

# GENDER AND JOURNALISM IN SOUTH AFRICA

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UCT

# DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGE

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- South Africa boasts of having reached a gender parity of 50/50 in its workforce as well as in arts, culture and gender equality reporting.
- Women journalists dominate financial/economic and business reporting and comprise 40 per cent of sports reporters (Made& Morna, 2009).
- There is an increase in the number of women journalists at the entry and middle level but they are under-represented in senior positions; for instance, only 12 out of 43 South African editors are female (Daniels, 2014).
- Similar to other BRICS nations, there

## IMPACT OF INCREASED WOMEN JOURNALISTS IN MEDIA ORGANISATIONS

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- The news media in South Africa is still very male dominated though there is an increase in the number of female journalists.
- A female newspaper journalist said, 'There are probably more opportunities for women in news media today than 20 years ago'.
- Another said, 'The number of female journalists has certainly grown. We still do not see women advancing to more senior positions though. This is a serious problem'.

## IMPACT OF INCREASED WOMEN JOURNALISTS IN MEDIA ORGANISATIONS

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- However, the majority of female journalists overwhelmingly stated that more female journalists in the newsroom did not necessarily translate into women having more power in the newsroom or increased influence over news agendas as there were no women in senior positions.

# IMPACT ON THE CAREERS OF FEMALE JOURNALISTS

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- In South Africa, majority argued that women are bad at seizing opportunities for mentorships and career advancement and have to create opportunities to break through the 'glass ceiling'.
- Sexist attitudes still abound in the newsroom and male colleagues often take a condescending view of their female colleagues.

# IMPACT OF INCREASED WOMEN JOURNALISTS IN MEDIA ORGANISATIONS

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- Sexist attitudes abound and there is little one can do to change the attitudes of male colleagues. This might not be condoned and I know that we have a clear sexual harassment policy, [but] this does not stop some of our male colleagues though 'said a female television journalist (F, SABC). Similarly another journalist says: 'Unfortunately it is still the case that men often take a condescending view towards suggestions made by their female colleagues. Not all men are the same but generally this is still the case'. (F, *Star*).

# GENDER UPWARD MOBILITY

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- Although majority of the journalists in South Africa think that gender does not matter in journalism, there are a few male journalists who argue that women journalists are better suited to cover certain types of stories; in particular stories on sexual violence perpetrated against women as there often would be fears of re-victimization though the female journalists think they can cover all kinds of stories.

# GENDER UPWARD MOBILITY

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- Majority of the female journalists interviewed said that they would like to change the proportion of certain kind of stories covered [and] 'bring slightly different angles to the stories.' In this regard, female journalists emphasized: 'there is a need to strengthen coverage of women and children and the concerns of these groups.' This also links to the ways in which female journalists articulate their own role in society.



# GENDER UPWARD MOBILITY

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- Thus, while male and female journalists acknowledge that more has to be done to factor in the concerns of the poor and marginalized communities often neglected in coverage as well as in conceptualizations of the audience, female journalists, put a strong emphasis on serving women and children in particular (Rodny-Gumede, 2015).

# NEWS ASSIGNMENT

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- The interviewees also spoke of ideas for news coverage and the fact that both male and female journalists cover more or less the same beats. However, as confirmed by Rodny-Gumede (2015), there are gender differences in how these beats are interpreted and the ways in which female journalists would like to change news coverage vis-à-vis their male counterparts.
- As this female journalist says: 'There is little focus on women in the news media in general; women and children are still neglected in coverage and as sources in media coverage' (F, e-tv). As such, improved gender equality seems to do little to change power dynamics and the influence that female journalists have in the newsroom and the editorial control that women have even over their own beats.