, very tall wooden structure, and they said you can’t climb it and I said no, I’ve been assigned to come and do this and the I have to stand there and then see the people and direct my shot, there is no option, I can’t stand down there and talk to the cameraman up there. So I just went up there, and it was, the structure was shaking and the men were jumping down, and I stood there for almost two-three hours, till the end of the program. So sometimes it’s not always that we the women can’t take up those challenges and do those things, but it’s that. The editors feel sympathy for us, that’s how I see it.

Å: So you never feel like, oh I don’t know the word in English…. You never feel like ”oh I could have been able to do that” or ”I should have been given that assignment, but they gave it to a male reporter cause they think you cant…”

E: No, no

Å: Are there any other subjects, you said demonstrations, any other types of events?

E: The other one too was an election time, it wasn’t me but my colleague, she had spectacles and she was attacked
Å: Yeah?

E: Yes, and she lost her spectacles and everything. She was following the crowd, and they didn’t want them to take the shots that they were taking so it’s…

Å: So is it considered more dangerous for female reporters to do that kind of things?

E: I don’t think… I think we’ve come of age and it’s time we also have to match up… What is it about demonstrations, it’s just that you have to be careful, if you know that people are just messing things up over you, you don’t go there. That’s why you have your cameraman, you direct your shots, you zoom in and you zoom out, you don’t have to go there, that is why they feel for us, they think that if you go to cover those assignments you will get hurt or something, but I think it is up to the reporter, female or not, to take responsibility and be very careful

Å: When you are working, do you ever think about that you are a female reporter, as to how the interviewees respond to you or how they perceive you

E: No

Å: If you are going to interview, let’s say the head of a company, and it’s a man and you are going to interview him. Do you ever feel that he is treating you in a special way because you are a woman?

E: No

Å: Can you imagine it would be different if it were a male reporter?

E: No. I think it’s the approach

Å: The approach?

E: How you get to the person. Sometimes the reporters I think they are too aggressive, they are overaggressive, if that word is appropriate

Å: Both male and female?

E: Both male and female. If you go and you want to interview the person, and the person is busy, but you need your story, and that is how it starts, do you have to just barge in to his office, cry, make sure, you know it’s the approach, if he tells you that
he is busy, that he can’t offer or won’t give you that interview, what is the big deal? Let him give you another date for you. If it’s a special report than it’s your story and how special would it be today that it can’t be the next time? You build up a [???] with the person so anytime you want to interview him you just call […]

Â: So, do you ever feel that it affects your work that you are a woman?

E: No…

Â: How do you think about your future?

E: In the field of journalism?

Â: Yes

E: I can say that it’s very bright! Some people at the office call me Esi Amanpour [after Christiane Amanpour, CNN] If my colleagues call me by someone who has gotten that far I think I have a bright future

Â: When you finish school, do you want to stay in broadcasting, TV?

E: It depends, I want to be in the media still do my programs but when you are working as a reporter you are limited, you can’t do other things, but if you have your own program, lets say you run the program twice a week, then you have chances to do other things outside, so I want to work with international organisations who work with developmental issues, projects

Â: What kind of organisations?

E: I wouldn’t mind if could work with US Aid, UN, the communication department, and I also want to come up with my own programs on TV. So it’s not going to be easy but I will try very hard and I know I can do it

Â: Do you think your future as a reporter would be different if you were a man?

E: How do you mean?

Â: Does it affect your future, I mean if you were a man, would you have other or different opportunities?

E: It wouldn’t affect…
Â: Do you want to work as a journalist for the rest of your life?

E: As I said I want to be in the media but I don’t want to be a journalist fulltime, I want to work with international organisations, so I may do it alongside… The passion is there and I don’t want it to die out

Â: Is there anything else you would like to talk about on the subject women in the media?

E: Women in the media… Our challenges what we go through as women, if you are single, you’re ok, but if you are married you have kids that I see a little problem if you are able to manage yourself, manage your time in the sense that if you are still working as a reporter and you are married then you have kids, you’ll be assigned to cover a program 6 am, you go cover your program, whatever hazards you go through is your problem over there, you have your kids back home, then you have to let someone take care of your kids for you which is not the best, you have to be there for them, so it’s the problem I see is you not having time for your home, one, and then also the challenges you go through outside you, you go and want to interview people, they want to grant you the interview, especially in demonstrations, I always take demonstrations as an example, cause that’s where people get rough, and want to do anything, even hitting somebody, they don’t mind, so these are some of the challenges that female journalists go through. And I don’t think it’s only in Ghana or Africa, it’s across…

Â: Yeah.. Is there is anything else you would like to add?

E: I think I’ve talked about the challenges… I think being in the media, for women, is an opportunity, it takes you places. And you are on TV, you go to a program, you are well-known, you will be attended to [laughing] I would say aside it’s challenges, what also comes with it is you get some first hand treatment, so it’s a good profession. And without the media, I don’t see how the world would be like. And it can’t be only men, the women can’t only be in the studio, we also have to go out and fish for information, and I think we are doing that right now, I see a lot of women going out and fishing for information

Â: Do you… listen to a lot of international media?
E: I watch CNN a lot, a watch Al Jazeera and then BBC. In that order [laughing]

Å: So would you like to work with international media?

E: Yes, why not, I wouldn’t mind being the CNN African reporter, I wouldn’t mind
taking that position and I know I can do it very well

10.3.3 Interview with Esther, reporter at The Daily Guide. Monday April 19, 2010
10.00 AM, The Daily Guide offices in Accra, Ghana

Å = Åsa

E = Esther

Esther is 26 years old was born in Accra. Next year she finishes her degree in
marketing, she also has a diploma in journalism. She has been working as a reporter
for four years. She is not married and has no children.

[...]

Å: Are you married?

E: No

Å: No kids?

E: No (laughing)

Å: For how long have you been working as a reporter?

E: Ehm… I’ve been working as a reporter since school, so since 2006, so like fours
years now

Å: Where have you been working except for here…

E: Yeah, here, The Daily Guide, but I did my internship at, while I was in school I did
my internship at the Ghana Broadcasting Cooperation, radio [inaudible] I did an
internship for three months…

Å: It’s the same in Sweden, I did mine on the radio too…

E: Ah, ok (laughing)
Å: What kind of reporting have you been doing, news, feature, entertainment?

E: When I started here after school, actually I did my national service here as well…

Å: Your what?

E: National service, here in Ghana after school, after degree or diploma you do a national service, it’s a compulsory thing where you serve for a year after school before you really start to working, to be paid

Å: Ok

E: So I did my national service here, so while I was doing my national service I was general reporter, general reporter you report on anything social issues, business, entertainment, yeah I was a general reporter. If I’m going fast you let me know?

Å: No, it’s ok

E: Yeah ok, so I was general reporter during my national service, and after my national service, then after about two years, when I got here, I did business, so I’m now on the business desk and we are about five on the business desk so we produce the paper I gave to you

Å: Five reporters on that paper

E: Yes, five

Å: And how many of you are women?

E: Two, yeah I told my colleague about you but she hasn’t come yet (laughing)

Å: Ok (laughing) and so… when did you decide to become a journalist?

E: Eh… Actually, when I was going to secondary school, I don’t know how you call it, secondary school is like high school, sort of

Å: Yeah

E: I wanted to do public relations, cause I loved everything about communication, yes, so I wanted to do public relations, but after school, for some strange reason I wanted to do journalism, because… not only did I… I had a flair for writing but I… I
was very nosy, personally I’m very nosy, I talk to much and I always ask questions, I want to know this I want to know that, so I felt that if that is my personality why don’t I just go to school, polish it up, and then use it. So it started after high school…

Å: Ok… and was it an easy choice to make?

E: Yeah, it was quite easy. It’s like, I haven’t, apart from the fact that I wanted to do public relations, yeah it was very easy for me to decide to do journalism, because the two are quite similar too, because in school I was taught public relations, in journalism school, so yeah it was never really much of a difficulty… Actually I wanted to be a broadcaster, sort of read news and stuff, so it just came like that…

Å: And did you get any reactions from friends and family when you decided?

E: No, no, actually I live with my nuclear family, my parents and my siblings, and I’m the first born, so in my family there is actually nothing like “why do you want to do this, why don’t you do that”, it’s like we leave you, my parents will leave you… whatever you decide to do they support you, so there wasn’t much reactions from them…

Å: Ok, and do, how did you get this job, you mentioned the national service…?

E: Ehm, the national service… ehm…

Å: Is that how you got the job here?

E: Actually when you finish school, national service starts in august, so I finished school in July, so I have to stay in the house for like a month so I was like I don’t wanna stay in the house, so I came to The Daily Guide and I told them I wanted to do an attachment for a month before I start my national service, actually I had not decided to do my national service here, so I was suppose to do tv3, I don’t know if you know tv3?

Å: Yeah

E: But I had already done one month here and I thought I liked the place, so I thought ok, so I just changed my poster to The Daily Guide

Å: And then you got a job after your national service?
E: Yes, I got a job after my national service

Å: Is it hard to get a job as a journalist in Ghana? Are there a lot of job opportunities?

E: Ehm [inaudible] there are a lot of journalism schools around and every year people graduate, so and almost like every month there is a new newspaper or a new radio station or a new TV-station, so actually I think that getting a job is not so difficult, the only problem is like remenation, how much you get paid, that’s the only problem here, but really getting a job is not so difficult, that’s what I think

Å: Cause in Sweden we have a lot of schools too and they educate more journalists than there is need for so…

E: Ok

Å: So you already told me what kind of journalist you are, so could you describe a normal workday?

E: Ehm, a normal workday here for me or generally?

Å: For you

E: Ehm, it’s a Monday and I have a page in the Business [inaudible] entrepreneurs, where every week I feature entrepreneurs so apart from doing business stories every week I talk to entrepreneurs to sort of find out what they do, how they do it, challenges, so every Monday, ehm, every day, from the beginning of the week when I come I’ve already thought of somebody to talk to so first I make a call to find out when it would be appropriate, cause I am suppose to submit my writing by Thursday, cause we do production for the business issue on Fridays, so by Thursday I should finish my writing. So I book an early appointment so I can meet up a person, so Monday I usually, Mondays I really don’t like Mondays cause I really don’t get a lot do to, so when I come I read a lot. I read from papers, a lot, that is what I was doing before you came, because then I can see what I can also generate from what somebody has written, cause sometimes you can have another angle to a story, so usually I read newspapers, surf the net, I like the internet a lot I like reading about other newspapers outside Ghana, yeah so I surf the internet… and then, if there are assignments for the day, if I have an assignment I go, come back, if there is time I do my story before I go back to school, because I go to school after work. So my days
are very short, I leave work around three pm, or four, cause my lecture starts at four so I usually get to work latest by nine, then I leave around four

Å: So do you have work and school every day?

E: Yes, five days a week, so it’s very hard…

Å: You get home late?

E: Yes, very late, sometimes I get home, my house is close to the school, it’s just five minutes walk, so sometimes I get home at 10 pm and then I’m suppose to come to work again [tomorrow]

Å: But when you finish school, you said next year?

E: Yeah

Å: Will you work fulltime here then or?

E: Ehm, it depends, it depends, you know… in journalism I believe that you don’t stay forever in journalism; I like everything about communication, that’s why I’m reading marketing. So if I get an opportunity to pass [inaudible] but if I don’t I can still use marketing in journalism because sometimes it’s difficult to convince people to talk to you, so I have to sell myself to make people agree to talk to me, so it’s almost the same thing, it depends on what happens after school I can’t really say for certain

Å: Eh, you are in business so you report on business, but how do you experience your opportunities to report on different subjects?

E: Ehm, yeah sometimes opportunities come because I used to be a general reporter here, so I met people who… I met people in the line of social reporting and entertainment reporting so once in a while they will call you and say I have a program, so if it’s entertainment and I feel that I have the time I do other reporting as well. Sometimes there might be a breaking story and there might be no other reporter in the newsroom then maybe I am the only one in there and I will be asked to do it. And it might not necessarily be business so I write business but sometimes I also write entertainment, social stories, depending on the situation that comes.
Å: Maybe I’ve already asked this but how come you are in the business section?

E: Eh, management.

Å: By choice or by…

E: No, management. Because before the paper came out, I was asked to join the business team, so we have two pages of business in the daily Guide everyday, and that is what I was doing, so management decided that the five of us should do this business paper. So it was management decision.

Å: Were you happy about it or…?

E: Ehm, business, it’s quite difficult sometimes, I sometimes it’s, eh, I can’t say it’s a 100 %, it’s 50 50, I like the social aspects because social news stories, general news stories are not limited, you know? I learn a lot, I like general reporting because you get to learn a lot cause you go for different programs about health, entertainment, social issues, but in business you are limited, you know, just ”do this, talk about this” it’s the same things you do every time, it’s the same things you hear every time, but with general reporting, at the end of the week, at least I learned something new. I learned something new. I learn something new by listening to TV-news, radio news, but when I am there in person I kind of get more out of it, so I enjoyed being a general reporter.

Å: But if you wanted to go back to be a general reporter, would that be possible for you?

E: Yeah, if I just let management know that maybe I still like being a general reporter, but I think that business reporting is a challenge, I just have to take it as it comes, because here in Ghana there have been the stress or the need for journalists to specialize, because people think that when you are here your are there, you don’t really stay focused, but if you are an entertainment writer you have a flair for it, you learn about it, so when you are writing it, it becomes easier for you, so here there has been the need to specialize, in Ghana.

Å: Ok. Eh, can you see like a pattern here at the Daily Guide on who reports on what…?
E: Sorry, come again

Å: Eh, can you see like a pattern, or a model I don’t know, for who reports on what, is it like the young report on this and the old…

E: No, no, no, it’s nothing like that. Like I said before it’s about management decision, whom we think can do the work. So if they think you can do stuff on crime reporting, they give it to you, so there is actually no gender or age determination as to who does what

Å: Are there a lot of young people working here?

E: Yes, a lot, a lot. In the newsroom a lot, most of us are young

Å: And how do you experience your opportunities to get promoted?

E: Ehm, I feel that here promotion is based on maturity, how long you have stayed on the job, experience wise, yes and I think that for me I am not really there yet, I have a lot of years to experience before I can get… and here the promotion is really not that much in journalism, because they already have a news editor, you have an editor, uhm, basically for the news room that is all we need, a deputy editor, and deputy news editor, these are the main positions when you already have people who have been in the profession for a long time occupying those positions so it would be difficult for you to get it cause you need a lot of experience, it’s not really easy

Å: How many people are working here at the daily guide?

E: Ehm, about a hundred here in Accra, with all the regional reporters as well about 150, but here in Accra, in this office, around hundred, because of the printing press too

Å: Yeah, ok. And, eh, how would you describe yourself as a reporter?

E: In terms of…?

Å: Like… if I would describe myself as a reporter I would say maybe I am more of a listener than a questioner

E: Hrm, ok, describing myself as a journalist, a reporter… I see myself sort of trying to learn everyday, cause that’s how I see journalism, because you need to learn to
impact, as you learn you make it easier for others to also understand, so sometimes you get complex situations that you have to write on and I see that as a challenge everyday because someone comes and narrates a story to you, you are not so clear on it you have to get the other persons side as well and the other person is not being cooperative and you have to really push on to get the story across, so I see journalism as a for me, it has been a learning business for me because I always learn new things every day. And it has also improved my relations with people, because you are in an office with different kinds of people from different kind of [inaudible] are coming to the same office, and you get people who might not like you, people who like you, so I’ve kind of learned to be a bit soft sometimes, yes, so personally it has helped in my personal relationships, it has helped me to learn new stuff everyday. If that answers your question?

Å: Yeah, sure. Ehm, do you experience any differences between male and female reporters?

E: No, no

Å: In the way they work or…

E: Here, here well, in a way I say yes and no. Yes in the sense that news stories come up, breaking news come up, and it will need a male journalist to tackle, for instant if there is a fight, a demolition, or, what do you call it – a demonstration, usually demonstrations news editor usually attach male to, because of the harsh conditions it is, so here usually there are some issues that they don’t allow female journalists to tackle, there are some issues where you would allow the females to go, but generally you have access to any news reporting, but as for when it comes, but there are specific ones like I mentioned that one would rather require the services of a male journalist.

Å: And how do you feel about that?

E: I really don’t have a problem with it, because it is quite understandable. Cause for instance of there is a huge fight between two fractions, and you put a female journalist… you see most women naturally are fearful, but she knows she has to do her job, but she might not really know how to move her way about, to [inaudible], but when a male journalist, male journalists really know how to fight their way through, and it becomes easier for them. So I personally don’t really see anything wrong with
that, yes, cause if you tell me to go for a demonstration I would have to walk several miles or several kilometers, I found that a bit uneasy, cause I am in heels and with my bag and see the sun and everything. The guys don’t really mind, so I really don’t see anything wring with that

Å: Have there been a situation where you have wanted to report on something but they have said no because you are a woman?

E: No, if you really want to you just go

Å: Do you ever, when you are working, do you ever think about the fact that you are a female reporter? Does it like… ehm, yeah, do you think about it?

E: No, no…

Å: Like when you are meeting for an interview, does it matter that you are a women, how the interview person is perceiving you.

E: Well it hasn’t really crossed my mind, cause I haven’t really been confronted with the situation where I have to talk to some one, and the person would say why, you are a female I don’t think you are really qualified to ask these questions, no, it has really not come up. [inaudible] Cause my mind to that I am a female so I should know my limitation as to how to work

Å: But have you ever felt that you are treated in a certain way because you are a woman?

E: No, no

Å: Do you experience that it affects your work in any way that you are a woman?

E: Hrm…

Å: Would it be different of you were a man?

E: Ehm, sometimes, yes… I feel it would have been different if I was a man working as a journalist because, personally I am not too forthcoming, if you… I find it difficult to approach someone to talk to, but if the guys are like that, they just… cause sometimes when I work people you meet outside you want to talk to, because of the perception here that sometimes these females push themselves to the men, so
sometimes it becomes difficult for you to come out and say I think that I would like to talk to you about this issue and I would like if we could arrange for an interview later, maybe in your office, you know there is a perception that she might not only be coming for work, she might come for other reasons. So it becomes difficult, sometimes you even approach them to talk to them and they decline cause they feel they don’t really have time, and me when they do that I just lay back, but guys when they do that they push you to it, so sometimes I feel that if I was a guy working as a journalist I would have been more forthcoming, than I am now

Å: How do you see your future? What do you think about your future?

E: Ehm, future wise, I definitely am not going to do journalism for the rest of my life. There are lots of opportunities in journalism, as I see, here for us in Ghana, Africa, because there are programs in Germany for journalism, which are free off course, I see that as a good opportunity because you try to learn from other countries what do you here, those are opportunities in journalism but I still wouldn’t want to hang on to it because I like variety, at least I have done something about journalism I have, it has taught me to relate to people, to be bold and ask them questions, when I want something I need to be bold about and stay persistent until I get it and I want to use that in another field. That is why I study marketing, I like marketing, and I like everything about it, trying to sell out yourself, sell out what you have to others, to believe in it. It is a big challenge in marketing, marketing is more challenging than journalism, sometimes that is what I think, because most [inaudible] has a perception of your products and it’s difficult for you to sell your product to that person. So, for me, future lies, I will definitely not stay in journalism for the rest of my life. I will [inaudible] into anything with communication, marketing, but I like Public Relations.

Å: So for how long do you think you will be working as a reporter?

E: Oh… If I get a new job to do in any field apart from journalism, I will do it, and I just have a year after school, God ? so if maybe I will pull through, if the opportunity comes, why not, I’ll grab it, if it doesn’t come, I’ll still do journalism, but I want to get the opportunity to work in another field.

Å: Ok, so do you think your future is affected by the fact that you are a woman? Do you have every choice…
E: Yes, I believe I have every choice, provided I have the experience, the skills, the qualifications to do so, I believe I have, I can take advantage of every opportunity despite my gender, yeah

Å: And the demands on qualifications and experience, they are the same for women and men?

E: Ehm… it depends on the kind of work, because if I want to be a marketing executive, actually my experience, I think I have a little experience because I feel that like I said journalism is similar to marketing, cause you still have to sell yourself to people, selling my paper to people is not easy, because people have a perception about Daily Guide, so even from the fact that I am telling someone I am from The Daily Guide, it’s a bit difficult, cause I have to convince the person, so I believe that with the skills and everything that I have I don’t think I should any limitations, I don’t know

Å: Is there anything else you think that we should talk about on the subject women and the media?

E: Oh… well, I think you should know that women in the media here in Ghana, there is actually no barrier between us and the males, in Ghana there is just in a few professions that you find limitations to women, not going to certain levels, but generally here, I believe gender is not really an issue. Women are also pushing to also get to the top [inaudible] there is a little difference because most of the time you find these media houses and other organizations have a male head in them, yes, but women are also trying to push their way through and I feel that there is actually no, well personally that is what I think, as I sais earlier there is no barrier between male and female in journalism here in Ghana, because we are all given the opportunity to go for it so you have to push yourself through and get it, cause we are all given the opportunities, as long as you have the ability to get the story, just go ahead and do it, it doesn’t really matter whether you are male or female

Å: And, is there anything else you would like to add or that you think I forgot to ask about?

E: Oh! Something to add… like I said, I don’t believe there is any barrier in journalism, the only problem I have with the media here is they are not really
checking the stories they put out, because more often than not, you find out that people bring bold headlines on their newspapers and stuff and it is not substantiated, they would just speak to one person and just bring out the issues without crosschecking, because in journalism you are taught to hear both sides, you put out the stories and you leave it to the public to judge who is telling the truth and who is not. But here more often than not, because of personal gain, people just [inaudible] one line, just come out with the story, create a lot of controversy and then later when you go into it you realize that the person did not even crosscheck and check again to find out the truth, so the only problem is people trying to force the image of others by not coming out with the true stories because what we write can [inaudible] people and as a journalism you should keep that in the back of your mind, that you are educating people and through my story I can destroy the image of someone so I need to be careful with how I write and what exactly I write about people, yeah

Â: And why do you think it’s like that in Ghana within the media?

E: Well, like I said sometimes because peoples selfish gains and interests, yes, I might like that person and if this person comes to tell me oh write something this bad about this person, because I like the person I will do it, and for personal gains, money, journalism here doesn’t really pay much, I know in certain countries it is almost the same, it is not a profession you get a lot of money from so people try to use the power they have as journalist to get money from people, so they’d rather forget about doing a balanced story and think about their selfish gains. And that’s why it starts. But others a doing a very good job, lots of them are doing a very good job

Â: Is it possible to get a job as a journalist in Ghana without the professional education

E: Yes, it’s difficult

Â: But it’s possible

E: It’s possible when you have the flair, when you have proven… Cause there are some people who started journalism before they went to school, some are natural writers, they are very good at writing, if you have the flair for it and you decide to get a job sometimes you can, sometimes you can’t, because now most media houses are looking for people with good education and background, because you may have the
flair, but when you are not properly school on ethics, because when you go to school we talk about ethics, about doing a balanced story, checking your facts, when you haven’t gone to school you don’t know these things, you just write and write but when you go to school you are taught… so it is quite difficult getting a job without the right qualifications. You really get the [inaudible] you have the flair, you are a good writer, from all angles you are seem to be a good writer, you can get it but later you will be asked to go to school, at least to polish it up, yes

Å: Is there like, cause we have that in Sweden, like a code of ethics…

E: Oh Yeah, yeah there are but people don’t really know them, let alone follow it, because, me, well the only thing I know, I don’t really have the code of ethics like the handbook or something but I know that I have to do a balanced story, crosscheck my facts if my source doesn’t want to disclose his identity I have to respect that, so I know, there a general rules about it that everybody should know, but there is a code of conduct..

Å: And where can you find that?

E: From the Ghana Journalist Association, they bring out the code of conduct or ethics, so if they find out you have gone against them sometimes they call the media house to the national media commission, they sit on issues about the media, so maybe you know that you are no suppose to publish nude picture on your front page but you do it, recently there was an issue like that, about two weeks ago, there is a paper called P&P, an entertainment paper, sort of writes issues about sex and those things, on the front page they had a bold picture of two gays in the act, in the act, and they didn’t cover the face of the guys, the face came out in the act, very naked and all that, I thought that wasn’t very good, so the Journalist Association came out with a press release and I think, the police even came in, they wanted to get the guy of the newspaper house and then the media commission also came in, so there really was an issue about ethics the journalist association also came out with a press release to condemn the act as well

Å: Well, those were all my questions

E: Are you sure? I enjoyed it; I enjoy talking (laughing)
10.3.4 Interview with Eva, former reporter at Joy FM

*Wednesday April 28, 2010 2.45 PM, Ghana School of Law in Accra, Ghana*

Å = Åsa

E = Eva

30 years old, born in Accra

Grew up in a middle-income family with five siblings. Took a diploma in journalism at GIJ (2 years), majoring in sports reporting. Moved on to University of Ghana for a degree in English and Linguistics (3 years), continued at the faculty of law for a bachelor of law certificate (2 years), now studying at the Ghana school of law finishing her professional law program.

Worked as a sports reporter and on-air presenter at Joy FM. Previously worked for the Ghanaian times and before that she did an internship at Choice FM.

[…] Å: How come you specialized in sports?

E: I come from a family that enjoys watching sports together, commenting on sporting events together. I remember growing up we would wake up at dawn or into the middle of the night to see Azumah Nelson in a boxing bout, you know, supporting him behind out TV-set. And we would watch football matches and argue about which player was a flop or who excelled and all that. It’s a family thing, and when I got the opportunity to read journalism I thought I would do something different and better still, why not do something that I enjoy doing and love, so I decided that sports reporting was it, so that's how I ended up in sports

Å: Is it unusual for women to do sports reporting?

E: Yeah, I’m sure you realize it yourself, you can ask around how many female sports journalist there are in this country and I am sure, I mean you can count them on your fingertips, so it’s an unusual terrain for women, it's male-dominated… eh… so when you get in there you’ve got to know what you are about, be damn sure what you are hoping to achieve and you’ve got to make your mark by being very professional and excelling, so that I mean you’re someone who makes an impact in the field
Å: When did you decide to become a journalist?

E: Journalism I stumbled in to [laughing], I’ve got to be frank, I just stumbled in to it, and it wasn’t my original plan. I completed my advanced level studies and after secondary school…

Å: And how old are you then?

E: Ehm, I was 16 I think. So I was hoping to, like any other student, to move straight to university, that’s the normal order of things, but it wasn’t to be. I had to wait for some supplementary list from the kwame Nkrumah University of technology, which never came and… so I kept hoping and hoping but never got called to any of the universities I had applied to. Fortunately an uncle of mine had convinced me to buy the GIJ form, so I had actually put in an application, which I never bothered to follow up on, but I had written the entrance exam and I had attended the interview already. So while I was waiting for the university to call me up I got my letter from GIJ that I had been admitted. So I fell on that as a last resort, but I’m thankful and grateful that it came my way cause it has actually made me, I can say, not I mean, not to be boastful or anything but I can proudly that Eva Okyere is a known name in this country especially in the field of sports journalism and it’s thanks to my training at the GIJ, so…

Å: And, did you get any reactions from friends and family when you decided to go to GIJ?

E: No, no, encouragement I would say from my family, my parents especially cause initially I was very disappointed, my aim was to go to uni and build my life from there, so I saw this more like an anticlimax in my life. But my parents encouraged me, I mean it was a professional institution, so I think they encouraged me through the GIJ and it has paid off.

Å: And, how did you get the job at JOY FM?

E: JOY… it’s interesting [laughing], I was at work at The Ghanaian Times one afternoon when I got a call from a colleague, he’s an anchor at the sports program at JOY, and he said he wanted to hook up with me, and there was a game that day so we
were going to the stadium to cover the game, so we met up at the stadium and he told me that the CEO of JYO FM wanted to see me, he wanted me to work there

Å: Do you know how they came up with that idea?

E: No! So he took me to their office and I got similar comments from all the guys there, they said “our CEO has been looking all over for you, he’s been hounding us that we should get you to work for his station by all means, cause he had apparently seen me on TV, on some panel on sports discussion and he wondered why they had never invited me to any of the sports program on his station, so I mean he said that they should get me on air by all means

Å: Were they looking for a female sports reporter specifically or?

E: I think so because there was this lady who was there earlier, she had moved on to the united states, and I think since she left they hadn’t seen any female pop up in the sports journalism field doing so well, so he saw me on TV a couple of times and he felt that wow this could be the replacement we’ve been looking for. And she actually happens to be a senior of mine I secondary school. So that’s how I got the job at JOY FM

Å: Were you happy about it?

E: Yeah, I was excited. Cause I remember, when I was in GIJ, for internship or something I had put in an application for JOY FM but never heard from them you know so… so now for them to come back for me at a time when I wasn’t even looking their way I was very delighted. Cause I mean like it or not JOY FM is the best thing that ever happened to the private radio industry in this country. So it was always a prestigious workplace to be, so I felt privileged.

[…]  

Å: But you started working as a reporter for the Ghanaian Times right? How did you get that job?

E: Oh yes, I was an intern there. As part of the journalism program at GIJ, the diploma program, you went on an attachment, an industrial attachment at some state owned media house, for the first half of the second year of your program. So I spent a
chunk of my time with the New Times Corporation with the sports desk there and when I came back to school I was definite that I wanted to go into sports reporting. Cause when I was going for my internship I had no idea what I wanted to major in. But I was there one day, at the times, and I got into a chat with one of the guys at the sports desk, they were picking my mind on sporting issues and I gave them my view and he said “wow, you know so much about sports, what are you doing in the general newsroom, come on we need a female amongst us, it would be good to have you around” so he encouraged me to join them, so the following day when they were going their usual rounds for news, he dragged me, took me along, and I enjoyed it and subsequently we got to work together and eventually I got transferred in to the sports department

Â: What do you think the media should do; should they just reflect what’s going on, or should they take a lead and kind of try to change things?

E: I think it should be a combination of the two, I think the media should set the pace for change, being as the media is very influential the world over and in Africa especially and in our particular context here in Ghana there are so many things we need to change, there are so much rot in our system and the media should be champion in the change in our system, so I think it should be a combination of the two. Plus the media has a duty to reflect regardless of what the situation is so that we always have a true and fair account of our current circumstances. Cause it is based on that that we can initiate change in our society. So I think the media must play that dual role.

Â: What do you think needs to change in Ghana particularly?

E: Oh, a lot! It’s a myriad of problems, starting with leadership, attitudes of the so-called ordinary person on the streets, it’s a lot, I mean you look around and the whole city is littered! And it’s suppose to be the national capital, so I mean the whole nation is engulfed in [inaudible] and I put it down basically to attitudes of people. I mean attitudes are also informed by leadership and how firm leadership is and committed leadership is. Cause I mean if the leadership is not committed to change, if the leadership is not honest enough to admit that there is so much rot that must be cleared from our system, you don’t go anywhere. The vision of our leadership is virtually
non-existent, that’s so much, I mean sometimes it’s so overwhelming you just want to give up on this nation

Å: But do you feel hopeful at times as well?

E: I mean hope is all we’ve got, right? [laughing] Cause we keep saying that this is the only nation that belongs to us, that we will not feel at home anywhere else other than Ghana, so we can only contribute our culture and hope for change some day. But I do hope it comes soon, soon, soon, there’s so much attitude that stinks in this country, so terrible…

Å: have you been abroad much? Cause it sounds like you’ve got a lot to compare with when you talk about Ghana?

E: Yes, the job has taken me to quite a few places. I have been to the US, California, Los Angeles, I covered the 2003 women’s soccer competition, I was with Joy FM then. I’ve been to South Africa with hockey clubs, there was an African hockey club competition, I covered that. I’ve been to Peru 2005, that happened to be my last major assignment before I put the job on hold. It was for the under 17 soccer world cup, so I’ve been to Peru, I’ve been to Brazil, I’ve been to South Africa I’ve been to the US, I’ve been to the Ivory Coast

Å: Have you ever been to Europe?

E: Yeah, I’ve been to London, but that was on my own on holiday when I was at the law faculty. That was in 2007 I went to London. So I’ve been around, I’ve been to Ethiopia. I’ve seen a bit of the world I can say. And I mean you go to these other countries, like Peru, it’s not a wealthy country, in their own small way it’s beautiful, it’s homey, it’s neat, people are friendly and they try to beautify their little corner and that’s what you don’t get here. That’s so sad. I mean you can get the friendly people here and all that, but who wants to live in filth?

[…]

Å: When you were working as a reporter, what would a normal workday look like?

E: Oh, very hectic! I remember those days, I mean anytime you were off duty, and that was on very rare occasions, cause you were working about 18 hours of the day,
cause I remember I had to wake up, they would pick you up around 4.30, go to the office, come back after 10 pm, close to midnight, so I mean I was the first to wake up in my house, then the last to get back home. So when I go to work they are asleep, when I come back they are asleep, so I only got to see just on Saturdays, cause you got to work in the morning then you had the rest of the day off. On Sundays it was hectic cause you had to cover sporting events at the stadium or somewhere else. Cause that’s when a lot of sporting events takes place, in the weekend. So it was around the clock something. So when you got the least time off the job all you wanted to do was sleep, cause you had so much sleep to catch up on.

Å: Was that one of the reasons you decided to change profession?

E: No, not really, I mean, the legal profession has always been a childhood ambition I’ve always loved to see myself as a lawyer. It’s been a dream and I’m thankful that it’s coming true. But I love journalism, I keep saying that if anything at all it would remain a past time, I’m not putting it away entirely, I’m not doing away with it, I will continue practising it, cause it’s something I love doing, it’s not just a job, it’s something I love doing. I mean if there is a competition ongoing I want to be part of the discussion, the debates and everything that comes with it, so I’m going to stick to that. So it’s not really a change in profession, I always envision a combination of the two. I always saw myself becoming a lawyer journalist.

Å: It’s a very ambitious combination?

E: Yes, because you see when I entered the law, I realized that these two areas has so much in common that the knowledge in the law will actually enhance your work as a journalist cause you get more enlightened on issues that border o national development, public interest issues, you get enlightened in so many ways. Cause if we are talking about human rights and how to uphold human rights, then media must play a key roll in that. If the human rights abuses it’s the place of the media to bring those things to light so that we all as a people as a nation can talk about those and correct those flaws in our system. So I realize that knowledge of the law is… an invaluable tool that you need as a journalist, I mean the two complement each other very well.

Å: I was thinking about that when you said that you talk about human rights in the law faculty, did you ever talk about gender equality issues at the GIJ?
E: At the journalism school? Gender issues? Oh [laughing] … not in my time, I mean it wasn’t a specific area that we paid much attention to. The closest we came to that was electing a women’s commissioner, you know

Â: Yeah, I met this year’s candidate actually

E: [laughing] that’s the closest we came to acknowledging that we needed to pay special attention to gender issues, women’s issues

Â: Do you do more of that here at the Ghana school of law?

E: We do, we do a lot of critiquing of decisions made by our court in our study, we are looking at provisions in our constitutions and in our status which seek to… ehm… promote the interest of women. Perhaps, I mean… Eh… this institution is general studies so you don’t get to specialize in gender law or that kind of thing. So that’s the only thing, but otherwise you are given the broad perspective and we do our own debates of showing that there is gender balance in the laws and the application of the laws, it’s very enlightening

Â: I’m switching subjects now, but during my previous interviews I have been told that sometimes in the newsroom, there are some subjects that women don’t get to report on, for example demonstrations, do you have any experience of that?

E: Oh, hell no, or at least not at Joy FM, they would throw you in the mix, whatever kind of mix it is, and I mean it’s really a test for you, ehm… well I don’t know what media institutions these people worked in. Generally, it all emanates from the fact that generally as a people the female sex is deemed to be the weaker sex, which always needs to be patronized, you know, cause I don’t see it as protection, I see it as patronizing… they don’t seek to protect us, they seek to patronize us

Â: In general or in the media specifically?

E: No, in our society, the Ghanaian society, purely patriarchal, I mean male-dominated, the females, they are always trying to patronize you

Â: But how can you see that?

E: Yeah but I mean, for Joy FM I can say boldly that you don’t find anything of the sort, if it’s a demonstration that is going on you’ll be thrown in there, I mean if there
is a team that most be formed for a specific event there will be a blend. Ehm… the
other thing is that generally journalism as a field in itself is male-dominated, so in
every newsroom you find more males than females, so even if you form a team of say
ten, you can be sure that you can get just about 2 or 3 females in there cause there are
not many, generally in the newsroom. Ehm.. but from my experience it would not be
because you’re female and you’re being sidelined because they think it’s some tough
task or something, from my experience from both the times and Joy FM, you were
always expected to come up with something extra, you know, think on your feet, I
mean, take the initiative to do something different. If it’s a demonstration, fine you
are required to take care of yourself so you don’t get hurt or anything but that will not
preclude you from covering the event, it must be covered and it must be covered
timeously, because if it’s the midday bulletin you’re suppose to be on, you must
definitely file a report when you’re called. So there’s no excuse for you simply
because you’re a woman. That’s from my experience. I’ve covered demonstrations,
I’ve covered women’s demonstrations when I was at new times corporation. At a
time, ina an era, when women were being murdered in this country, in Accra
especially
Â: murdered?

E: Yes, in specific areas, there was a serial murder of women a few years ago, so
some women’s groups, the civil society came together to organize a demonstration to
call on the authorities to sit up and protect our women. I remember I covered the
whole day. But I mean, for the field that I’m in, your on a daily bases haggling for
news stories with men, cause when you go to the stadium and the game is over you
have to rush down to the changing rooms to the tunnel to get your interviews, no one
would make any excuses for you because you’re a woman, you’ve got to go back to
the newsroom with a story, it needs to run. So on a daily bases I was at the stadium
jostling for space, jostling for news… with guys! I mean, so where I work nobody
made any discrimination or excuses for me cause I was a woman, and I can say that
on most occasion I even got better interviews because I was a woman, so it works
both ways. I mean sometimes the men in there, in the field, will try to bring you
down, they will try to make you feel that you’re not up to the task. But once you get
in there with a purpose and you’re well trained, you know your stuff and you are
professional in your duties, they get to accept you and realize that you are not just in there to make out the numbers, you know your stuff, you know what you’re about, and they get to respect you.

Â: Do you ever feel that the demands are higher because you are a woman?

E: Obviously, because you see when you go in there, people are suspicious of your motives for entering that field. I mean they feel, probably they feel threatened, and some of them probably think “oh you lost your way or what?” you know, “what the heck are you doing in here”, so you know you get those curious looks from the guys, so it’s a incumbent on you to make a point and make a mark, you only make a point by showing how good you are at what you do, so once you’ve made your mark, you earn their respect and you get that recognition, so that the next time if there is a discussion on an important issue, they know that they can call you up, cause they know you are coming in to make brilliant contributions. I mean initially you get that cold shoulder from the males especially, and because of that you need that x-factor, you need to make an extra effort to prove to everyone that you know what you’re about.

Â: Do you think it’s the same way in general reporting?

E: I think… yeah, I mean people face those difficulties, because as I said earlier in the field of journalism generally there are more men than women, so being a woman in that field of endeavour comes with it’s own challenges, matter the sector you’re in, whether it’s sport, entertainment, business, men are more accepted and they feel more at home doing that than you, so you get in there you’ve got to adapt, to the situation, to the circumstances, so you need to make your mark there. So I can say that it’s a [inaudible] and for sports especially, which is predominately a male terrain you find that you need to work extra hard to fit in there first of all and to remain in there and make a mark

Â: How do you experience your opportunity to get promoted?

E: Oh I must repeat myself, being a female on a sports desk, an all guys sports desk, you are the only female amongst them, you know that the men will definitely be considered ahead of you because hey, we are talking about sports, [inaudible] a woman heading a sports desk when there are guys there, so again, with time, when
you have delivered, people begin to appreciate your work then they realize that they can trust you with any responsibility at all and then you begin to rise through the lines, but you’ve got that initial hurdle of trying to convince people I can do it as well as the guys, so give me the chance. So I mean, it took a bit of time, I was there at Joy FM, guys came in, guys went out I was there for a while and the eventually I was the senior most person on the team on the sports desk, so it was difficult for anybody to pass me by. But even then nobody actually put a tag on me I was heading the team, so it’s like that. I mean you just need to bide your time and make a mark.

Å: Are you married?

E: No

Å: No kids?

E: No

Å: Do you think you could still be working as a reporter if you were?

E: I think family life will slow you down undoubtedly cause you have to divide your attention, you need to devote a bit of your time to your home, to your children, to the family generally then still give your very best at work, it’s challenging, but hey I mean a lot of our female journalists are doing it and are doing it brilliantly, I don’t see how family…

Å: So it’s possible?

E: Yeah, it’s possible! I mean you need to juggle your time very well but it’s possible, it’s doable, a lot of our female journalists are doing it so I don’t see how that becomes a hindrance in any way.

Å: And how would you describe yourself as a reporter?

E: Ha-ha, very diligent, pushy if I have to be to get a story out of you… ehm… I paid attention to details, I never compromised on that, if it means waiting for a while to get to do a more thorough job I would, because I am one who would do it and do it well or not at all. That’s why I do the things I love doing, because if it becomes a chore it’s difficult for you to accomplish, but if it is something that you love doing you don’t even see the burdensome nature of it. So yeah, I attack everything diligently, when I
was working I gave my very best cause I didn’t want half-baked stories, my colleagues would fight with me sometimes cause they would write their stories then they would tell me to edit it and I would go through it and edit it over and over again and they kept telling me hey it’s almost time let’s go with it like that and I would say no, cause you know in journalism your major tool is your language, for radio especially, I mean you can’t go on air with all these [inaudible], it’s inexcusable, so I mean if I know the right thing I would do it and it was a rumour on Joy FM our listeners are unforgivable, so you dare not make those mistakes and think the listeners would gloss over them, they would take it to heart and take you on for making those mistakes cause once you assume the role of pacesetter you are suppose to live above the [inaudible]. So I approach my work diligently. Yeah, I try to have fun while doing it so I mean I think one thing that has helped me along is that I bond easily with guys, I mean maybe I’m a Tom-boy character

Â: Do you think it has helped you when you’ve been working as a journalist?

E: I think so, cause it’s a mans world you know so you’ve got to bond with them, you’ve got to know how to roll with them, if you get into [inaudible] situations, you should not be lagging behind simply because you are a woman, you should learn to tag along, so I just side with the guys, enter the dressing rooms, I mean with half naked players, who cares, I’m here for my interviews anyway so I mean I think it’s [inaudible] a lot cause a lot of my friends, generally, my social life, are guys, I have few female friends. So I mean it’s fun, I do my work diligently, I pay attention to detail, I don’t compromise with quality at all, but I try to have fun while I’m working.

Â: Do you think that there is a difference between male and female reporters? As to the way they’re working?

E: Ah… no. I don’t know who does a better job. Uhm. From my experience at Joy FM, you would go in the newsroom and you would realize that some of the very distinguished journalists there are females. Maybe it’s because we have in it a tendency to pay attention to details, be very diligent with our work, we don’t take things for granted, we are very particular about [inaudible], talk about Matuba Asante, she runs the newsroom at Joy FM, as news editor, has worked there for years, you know, and whoever has worked under her will tell you how much she pushes you, you
dare not do a poor job, it is unacceptable at Joy FM. Differentiating the work of the ladies and the guys, that’s a difficult one, cause we do virtually the same things over there, or well I should say we used to do the same things over there, cause you had those in the general news reporting, they had ladies covering business stories, political stories, entertainment, it was mixed for everybody. So there was virtually very little to choose between the work of a female and the work of a male.

Â: Do you think female reporters go about their interviews in a different way?

E: Yeah, sometimes. I need to go back to Matuba Asante again, cause I mean she is rather militant in her interviewing, her approach to interviewing is militant, so she confronts you with the issues, and you either confirm what she’s saying or… I mean there is no middle ground for you so she actually pushes you into a tight corner, and eventually flaws you, and people applaud that approach to interviewing. People have different styles, but generally the females will [inaudible] you, seize the answers out of you and mean it depends… I think that generally because it’s a male dominated area you go in there and you want to assert yourself, so even when you are interviewing someone the person should know that you know your stuff, so you confront the person with the facts and the issues as you have them, so they take you seriously. So you’ve got to come across as a very serious person when you do your job while the men can be leisurely about their work, you cannot afford to be leisurely simply because you are a woman, you must be seen as knowing your stuff and, but the again it depends on the individual and their style or approach to interviewing. Some people sometimes are laidback, I am not the militant type, generally not, I will try and seize the answers out of you, suggest to you in some subtle way that you are not maybe telling the truth, this should rather be it and what you are trying to put across… But I am not the militant type. But generally we get the job done and that’s the important thing.

Â: Would you say there is such a thing as *female* journalism and *male* journalism?

E: No, not that I know, not in Ghana. Female journalism, no, I don’t think so. In resent times more females are coming up and getting into that area of profession, but I mean…
Å: I mean, some would say that there are subjects that are considered to be more soft and that those subjects are more often reported on by women…

E: Soft journalism, yeah that’s true. Cause aside the newsroom work, and yeah even in the newsroom, and I need to call on Joy FM again cause that’s my background, in the newsroom you see that the head of the business desk is a guy and most times the guys do a lot of the business stories. So I mean you still have those stereotypes in the newsroom, if it’s a health-issue you are likely to get a female reporter, cause we are talking about child birth, infant mortality, maternal mortality, you are likely to have a female coming up with those reports. You need to go into the hinterlands for some stories, I mean consider maybe on mining or something, you are likely to get a male reporter being assigned that beat in a newsroom, so you still have vestiges of those stereotypes in our newsrooms.

Å: Would you say media content reflects the composition of the editorial staff?

E: Maybe it does, but… In a certain way, or maybe we are simply not acknowledging the fact that it does, when there is a gender imbalance in the newsroom there are certain ideas that the female minds would come up with that guys would take for granted, you know. We are not paying attention to that maybe, but generally the work that is, the type of work done in our newsrooms is to report on issues that are doing the rounds, you know, in resent times you have some media houses, Joy FM particularly, are doing features. So they will go out, take a topic, an important issue, feature on it and it will be aired, documentary type of stories are being done on our radio stations now, but generally we are so into the hard news stuff, and when it comes to hard news it’s what people will here that you put out, so today in the dailies in the papers and on the radio the top is the fatal lorry accident which claimed 15 lives. It’s been splashed on the front pages on most of the newspapers and all that. So those are issues that you talk about, that’s what people find relevant, maybe it’s because we are a developing country, people are more into the bread and butter issues, so that’s what you talk about in the news. If you are in an advanced country, Europe, Canada for instance, which champions humans rights you know you’re getting very serious issues that go to the very heart of national development, those are issues that you do serious journalistic pieces on and air. But here, the Accra metropolitan authority is planning to pull down some unauthorized structures, you
know these days people are more concerned of health because health is a basic you know, so that’s what we’d pay much attention to health, education even we don’t devote much time for, I think we’re not doing, we’re denigrating the service of education and that’s why the illiteracy rate is so high still. I guess it’s a peculiar problem with developing countries, so you get the usual bread and butter issues, shelter, health, sometimes education, those are the things that people are really into so I guess when we get more developed we will be looking at gender issues, but I mean, in resent times in our democratic and constitutional dispensation we are beginning to wake up to the new realities of our world now and we are beginning to realize as a people that it is about time to give some recognition and respect to women and it's about time to put women’s issues, or gender issues, up there, and try and do something positive.

Å: So it’s moving in the right direction?

E: That’s the point right now you can see that there is a positive effort to address women’s issues to the extend that even ahead of our national elections you here the essential candidates and the political parties talking about the quota that they will give to women in parliament when they get into power and all of that. Right now a political party can say that if I win, a quarter of my cabinet will be made out of women, I’m appointing this number or this percentage of females as ministers when I get to power. So it tells you that it’s turning gradually, we are waking up to the realities that the world is acknowledging women as partners in national development and we need to take gender issues seriously and address them.

Å: Is that the current number of females in the parliament, a quarter?

E: Oh, even that I wouldn’t say so, in reality it’s less actually, cause I mean they just pay lip service, just to get the female votes, gullible voters will fall for that, you know. So what happens generally is that our politicians pay lip service, I mean they never materialize. But at least you can see that under the third, the fourth republic there has been a considerable increase in the number in women that are occupying ministerial positions and in parliament for instant more women are getting into the legislator, and I mean it’s encouraging and we realize that we’ve made some important appointments, so we have a female chief justice, we have a female speaker
of parliament and females are beginning to head very important state owned institutions in our country tells you that the state is waking up to the responsibility to give women their fair due.

Â: When you were working as a reporter, how often did you, if ever, think about the fact that you are a female reporter?

E: Never, I never let it operate on my mind because I saw it as a hindrance, an excuse not to excel, and I didn’t want that. I just saw myself as a journalist and I believed that whatever the men could do, I could do equally so all I was interested in was to prove myself, and make sure that I rub shoulders with the guys and even be better than them at what I do, and that’s all that mattered to me, cause I thought, I felt that having always at the back of your mind that you are a woman is a defeatist attitude, so I didn’t want any of that

Â: You sound like an athlete talking…

E: Haha, yeah I mean you wield so much power in here, no one can take it away from you whether you are a woman or a man, if you have such great intellect and make use of it no one can humiliate you or belittle you in any way and that’s what I always seek to do, I see myself as having such huge potential and when I seek to exploit that potential I forget about the fact that I am a woman, I am a human first, I’m a professional second and whatever the gender can wait! So that’s what matters to me.

Â: Did you ever experience that it affected your work that you are a woman? For example the way were being treated/perceived by male interviewees?

E: Yeah, because it’s so annoying sometimes people want to patronize you, you know, they would ordinarily not give you this opportunity but they would call you up simply because you are a woman and they are looking for some balance, I hate it. I keep telling people “if you want me to be on your show, it must be because you believe that I’m bringing something valuable to the discussion, otherwise forget it, don’t call me because I’m a woman, and if I come on your show and you think I’m rubbish, pull me out, take me off, don’t keep me on cause I’m a female and you don’t want to offend me, cause I really fell offended that you’re being dishonest with me, you are patronizing me.” So that’s annoying that sometimes people patronize you simply because you are a woman, they want to be extra nice or make things a lot
easier for you and I don’t fancy it much, I want to be appreciated for the quality of my work, that’s what I want.

Å: During my previous interviews I’ve been told that there are rumours, or misconceptions, that female journalists are a bit “easy”?

E: Loose, more, yeeeah! I think that in the past some of our predecessors haven’t really done much, did not really do much, to erode that perception, I can put it that way. I guess on authority don’t they, those men who make those assertions, maybe because of experiences they’ve had with previous journalists, in previous times who have exhibit loose morals.

Å: Is that perception still alive?

E: Oh definitely, especially in the sports field, every, excuse me, idiot, tries to make a pass at you in the performance of your duties.

Å: Would you even call it sexual harassments?

E: Yes, some people can go as far as harassing you, especially sexually, but generally they would be making passes at you, but then again it comes down to the individual involved and you resolve and you [inaudible]

Å: Does it happen often?

E: Many times, I mean you ask around and you’ll see that a few females have passed through, in the area of sports reporting for instance, they’ll pop up and fizzle out, you know, and so the males in the profession, that’s why whenever you’re coming they get suspicious, cause they don’t know why you’re in there, but you’re in to get something then you’re out, so once they realize that you intend to stick around forever, or for long, cause you’re in there as a professional and you’re hoping to make your mark in that profession, then they warm up to that idea and start according you the necessary recognition and respect. But as I said sometimes it’s based on observations that men have made, sometimes it’s based on the attitude of some female journalists

Å: I really don’t recognise this from Sweden, this perception of female journalists…
E: To a large extent I think it’s an individual thing, cause you definitely have a female in an organisation who feels that the only way she can get to the top is by sleeping around with the big men, to get promoted here and there, so those are some of the things that men see and they begin to generalize

Å: Do you think it’s more common in journalism than in other professions?

E: No, I don’t think so, it’s a general perception. But I mean it’s basically cause men feel threatened you know, when they believe that they built their own world and they are cocooned in there and all of a sudden find females, you know they feel you’re trespassing, so they come up with all these preconceptions, it just frustrate you sometimes. You’ve got to ignore those things and do what you have to do

Å: What would you say are the biggest challenges for female reporters in Ghana?

E: For some of them who have families major challenges apportioning your time between family responsibilities, domestic responsibilities and your work professional duties and responsibilities, that’s the major challenge, and that goes for all female journalists whether they have families or not, cause generally as a female, our society has it’s own stereotypes of things that you’re suppose to do so, regardless of the chunk of work you have, you are still expected to live up to your responsibilities as a woman, and that is domestic chores, I mean if you’re living at home with your brothers, you’re still expected to do the cooking, do the cleaning, the washing, even if you still have to go to work, they can be lazy and be at home, but because you are a woman you still have to do those things. So that is a major challenge

Å: Do you think that’s about to change?

E: I hope so, and soon too. And then I mean for those who have families apportioning their time between domestic chores and their workplace, and the… to a large extent, you have to deal with the preconceptions about females in that field of endeavour, so you start off on a lower level than your male counterparts. Because they think that it’s in their place to be there, they must be working as a journalist as a right, you have no business being there. You always have to make that extra effort to make an impression, to make a mark. That is a challenge. But I think that those are very surmountable challenges, those are challenges that shouldn’t deter you from attaining
your goals, cause you can always make it beyond those challenges and attain your goals.

Å: What do you think about your future as a journalist, can you go back to working as a journalist? Or maybe you’ll try to combine them?

E: Yeah, yeah, yeah, I’ll try to combine them, even in school, what I do is when there are major events, like the world cup coming up, I was on TV for the last under 20 football world cup competition, which was in Egypt, I was on, TV, TV3, and I’ve been doing lots of discussions with TV3, so yeah, because of school I’ve been doing a lot more TV, since I started reading law I’ve been doing a lot more TV, cause I don’t have the time to do radio, so when major events are coming up I’ll be on the panel on TV, that’s what I do. So, I haven’t called the quits entirely, I’m still doing it actually, but I’ve got to lie low a bit cause my professors must see me as very studious, at least you must be seen as being very studious, committed to your academic work, cause the workload is overwhelming, so you don’t even get the time to do work a lot of times.

So journalism, I’m sticking to it, it will always be part of me, and when push comes to show it will be a past time, otherwise I intend to do both, practice as lawyer, and do a bit of journalism, when I find time to do it.

Å: And is there anything else you would like to talk about on the subject women and the media?

E: Women and the media… I think that the few females in the media need to make a conscious effort to champion the interest of women, we need to pay attention to more issues that are sensitive to women’s existence generally. In the last few days there has been a lot of talking on the radio about maternal mortality, simply because a ministers wife died during childbirth, you know. Previously there have been similar issues, several issues, people have complained, they did nothing about them until it affected a minister. We don’t have to wait for that to happen, you know

Å: So do you think the media should take a lead?
E: Yeah, that’s why I said earlier that the media should be the pacesetters, we should set the trend, and in fact it’s one of the fundamental roles of the media, to be agenda setters, right? We set the agenda! And we are also supposed to be gatekeepers. So women make the news, we are newsmakers, why can’t we make news that affects our own interest? Why don’t we seek to serve our own interest? Why don’t we set an agenda that fosters our own development? We can’t wait for…

Å: Can’t men do it as well?

E: The men can do it, but they are not totally willing to do it so they can take a queue from women. Think of it, if you are the one who’s affected and you are not interested, why should I be bothered? And it serves their purpose that you are down there, so they can also be up there, so it’s in your own interest as a woman, to engender discussion on women’s issues, so I think that the few influential women in our newsroom, must be making a case for people to appreciate the women’s point of view. Of course not to the detriment of issues concerning men or anything, I mean they’ve always enjoyed that privilege, they’ve always enjoyed it as a matter of right. It’s about time to start pushing issues that affect women, because issues that affects women, affects the nation. So, we need to be pay particular attention, and women need to champion discussions and we have to do it for ourselves.

Å: Anything else you’d like to add?

E: Oh… I think journalism in Ghana needs to develop at a faster pace than it is doing currently. And I think that… It’s moving, I think that we should be placing much premium on quality, than quantity. What’s happening right now in our system is that you have a proliferation of radio station, newspapers, TV-stations, so you have a proliferation of media houses who are adding little or nothing to the media landscape, and you don’t want that because in the end they tend to create confusion, they tend to work to the detriment to the nation. So I’m thinking we should be placing more efforts, we should be more concerned with enhancing the quality of the media landscape in our system rather than the quantity.
10.3.5 Interview with Gloria, reporter at Ghana Broadcasting Corporation (radio)

*Wednesday April 28, 2010 12.15 pm, Ghana Institute of Journalism*

Â = Åsa

G = Gloria

28 years old, born in Tema. Considering herself privileged growing up, went to the best schools, three siblings. Has a diploma (2 years), finishing a degree. Been working for four years at GBC, since her national service

Internships at Ghana News Agency, Ghanaian Times

Â: What kind of reporting do you do? News, feature?

G: Yes, I… over there they used to have specialization, but now the specialization is not working seriously, so you get to do everything, apart from maybe business where they have reporters for business. You get to do stories on women, health, gender, sports, anything

Â: So it’s like general reporting?

G: Yes, like general reporting

Â: And, when did you decide to become a journalist?

G: Ah… do I even know? I don’t think I decided to become a journalist, I just became it… I… my uncle brought be the forms, as a birthday gift

Â: Brought you what?

G: The forms, for me to go to school, as a birthday gift

Â: Ok

G: I had applied to Legon, I was awaiting to go to Legon [University of Ghana], but I wasn’t getting to the admission so I was in the house when he told me that I had been admitted to GIJ [Ghana Institute of Journalism], started to read a diploma, then I started a degree. So I just took the opportunity and I came, and I liked it. My aim was to do law, so I just wanted to go and do political science and some of those subjects at Legon that can help you when you read law, but basically when I entered the school
[GIJ] and I got to know what journalism is all about, I fell in love with it, and I started working on it

Å: Why did you fall in love with it?

G: Ehm… Journalism is interesting, you get to inform people about what is happening, you get to meet a lot of people

Å: Yeah, that’s what I like about it too

G: Yeah you get to meet so many people, all the top people. It doesn’t make you so ordinary. You know I don’t have money, but the kind of people you meet, you get a satisfaction

[...]

Å: Did you get any reactions from friends and family when you decided you wanted to be a journalist?

G: No, not at all, not like that. They were rather happy and encouraging. Some of them said, “I heard your voice, was that you?” and they were like you can do more so continue, so they were encouraging

Å: How would you describe a normal workday, where you’re working now?

G: Hmm… very tedious, where I’m working now we have four shifts. You go from, you start from 4 am, because it’s radio, so you start from 4 am to 9, and then 9 o’clock if you are assigned to go and bring a story it can take you like the whole day to bring the story. You have to come and write the story, if you have voices you have to edit, so it’s very busy, a very busy day. Imagine if you are supposed to go to work at 4, you have to get up at 2, cause I am the first to be picked up by the office bus. So by 2 o’clock I am already in the car to Accra

[...]

Because I’m in school now I handle the interviews in my office, telephone interviews and so right now from here I am going back, to the office to go and help them and roughly, depending on the work I am given, maybe I am suppose to talk to three or four people on different issues, I leave he office around 7 o’clock
Å: So do you have school and work everyday?

G: Apart from Mondays and Fridays, so from Tuesday to Thursday it’s school and work. And I am a mother so you can see how it’s very busy

Å: How do you experience your opportunities to report on different kinds of subjects?

G: Well, I think that if you report on different kinds of subjects, it gives you an opportunity to know what’s happening all over the places

Å: Do you feel you can report on whatever you like or is it like… you don’t do sports or you don’t…

G: Oh, you can report on anything you want. You don’t need special skills to report on gender, you don’t need special skills to report on health, you understand, so in any way or case I think that I am able to function effectively

Å: I have done previous interviews, and they said that there are certain things that female reporters usually don’t report on, for example demonstrations…

G: No, that’s not true!

Å: No? You don’t feel the same way?

G: No, I don’t […] I had to go to a military camp, they were doing what they call a military and journalism relationship so we had to go with them for a week, we went to the bush and all that, so I don’t think there is any limitations for a woman. The fact that I am a woman doesn’t mean that I can’t report on sports or demonstrations, I have reported several times on demonstrations and I have liked it. It gives you an opportunity to understand what all those people think, you understand? So I don’t think it’s a barrier at all, it’s not

Å: How do you experience your opportunities to get promoted?

G: In my office… you know how it is, promotions are done by the company’s policies. You understand? So, it depends on whether it’s time for promotions in the office or not, and then it’s based on what my editors will say and what my boss will
say, then maybe my name will be included. But I don’t have the right to say I need to be promoted or it’s my time to be promoted

Å: Do you feel there is a pattern as to who gets promoted?

G: Eh… they have a pattern, they have something that they look at. They ask the bosses to bring people they think deserve to be promoted, and so they will take the names of them cause the bosses work with you so they know your performance and your output, but in some organizations after two or three years you need to be promoted

Å: Like a policy?

G: Yes

Å: And is it just as common for men and women to get promoted?

G: Yes

[…]

Å: You told me you have kids?

G: Just one, 8 months

Å: Oh, it’s a newly born. Would it make a difference if you didn’t have kids?

G: Not at all, when I was pregnant I was working. During the early stages of my pregnancy it was an election and so I was at the media center, where I was collecting the final results for the office. And I had to sleep over, and I was combining chairs and I was sleeping on them, even though I was pregnant, because I love the job, so I don’t think having a child makes any difference

[…]

Å: So, how would you describe yourself as a reporter? Are you pushy, shy, forthcoming, when you work…

G: Ehm… I’m not that pushy. I think that when I come to a place and I need information I will not go to all the ends to get a story
Å: Would you say that there is a difference between male and female reporters? The way they are working?

G: No, there is no difference

Å: And, would you say there is such a thing as female journalism and male journalism?

G: Yes. You will find just two or three women in the sports field, most of them are general reporters and there are quite a lot of them in gender reporting and there is not as many in sports

Å: And if you take a newspaper, are there any other sections than sports that are…

G: Male-dominated?

Å: Or female-dominated

G: Hrm… you see in Ghana we do more of general reporting than specialized reporting and so you see a woman covering gender, a man covering gender

Å: And would you say that the status of a female reporter is the same as of a male reporter?

G: Yes, it is

Å: You don’t feel that there is difference

G: No, not at all, there is no difference

[…]

Å: And, do you ever think about the fact that you are a woman when you are working?

G: Not at all

Å: Never?

G: No. Unless maybe somebody makes a statement that makes the women feel inferior, when it’s not right, then maybe I will react, but in general I think it’s ok
Å: It’s almost the same question, but do you ever feel that it affects your work that you are a woman, they way you are being treated or perceived by the people you interview?

G: No

Å: No matter whom you are interviewing?

G: Yeah, I think that sometimes it depends on who you are interviewing, sometimes the person can make you feel useless or worthless, but it depends on how you yourself hold yourself up, you understand? I hold myself strong, so you will not think or feel that because I am a woman I am inferior or something

Å: What would you say are the main challenges for female journalists in Ghana today?

G: [laughing] In Ghana today… What I would say is that… you get the information fast but sometimes people tend to think that female journalists in Ghana are, for lack of a better word, flirt or prostitute. That’s what people think in Ghana

Å: That female journalists are… easy?

G: Yes, easy. Because they come in contact with different kinds of people, so people think that… unfortunately most of them are not really married

Å: Why do you think that is?

G: I don’t really know, I don’t know. But that’s some of the perception people have that female journalists are easy, they can easily be gotten, I don’t know if it is because of past experiences, that’s why people are saying that. Sometimes it’s quite difficult

Å: But you are married so maybe you don’t experience it too much?

G: My husband also has the same notion

Å: Yes?

G: Yes he did

Å: Have you ever asked him why?
G: Well, he also said the same thing, that that’s what he’s heard, that…

Å: So there is a rumor?

G: Yes, a rumor. But nobody has been able to provide evidence that this is true

Å: So they didn’t crosscheck the facts?

G: [laughing] no, they didn’t

Å: And, what do you think about your future in journalism?

G: Eh… I don’t think I will stay long, practicing as a journalist

Å: Why not?

G: Ehm… because the salary is not encouraging. Journalists are not well paid in Ghana

Å: How much do a journalist earn in Ghana, in general?

G: Yes, private media, for the private media they are paid quite well

Å: And how much is that per month?

G: Five million, seven million [5,000,000 Cedis ≈ 2,500 SEK]

Å: And the state-owned?

G: Around four million [4,000,000 Cedis ≈ 2,000 SEK]

Å: And, do you think your future as a reporter is affected by the fact that you are a woman? Would your future look different if you were a man?

G: No

Å: You have the same possibilities?

G: Yes

Å: So you don’t want to stay in journalism because the salary is not too good…?

G: Yes, and I really want to read law. My interest in work is helping people. So I had to do an industrial attachment for six months for the UN and I liked my job there. So I
think I will better my certificate and go back to the UN system, that’s what I want to do

Å: When do you think you will do that?

G: Eh, I gave myself five years

Å: So in five years time

G: And I have three years left, so I’m just waiting to get my degree and then go read international development, conflict resolution or conflict management

Å: But do you want to continue to work with communication in some sense?

G: Ehm… You know working in the UN is all about communication [laughing] so I think that I will still work with communication

Å: Do you want to work here in Ghana or…?

G: Anywhere I can get it

Å: Is there anything else you think we should talk about on the subject women and the media in Ghana?

G: Ehm… I think that women in the media are making a lot of impact and they need to be encouraged

Å: They need to be more encouraged?

G: Yes. I don’t see any discrimination in the work of media, I don’t think there is so much

10.3.6 Interview with Helena, reporter at The Chronicle

*Wednesday May 19, 2010 2.15 pm, The Chronicle*

H = Helena
Å = Åsa

Helena is 24 years old and was born in Tema. She has three years of university education and has been working as a reporter for three years. She has worked at one other place before coming to The Chronicle
Å: So when did you decide to become a journalist?

H: In senior high. I chose between being a lawyer or a journalist

Å: Was it an easy choice to make?

H: Yes

Å: Did you get any reactions from friends and family?

H: Ah… no. They just said go and try your luck there. So I went.

Å: How did you get the job here at the Chronicle?

H: During my national service. I did my national service here for one year and after that I stayed.

Å: What kind of reporting do you do?

H: Court reporting. And I write a column too. I like my column too

Å: What do you write about in you column?

H: Women’s rights, children’s rights, human rights, social issues

Å: And it’s by your own choice?

H: Yeah

Å: And how often?

H: Every week. It came out today.

Å: How would you describe a normal workday here?

H: Sometimes it’s very boring, and sometimes you’re under pressure. And sometimes it’s kind of empty, when there is nothing to write about

Å: Do you write about any other subjects than court?

H: Sometimes we are assigned to certain programs and we go and report on them, any kind of programs, apart from politics

Å: Why not politics?
H: I don’t know much about politics, and they specialize people who know much, they know the people and what is going on, they know the genesis of the issues and I don’t know anything

Å: So how do you experience you opportunities to report on different subjects? If you one day wanted to report on politics, would they let you?

H: They would give you the opportunity to learn and if you are doing well they give you a chance

Å: Can you see a pattern as to who reports on what? Is it ever gender based?

H: No, I don’t think so

Å: I’ve done some previous interviews and some of them have said that there are certain subjects that women rarely are assigned to do, for example if you have to leave Accra or work late at night, have you experienced the same thing?

H: I haven’t been assigned late at night, but I’ve gone out of Accra before

Å: Have you ever felt that there are some assignments they won’t give you because you are a woman?

H: Hem… Sometimes.

Å: What kind of subjects?

H: Like sometimes when it is a political demonstration, the guys go. They are strong. [laughing]

Å: But you are not?

H: [laughing]

Å: Would you go if you were assigned?

H: Yeah, I would go

Å: And how do you experience your opportunities to get promoted?

H: Here? My opportunity to get promoted?
Å: Do you feel that you have the opportunity to get promoted?

H: Maybe. If I do well, if I do well and the editor likes it, I think so

Å: What is the promotion based on?

H: Experience

Å: Are they ever gender based according to you?

H: No… Or sometimes, yeah

Å: Are you married?

H: No

Å: No kids?

H: No

Å: Do you think it would make a difference if you were?

H: Having kids and working, yeah. It would be very different. I leave here around seven and I get home around 9.30.

Å: So you live far from here?

H: Very far. So if I was married and had kids I think I would have to leave here earlier, to go and see my husband and my kids

Å: If you had kids would you continue to work as a reporter?

H: Yes

Å: Do you feel that there is a difference between male and female reporters in the way that they are working?

H: Have you watched the morning programs, the talk shows?

Å: I don’t have a TV here in Ghana

H: Oh, ok. You know the talk shows on the radio?

Å: Yeah
H: There are no single woman hosting those programs, on all the radio stations those who host those programs are men

Å: Why do you think that is?

H: I think the men are strong. I mean stronger than women. Cause there is no women hosting the political morning shows

Å: Would you say there is such a thing as female journalism? Like certain subjects that are considered to be softer and more feminine

H: Culture

Å: Culture?

H: Yes, many women specialize in environmental; all the women do it cause it’s very easy. And the guys go into sports and political science

Å: Why do you think it’s like that?

H: I don’t know

Å: Why do female reporters decide to go into environmental reporting?

H: Cause it’s the easiest. They don’t want anything challenging, that’s why

Å: How about you?

H: I wanted to do business, that’s what I wanted to do when I was in school

Å: So why don’t you?

H: Someone was already doing it when I came here

Å: Would you like to do it if you had the chance?

H: I’ve lost interest

Å: Would you say that the content of the paper, that it reflects the composition of the editorial staff. That if there were more women working on the paper the content would be different?

H: No
Å: You don’t think so?

H: No

Å: And, do you ever think about the fact that you are a female reporter when you are working?

H: No

Å: Have you ever experienced that you’ve been treated in a certain way because you are a woman?

H: No

Å: Never?

H: No. Actually when you go on an assignment they give the female more attention than the guys, wherever you go it’s like that

Å: Why do you think it’s like that?

H: I don’t know

Å: Do you think it’s good?

H: Yeah, extremely good [laughing]

Å: What would you say are the main challenges for female reporters in Ghana?

H: Challenges… challenges… My only problem, I don’t know if it’s a challenge or a problem, they don’t give the women the chance to go into politics. I don’t know why. They don’t give them a chance. Maybe women don’t want to do it

Å: Are there not so many female political reporters?

H: There’s no one. All I know are in culture, human rights, and business.

Å: Do you think that’s a problem?

H: Sometimes I think about it and I wonder why it is

Å: And what do you think about your future as a journalist?
H: I wish I could stop tomorrow [laughing]

Å: What do you want to do instead?

H: I want to go into administration

Å: Why?

H: I think it’s better there

Å: Better in what way, is it more fun or better paid?

H: Yeah, better paid. Journalism in Ghana doesn’t pay. You know about that right? Is it there too?

Å: In Sweden?

H: Yeah

Å: It depends, some of them make a lot of money. But may I ask how much you earn?

H: I’m shy to say…

Å: Ok. And, maybe it’s hard for you to imagine, but if you were a man, would it be different, would you want to stay in journalism?

H: How will I take care of my family? How will I take care of myself?

Å: If you stay?

H: I think so, if you have other means, you can go on

Å: So it’s mainly a financial issue?

H: Yeah

Å: And when you think about women and the women media, is there anything else that comes to mind?

H: Sometimes I think it is meant for women.

Å: Meant for women?
H: Yeah, cause financially it’s meant for women cause women don’t have to spend much, on the family and on themselves, but the men have to take care of the whole family, the children, the wife, the whole household, so sometimes I think about that, journalism is for women

Å: Because it’s less paid?

H: Yeah

Å: Why do you think women should have less money?

H: During the circumstances I don’t think women should have a profession that is less paid, but in terms of journalism it’s best for women, because it’s less pay. Elsewhere women will also deserve it

Å: But if it were better paid, would it be better suitable for men? Is it because men are supposed to provide for the family?

H: Yeah

Å: Is it wrong for a woman to provide for the family?

H: No it’s not wrong! You have to support, so that you feel useful

Å: Is there anything else?

H: No

10.3.7 Interview with Ivy, reporter at The Chronicle
Wednesday May 19, 2010 1.45 pm, The Chronicle

I = Ivy
Å = Åsa

Ivy Benson is 37 years old, born in Accra. Her highest level of education is a degree in sociology, she has a diploma in journalism. In total she has 3 years of university education. She has been working as a journalist about ten years. Before coming to The Chronicle she has worked as a ticketing officer for an Ivorian transportation company.
Å: When did you decide to become a journalist?
I: when did I decide to become a journalist… It was when I started attending my journalism course
Å: So it’s not a childhood dream?
I: No, no, no. I never dreamed of becoming a journalist.
Å: So why did you decide to study journalism?
I: First of all those times we have a situation that people cannot talk, like our part of this world, we have people who have no voice, they needed somebody to talk on their behalf
Å: So you wanted to do that?
I: Yes, I wanted to do that. So I took the course.
Å: Was it an easy choice to make?
I: Yeah, it was an easy choice, cause at that time the media begun flourishing, media houses and journalism became very interesting so it was a very easy choice for me to make.
Å: Did you get any reactions from friends and family when you decided?
I: No, no reaction
Å: And how did you get the job that you have today? Was it an internship or was it…
I: Yeah, after school I came to the Chronicle for my one year internship so after that the took me on, and I’ve been here since
Å: It’s quite a long time. Do you like it?
I: Yes, I like it.
Å: And what kind of reporting do you do? Is it general reporting?
I: I specialize in court reporting, legal reporting
Å: How come?
I: It just crossed me... I started as a general reporter. And then afterwards, you know here in Chronicle you don’t really specialize, they allow you to experience all the areas. But for me, after doing general reporting, I was taken to parliament, so I did a little parliament reporting and then my boss saw that I would be good and have good knowledge of the legal background, so he decided to push me into the courts, the legal. And since I’ve never regretted being there, I’m happy

Å: How would you describe a normal workday?

I: A normal workday, here at the Chronicle is... tedious.

Å: tedious?

I: Yeah, a normal working day. Cause the sun is just too high [laughing]. DO you know where the court is?

Å: No, I don’t know

I: At the High Street, you know High Street?

Å: Yeah

I: Today I went to court in the morning but the case didn’t come up so that is why I’m back early

Å: Ok. And how do you experience your opportunity to report on different subjects?

I: Opportunities to...?

Å: I mean if you’re interested in something can you just say want to do it?

I: Oh yes, I can report anything I want to

Å: Can you see a pattern among those who work here as to who reports on what?

I: Can I...?

Å: Can you see a pattern, like women report on some subjects for example and men report on others like business or sports

I: Yes, I can see something like that here
Å: In what way? Can you describe it?

I: Yeah, you see the men reporting on business, sports, political you see the women report on social issues. I have one colleague who is reporting on social gender

Å: A man or a woman?

I: A woman. Helena. She sometimes goes to the court with me.

Å: And why do you think it’s like that?

I: To me, such areas meant for the male to handle and others for females to handle. That is what I see. Because if you go to other media houses you’ll find the same trend. In the Graphic (The Daily Graphic – my comment) I hardly see a female reporting on business, all the names are male, male, male

Å: Why do you think it’s like that, is it because the female reporters don’t want to report on business?

I: Not that, I don’t think it is that. I don’t think the females don’t want to report in those areas, they will if you give them the chance. You know female are versatile, they can do anything, they can work anywhere, provided you give them the chance. But if you don’t give them the chance, then they are stuck where they are.

Å: So it’s management decisions to divide subjects?

I: Yes

Å: And, are there any subjects that female reporters are not allowed to report on, cause I’ve done some previous interviews and there have come up subjects that female reporters don’t go on, if it’s like you have to work nights or if you have to leave Accra. Have you experiences the same things?

I: For me I have not experienced that because I’m even called upon to travel anywhere to go and report on anything outside Accra

Å: You don’t?

I: If anything like that comes up it is the males who are called upon?

Å: Why?
I: I don’t know why management or editors choose to do like that. But maybe they think it will be too stressful for the females

Â: They don’t think you can take it

I: Yes

Â: Do you agree or disagree with them?

I: No, I disagree

Â: So if you got the chance you would do it?

I: Yeah

Â: Ok. And how do you experience you opportunities to get promoted?

I: Get promoted, no here it’s hard work and then experience. For me I have worked here for ten years I have enormous experience. I am the head of the legal desk here and I’m a senior journalist

Â: So do you see a pattern as to who gets promoted? Is it only based on experience or?

I: No… I will say these things depend on management decisions. They will not like a female to handle the paper because the paper will be finishing late in the night. And I don’t know if they fell pity for women staying here that late to finish up

Â: You don’t have any female editors here?

I: I am an editor, a sub-editor. But our head is a male

Â: So do you ever get the feeling that the promotions are gender based?

I: Hrm… yes I think so, they are gender based. Because females are always sidelined, there is no doubt

Â: You think?

I: Yes, I think. And it’s not in Chronicle alone, we have it in all establishments. You see a female with experience and yet somebody lower can be nominated or delegated to act in a higher position. It is everywhere
Å: Why do you think that is?

I: Because women are seen to be weaker that’s the general perception. And as I say it’s a perception. In Ghanaian society and African wants the male in general. Women… and even generally in the whole world, I think women are not given the chance. Or should I say they look down on female, because they don’t give them the opportunity to rise, anything that comes up is given to the male. I think they think, or I don’t know if they think they would be putting stress on the female or… and one thing also is I think is very the female at one point in time will be having a family and will have maternity leave when the job should be on. So by picking the male the male is there, they will not go on maternity leave or anything of that sort

Å: So can I ask, are you married?

I: No, not yet

Å: No kids

I: No, no kids

Å: Do you think it would make a difference?

I: If it would make a difference?

Å: With your work I mean

I: Yes, because if I had a kid or a husband… well I would not stay as long as I do at work. I will try and leave earlier because the kids are in the house and I have to take care of them

Å: It’s your responsibility?

I: Yes. It’s always the responsibility of the woman

Å: Do you feel that there is a difference between female and male reporters when they are working?

I: No, there is no difference. We are all like one

Å: You do the job in the same way?
I: Yes, if somebody needs help the other will help. Because in this you need to cooperate, it’s not a one persons job.

Å: Would you say that there is something called female journalism? Like a type of journalism that is characterized as more female?

I: Those areas that are mostly taken up by female

Å: For instance?

I: For instance women and children issues, you see female reporters on those things

Å: Why do you think it’s like that?

I: Because female too are very passionate about themselves and children, so they would like to areas that brings out their passions, you know. So when they are reporting that they have placed themselves into the story

Å: And would you say that the status of female reporters is the same as for male?

I: The what?

Å: The status

I: It depends on everybody and his or her style of writing; the style of writing is never the same. So I can’t say that we have female or male reporting style, it’s depending on the individual

Å: Would you say that the media content reflects the editorial staff? So if there are a lot of women working on a paper the media content is different

I: No, I wouldn’t say, cause every media house has its editorial policy. It is a… a media house that does with women issues, that you see those aspects of women issues being the focal point of that media house, and if it is a political paper you would see the paper shifting to political stories

Å: And who decides the editorial policy?

I: Again it would depend on the publisher

Å: Does it matter if it’s a man or a woman
I: No, cause female publishers will also go into political

Â: Do you ever think about the fact that you are a female reporter when you’re working?

I: No

Â: Do you ever think it matters?

I: No, it doesn’t matter

Â: So you always feel that you’re being taken seriously and respected for your profession?

I: Yeah, and it depends on how you present yourself. If you present yourself you’ll be taken seriously.

Â: Have you ever experienced that you haven’t been taken seriously because you are a woman?

I: No, I have not experienced that

Â: What would you say are the main challenges for female reporters in Ghana today?

I: The main challenge is the discrepancy between male and female in terms of positions.

Â: You mean like editing positions?

I: It can be anything. Cause you see a female who must be promoted to a certain position, yet a male who comes up will be taken up. And that is our main challenge, in every work place, you can find that

Â: Cause the promotions are gender based?

I: Yes, they are gender based. They like to place male ahead of female

Â: Almost every reporter that I have been interviewing has said that there is a challenge to combine journalism with family life, do you agree?

I: Yes, yes that is also another. Cause you have to look after the children and the house, before coming to work. The duties in the house are also a type of work, a
fulltime work. So that means that females are taking up two jobs, and they have to manage their time and that is challenging

Å: And what do you think about your future, will you stay in journalism?

I: In fact, I don’t think I will stay

Å: Why?

I: Cause journalism is just not paying in Ghana

Å: May I ask how much you earn?

I: [laughing] No enough

Å: But what will you do instead?

I: Some type of office work, anything communication managing office

Å: And do you think that your future as a reporter is affected by the fact that you are a woman

I: I can’t answer that because I am not in that situation, I am in the female situation, so I can say that… Maybe if I were a man I would think differently, I don’t know

Å: Do female and male reporters earn the same money?

I: It depends on management

Å: And on the subject women and the media is there anything else you would like to add?

I: [laughing] no, it’s done. The ability to work vis-à-vis the male, that the female reporters can do the same work as the male, if they are given the chance

10.3.8 Interview with Lucy, reporter at The Daily Graphic

Tuesday May 18, 2010 3.15 pm, The Daily Graphic

Å = Åsa
L = Lucy
Lucy is 46 years old. Born in Kumasi. Took a degree at the University of Legon, a diploma at The Ghana Institute of journalism and has been working as a journalist since 1988.

Å: When did you decide to become a journalist?

L: When I was in basic school, in primary school.

Å: And why did you decide to become a journalist?

L: I liked writing at that time and a teacher of mine encouraged me I would be a good writer

Å: Was it an easy choice to make?

L: It was easy for me

Å: Did you get any reactions from friends and family?

L: No, no reactions

Å: How did you get the job you have today, at The Daily Graphic, was it through an internship or…?

L: I applied, there was an advertisement in the newspaper, looking for reporters, and I applied, came for an interview and I had it

Å: And for how long have you been working here at the Daily Graphic?

L: Six years

Å: What kind of reporter are you, general reporter...?

L: I am basically health reporter, but I do anything that my news editor asks me to do. I do most health reporting.

Å: How would you describe a normal workday?

L: Hectic. My house is far from the office and then it’s the Accra traffic situation so from my house to the workplace I am already tired, and then I need to go to town to look for stories, and I don’t have means of transport so most of the time I go by public transport, taxis and all that
Å: And what kind of reporting do you do, you said health but could you be more specific?

L: Health generally, the national insurance scheme, I know about the scheme, maternal health, any other things [inaudible]

Å: How come you are specialized in health?

L: My previous workplace I was public relations officer, the original coordinating counselor, in [inaudible] region, and I was appointed as a focal person for the national insurance scheme when it was first introduced, so I worked a lot of health [inaudible] at that time, I got to have an interest in health. When I was given an appointment here, [inaudible] nobody asked me, I myself developed an interest

Å: And how do you experience your opportunities to report on different subjects?

L: Opportunities, it’s easy, if I’m interested nobody can stop me, nobody stops anybody from doing anything here

Å: Can you see a pattern as to who reports on what?

L: Yeah, the person who was doing health before I came here was a woman, so mostly we are women, and apart from me all the people who are working on health desk are women.

Å: Why do you think that is?

L: I think from my own personal experience, I think women are more interested in their health than men, many women has interest in knowing what is happening to them and they are interested because of their children too, cause with children you have a lot of health issues, pregnancy, menstruation, menopause, so women tend to have much more interest in health than men and I think that’s what motivates some of us to go into health reporting.

Å: I have done some interviews before this one, and many of them have said that there are some subjects that male reporters more get assigned too, have you experienced that?
L: Uhm… yeah. When it’s a late, a night assignment, and also the business reporting, we have a Graphic business, there is no female reporter on that paper, they are all male. So basically the men get interested in working on the business desk, technology, things to do with communication, gadgets, ICT, men are more interested in that kind of things

Â: So is it because of interest or because of management? I mean are they assigned different types of subject?

L: They assign when they see you have interest in something, if they realize you are not interested they will just try and give you another assignment, so it depends on individual interest

Â: Are there any subjects or assignments that women are not allowed to do?

L: No, not here

Â: Ok. And how do you experience your opportunities to get promoted?

L: Yes, I’ve been promoted since I came here

Â: And can you see any patterns as to who gets promoted?

L: No, it depends on your ability to work

Â: your achievements and your experience?

L: Yeah

Â: Are you married?

L: Divorced

Â: Any kids?

L: I have one

Â: Do you think that makes a difference when you’re working?

L: Yeah

Â: In what way?
L: Some men don’t understand why [inaudible] after close of work, the normal workday in Ghana is to 5 pm, but we are journalists, there is no way we can close at 5 pm. And sometimes when they see you talking to many people from the opposite sex, they don’t understand why you should talk to them. If you are not able to get someone who understands the work there is always a tendency for disagreement, argument and if the relationship is not the solid type, it’s possible to break.

Å: Do you experience that it is expected of women to take care of the children, cook, take care of the house…

L: Oh that’s in the Ghanaian culture, so if you try to do any otherwise people look at you as somebody who’s trying to be bossy or something and here the women are not allowed to… I don’t know the right word, but to be seen as being bossy, you are always suppose to be submissive to the man so if he [inaudible] and he talks back people in the community will look at you in different terms, so it’s a problem, but some men are beginning to learn

Å: So it’s changing?

L: Yeah, especially in big cities and towns, in the rural areas, women have to do almost everything, but here many of the men do understand cause we’re all working, so they make compromises

Å: Would you say there is a difference between male and female reporters, in the way they’re working?

L: No, what I know is that the female side is more careful, they are careful, because they are not daring. I can’t find myself to go and do a story that might put me into trouble unless I have the backing of my office, if not I will prefer doing something that I would be comfortable with. But when it comes to grammar, the women are more careful, and they take their time to do their stories, I’ve studied that from the interns that we have now, when they finish their work I see that the girls take their time, read through it, choose their words and then try as much as possible to come out of little mistakes, and the men because they want to rush they always trying to outdo one another, to impress people so they hurry through their work and then sometimes they make mistakes.
Å: Would you say that there is such a thing as female journalism?

L: Is there…?

Å: A certain type of journalism that is extra feminine?

L: No, apart from health. There’s a group that covers health and I can say that about 80% of the membership of the group are women, there are few men in gender issues, the men thinks gender is only for women, so I’ve never seen a man working on a gender desk, and few of them contribute to the pitch. So health and gender and children. Women and children men don’t come near, specifically women and children and then gender and health, they’ve left it for women

Å: Would you say that the status of a female reporter is the same as a male?

L: The status?

L: I would say so, yeah

Å: And would you say that the media content reflects the composition of the editorial staff?

L: No, no. We have fewer women here and many of the senior people are men, I wouldn’t say that it’s a discrimination the issue is that many women don’t work here for long, they are here for a while and then they leave, the men stay on so they become editors and all that. So many of the senior staff here are men, and because of that when they take decisions it’s almost always skewed towards their own interest, sometimes it reflects the way they do things

Å: Do you ever think about the fact that you are a female reporter when you’re working?

L: Do I…?

Å: Do you think about it, when you’re doing interviews that maybe you’re being treated in a certain way…

L: Sometimes… when you meet somebody for the first time, they have this impression that you are a woman and that you will not be able to perform as they want. Not long ago I interviewed one minister here, I could see that he wasn’t doing
anything but he still made me wait [inaudible] I stayed, the story came out and the
next morning he called me and said you didn’t [inaudible] if I’d know I’d taken you
serious

Å: Do you think he made that assumption cause you are a woman?

L: Yeah, he thought I was one of these women who men [inaudible 5.22] he told me
to the face

Å: And how did you feel about that?

L. Oh, I told him that well that is his opinion but next time when he needs
somebody… because we all have the same brains [inaudible 5.10]

Å. And, what would you say are the main challenges for female journalists in Ghana
today?

L: The combination of work and the home, because you are women you have a
husband and children you might not be able to travel around town or outside the
office to do some interviews outside Accra, and also looking at the roots, the
traditions that serve in this country, many women wouldn’t want to travel to far away
places, but the male don’t mind, they can go maybe, as soon as they’re asked they’d
go, they wouldn’t mind, they wouldn’t even care go home to, but with women, you
can’t just get up and say I’m traveling, you need to go home and prepare. Like I told
you earlier, an assignment that travels through the night, many women wouldn’t want
to stay on, some of us would, but depending on the nature of the assignment, if it’s an
international conference or something you might, but if it’s normal assignment and if
it’s at night they would prefer a male colleague of mine, that he would rather go

Å: So that’s a big challenge?

L: Yeah

Å: So what do you think about your future as a journalist, will you continue to be a
journalist?

L: Yes, for the rest of my life I think I will want to be a journalist unless maybe I get
another work that pays me more than I’m getting now. If I would be able to get
something like that I would decide. But I think a higher salary can make me change my mind.

Å: May I ask how much you earn?

L: Very low [laughing] My check is around 1000 Ghana Cedis (≈ 5000 SEK).

Å: Do you think that your future as a reporter is affected by the fact that you are a woman?

L: I don’t think so, when I was younger but not now.

Å: And is there something else you think about on the subject women and the media?

L: Hrm… in some media houses… In our place it’s ok for a woman to get promoted if you work hard and I see many women here getting promoted ahead of men, some are rewarded at the right time, I mean if you work hard you are appreciated, here there is not much discrimination. Unless you allow yourself to be discriminated against, if don’t work hard and you behave, cause you are a woman… you come here and you lazy about naturally nobody will mind you, but I think it’s ok. But I hear from other [inaudible] some media houses they are not promoted even when they are due, and they think the men are given all the important assignment. When there is an opportunity for people to travel out of the country they don’t allow them, they always give those opportunities to the men.

Å: Do you feel that you have to work harder as a woman to achieve the same…?

L: Oh… Not harder, but personally, I’m looking at people outside this office, who look up to me, so I’m doing something I have them in mind, I don’t normally consider how I will be seen in this office, my motivation comes from outside, actually, cause when they see that you’ve done they can call and comment you, that is what motivates me. I don’t think I have to anything extra than the men are doing here, no.

Å: Is there anything else you would like to add?

L: Hrm… No.