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School of Journalism and Mass Communication

Women working in the media industry in Kenya: How are they faring?

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Declaration

This thesis is my original work, and it has not been presented for award or degree in any other university.

Date: 29th October 2013

Signature:

Antonia Njeri Ndũng'ũ Okono

Approval

This research has been submitted for examination with my approval as university supervisor.

Supervisor's name: Mr Edwin Nyutho

Signature:

Date:

Dedication

I dedicate this work to my mother and my husband, who have both made the sacrifice and paid the price for me to be who – and where – I am today. I owe them an un-payable debt of gratitude. *Shukrani. Nĩ ngatho. Ero kamano*

And to the memory of Prof Wangarĩ Muta Maathai. *Mama*, even now two years after you passed on, I continue to learn from you, on how to be human; how to be a woman; how to be African and one's authentic self; and how to stand up for right in the face of might.

Acknowledgement

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Abstract

The media are at the forefront of admonishing societal ills, including discrimination against women.

However, turning the spotlight on their operations and environment, do the media live up to the ideals they preach on the cause for the advancement of women?

Statistics from various studies show that women are under-represented in the media industry in Kenya, yet there is no shortage of competent women professionals in the field: four out of every five graduates from journalism or media faculties are in fact women. This under-representation is even more pronounced at the apex: in senior management and governance, the ratio of men to women is 2:1, and the two largest media houses have never had a woman CEO.

This begs the question: Is 'womanity' positive or negative capital in the media workplace? Is the media sector woman-friendly? Does the industry actively seek gender parity? Are women employees valued?

This study examines these and related questions, through quantitative and qualitative analyses on the done by various researchers over the last two decades. The questions are examined using Pierre Bourdieu's theories on capital, as interpreted by Toril Moi and applied by Monika Djerf-Pierre. The image that crystallises on this reversed mirror is disturbing, at odds with what the 'preacher preaches'. The 'glass ceiling' is intact, the 'velvet ghetto' undemolished and a 'Barbie-doll boudoir' has emerged. The media sector is far from being woman-friendly; it is still largely a man's world: sexual harassment and sexist language are rampant – with women-based sexualisation of content now added. The 'boys' clubs' and networks remain intact. All these factors militate against the advancement of women.

But there is hope if only because some women have overcome these barriers, and so others too can.

This study makes several recommendations on areas warranting further research and action, to counter the anti-woman culture in the media sector and remedy the undesirable prevailing situation.

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Acronyms and abbreviations

AMWIK	Association of Media Women in Kenya
AWC	African Woman and Child Features
B Ed	Bachelor of Education
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CGIAR	Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research
COO	Chief Operations Officer
G&D	CGIAR Gender and Diversity Program
HR	human resources
IWMF	International Women’s Media Foundation
KBC	Kenya Broadcasting Corporation
KTN	Kenya Television Network
KUJ	Kenya Union of Journalists
MCK	Media Council of Kenya
MIT	Massachusetts Institute of Technology, USA
MOA	Media Owners Association
NMG	Nation Media Group
PGDMC	Postgraduate Diploma in Mass Communication
POPS	People Operations (<i>Google parlance for ‘Human Resources’, with ‘POPS’ acronym coined by staff</i>)
PR	public relations
PRSA	Public Relations Society of America
PRSK	Public Relations Society of Kenya
PSCU	Presidential Strategic Communications Unit
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
USA	United States of America
USD	United States dollars
WACC	World Association of Christian Communicators

“...there can be no full freedom of the press until women have an equal voice in the **news-gathering** and **news dissemination** processes.” (emphasis mine)
– *The International Women’s Media Foundation (IWMF), 2011*

Chapter 1: Introduction

Background and context

Oftentimes, the media point an accusing finger at gender inequity and other injustices in the society, be this at community level, in politics, or in the workplace in both the private and the public sectors.¹ This is in order, and exactly as it should be, because the media sector is the public watchdog. But do the media themselves practise what they preach? While the area of the media’s portrayal of women is well-studied and documented, “there is very little or no scholarly work on the working conditions of women in the media.” (MCK 2013)

In contemporary Kenya, diversity at the workplace is widely considered not only as a strong indicator of equity in both in-house practices and external interactions, but also makes for a good public image. As a generally accepted public watchdog, the media more than any other industry should be actively in pursuit of – and perpetually mindful of – a good and positive public image built on firm substance, and should therefore place an exceptional premium on positive public perceptions. As such, the media sector then becomes the natural nexus for the closely intertwined twin disciplines of communications and public relations (PR), sectors which are both reported – worldwide

¹ For example, an article that appeared in *The Standard* titled *Six years later, the civil service is still a man’s forte* (August 8th 2009, p 8).

– as getting increasingly feminised² (Public Relations Society of Kenya [PRSK], 2011; Public Relations Society of America [PRSA], 2010; PR Daily, 2013). In Sweden, “women have a journalism degree more often than men” (Djerf-Pierre 2005) and closer home, four out of every five graduates from a journalism or media faculty are women (Chege 2012).

A 2012 UNESCO study on gender-sensitive indicators for media content and operations states: “Germane and central to media development is the recognition that if the media are to accomplish their democratic potential, they should reflect diversity in society.”

² Feminisation in the context of this study has a dual sense, and both senses apply. (1) Statistics: Women professionals outnumber men in both communications and PR, and (2) Nature and science: in everyday life, communications and PR are more characteristic of, or associated with, the feminine and women. Both are ‘talking’ and ‘public image’ areas.

Comparative scientific studies show women talk more than men (13,000 words per day to men’s 7,000) and have a greater aptitude for language, hence a natural flair for communications. This starts from a young age: comparative studies in child development show that girls learn to speak earlier and more quickly than boys. They speak their first words and construct their first sentences earlier, have larger vocabularies and use a greater variety of sentence types than boys of the same age. In studies published in early 2013, scientists have attributed this to the female brain having more Foxp2 protein – the ‘language protein’. Therefore, the female brain is hardwired for storytelling, which is the essence of communication. Good communication is an imperative for socialisation community-building and community relationships, the base of PR. Most people in the older generation can relate with grandmother’s and mother’s stories, but not much with grandfather’s or father’s storytelling. This has carried into the Information Age, with most social media users tending to be female in either numbers or in level of engagement. For PR, consider a family or social setting, and the role of women in teaching children how to talk, decorum and etiquette (eg, “say please!” will usually come from Mum rather than Dad). Women tend to be the family’s ‘public image builders’, with men in a more residual role. It is usually women who will be smoothing ruffled feathers with friends, family and neighbours, which is illustrative. Despite this, coupled with the high numbers of professional women, the media and PR industries are male-dominated, in numbers and higher income, and the work culture is male. Yet, “women often make better journalists” (*The Double Standard*, 1993). By their nature, both communication and PR industries present opportunities and options for flexi-place and flexitime, career on- and off-ramps that few other industries can offer. These concepts, to be discussed in later sections, accommodate ‘womanity’ in corporate life, with high potential for win-win outcomes.

The study defines 'social indicators' as embodying "a variety of complex characteristics of the human population such as language, culture, religion, race, ethnicity and gender."

The study goes on to state: "for the media to ***accurately mirror our societies*** and produce coverage that is complete and diverse, it is critical that the news in particular reflects the world in a way that goes deeper than a ***male-centric*** and ***stereotypical*** perspective." (emphasis mine)

Problem statement

Staff diversity takes many forms (Merrill-Sands et al, 2000), with gender as a key aspect.

Clear indicators of workplace diversity in Kenya would be ethnicity, religion, region of origin and gender. The media have been visibly at the forefront in advocating gender parity, advocating for equitable representation of women in key positions in society.

However, turning the mirror in their direction, how far have the media themselves advanced the cause of women by their own operational and staffing customs and practices?

This modest study explores this question by examining the state and status of women professionals in the media. It covers both quantitative and qualitative aspects, ie: What positions do women in the media occupy? How many of them are in management positions and the upper decision-making echelons? Is there a glass ceiling³ perceived to

³ The metaphor 'glass ceiling' is the notion that women successfully climb the corporate hierarchy until they are blocked just below the summit, blocked by a real but invisible 'glass ceiling' that they cannot break through (hence the term 'glass'). The originator of the metaphor and when (and hence proper attribution) remain unknown, as there are many differing versions

block the way of women aspiring to advance up the corporate ladder? What are the gender-specific issues that affect them in the workplace? Do women perceive that their gender plays a role in the workplace, and if it does, does gender advance or retard their career?

Reference is made to PR which is a very close twin to media and communications. The rosy picture on the feminisation of PR worldwide, including in Kenya, is swiftly dimmed by the grim and sobering statistics on earnings: as *PR Daily* reported on March 3 2011, the majority of people working in public relations are women, yet – on average – women earn less than men.

Are these scenarios replicated in the media sector, given the close kinship between media and PR? The 2010 PRSA study reported nearly 60% of PR professionals are women. However, when it comes to earnings, while the average annual income for men in public relations was about USD 120,000, the figure significantly dipped to about USD 72,000 for women, in this distinctly feminised profession, as the percentage statistics above bear out. This means that men are twice as likely to earn more than women.

A very recent global study published online on February 19 2013 by *PR Daily* found that “Men are over-represented in high-salary brackets in the public-relations industry, while women disproportionately fill in the lowest ranks.” A distressing 85% of those earning

on both. What is not in dispute is that the metaphor describes the invisible but real barriers that block the upward mobility of women up the corporate ladder – namely organisational attitudes and prejudices that keep women from decision-making and leadership positions. In USA, it is sometimes also extended beyond women to include demographic minorities as well.

less than USD 35,000 are women. Very noteworthy is that while most respondents were from North America (USA and Canada), the study also had respondents from Africa, Asia, Europe and Oceania. Seventy-seven percent of the respondents were women, which the article reports as roughly representative of industry statistics for USA, where 72 percent of PRSA's membership is female.

Unfortunately, similar gender statistics cannot be provided for Kenya. The Kenya PR sector study by PRSK reported women respondents to have been the majority,⁴ and also reported on earnings, but did not gender-disaggregate this potentially crucial indicator in the sector. Efforts to solicit this extra information from PRSK did not bear fruit. It is also not clear how the gender percentages reported in the survey stand relative to the source population they are drawn from, since no statistics have been provided on that population. However, based on the USA findings above where there was not much difference between the demographics in respondents and the source population, the same can be reasonably assumed for Kenya (ie, that the survey respondents are representative of the source population's gender demographics).

Objectives

This gap in information above is indicative of a broader context, where there is a deplorable dearth of documentation on women's issues, and statistics are scarce (Opoku-Mensah, 2001; Gadzekpo, 2009, among others). The study proposed anticipates

⁴ The 2011 PRSK survey reported respondents as 72.5% female for in-house PR, and as 53% female in PR firms.

making a very modest contribution to help fill this void. And in Kenya, studies such as the African Woman and Child Feature Services (AWC) 2009 baseline study, and scholars such as Mugwe (2012) and Chege (2012) have made notable contributions.

The specific focus on women rather than on gender (women and men in comparative analysis) stems from the hypothesis, grounded on previous studies (Double Standard 1993; Morna 2002; AWC 2009; Gadzekpo 2009; UNESCO 2010; IWMF 2011; Zuiderveld 2011; Chege 2012; Mugwe 2012; Rai [undated]), that media women are at a distinct disadvantage relative to men. The hypothesis is also grounded on the statistics previously cited on media's twin industry PR, statistics which are very instructive.

Rai (undated) observes that men account for approximately 75% of the positions of power in the mass media. The 2011 IWMF *Global report on the status of women in the news media* states that "men hold the vast majority of the seats on governing boards and in top management across seven regions, at 74.1 percent and 72.7 percent." It further reports that in the Kenyan media organisations surveyed, men outnumber women by a factor of 2:1 in these upper echelons. And to date, neither of the two leading cross-media houses in Kenya (the Standard Media Group and the Nation Media Group) have had a woman CEO in their entire corporate history.

Is there a correlation between gender demographics in governance and management, and ultimately operations, given that the IWMF study reports nearly similar percentages for governance and management? What of media ownership? Is this too another correlation? How and why is it that men account for 73% representation in

the upper echelons of the media yet 80% of media and journalism faculty graduates are women? Does this distinct disadvantage – or discrimination against women – still prevail in 2013? Does Morna’s (2002) assertion that “the gender imbalances in society reflect in the institution of the media” also stand when it comes to the media’s own internal operations? A 2013 Media Council of Kenya report cites a journalist, Michal Ochula, thus on reversing the mirror: “As we journalists scrutinise the actions of others, we must do the same to ourselves. We have to ask whether we and the media houses we work for meet the standards we demand of others.”

A 2013 Media Council of Kenya (MCK) report which included a survey states that respondent gender demographics were “a good reflection of the reality of gender composition of journalists in media houses in Kenya.” Respondents were 65% male and 34% female, with 1% skipping the question on gender.⁵

Comparing these MCK statistics with those above from IWFM (74% male managers and 73% male representation on governance bodies) and those from Chege (80% of media and journalism faculty graduates are women), two disturbing facts clearly emerge:

- 1) Women are at a double disadvantage, as rank-and-file media professionals, and also as top media managers, and
- 2) The media pipeline is ‘leaking’ women. Why is the media sector not attracting or retaining professional women, losing them to other professions?

⁵ However, the raw MCK gender demographics data had some ‘noise’. MCK did not respond to my email and via website inquiry to seek clarification. The noise does not however have significant implication on the gross percentage statistics cited above.

“Women often comprise the rank-and-file of journalists and presenters in the print and broadcast media but few are in the top leadership positions...Women reporters are often assigned to health, education, and social issues, while men are given the political and economic assignments which are seen as part of the career path to senior editorial and media management positions.”

– *World Association for Christian Communication (WACC), 2006*

The quote above illustrates the ‘velvet ghetto’, discussed further in Chapter 4, where women are confined to what the media terms as ‘soft’ subjects. Much more important than numbers alone is **placement** and **power**. Beyond **how many**, the even more critical question is **where** the women are, and **how they are faring**, which is the primary objective of this study.

This study set to find out where, how and why there is a ‘leaky pipeline’⁶ for women media professionals in Kenya, and to suggest possible solutions to seal these ‘leaks’. Findings should be of interest and relevance to media owners and managers; media professionals as well as aspiring media professionals; scholars and practitioners of gender issues, women in the media or those seeking careers in the media, as well as bodies such as AMWIK, MCK, MOA, KUJ and IWMF; and PR professionals.

Based on the analysis above, this study had eight main objectives:

⁶ The term ‘leaky pipeline’ has been borrowed from studies on women in science, used by, among others, Blickenstaff (2005) and the UN Commission on Science and Technology for Development. This metaphor is frequently used to explain the fact that women are under-represented in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) careers. ‘Leaky pipeline’ describe a concept that refers to the steady attrition of girls and women throughout the formal STEM system, from primary education to STEM decision-making. The proposal is to carrying students from secondary school through university and on to a job in STEM, and to retain them there.

1. To establish whether there has been any improvement or deterioration in the workplace status of women professionals in the media in the last twenty years. Proceeding from the hypothesis that the status of women in all sectors of life has improved, the study will seek to answer this question through a comparison of literature from the 1990s with current literature, and an analysis of the responses to the questionnaire in the *Annex*.
2. To determine whether being a woman is negative or positive capital in the workplace, proceeding from the hypothesis that given affirmative measures encoded in various laws and national discourse being a woman would in fact endow one with distinct positive considerations and career advantages in the media industry. The study will seek to answer this question from preceding studies and an analysis of the survey responses.
3. To ascertain whether women media professionals continue to be confined to 'soft' beats and suffer disproportionate under-representation in management and leadership roles, proceeding from the hypothesis that with greater awareness of, and desire for, gender equity this would no longer be the situation. This would again be primarily established from a literature study and survey responses.
4. To determine the extent to which Government agencies, media establishments and the media women themselves are acting to ensure equity in the media working place. Starting with the hypothesis that all these parties are working in

tandem and separately towards that goal, this question will be answered through a literature review and survey responses.

5. To determine whether there are any distinct differences in job satisfaction and motivation between women professionals in fulltime employment in the media houses, and those working as independents, including perceptions on their gender status. This question will again be answered from literature, where available, and from the responses to the survey, proceeding from the hypothesis that the women in fulltime employment are likely to be more motivated, have a higher job satisfaction and more positive perceptions of their gender in the workplace.
6. To determine whether family obligations, especially being a wife and a mother, in any way impact on the career trajectory of the women professionals in the media – proceeding from the hypothesis that the women that are unmarried and single are likely to be doing better professionally. This will again be answered from literature and the survey.
7. To determine whether, as in other fields previously considered a male domain, there are more women training for careers in the media, and entering that career; this to be primarily established from the literature available on the subject, as well as inquiries to the main media houses.
- 8.** To recommend from the results of the study what areas may require further research, and what action if any can be taken at the present time to enhance progress or arrest regression..

Chapter 2: Method

Literature review and scoping

The first step was a broad reading on the situation of women media professionals in Kenya, in Africa and in the rest of the world, to get a sense of the situation they find themselves in. A robust even if not bountiful body of literature is to be found in this area, ranging from articles and papers in peer-reviewed journals to reports, surveys and industry assessments. A good portion of the literature reviewed is cited in context in the other chapters. I have attempted to analyse the trends through time by reviewing literature spanning a 20-year period (1993–2013)

In analysing gender and its implications in the media workplace, the work by Djerf-Pierre (2005) studying gender as capital, leaning on the theories of Pierre Bourdieu and their interpretation by Toril Moi provides the framework. In his interpretation of Bourdieu's symbolic capital, Moi characterises gender as either positive or negative capital. To these two characterisations by Moi (positive and negative capital), and for the purposes of this study, I have introduced 'neutral capital' as a third indicator to describe circumstances where gender is perceived as neither positive nor negative.

In scoping the study, I went beyond published works and literature to encompass conversations with key informants – women professionals working, or who previously worked, in the Kenyan media, on their perspectives on the status of women media professionals in Kenya.

Both the literature review and the scoping provided useful pointers and were instrumental in helping design and refine the study instrument, discussed in the next section.

A key reference point for this study is *The Double Standard*, Newsletter of the Women in the Media workshop, published on January 22 1993. It was the result of a two-week workshop on *Writing, editing and the role of women in news media*, co-sponsored by the then School of Journalism at the University of Nairobi, and the Graduate School of Journalism at the University of Western Ontario, Canada. In attendance were 22 women – 19 from Kenya, and one each from Botswana, Uganda and Zambia. The newsletter assesses the status of women in what were then all the major media houses in Kenya, in the era before the general liberalisation of the media sector that led to its prolific growth. These media houses were:

1. Kenya Broadcasting Corporation – KBC (government-owned radio and TV station and for a long time, the sole broadcaster before KTN's entry in 1990)
2. Kenya Television Network – KTN (Kenya's first privately-owned TV station, though it was connected with influential individuals in government. It was then three years old)
3. *The Kenya Times* (the party-owned newspaper. Then, there was no distinction between the ruling political party, KANU, and the government of the day)
4. *The Nation* (newspaper)
5. *The Standard* (newspaper)

Study instrument – survey

The key instrument I used in this study was an online survey, administered using the Survey Monkey tool (www.surveymonkey.com). The questionnaire was pretested and refined over a two-week period in late-May/early June 2013. I incorporated the constructive feedback I received from the pre-test, after which I administered the survey.

Structure

Dual stream

There were two different questionnaires, seamlessly woven into one in the online environment in which the survey was administered: each respondent was routed to a different section of the survey, depending on whether in their response they indicated they were: (i) freelancers or correspondents for several media houses; or, (ii) worked fulltime in the media (see *Annex*, which also delineates and explains the two kinds of questionnaires).

Design

The questionnaire had the following sections:

1. Part I: Profile (name [optional], age, family status, professional background and career motivations, etc); and,
2. Part II: Work environment (workplace motivations and satisfiers, career path and growth, mentoring, gender relations and woman-friendliness, personal perceptions on media sector and women).

Most of the questions were quantitative, with comment boxes and open-ended questions in key areas to invite qualitative responses and clarifications. Certain sections of the survey were only visible to, and therefore only answered by, those to whom the question applied, eg, whether or not a husband or partner worked in the media was a question only visible to respondents who indicated they were either married, or in a relationship, and likewise for the follow-up questions on mentors, training, etc.

Administration

The survey was administered over a one-month period in June–July 2013, and disseminated via email, social media (Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn) and professional networks.

Dissemination

Requests were sent to the Heads of Human Resources of several leading media houses soliciting their assistance (eg, Standard Media Group, Nation Media Group, Royal Media Services, Radio Africa Group, Media Max) in disseminating the survey to their staff, but none of the media houses responded, even after several reminders and follow-ups.

On a brighter note, media-related organisations active on Twitter were more responsive and helped disseminate the survey. Of the 13 organisations and networks contacted, eight retweeted the survey request, including the Association of Media Women in Kenya (AMWIK) whose efforts, I believe, accounted for the largest number of respondents following their rediffusion via Twitter and by email. Notably, a reminder by AMWIK to their members resulted in a visible spike in respondents on each occasion. The other

seven who retweeted were: AWC, FEMNET, IWME, Kenyan Woman, Make Every Woman Count, Media Focus on Africa and Media Source Africa. Those that did not respond were Africa 24 Media, Africa Gender & Media Initiative, Black Feminists, Coalition on Violence Against Women and the Media Council of Kenya

About 20 women journalists on Twitter were also contacted directly and an additional four by email. Since names were optional for the survey, it is difficult to ascertain who responded and who did not, but at least four directly confirmed to me that they had responded. To maximise the reach, I requested all the individual journalists I contacted to also spread the word to colleagues. Most did not respond. On Twitter, those contacted included Anne Kiguta, Asha Mwilu, Carol Radull, Betty Kyalo, Farida Karoney, Felista Wangarĩ, Grace Wekesa, Janet Mbugua, Julie Gĩchũrũ, Kathryn Omwandho, Laura Walubengo, Lillian Muli, Linda Oguttu, Nyambura Gĩthongo, Naisula Lesuuda, Sally Mbilu, Sophia Wanuna, Terryanne Chebet and Wilkista Nyabwa. An inbox message on Facebook to Caroline Mutoko, who has a considerable following on Facebook (370,000+), also went unanswered. Felista Wangarĩ however disseminated the survey via a journalists' page on Facebook.

A tweet to Linus Gitahi, Chief Executive Officer of the Nation Media Group, went unanswered. He was in a group of about seven potentially influential individuals with accounts on Twitter contacted to help disseminate the survey, of whom four responded positively. These were Betty Murungi, Joe Kadhi, Mũmbi Kaigwa (also via Facebook) and Ory Okolloh. The other three who did not respond were Rosemary Okello-Orlale (then

AWC Executive Director), Dinah Musindarwezo (FEMNET Executive Director) and Caroline Mutoko, although it emerged afterwards that the Twitter account @mutoko_caroline was not run by Caroline Mutoko, and it considerably lost followers after she announced it was not her account. I did however also contact her on Facebook.

Chapter 3: Survey results

Responses and response rate

A total of 43 people took the survey, of whom 30 (70%) completed it. Name of respondent was indicated as desirable but not mandatory. I deliberately designed this field as optional to maximise response rate, as well as assure candid responses, by accommodating respondents who preferred anonymity. This turned out to have been the right decision since of the 43 respondents, less than a quarter (only 9, corresponding to 21%) provided their names, and indeed 4 only gave their first name!

It is not possible to compute a response rate relative to the population, since – to my best knowledge – the population is unknown: no figures appear to exist on the number of women media professionals in Kenya, and undertaking such a census is beyond the scope and resources of this study.

However, for the purposes of this study, the number who responded was adequate since, as was stated in the proposal, the focus was on quality and depth, over quantity and breadth. As Zuiderveld (2011) states, several scholars (de Bruin 2004; Melin 2008; North 2009) “have demonstrated the potential of a small number of in-depth interviews with journalists, especially when their aim was not to present descriptive facts, but stories and narratives that together provide useful insights into the gendered structures of newsrooms.” Administered on an online environment, the survey instrument provided room and flexibility for virtual in-depth ‘conversations’. The structured questions, were short and clear, and had a comment box for almost every question

where this was relevant, with an open-ended question at the end. Terms such as ‘mentoring’ and ‘sexual harassment’ were defined to ensure all respondents had a common understanding of them. If respondents wished to revise their response, they could navigate backwards on the survey, before submission. But I had to disable the facility that would have allowed them to make modifications after submission, since this facility only allows one response per computer – and would hence have barred respondents from sharing computers for the survey. Sharing of computers was desirable, in a bid to optimise the response rate and also in recognition of the reality that at both the workplace and at home, computers are more often than not shared.

If the media houses approached had been more cooperative and responsive, I could have had some indicative figures on the demographics for the population the respondents were drawn from. The MCK 2013 report was a possible source, given its assumed figures of a 65%–35% male-to-female ratio for journalists. However, while noting the difficulty in arriving at accurate figures citing perfectly valid reasons,⁷ the spread in the estimated total number of journalists in the report has too wide a variance (50%), statistically speaking. The number in one instance is estimated at 10,000 (on page 7), then in another instance as 15,000 (on page 12).

This lack of support by the media industry on gender statistics was however not unexpected given difficulties encountered by previous researchers, and which I had

⁷ Including just simply defining who is a journalist in Kenya, for reasons beyond the purpose of this study, which are well outlined in the MCK report.

pointed out as a possible impediment in my pre-research proposal (page 9) thus: “But it should be noted that a robust exploration of this area [mainstreaming gender in media staffing] would require the cooperation of media houses, and this may not always be forthcoming.” Previous research by AWC faced similar impediments, with AWC reporting in their 2009 work that three of the media organisations surveyed “in Kenya did not provide information on the number of employees by gender.” The three are the Nation Media Group, Royal Media Services and K24 (then a stand-alone television station and now part of the Media Max Group).

This regrettable gap in gender information cited above, which is further exacerbated by lack of cooperation and apparent apathy and indifference by players in the media industry, is indicative of a broader context, where there is a dearth of documentation, and statistics are scarce. In Africa, women-based media analyses are few and far apart in communication studies compared to other regions – a deplorable situation decried by Opoku-Mensah (2001) and Gadzekpo (2009), among others. While there have been notable seminal works by IWMF, UNESCO and WACC, regrettably, this perennial gap between feminist theory and communication research still largely holds today. And if key players in the media are unable or unwilling (or both) to provide gender-disaggregated staffing statistics, the situation is unlikely to improve in the foreseeable future (thus rendering it impossible to establish a credible baseline which can subsequently be monitored for progress, regression or stagnation).

Analysis

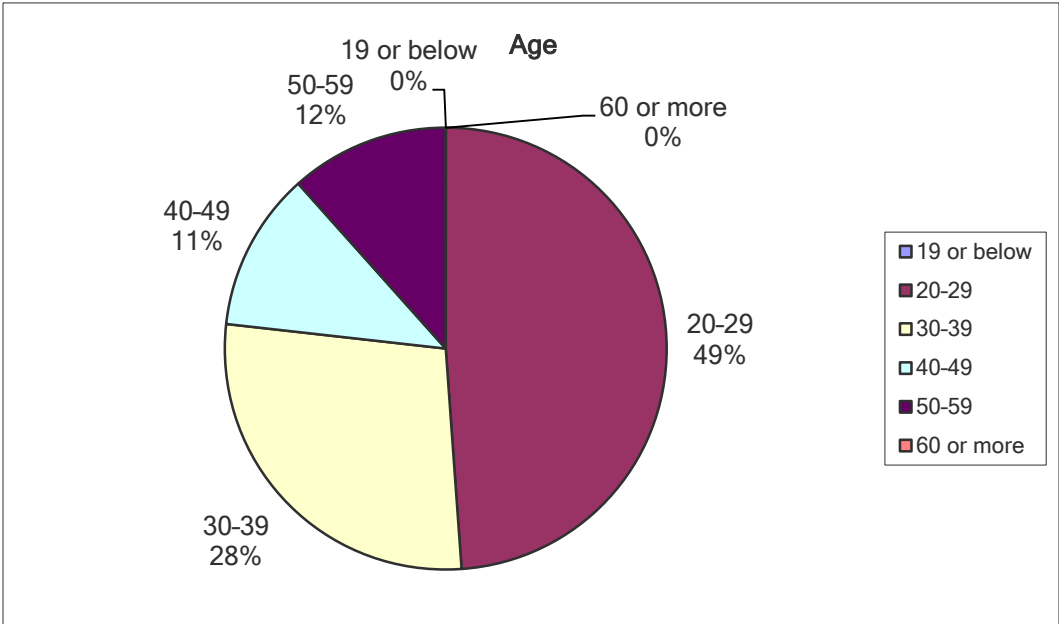
Findings were analysed using the in-built tools of Survey Monkey Premium, complemented by MS-Excel where necessary. Those findings are presented in the sections that follow in narrative, tabular and chart formats.

Profile of respondents

Age

Nearly half (49%) the respondents were in the 20–29 age bracket, with none in the extreme upper and lower ranges (ie, 19 or under, or 60 or over) (see Chart 1).

Chart 1. Age of survey respondents



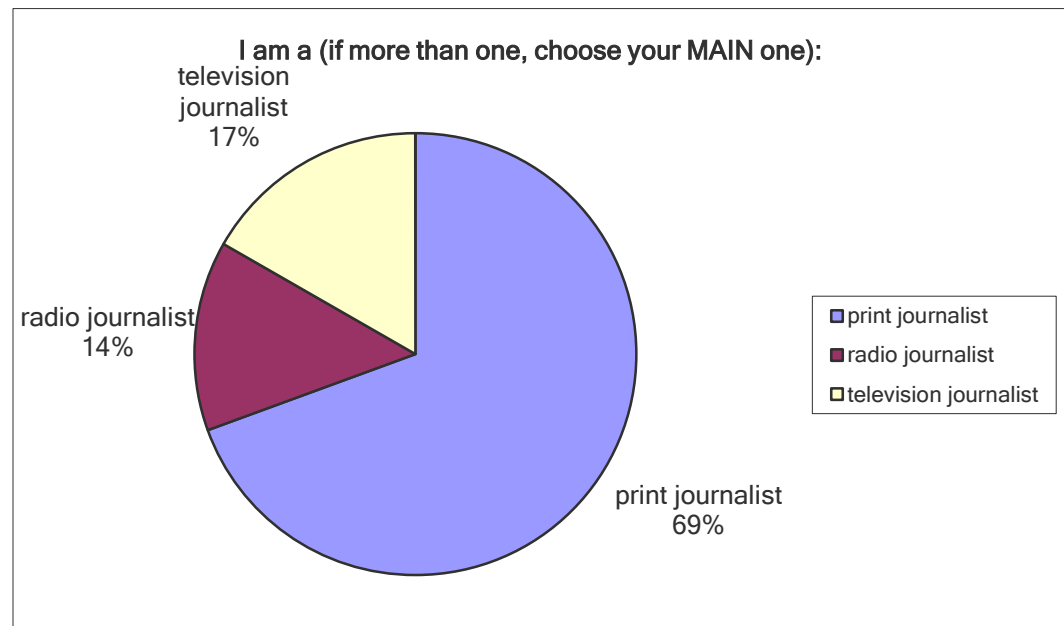
Family status

Most (63%) did not have children, and just over half (56%) were single. None were widowed, 21% were married, 7% divorced or separated, and 16% were in a relationship. Interestingly, of the respondents who were married or in a relationship, 94% reported that their husband or partner *did not* work in the media.

Professional background

The majority of respondents (70%) were print journalists (the survey question required that if they worked in more than one area in the media, they select only their **MAIN** one).

Chart 2. Distribution of respondents across media genres

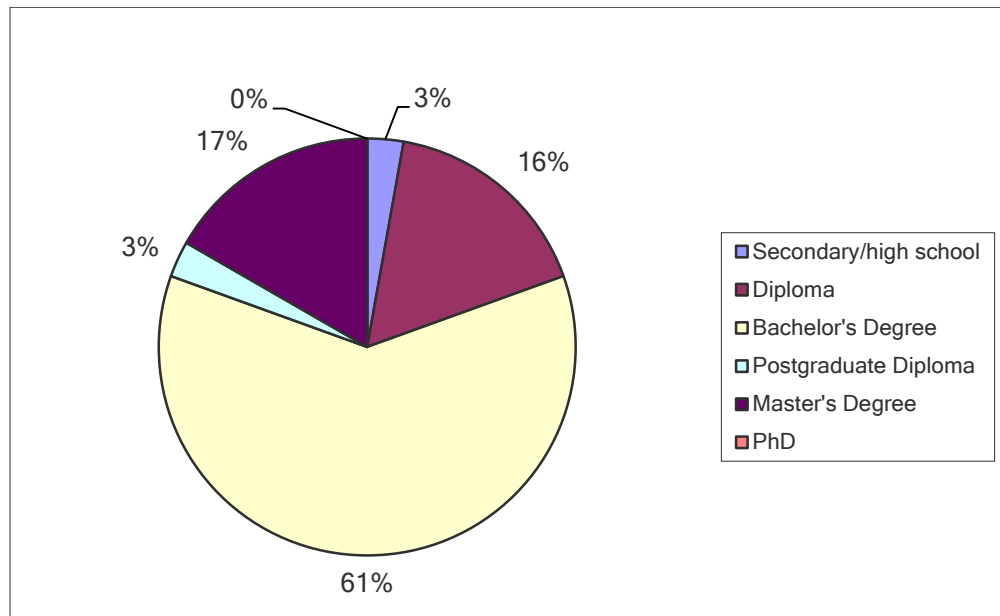


Education and professional training

Education

Respondents were highly educated, and only 17% did not have formal training in journalism or media studies. Eighty-one percent had a Bachelor's degree (the bulk, at 61%), a postgraduate diploma or a Master's degree. None had a PhD. See Chart 3 below for details.

Chart 3. Highest level of education attained by respondents



Professional training

Delving deeper beyond general education to ***specialised professional media training***, the vast majority of respondents (nearly 70%) are trained, holding a range of professional qualifications from a diploma to a Master's degree in media studies, as shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Highest level attained of specialised professional training in journalism or media studies

No	Status/highest level attained	Percentage of respondents
1.	No formal training in journalism or media studies	17%
2.	Certificate courses	8%
3.	Diploma	19%
4.	Bachelor's degree	39%
5.	Postgraduate diploma	3%
6.	Master's degree	8%
7.	PhD	–
8.	Other	6%

Explanations given for the selection ‘other’ in Table 1 above were on-the-job training and short courses.

Motivations for a media career

Reasons why respondents chose a media career were varied. Well over half the respondents (nearly 60%) indicated that it was because they aspired to change society, while none indicated glamour and/or prestige, high income, or their parents having been journalists as motivating factors. See Table 2 below.

Table 2. Responses to the question 'What led you to a media career?'

No	Reason stated	Percentage of respondents
1.	One or both parents are/were journalists	–
2.	Husband/partner is/was a journalist	2.8%
3.	Other relatives	2.8%
4.	Friends	2.8%
5.	Glamour and/or prestige	–
6.	To be an agent for societal change	58%
7.	High income	–
8.	Other	33%

The reasons stated under ‘other’ (33%) in Table 2 above included intrinsic reasons such as “infatuation with radio!”; inspiration from high school literature teacher; a love for writing; passion; and an inquisitive and social nature.

The beat: what areas are women covering?

The largest proportion (28%) of the women who responded to the survey is in the gender/family beat, as shown below in Table 3. These findings will be discussed further in the discussions section, as some beats are considered as catalysts accelerating career

advancement, including a trajectory into management and leadership, while others are characteristic of the ‘velvet ghetto’. Not all beats are equal!

Table 3. Distribution of beats covered by respondents

No	Beat	Percentage	Classification*
1.	Arts/Entertainment/Fashion/Society	17%	Soft
2.	Agriculture/Environment	8%	Core
3.	Education/Training/Careers	6%	Core
4.	Gender/Family	28%	Soft
5.	Health	–	Soft
6.	Human rights/Law/Courts	6%	Core
7.	Investigative stories	6%	Core
8.	Politics/Parliament	6%	Core
9.	Economics/Business/Finance	8%	Core
10.	News	8%	Core
11.	Religious/Spiritual Matters	–	Soft
12.	Science/Technology	3%	Core
13.	Sports	–	Core
14.	Other	6%	-

**This soft or core classification is my own evaluation, based on literature from preceding studies and sentiments expressed by survey respondents. While 55% of the respondents are in core areas, qualitative analysis of comments by survey respondents shows this may not reflect the general population.*

Listed under ‘Other’ above were social media and development. While ‘development’ could be argued not to be a beat as such in its own right, it is interesting to see social media specialists emerging, as journalism embraces these new and emerging media. This would be an interesting area to consider in core media operations (and not as a peripheral) and in the training curricula for institutes specialising in media training.

Regular employees vs ‘independents’

Forty-two percent of the respondents were ‘independents’, either freelancers (36%) or correspondents for more than one media house (6%). The rest (58%) were on regular

employment in secular private- and public-sector media houses. None of the respondents were from faith-based media houses (see Table 4).

Table 4. Media houses from which respondents were drawn, and self-employed media professionals

	Media house	Percentage
<i>Public sector</i>		
1.	Kenya Broadcasting Corporation	6%
<i>Private sector</i>		
2.	Capital Group	–
3.	Media Max	–
4.	Nation Media Group	17%
5.	Radio Africa Group	3
6.	Royal Media Services	–
7.	Standard Group	8%
<i>Faith-based</i>		
8.	Hope FM	–
9.	Iqra FM	–
10.	Radio Rahma	–
11.	Waumini FM	–
<i>Other</i>		
12.	Media houses other than listed above	25%
Self-employed media professionals		
13.	Freelancers	36%
14.	Correspondent for more than one media house	6%

As the single largest group of respondents were from outside the media houses (total of 42% for freelancers and correspondents), the responses from this group are analysed separately from those in fulltime and regular employment.

For ease of reference to these two very distinct groups, I shall refer to the 'independents' (freelancers and correspondents) as 'Group A', and to those in full-time regular employment in the media as 'Group B'.

Different questionnaires for full-timers and 'independents'

In the survey design (see *Annex*), after the biodata section, Group A and Group B were automatically streamed to a different set of questions in Part II of the survey, questions which were tailored to fit their circumstances (Questions 12–18 for Group A and Questions 19–46 for Group B). The last part of the survey (Question 47 onwards) was common to both groups.

Worth noting is that 67% of Group A indicated they were freelancers or correspondents **by choice**, and that 50% of them had been in this line of work for 1–2 years; 17% for 3–5 years; 8% for 6–9 years; and 25% for more than 10 years (see Chart 4 below). Given the high percentage that are in this line of work by choice, it could therefore be logically inferred that these women are highly satisfied with their job, and this will be discussed further in *Mentoring and motivation*.

Duration of employment: 'independents' vs employees

The length of time respondents had been in employment is indicated in Chart 4 and Chart 5 below for Groups A and B, respectively.

Chart 4. Group A – duration in employment

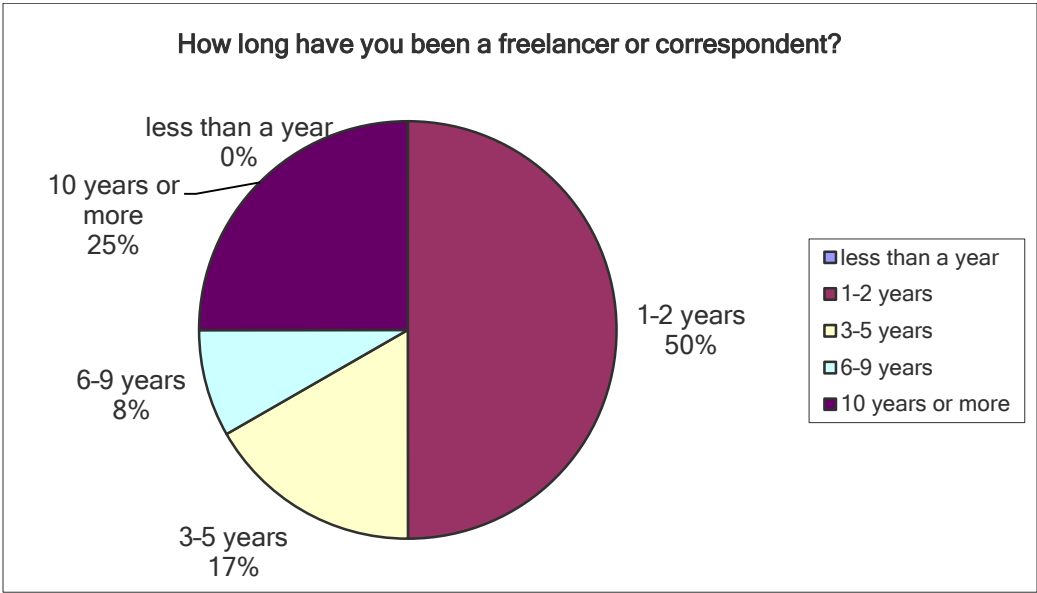
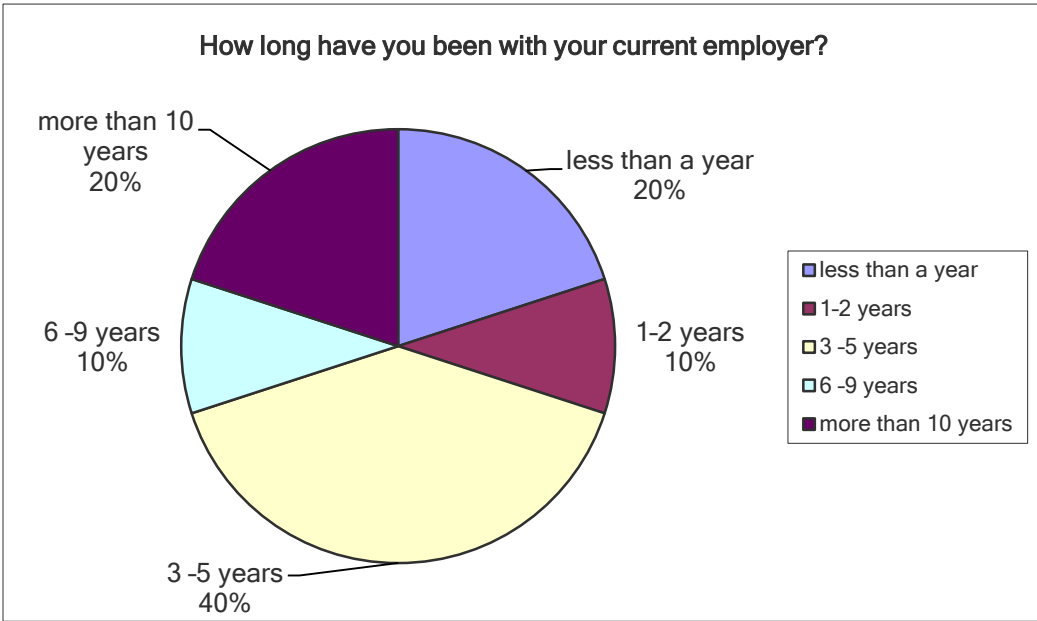


Chart 5. Group B – duration in employment



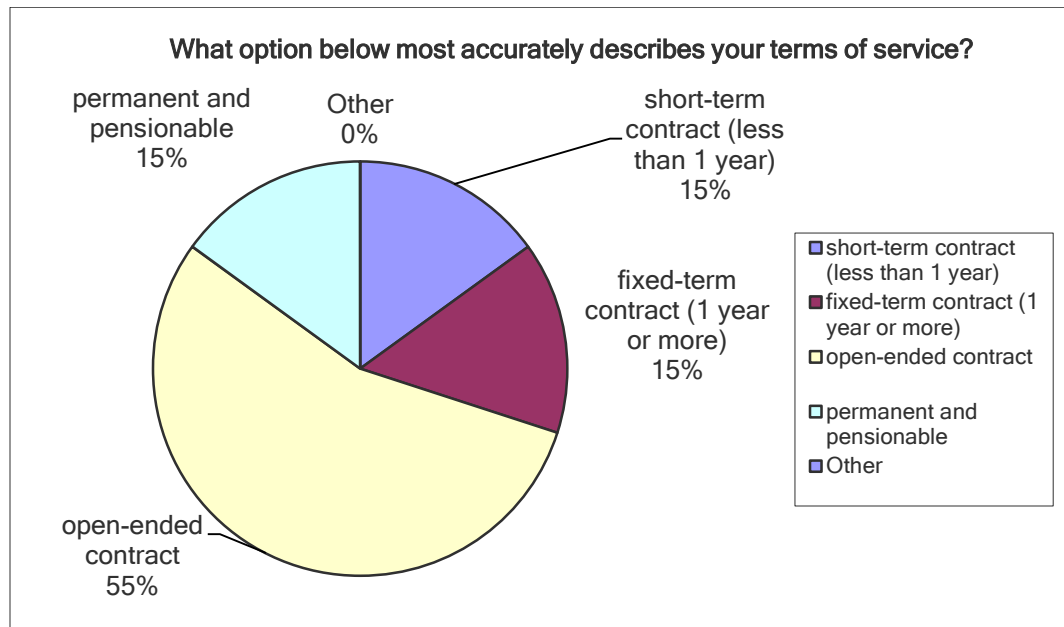
Additional demographics on Group B (regular employees)

Placement, responsibilities, and employment status

Half the respondents (50%) self-identified as being in managerial positions. The statistics sharply shifted upwards however when it came to classifying their function, irrespective of job title: here, 75% described themselves as ‘creators and executors’ (characteristic of managers), versus 25% who classified themselves as ‘helpers’. By their own evaluation, therefore, 75% of the respondents are already carrying out what are ‘leadership/management functions’, but only 50% are formally recognised as such.

Ninety-percent of the respondents in this group are in fulltime employment, with a majority (55%) being on open-ended contracts. Terms of service are in Chart 6 below, and the majority (70%) are in very good standing, being either on open-ended contracts (55%) or on permanent and pensionable terms (15%).

Chart 6. Terms of service: Group B



Orientation and expectations

Sixty-five percent indicated they got adequate job orientation at the time of joining the media house, with 35% indicating they did not. But none indicated having received no orientation, and an impressive 85% indicated that it was clear to them what was expected of them at work. Orientation is one small element of mentoring, and on this particular element the sector appears to be doing well.

Maternity leave policy and child-care assistance

On maternity leave, 60% indicated this was provided, 20% indicated it was not, and a (very worrying) 20% did not know whether or not maternity leave was provided. None of the respondents' employers provided childcare assistance at the workplace. These findings are discussed further in the next chapter.

Chapter 4: Discussion of selected findings

Ingredients for career success

The findings in Chart 7 and Chart 8 below are interesting: 63% do not have children, and most of the respondents (56%) are single. The combined percentage for those who are married (21%) or in a relationship (16%) is 37%.

Chart 7. Responses to the question "Do you have children?"

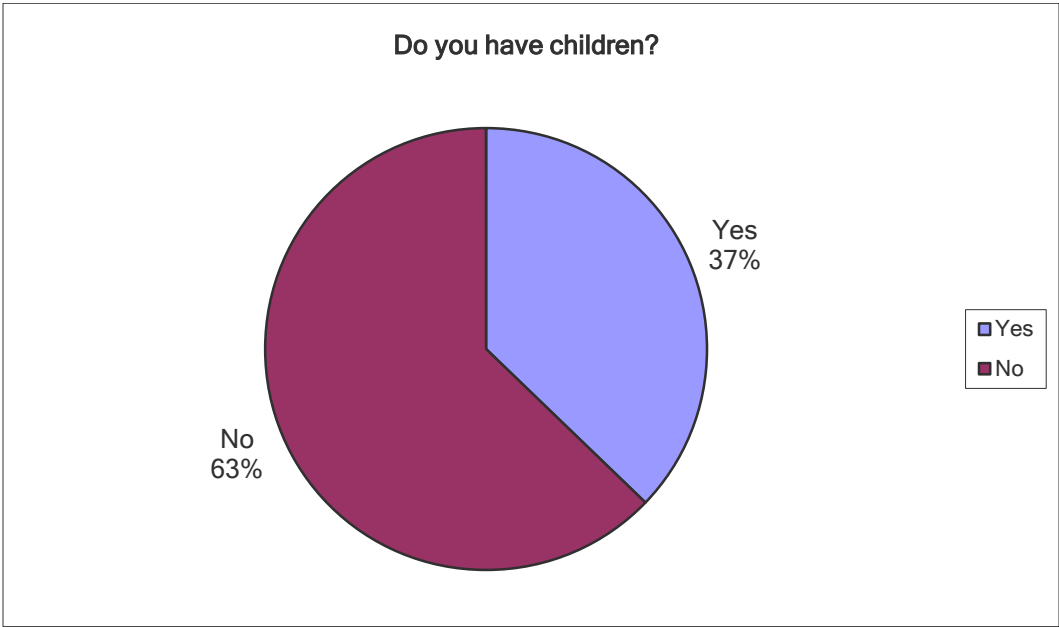
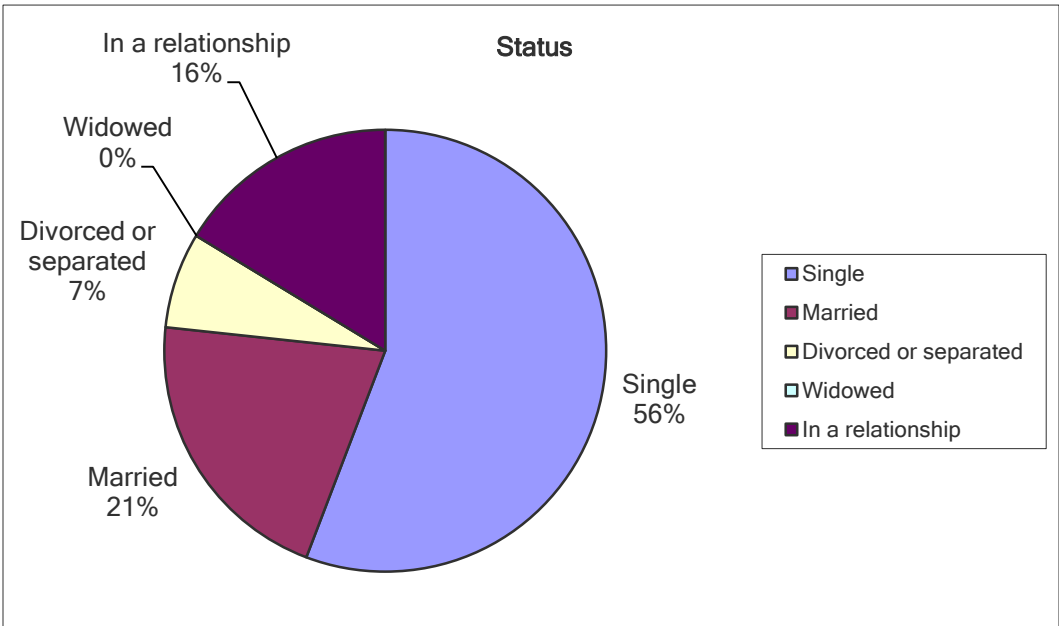


Chart 8. Social or family status of respondents



The significance of these demographics is that single and childless professionals, especially women, are the classical high-fliers in most fields, especially those as

demanding and potentially itinerant as media. These personal demographics often go with high job satisfaction and career success, given the trade-off on family and social relationships and attendant obligations.

However, the findings in Chart 9 on Group B job satisfaction do not reflect this.

Analysing the 'childless' sub-group, the bulk (80%) are in non-managerial positions, with 10% in senior management and 10% in middle management. For the 'single' sub-group, those in middle and senior management are 18.2% each, with 63.6% as non-managerial staff. For respondents who are both single and childless, 77.8% are non-managerial staff, while senior and middle managers are 11.1% each. From these findings, it would appear that there is no correlation between being single and/or childless, and an accelerated career path into management for women in the media sector in Kenya. Lack of expanded family or social obligations do not in any way appear to help the women's careers.

An article by Beusman (2013) entitled *Single women and the 'inadvertent second shift'* alludes to an argument by Ayana Byrd that for single and childless female employees, "employers assume that you don't really have any valid external demands on your time" and therefore, employers proceed to [one could say inadvertently] load more on these employees over their married-with-children co-workers.

How then is it that in the media sector in Kenya, women:

- are not advancing in their careers as much as they should, given the above trade-off that should favour career advancement?

- are not highly satisfied with their media jobs and continue to be under-represented in the upper echelons of media management?

These and other related questions would be an area worthy of further research, given that the media women are highly educated, have professional media training, and have the right motivations to make for a highly successful career and a climb up the hierarchy. And, as the survey indicates, women in addition to all these, aspire to lead and manage, so all the essential ingredients for career success are in place. What then is missing and why? What militates against successful and upward-oriented career paths for women in the media in Kenya?

From the survey, we can only infer that being a woman, with or without family, is a career drawback in the media in Kenya – a hypothesis further analysed in the section Does being a woman confer positive, negative or neutral capital?

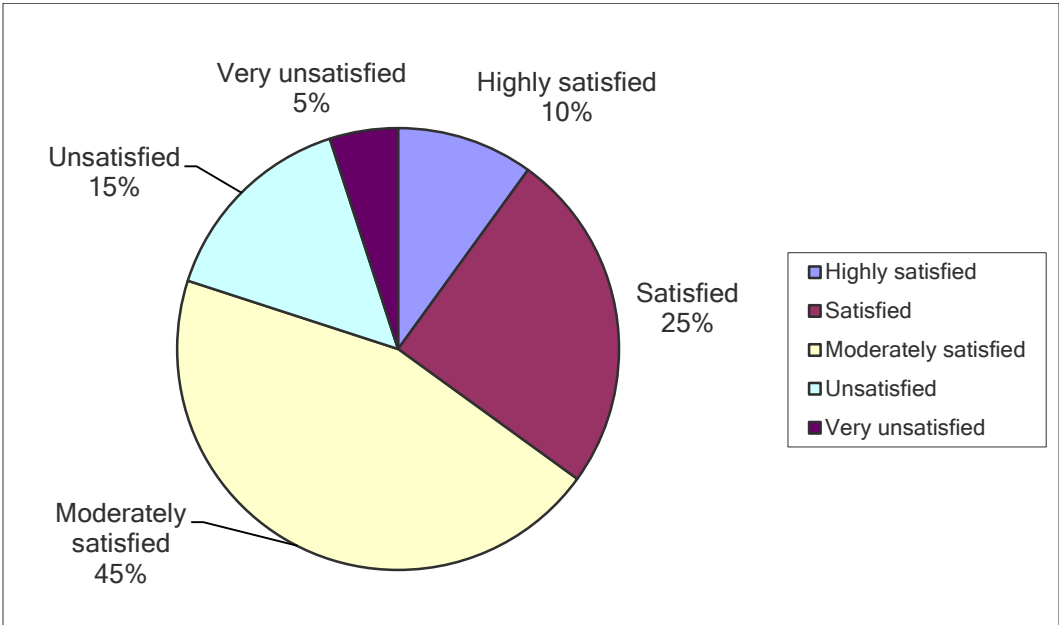
Mentoring, motivation and job satisfaction: any links?

Three-quarters of the freelancers and correspondents (Group A) were in a mentoring relationship, with half of them (50%) as both a mentor and mentee (ie, a person being mentored by another). Only 25% were not in a mentoring relationship. The Group A mentor–mentee percentage contrasts very sharply with Group B, where those who are both mentors and mentees are only 25%. However, the number of those that are not in a mentoring relationship is about the same, with Group B reporting 30% to Group A's 25%. Group B has more mentors (30%) compared to Group A (8%), while for mentees, both groups are about the same (A with 17% and B with 15%). Most mentors are

female, with Group B reporting 63% female and Group A 88% female. Considering that mentoring is an important contributor to career advancement and is largely based on a senior–junior relationship (with mentors as seniors and mentees as juniors (CGIAR Gender & Diversity Program Working Paper 44A), the continued dearth of women in the upper echelons of media management could therefore work against the advancement of women from the lower to the upper ranks, due to lack of mentors, enablers and role models in the upper ranks.

More than two-thirds (67%) of Group A indicated they were freelancers or correspondents by their own choice, with the balance (33%) indicating that they been forced into this line of work by circumstances. We can take that first percentage (67%) as an indicator of high job satisfaction. For Group B, job satisfaction was rated as follows in Chart 9.

Chart 9. Group B ratings on job satisfaction



The percentage for ‘highly satisfied’ and ‘satisfied’ adds up to 35%, which is nearly half of 67% reported by Group A. It would therefore appear that Group A are much more motivated than Group B, since motivation is linked to job satisfaction. Moreover, nearly half (45%) of Group B indicated they would consider taking a comparable (and not higher) position in another media house, which is a very telling statistic on staff motivation – or in this case, the lack of it. This is in sharp contrast to the freelancers and correspondents who are in this field by choice (67%), and who are probably therefore unlikely to consider a career as regular fulltime media-house employees.

Examining Group A and Group B results, job satisfaction appears to be linked to motivation to mentor, or to be mentored, or both. Staff who are themselves unsatisfied or demotivated are unlikely be in a mentoring relationship either as mentors or as mentees. Group A has a higher rate of respondents in a dual mentor–mentee role (ie,

they are mentors and are also being mentored). A possible explanation could be that freelancers, having more job satisfaction, are more likely to be more positively disposed to mentoring, whether as mentors or as mentees, compared to fulltime employees. Another possible inference is that freelancers enjoy more flexibility on their time and mentoring relationships in contrast to full-timers who are in a rigid structured and 'official' setting. It is also noteworthy that 85% of Group B indicated that their media house has no formal staff mentoring programme. From this and the foregoing, it is therefore reasonable to infer that in the absence of a formal mentoring programme and corresponding policy, organisational practices and unwritten and informal institutional policies are less favourable towards, or even frowned upon, mentoring. And yet, the work environment itself for Group B lends itself to, and creates opportunities for, mentoring, given that Group B respondents all met their main mentor in a professional (as opposed to social) setting (compared to 75% for Group A).

All in all, findings indicate that there could be a definitive link between mentoring, job satisfaction and motivation – and hence career growth and development.

Which beats are catalysts for career advancement?

The 2009 AWC Eastern Africa baseline study reported that:

“...women still cover most of the beats traditionally considered 'soft' or those characterised as 'women issues'.” Among the beats most frequently covered by women are gender equality (92%); human rights (64%); and health issues (62%).”

Table 3 above shows the beats covered by survey respondents, and the picture is not much different. 'Soft' beats are highly unlikely to lead to career advancement or

promotion into managerial ranks, and it would therefore appear that not much has changed between 2009 and 2013, if this small-sample survey is an indicator of the general status of women journalists. Just over half the respondents (51%) are in gender/family; arts/fashion/entertainment; and human rights/law/courts, with the bulk of them (45%) in the first two categories. This appears disproportionate, but in the absence of data on the distribution of male journalists, it is not possible to draw a firm conclusion. However, data from the AWC study gives statistics for male journalists which provide adequate grounds for a tentative conclusion that women would appear to be over-represented in the 'soft' beats, and under-represented in the beats that are 'career accelerators'. The AWC study reported the following:

“More men than women are assigned to cover sports (82%); science and technology (79%); investigative in-depth stories (66%); disaster/war/conflict (64%) and economics/business/finance (56%).”

However, on a positive note, this small-sample survey of the current study revealed that Kenya is no longer at zero for women covering investigative stories or science and technology (see Table 3). It is probably time to monitor the baseline established by the AWC study. One respondent also added the comment that she is “the first woman to handle the crime beat in Kenya” (see comment 6 on Table 6).

Technical training, management and leadership training, and clear upward path

Questions on these areas only applied to Group B, since these questions were about the employers. Sixty-five percent indicated that their employers provided opportunities for

technical or professional education and training, with 77% of the respondents having themselves benefitted from such training, which is very welcome news.

Not so positive is the picture on management and leadership training to facilitate promotion and career advancement, and a clear career path upwards. While half the respondents indicated their employers offered opportunities for training in management and leadership to facilitate promotion and career advancement, a follow-up question to this group showed only 40% of them had benefitted from this training. Furthermore, to the question on whether the pathway to steady career progress in the organisation was clear, responses were 'Yes' (40%); 'No' (35%) and 'Not applicable: there are no opportunities for upward mobility' (25%). Therefore, 60% of the respondents see no prospects for career progress in their current setting – a shocking finding which indicates that for women in the media prospects for career growth and development are very bleak indeed.

Does being a woman confer positive, negative or neutral capital?

In studying media executives in Sweden through a gender lens, Monika Djerf-Pierre (2005) examines gender as capital, based on theories of Pierre Bourdieu and an interpretation of these theories by Toril Moi (1999) entitled *Appropriating Bourdieu*. According to her citation of Bourdieu, capital is not limited to economic assets: rather, it is everything deemed valuable or desirable for a particular field. Bourdieu distinguishes three types of capital:

1. symbolic (status, prestige, legitimacy);

2. economic (material assets); and,
3. social capital (family connections, formal and informal networks, private connections and liaisons, support from important individuals or groups).

Djerf-Pierre states that “Gender never appears in a pure field of its own.” Rather, and here she cites Moi (1999):

“[gender] is always a socially variable entity, one which carries different amounts of symbolic capital in different contexts ...We may nevertheless start from the assumption that under current social conditions and in most contexts maleness functions as a positive and femaleness functions as negative symbolic capital.”

Applying some of Bourdieu’s and Moi’s thinking to the media industry in Kenya, does being a woman confer positive or negative capital? In examining this aspect, I will introduce ‘neutral capital’ as a third indicator, to characterise respondents who consider gender to be neither positive nor negative capital.

Below are the sharply contrasting responses from Groups A and B to the question on whether being a woman has had any effect on their career.

Chart 10. Group A responses on whether gender confers positive, negative or neutral capital

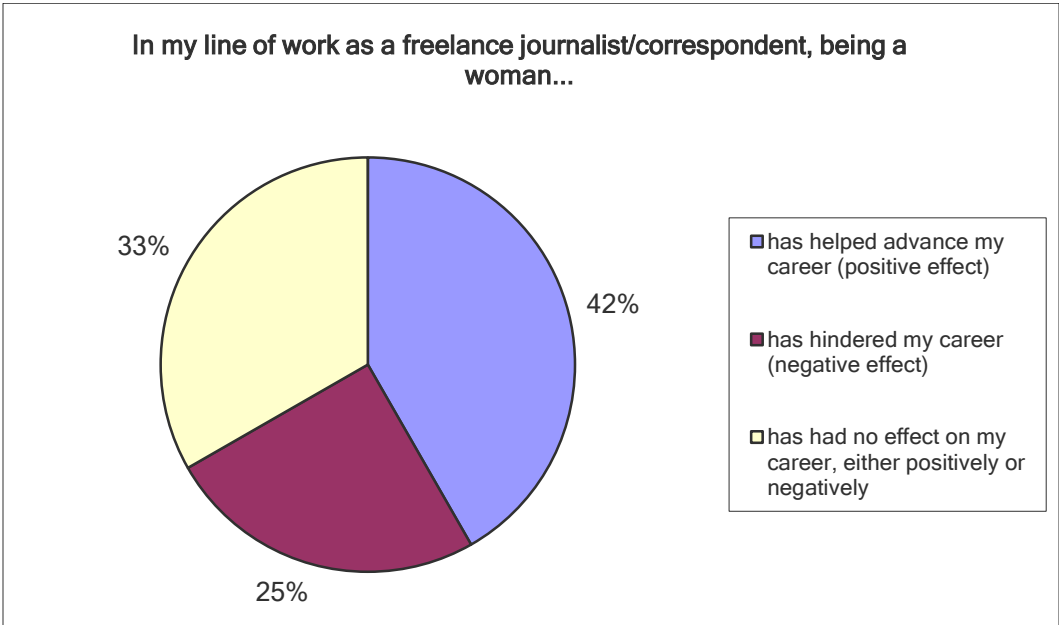
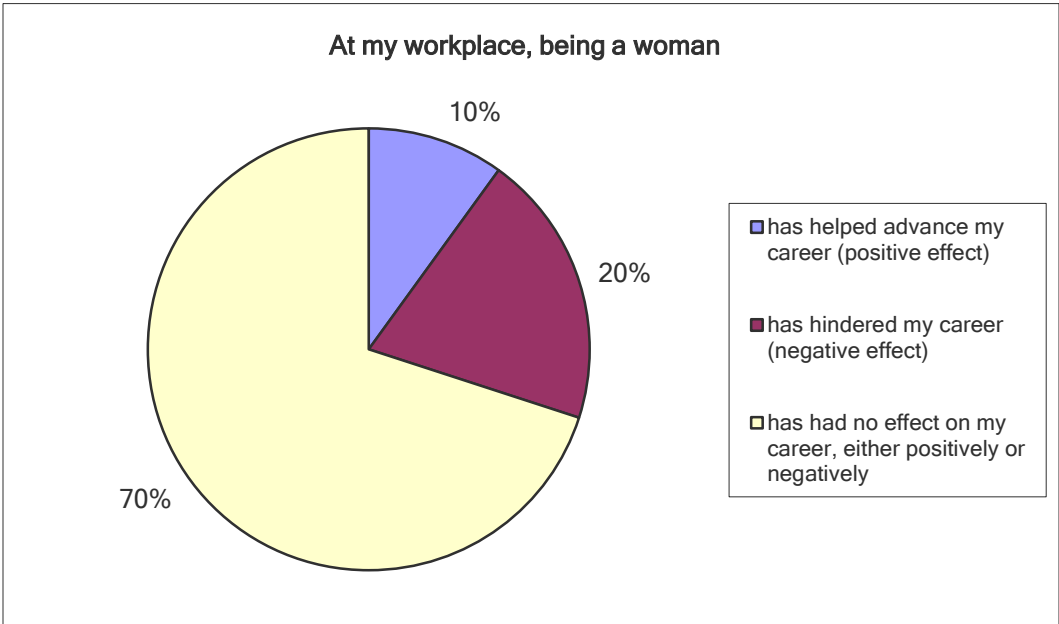


Chart 11. Group B responses on whether gender confers positive, negative or neutral capital?



At a glance, it would appear that women are faring far better as freelancers than in the mainstream media in terms of their ‘woman-ness’ conferring positive capital on their career (42% contrasted with 10%). For women working in the mainstream media, the

vast majority (70%) consider their gender to be a career-neutral factor, while the statistics of those who consider their gender as negative capital is about the same for both groups (25% and 20%). It would be interesting to find out the reasons behind the wide variance (by a factor of 4: 10% vs 42%) in the statistics for gender as positive capital. Perhaps it could be because the self-employed group determine their own beat.

However, that talented women flourish as freelancers setting their own terms of engagement with the media industry is hardly a new finding. *The Double Standard* (1993) cited a forum participant advising women to resign and start their own news operation, instead of “waiting indefinitely for promotions traditionally earmarked for men.” The report further states:

“Looking at her, one cannot fail to notice the absolute confidence the journalist has in herself. This is a woman who does not conform to the stereotype of women as wimpish pushovers incapable of handling high-powered jobs.”

Revisiting the 70% in Group B who consider their gender as neutral capital, this is an intriguing group, given responses to two co-located questions (Questions 46 and 47) which respectively ask them to rate their own media house, then the media sector in general in terms of woman-friendliness (see Chart 13 and Chart 14 further below). Only 30% ‘agree’ and ‘strongly agree’ that their media house is a woman-friendly workplace, while 63% of total respondents (Groups A and B) ‘disagree’ and ‘strongly disagree’ that the media sector in Kenya is a woman-friendly workplace, with none giving the rating ‘strongly agree’.

This contrasts with the response by 70% of Group B that ‘woman-nes’ is a neutral factor, neither advancing nor retarding their careers. It seems to imply that it is in fact negative

capital – being a woman in formal employment in a media house appears to coincide with lower job satisfaction, and hence lower motivation and lower chances of ascending the corporate hierarchy. It could be described as a chicken-and-egg downward spiral of self-sustaining negative organisational self-reinforcement, arising from gender-conferred low motivation and poor job satisfaction.

These apparently contradictory Group B findings warrant further analysis, which shall be done in the next section in the context of some of the explanations provided by respondents to clarify their rating.

“Is my media house a truly woman-friendly workplace?”

The next two questions were only for Group B, while the third was for both Groups.

Chart 12. Woman-friendly policies

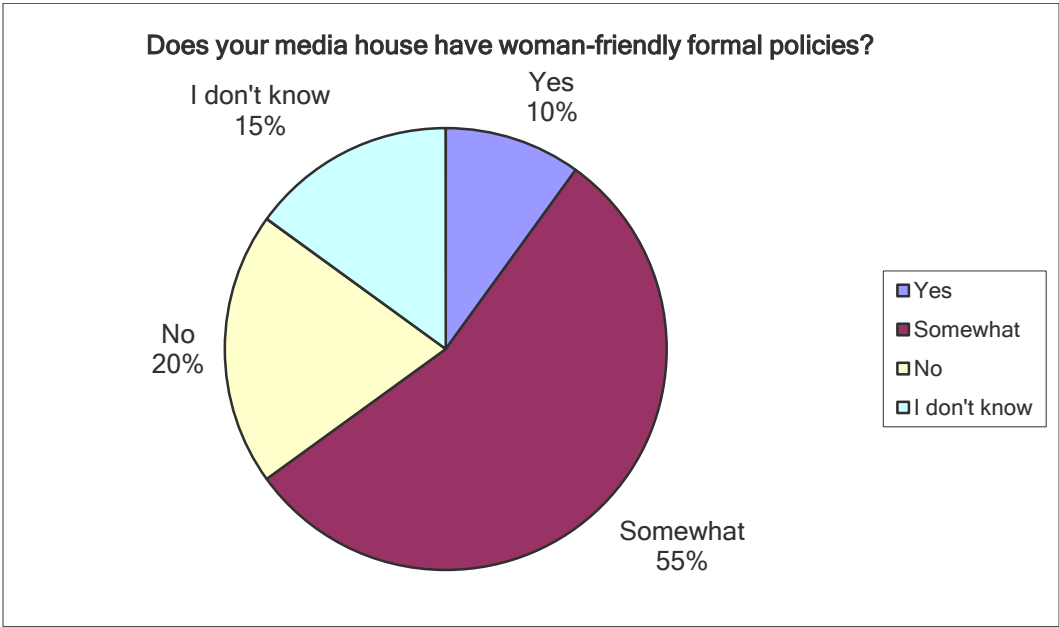


Chart 13. Woman-friendly practices

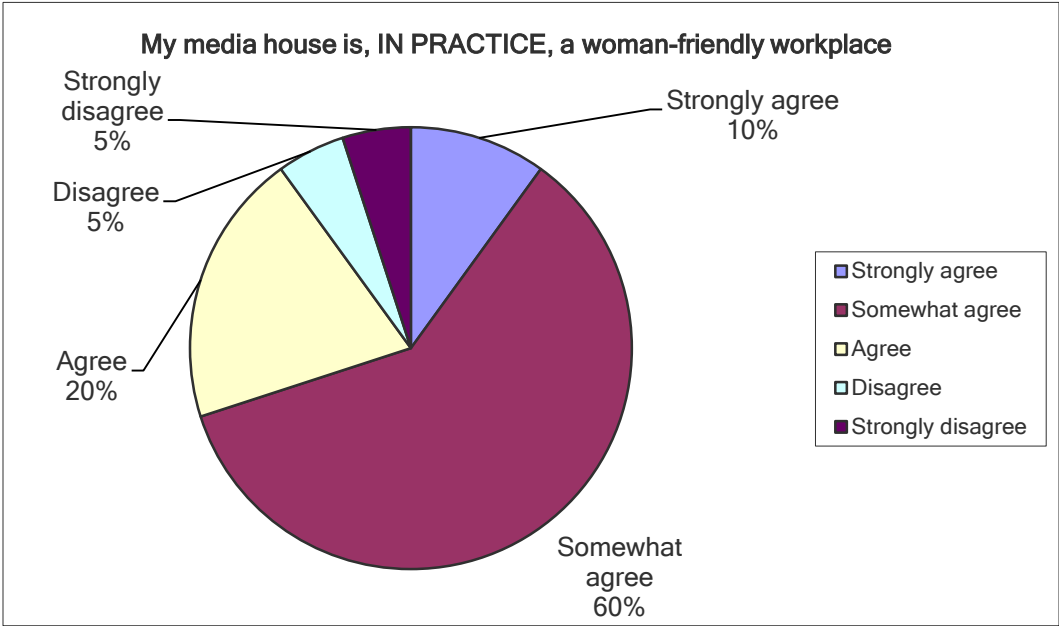
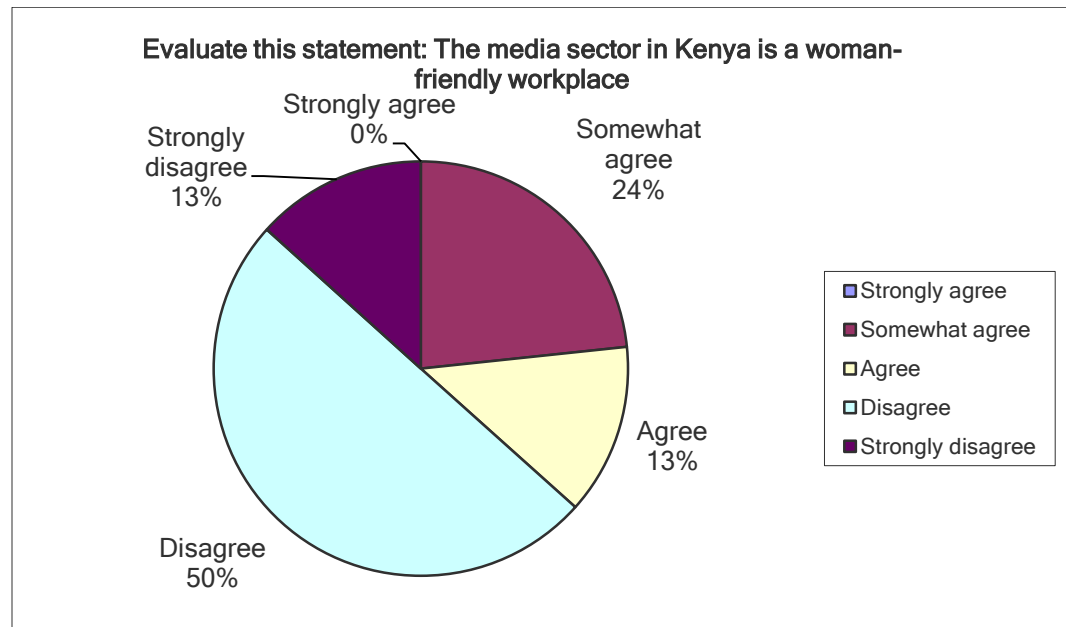


Chart 14. How friendly is the media sector to women employees? (Group A and Group B)



The three charts have been co-located for comparative purposes. **Error! Reference source not found.** shows there are women working in the media (15%) who do not know whether or not their employer has woman-friendly policies, and have no perceptions of their own to offer in this area, since they opted not to use the (optional) comments box below the question, which was for that purpose.

The ratings in Chart 13 are interesting for several reasons. First, because Mugwe (2012) holds that “the corporate culture does not support women’s participation and career advancement.” Secondly, the caution by MCK (2013) on the gap between policy and practice, under *Explanation 2* in the next section, is also relevant in interpreting these charts. Finally, because the media houses have ‘commodified’ women. Certainly in

practice, and probably in policy. This is covered in detail in a later section on gender as ‘positive’ workplace capital.

In rating their own media houses for woman-friendliness *in practice* (Chart 13), there was a follow-up ‘Why?’ question, which elicited the following responses:

Table 5. Explanations on responses to the question "My media house is, IN PRACTICE, a woman-friendly workplace

Rating,* Age, Family status	"Why?" (selected respondent's explanation on their rating)	Media house
Disagree 40–49 Single Children	1. There is no gender policy in terms of recruitment, sexual harassment cases have not been well handled and efforts to have management address this has [sic] fallen on deaf ears.	KBC
Strongly agree • 20–29 • Single • Childless	2. There is no discrepancy on whether you are a woman or a man	NMG
Agree • 20–29 • Single • Childless	3. To some extent it is because of the maternity leave support, but it really depends on one's immediate supervisor. If he (more often than not, it tends to be a man) is supportive of women, then he is likely to be flexible in making sure that your environment is woman-friendly, but most appear as if it does not matter.	NMG
Somewhat agree • 30–39 • In a relationship • Childless	4. For example, the supervisors will not consider sending females to cover events that will prove to be extra challenging for us.	NMG

* Rating scale: strongly agree; somewhat agree; agree; disagree; strongly disagree

Examining the insights

Explanation 1: “There is no gender policy in terms of recruitment, sexual harassment cases have not been well handled and efforts to have management address this has [sic] fallen on deaf ears”

Given that the respondent is from KBC which is government-owned, this is worrying considering the declared government policy on gender parity which is encoded in the Constitution and various laws. It reflects the government's ambivalence to gender issues. What is worse is that considering the relatively better gender rating of KBC (compared to then KTN, Nation newspapers and Standard newspaper) in *The Double Standard* (1993), KBC appears to have regressed in the 20 years since, and appears to be making no effort to comply with the 2010 Constitution three years after. But as we shall see in the next explanation, policy does not always translate into practice.

Explanation 2: *"There is no discrepancy on whether you are a woman or a man"*

This NMG respondent exactly echoes the 20-year-old position of a former Managing Editor, Mr Wangethi Mwangi, who, at a media women's forum (*The Double Standard* 1993), said women have failed to advance their own careers, and have expected to be given special consideration, adding that that women "have expected the job to suit their home and personal life," they "have resented making sacrifices" and that "while interested in the careers of women, the *Nation* newspaper cannot afford to have separate employment policies."

Given the respondent is in the 20–29 age bracket, is single, and has no children, it would be interesting to see if her rating and explanation would still hold when she is older and has acquired more professional experience, and if she in addition has a change in family status by getting into a relationship, getting married or having children. Then as now, it would appear that at NMG, women pay a price for their 'womanity' (inferior assignments, low regard, sexual harassment, having to work twice as hard to be

appreciated, etc). Nor is 'womanity' neutral, rendering the female gender negative capital. *The Double Standard* (1993) observed that "even though there are no special privileges for women journalists at the *Nation*, there is a backlash" and that women did not get the same respect or job assignments as did men. The section title is very apt: *Nation: Official equality, unofficial barriers*. Women are not men, and vice versa. Therefore, equality is not automatically and uncritically equivalent to equity, justice, fair play and a level playing field. Nor does the existence of policies necessarily translate into practice: "women are not equally or adequately represented in the media, despite the existence of equal-opportunity and non-discrimination policies." (MCK 2013).

My 2013 survey respondent from NMG has a 'twin' from 20 years ago, even though from a different media house (the then KTN), cited in *The Double Standard* (1993). Then fairly young and new in the media, she maintained that gender issues did not affect allocation of assignments, her work environment was ideal and that this had "given her confidence that she will someday make it to the top." *The Double Standard* observed: "This reporter still retains the idealism and optimism of youth. But she is fairly new to the network and to the field of journalism, and is not fully conversant with the women's uphill struggle in journalism."

And a respondent to the 2013 survey in the 20–29 age bracket (the same one who featured in Explanation 2 in the section on rating female gender capital) likewise commented:

"Nowadays there is nothing like a woman or a man or [sic] are equal and [sic] would recommend any job to a woman as long as she is comfortable in [sic] it."

The Double Standard's observation on the younger–older dichotomy is corroborated by empirical evidence in the findings of a committee set up to investigate the status of faculty women in science at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), USA, in 1999:

“The Committee discovered that junior women faculty feel well supported within their department and most do not believe that gender bias will impact their careers. Junior women faculty believe, however, that family–work conflicts may impact their careers differently from those of their male colleagues. In contrast to junior women, many tenured faculty women feel marginalised and excluded from a significant role in their departments. Marginalisation increases as women progress through their careers at MIT. Examination of data revealed that marginalisation was often accompanied by differences in salary, space, awards, resources and response to outside offers between men and women faculty, with women receiving less despite professional accomplishments equal to those of their male colleagues. An important finding was that this pattern repeats itself in successive generations of women faculty. The Committee found that as of 1994, the percent of women faculty in the School of Science (8%) had not changed significantly for at least 10 and probably last 20 years.” (MIT 1999)

The echoes and parallels of the dichotomy between younger and older women in science and in the media, in Kenya or in the USA, and the constants in both, are amazing, even if also somewhat depressing. That in both cases the younger consider their career as gender-blind is good news and bad news. The bad news is to see the replication of discrimination against women in two disciplines (journalism and science) that are tightly bound to society and that aspire for excellence, each in their own way. The good news is that women in science is now a well-studied area, from which the women in the media sector, both the younger and the elder, can draw lessons from.

The backstory that provided the rationale for why the MIT Committee was established is even more interesting, and it too has a local equivalent even if the ramifications are reduced, and empirical metrics are missing. In the MIT case, the backstory is that it took one woman and her tape measure, surfacing startling and undisputable metrics that exploded a cherished MIT myth on gender parity.⁸ It demonstrates how easy it is to believe in received wisdom, but even more importantly, how important it is to ***rigorously question*** received wisdom through investigation and empirical evidence. This is applicable to the gender dynamics in staffing in the media sector in Kenya, where gender inequities may be masked by unquestioned myths that showcase official equality while shielding unofficial barriers (a paraphrase from *The Double Standard*, 1993). The local parallel to the MIT 'tape-measure' case, from the same period and with comparable findings, was an informal assessment by Kenyan women in the media in the 1990s on managerial office allocation, cited later in *Media sector and women employees*.

Explanation 3: "To some extent it is because of the maternity leave support, but it really depends on one's immediate supervisor. If he (more often than not, it tends to be a man) is supportive of women, then he is likely to be flexible in making sure that your environment is woman-friendly, but most appear as if it does not matter."

⁸ "When Professor Nancy Hopkins decided to begin research on the development of zebrafish, she made a simple request for an additional 200 square feet of office space. Repeatedly denied, Hopkins used her tape measure (now in an MIT museum) to compare the size of her research space with that of her colleagues. The results were shocking. Male junior professors averaged 2,000 square feet; full professors ranged between 3,000 and 6,000 square feet. She had 1,500 square feet. The ensuing struggle to get that extra 200 square feet would transform the experience of women scientists at MIT and elsewhere." Extracted (with minor adaptation) from source at: <http://bit.ly/1bePJnL>

Although this respondent's rating was 'Agree', considering her explanation above, and that she is childless and has therefore not herself taken maternity leave to see how the written policy works out in practice (anecdotal evidence indicates some [mostly men] consider maternity leave as an undeserved 'holiday' for new mothers), perhaps the respondent's rating should instead have been 'somewhat agree'. There are two possible ways to interpret the respondent's explanations: (1) that the rest of her comment is on maternity leave, and (2) that the rest of her comment after the mention of maternity leave is not about maternity leave. Since it is not possible to determine which is which, both positions shall be treated.

The anecdotal perceptions on maternity leave illustrate the gap that there can be between policy and practice, previously cited. Even as maternity leave is an entitlement, how the policy is implemented and whether a woman professional will be penalised for pregnancy and is apparently subjective, and depends on the gender-sensitivity (or lack thereof) of their (often male) supervisor.

Of note is that the respondent says that most of the supervisors are gender-insensitive. Official policies should not be implemented on the personal whims and interpretations of individual supervisors, nor pegged to – and therefore qualified by – the supervisor's gender sensitivity or insensitivity, rather than on firm institutional practice. It also illustrates the potential transformative effect of more women in management, given the apparent significance of the discretion granted to individual supervisors to determine 'workplace woman-friendliness.'

This means that matters have not improved since 1993 (*The Double Standard*) where a Mr Frank Ojiambo from *The Standard* held that “women’s needs could be catered to [sic] on a personal level through an understanding relationship between the women and their immediate supervisors.” Again, this echoes the NMG official equality but unofficial barriers noted under Explanation 2 illustrative of the existence of a glass ceiling, discussed in a later section in this chapter.

Explanation 4: *For example, the supervisors will not consider sending females to cover events that will prove to be extra challenging for us*

It is not clear whether the respondent considers this to be good or bad, but it clearly indicates that one’s gender is a factor in assignment allocation.

The comment implies a condescending, over-protective, paternalistic attitude towards women professionals in the media from their supervisors who, as already observed, are more likely to be male. The women are clearly perceived as weak and possibly naïve, hence in need of protection. Because of this perceived weakness and/or naiveté, it is therefore likely that they would be denied career-accelerating assignments and the attendant professional growth. It implies a managerial belief that the ability to effectively handle challenging assignments is determined by gender, rather than individual talent and competence.

Below is a tabulation of some of the comments (which were optional on the survey) from both Groups A and B on gender as capital. I’ve added a note (in italics) to the comments that are discordant with the rating by the respondent.

Table 6. Comments (verbatim) on gender as positive, negative or neutral capital - Groups A and B

Rating on nature of gender capital	Comment
<i>Group A</i>	
Positive	1. Oftentimes, I missed out on opportunities due to gender. These are training opportunities, promotions among others. <i>(My note: This respondent considers her gender as positive capital careerwise, but appears to consider that her gender does however have some negative aspects in the workplace)</i>
Negative	2. I left work to be a homemaker for many years, then picked up on my journalism thereafter; Motherhood is good but it has its costs; men do not have to make these decisions.
Neutral	3. Society has faith in people who are in fixed media stations as permanent employees. If you are to look for employment they ask you why you are not permanent and would offer you poor payment in other job offers. <i>(My note: Could be seen to show a gender-neutral lack of respect for freelancers. It could also be indicative of the 'velvet ghetto', discussed later, to pad numbers)</i>
<i>Group B</i>	
Negative	4. It is unfortunate that I may be mistaken to feel that my gender is a drawback on my career (I would not choose to be a man) however I see no reason why I have not risen as I should have in the ranks having the qualifications and experience that I do. My male counterparts who have less qualifications are on much higher positions despite their lower qualifications. 5. It has had some positive effects too. <i>(My note: This respondent indicated her gender as negative capital, so it would seem that for her, the negative outweighs the positive, but she acknowledges that her gender is not entirely negative capital, and does have some positive aspects as well)</i>
Neutral	6. I work the same hours as men and handle serious beats (the first woman to handle the crime beat in Kenya). Nyanza is perceived as the most volatile region especially during politics. I was moved to head the region when campaigns were hot and I have managed to date. What a man can do, a woman can do better! 7. However, I feel that women are not given an opportunity to rise to management. There are few women in the core news management level and women are often not assigned big stories that would help their careers. I feel women are relegated to magazines, where after rising to editorship, they stagnate.

There were no comments from Group B on gender as positive capital. Comment 2 above paradoxically reinforces the hypothesis that perhaps media, more than any other sector, provides women employees with options for flexiplace⁹ and flexitime.¹⁰ This is because it is a 24-hour seven-days-a-week business that is not 'office-bound', unlike other industries that have fixed work hours and work places, closing for the night and over weekends. Likewise the media is well-suited to provide for career off- and on-ramps¹¹ if women have to take time out to have a baby, or to be homemakers and caretakers.

Gadzekpo (2009) observes the revolution of information and communication technologies (ICT) have engendered "opportunities for African women to work from home." By its nature and business, the media is very much part and parcel of this ICT revolution. In and of itself, the 'nature' of media as an endeavour is therefore indeed intrinsically female-friendly, separate and apart from how the media enterprise itself works to, or fails to, create a woman-friendly environment, despite the media field

⁹ Flexiplace, also known as flexible workplace or telecommuting, refers to paid employment performed away from the office, either at home, at a satellite worksite or telecentre, for an agreed-upon portion of the workweek. Designed as an alternative to the traditional work environment, flexiplace can be a valuable tool for managing workload constraints and improving employee efficiency. (USDA Office of Human Resource Management).

¹⁰ Flexitime refers to a non-traditional work scheduling practice which allows full-time employees to choose their individual starting and closing times within certain limits (such as 'not earlier than 5 am' and 'not later than 9 pm'). Flexitime periods usually precede or follow a core time during which all employees must be present. (Business Dictionary.com)

¹¹ 'Off-ramps' and 'on-ramps' on the career highway are terms used by Hewlett and Luce (2005) to describe situations where women 'off-ramp', ie, take a career break, eg, to have a baby or as care-providers for a child with special needs, or an invalid family member. The reverse situation is where the women 'on-ramp' to return to work, or fail to, even as they wish to. Hewlett and Luce explore push and pull factors – unfavourable conditions pushing women to off-ramps or favourable factors pulling women back up the on-ramps.

being positively predisposed to woman-friendliness. Google Inc, discussed in the *On the balance*

Weighing the findings above in conjunction with the statistics in Chart 4 which indicate half the respondents in freelancing have been in their line of work for just 1–2 years, it may be possible that women are increasingly moving to freelancing and media consultancy. These options appear to be more woman-friendly and give higher job satisfaction, thereby providing greater motivation as a working environment. It would be interesting indeed to engage with this demographic of women media professionals to discover the reasons behind their choice, and their markedly high motivation. Sample this comment from one of the respondents that falls in this group:

“As a consultant, my experience in the newsroom is a major asset and I have been able to leverage it to help me transition into a phase in my career in which I am doing a lot of work boosting the capacity of radio stations to develop quality content, and set up listener groups for purposes of feedback and research as well as revenue generation. I am in a position now to choose a path that is taking me deeper into the areas of research, adult learning and behaviour change with specific regard to the media.”

Over the fence, matters seem much gloomier for the women in regular fulltime employment in the media. Some women did not know sexual harassment when confronted with it, nor recognise it for what it was. It is also entirely feasible that for the 70% who report gender as a career-neutral factor, the negative capital is such a ‘normal’ aspect of their organisational environment that they do not even see it, much less recognise it for what it is. Second-class professional citizenship the norm for them, the natural order of things. This too is a disturbing area warranting further research, particularly to unravel the puzzle and to address the reported paradox of “being a

woman does not affect my career”, while at the same time, “my employer, and the media sector in general, are not a woman-friendly workplace”.

From the foregoing, it is therefore possible that there are women in regular media employment who do not perceive the glass ceiling and ‘velvet ghetto’ that many others perceive, and as a result, they are unaware of their disadvantaged gender-conferred status. I shall examine each of these two concepts in turn.

What needs to be done section under *Media sector and women employees*, offers a comparable and sharply contrasting example.

Yet, even with all these ‘natural endowments’, it would appear that the media sector has failed to support the careers of women, even as it has within it the intrinsic mechanisms to do so without expending much effort. Says Rose Lukalo-Owino, a journalist formerly working fulltime in the media, and now a Trustee of the Media Policy

Research Centre:

“Women have to make the choice between family and their careers. Of course you cannot choose against your family, unless you are the sole breadwinner.”
(Chege 2012)

This clearly illustrates that the woman who is her family’s only source of income will be forced by the woman un-friendly environment of the media sector to sacrifice other family obligations because she must keep working to support her family economically, however unfavourable the terms and conditions at work.

This observation on the media's failure to support women is further buttressed by the following comments from survey respondents:

"...Mature media women also find themselves without a job, while to their male counterparts, this is an advantage in terms of experience."

"...women are marginalised in many areas in the Media industry. For instance, if a woman becomes pregnant, she misses out on many opportunities and is not supported in her role as a mother/wife."

It would appear that the flexibility of the freelance environment (going by Group A comments) is much more conducive and female-friendly, and a transition from freelancing into the mainstream media could be a negative career move (including economically, going by the second part of comment 3 in Table 6).

From the foregoing, the symbolic capital (status, prestige legitimacy) that 'womanity' brings to the fulltime media workplace is negative. Negative gender capital can be countered by amassing other types of capital (Djerf-Pierre 2005), but even where they can, Kenyan women media professionals are unlikely to take this approach, given that, as indicated in the survey, there may be a critical mass of them that do not realise that their gender is negative capital. Secondly, they have little other capital to fall back on, given that social capital for instance, "includes access to formal and informal networks, support from mentors and other forms of valuable social connections" (Djerf-Pierre 2005). As elaborated in a later section of this chapter on informal networks, women are shut out of career-building informal networks that tend to be exclusively male or 'male-cultured', referred to informally as the 'boys' network'. The fact that the partners of most (94%) of the respondents who are married or in a relationship do not work in the

media further erodes their workplace social capital. The only other capital left to the media woman is economic (since her professional capital is neutralised by her gender), or economics-derived social capital in the form of a powerful family name or powerful economic connections that enhance their social capital. Such 'transferred' capital, even as it may be powerful, is however feared rather than respected. It is authoritarian, rather than authoritative, and is therefore more of a liability (to its holder) than an asset in any workplace.

Sexual harassment

This mid-1990s World Bank definition of sexual harassment still holds today:

“Sexual harassment is any unwelcome sexual advance, request for sexual favours and other unwelcome verbal, non-verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature which unreasonably interferes with work, is made a condition of employment, or creates an intimidating, hostile or offensive environment.” (The World Bank, 1994)

Various adaptations of this original text (eg, Joshi and Nachison, 1996; Stockdale, 1996;

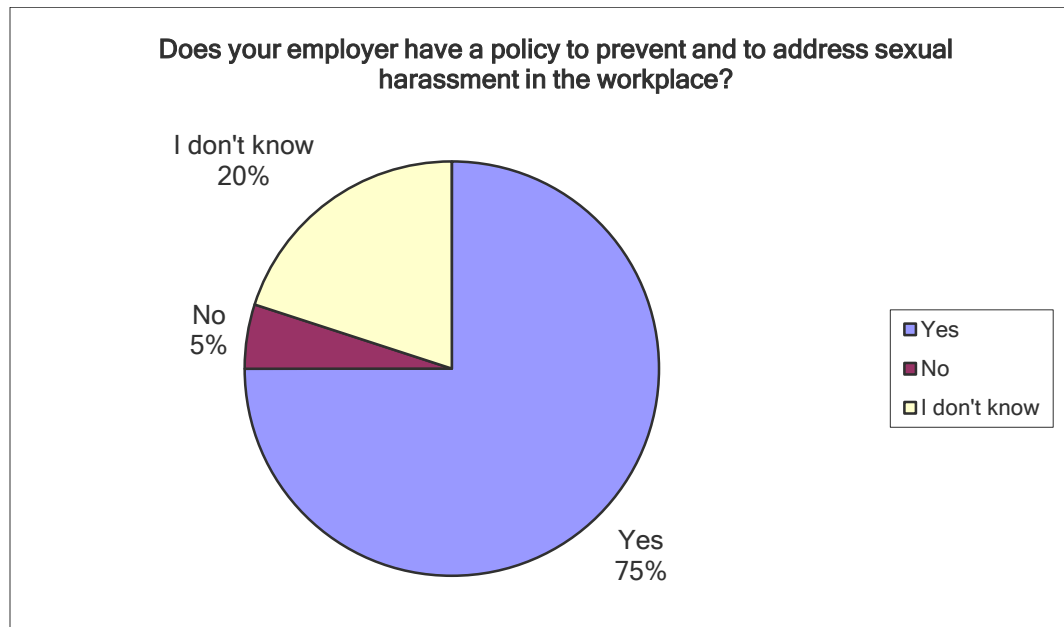
and a very contemporary one on the free legal online dictionary accessible at:

<http://legal-dictionary.thefreedictionary.com/>) are still widely used in more

contemporary organisational-science literature.

The questions below were only for Group B.

Chart 15. Responses to presence or absence of workplace sexual harassment policy (Group B)



Those who responded 'Yes' had this follow-up question: "Are you aware of this sexual harassment policy ever having been put into practice, with concrete action taken to curb sexual harassment in your workplace?" Fifty-three percent indicated 'yes' and 47% indicated 'no' with the following comment from one respondent:

"...sexual harassment cases have not been well handled and efforts to have management address this has fallen on deaf ears."

This is a further sampling of statements by survey respondents on this matter:

"...No matter how professional you try to be, if at some point you need their help, they assume that in exchange you will give them sexual favours and begin to harass you about sex."

"...sexual harassment is very rampant."

"...I heard stories where my friends have had to entertain sexual harassment..."

"...sexual harassment cases have not been well handled and efforts to have management address this has fallen on deaf ears."

The Double Standard reported the following about the *Nation* media house in 1993, which likely applied to all the media houses in Kenya:

“Women journalists often have to undergo sexual harassment in the newsroom in form of catcalls, boos and loose language meant to make them lose their composure. However, most of them have learnt to live with it. This is not a conducive atmosphere that anybody should be expected to put up with. It is to the credit of women journalists that many of them have put aside their emotions, put aside the office rubbish and concentrated on their jobs since they know they are there because of their qualifications.”

Commendable as it is, this ‘learning to live with it’ potentially habituates women to sexual harassment, and because they are so inured, they fail to recognise it for what it is when it happens, and not recognising it, fail to take appropriate action. This is shown to indeed be the case in later sections of this study.

In the present survey, 42% of Group A and 35% of Group B reported having **personally** been victims of workplace sexual harassment. For Group B, this is one in every three respondents. Also, the 35% statistic is made up of 5% who filed a formal complaint, and 30% who did not. This high proportion of failure to report is worrying, and warrants further investigation. It is particularly distressing considering 75% of the respondents indicate that their employer has a workplace policy on sexual harassment. This should on the face of it make formal reporting of such reprehensible behaviour a natural cause of action. Even more worrying is the one-fifth (20%) who **do not know** whether or not their employer has a sexual harassment policy! This is shocking and inexcusable in equal measure for a professional journalist of any gender. How can such journalists help their own cause, should they fall victim to sexual harassment, or be accused of the same, much less help other victims or counsel inadvertent perpetrators, given that they

themselves are ignorant? This ignorance is even more amazing, maybe even wilful, given that this is a matter that directly affects women in the media. Mugwe (2012) states that sexual harassment in the media sector is “of serious concern,” in a sector where she gives the employer a below-average score on gender sensitivity, and also that “most journalists are not aware of the policies that are in place in their respective organisations.” These journalists cannot be the agents of societal change – the reason that 58% of the respondents gave as their inspiration for choosing a media career.

Encountering sexual harassment – Group A and Group B

Below are two comments each from Group B and Group A respondents who encountered workplace sexual harassment. Pardon the strong and direct language in the first Group A comment, but I feel I owe it to the survey respondents to present their comments faithfully in the manner that they provided the comments – unedited and un-sanitised. For that is the nature of the ugly beast that is sexual harassment in the workplace.

Group B:

1. “This was sometime back; I did not know it as sexual harassment at the time.”
2. “I beat up my previous boss (previous employer) for harassing me sexually and resigned immediately. He thought I was a weakling but was shocked when I worked on him in a newsroom full of staff. I could not report him anywhere because he had police connections plus bosses above him were all male. I then got another job where RESPECT is valued.”

Group A:

1. “I honestly think that when men are with women they begin to think with their penises at some point! No matter how professional you try to be, if at some point you need their help, they assume that in exchange you will give them sexual favours and begin to harass you about sex.”
2. “To give favours in order to be rewarded. Being asked for dates etc. The 90[s] were a difficult period in the media, especially newsroom and marketing department. Now things have changed though still a lot needs to be done on sensitisation. I never even at one moment though gave in to such demands and though I missed out on so many opportunities, I am proud of who I am.”

From the foregoing, matters do not appear to have improved for women in the media since the 1990s, as further indicated by this cryptic comment by no less a personage than the Executive Director of the Media Council of Kenya, cited in Chege (2012) as commenting that “the ‘scratch my back, I scratch yours’ factor ... forces women who want to get to the top to compromise their values.”

The velvet ghetto

“Women often comprise the rank-and-file of journalists and presenters in the print and broadcast media but few are in the top leadership positions...Women reporters are often assigned to health, education, and social issues, while men are given the political and economic assignments which are seen as part of the career path to senior editorial and media management positions.”

– *World Association for Christian Communication (WACC), 2006*

The quote above illustrates the ‘velvet ghetto’.¹² Much more important than numbers alone is **placement** and **power**. Beyond **how many** women there are, the even more critical question is **where** the women are, and, beyond where they are, **how they are faring**.

Zuiderveld (2011) argues that the ‘velvet ghetto’ hypothesis that an increase in the numbers of women in the profession will change the profession is false. She in fact reports that this increase in numbers depressed journalists’ earnings, as more women came in who were ready to “accept wages that men would never work for.” As a result, she says, “the velvet ghetto is spreading.” This would appear to be corroborated by the last part of comment 3 on Table 6:

For the purposes of this survey, I shall characterise the term ‘velvet ghetto’ as being defined by high-visibility, low pay and low-power:

1. positions ‘reserved’ for minorities, in this case, women;
2. positions whose responsibilities and assignments are at the periphery, far from the core

¹² ‘Velvet ghetto’ refers to high-profile but low-power positions, usually given to women and minorities to present cosmetic diversity, while masking the real issue of under-representation owing to the low power of these positions.

3. positions with low pay , since the purpose is not to attract cutting-edge professionals but rather to 'pad the numbers' and improve the company profile on gender statistics while creating a false impression of gender parity
4. positions which being on the periphery, the occupants have negligible or no chances of upward career mobility.

The soft beats women tend to be assigned to in the media in Kenya are therefore a 'velvet ghetto'.

Below is an illustrative comment from a survey respondent:

"... there is need for more women to be in the profession and provide the catalyst that is needed to push through their visibility. Any young women interested in the profession must fight not to be relegated to the ghetto of reporting on soft subjects, eg, lifestyle, fashion mothers and babies etc...(gender issues are not solely for women) and fight to be visible as a political reporter/ investigations/analyst commentator which are still the domain of the men. Having more women in these areas will make their numbers less of an anachronism."

Clear: "The glass ceiling is intact"

According to Zuiderveld (2011), "Women seem to reach top-level positions with financial responsibility and can attain a position as high as the number two in the hierarchy, but there is an obvious glass ceiling. Men hold the top positions as CEOs, owners and chief editors."

And according to Chege (2012), in Kenya, the number of women in top-level media management is so small as to be almost negligible. "While there are a few women who

manage to shatter the glass ceiling, most simply remain in middle-level positions, or quit altogether after a few years.”

The phrase in quotes in the subheading for this section is taken from the comment below by the same survey respondent cited on the velvet ghetto:

“While the profession has developed, there are still very few women in management. The glass ceiling is intact and there is little initiative or support to get women into decision-making positions. ”

Together, the two excerpts neatly capture the fact that women in the media are trapped between the smothering confines of the soft-subjects velvet ghetto and the towering tempered strength of the shatterproof glass ceiling.

“There are very few women in the management level that has for a long time been a 'male club'” comments another survey respondent, indicating that the glass ceiling remains strong, tempered by entrenched gender-biased corporate customs and practices.

Research shows that the proportional representation of women influences organisational dynamics related to gender (Ely and Thomas, 1996). Scherr and Merrill-Sands (1999) state that in situations where women are a significant minority (below 15%) and in occupations that have traditionally been thought of as male,¹³ systemic organisational dynamics come into play that are prejudicial to women’s job satisfaction,

¹³ The media is cited as one such by *The Double Standard* (1993), and even more so, media management (Djerf-Pierre 2005; AWC 2009; Gadzekpo 2009; United Nations 2010; IWFM 2011; Zuiderveld 2011; Rai undated)

productivity and career development. In these situations, women typically receive heightened attention or visibility; they are subject to higher performance pressure; they are isolated from informal social and professional networks; their differences from male peers are exaggerated; and they are more subject to gender stereotyping. As the relative percentage reaches the 35% level, this is a watershed of sorts: women begin to have a stronger voice and to influence the work culture and systems of the organisation. As in Scherr and Merrill-Sands above, most studies in organisational science¹⁴ consider 30% to be the minority threshold for under-represented groups, ie, if the threshold of 30% is attained, then the under-represented group has considerable (even if not completely substantive) visibility and voice. On the other hand, representation falling below the 30% threshold means that the potential for 'negative' minority dynamics kicking in is greatly enhanced, negative in the sense that the minority group or groups are less visible and have little leverage.

From the studies cited above and comments by survey respondents, the media industry scores a 'fail' for not meeting this minority threshold in terms of women in management. There is a clear (all puns intended!) glass ceiling in operation. Far from shattering the glass ceiling to allow women to advance in the media, the media industry appears to have instead tempered the glass to ensure it is shatterproof. This has been achieved through unwritten policies and structures such as 'boys' bonding sessions' and the 'old-boy networks' that all militate against women (discussed further in *The not-so-*

¹⁴ See for example Cox (1993) and Trompenaars (1993).

good news in Media sector and women). Far from its public watchdog role, the media have failed to “comfort the afflicted [women] and afflict the comfortable [men].”¹⁵ In its staff policies, practices and structures – written and unwritten – the media sector is entrenching rather than chipping away at, negative perceptions on women in the workplace.

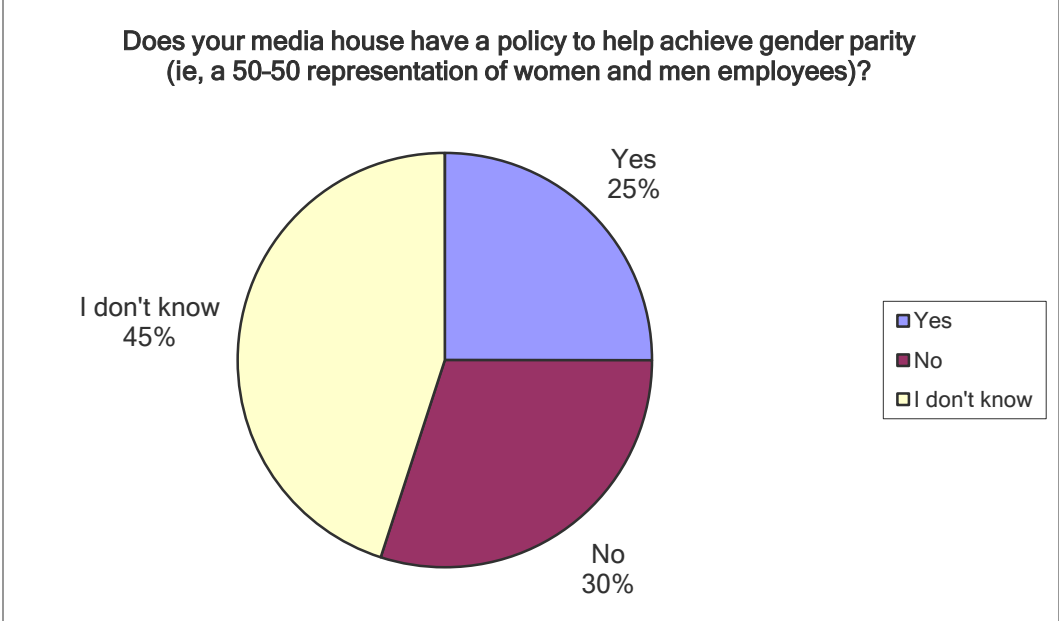
The minuscule good news amidst all the bad is that women are not entirely stuck on the ‘sticky floor’¹⁶, and may in time reach the critical minority threshold of 30%, but caution is called along the path to this tipping point, particularly in examining the cases when gender indisputably translates into positive capital in the media, treated in the next section.

¹⁵ Quote attributed to Finley Peter Dunne, and sourced from MCK 2013, p 10.

¹⁶ ‘Sticky floor’ is a term used to describe discriminatory employment patterns and practices that keep a certain group of people confined firmly at the bottom. Unlike their counterparts that rise from the floor only to encounter the glass ceiling, this group remains firmly glued to the factory floor, with no possibility of ever rising.

Gender parity: the not-so-good news

Chart 16. Gender parity for employees



Nearly half of the respondents (45%) had no idea whether or not their employer has a gender parity policy. Assuming that women may be under-represented in 'core' media areas and most certainly in management, this deplorable lack of knowledge does not augur well for any potential intra-industry measures towards gender parity. Given their apparent ignorance as revealed by the survey, women in the media are unlikely to marshal their numbers through bringing in more women into the core of the media sector and its operations.

Informal networks, territorial 'brotherhood' and the burdens and expectations of 'otherness'

Djerf-Pierre (2005) defines social capital as including “access to formal and informal networks, support from mentors and other forms of valuable social connections.” By dint of their gender – even without being mothers and wives – women are automatically excluded from the career-accelerating networks that are male-defined, male-owned and male-dominated – the women are shut out of career-nurturing and skills-honing informal connections and networks. ‘Networks’ here is used in a more generic sense, not in the restrictive meaning of formal professional or women-only networks such as AMWIK. These too have their role, and are immensely useful, but for career advancement, these professional women’s networks will not be enough, and must be supplemented by the informal networks. These latter are the real clinchers for upward career mobility, but tend to be men-only ‘boys’ networks’ which, by their nature, automatically exclude women as captured by one of the survey respondents:

“...Even with skills, education and qualifications, it is miraculous if one access [sic] a stable opportunity after years of tarmacking and networking. Sometimes it’s who you know that makes you get the job.”

This is corroborated by Zuiderveld (2011):

“...positions in the media industry are often filled through informal procedures, personal contacts and networks that tend to exclude women, as they take place in pubs and restaurants after office hours.”

Chege (2012) concurs and provides a rationale, arguing that “once they have a family, women find it difficult to socialise after work — something that their male colleagues often do.”

However, even beyond Kenya, the media sector still remains a man’s world (*The Double Standard* 1993; Zuiderveld 2011), in which women are (unwelcome) strangers. Chege (2012) quotes a female German journalist who observes that:

“Sometimes the one who gets the promotion is not the best but the one who makes the boss feel comfortable to work with. So, it is easier for male colleagues to build up a relationship with their boss outside office hours. But even young female journalists can feel awkward having drinks with a 50-year-old male boss.”

Citing research on a group of USA corporate women managers, Wellington (2001) reported that despite their senior position, these women:

“...often felt like outsiders, subject to stereotypes and excluded from the informal networks that operate in corporations. As they were coming up in the corporation, they couldn't do business over lunch or dinner at the clubs that remained male bastions throughout the sixties and seventies. Nor could they swing a club at 8 am on the golf links with the COO, who might pass along a golf buddy's name to the CEO as candidate for managing an overseas operation (women weren't allowed to tee off until after noon at most country clubs where senior executives played golf). “Things are getting better, but if we aren't at TGIF with the guys, we miss both the grape and the grapevine about the exciting opening in marketing. And we sure miss what's going down in the men's room. Worse, sometimes we don't know what we're missing or even that we are missing anything at all.”

And what belongs to the boys, belongs to the boys, and stays with the boys. It would appear from the apprehension captured in the quote below, from a UN forum entitled *Women and The Media* (2010), that a woman trying to take on ‘the boys’ would be kept busy in non-productive ways, detracting her from getting the job done:

“In the 30 years or so that the Pacific Islands News Association has existed, only one woman had led it as President. The position itself has become so **male-owned** that potential women encouraged by us to stand for leadership have said no because they didn’t want to deal with the **problems and politics** involved in **merely** standing for elections, let alone taking on the work of leading media regionalism.” (emphasis mine)

– Lisa Williams-Lahari, *Pacific Wave Media Network, New Zealand*

“It is 2010. It should no longer be a struggle for women to be in management positions. It should no longer be that a woman cannot change policies or practices of an organisation to make it more inclusive of those other than the ‘boys’ club’.”

– Discussant from Fiji

In a study covering Ethiopia, Nigeria, Uganda and Zambia, Zuiderveld (2011) observes that “there is a perception that a manager, the editor and the producer should be male.”

These examples from other countries are just as applicable in contemporary Kenya.

Women for women!

Jane Thuo, AMWIK Executive Director (cited in Chege 2012), holds that Kenyan media are patriarchal, which explains why women find it difficult to rise to the top. She says men occupy “the highest positions, protecting themselves and their interests. Women who try to penetrate have to behave like the men in order to be accommodated.”

This concurs with the 1993 *Double Standard*, already cited, which stated that “women are forced to... smoke, drink, and generally be one of the boys to fit in.”

Matters do not appear to have changed much since 1993 – a key informant in the current study who preferred anonymity, said that while in the media, she had no choice but to “become one of the boys in order to fit in” and advance career-wise. She rose to

media management but has since left the media (where she was a manager) for alternative female-friendly employment.

Then as now, it therefore appears that the media industry requires women to suppress the feminine in them to counter the apparent negative gender capital, if they are to rise to the upper echelons of the industry.

At the same UN forum on women and the media (2010) cited above, discussants from Cameroon, Canada, Netherlands and Nigeria noted that "...women who did climb to the top were keener on becoming part of the 'brotherhood circle' than supporting other women who were still on their way."

And still from this forum:

"There are very few senior women in the newspaper field in the UK. There are a number of women editors of magazines but very few in more senior positions. This is all completely anecdotal as I'm not sure of the exact numbers but I would say that 95% of newspaper editors are men. As you go up the hierarchy, there are fewer and fewer women."

– *Alison Clarke. Founder and co-Editor of Women's Views on News, United Kingdom*

"It should no longer be that a woman cannot change policies or practices of an organisation to make it more inclusive of those other than the 'boys' club'."

– *Discussant from Fiji*

This calls for radical **systemic** rather than topical solutions, on how the media sector manages gender dynamics in the workplace. It would be futile to increase the numbers of women in the profession if the workplace itself is toxic to women. It is not just up to the few women who do make it into the closed 'brotherhood circle' to support the sisters lower down in the hierarchy, though they do have a special obligation that is

rather difficult to fulfil if they are to remain members of the ‘boys’ club’. The media establishment itself must find *institutional* solutions and not rely on *individual* solutions, particularly where the individual’s position is precarious, as it probably is for women managers in a man’s world, keen to defeminise¹⁷ and be seen as ‘one of the boys’ (positive capital) and not ‘just another woman’ (negative capital).¹⁸ These women must apparently labour under the multiple burdens of getting their job competently done, working harder for longer,¹⁹ countering negative gender capital, and pushing the frontiers for fellow women, often on top of the universal household burdens that a woman must bear. Of these five, men in comparable positions probably only need deal with the first: get their job competently done. And should women managers falter under the heavy load, it is likely to be attributed to their gender as shown in the next section.

Ultimately, lone individuals acting for radical change without institutional support and strong buy-in by the organisation, or without a strong constellation of allies (Meyerson 2001), may not be effective, and the likelihood for a lose–lose outcome is high, or even

¹⁷ A comparable parallel of a woman ‘successfully’ penetrating ‘the brotherhood circle’ comes from the world of politics which in Kenya is also a male-dominated field – the case of former parliamentarian, cabinet minister and presidential candidate Ms Martha Karūa. Tagged by a leading columnist as “the only man” in her then political party, this moniker quickly spread, earning her friends and foes, probably in equal measure. Ultimately, she is seen as having dismally fallen short – losing her femininity by playing politics ‘like a man’, failing to advance the cause of women in any patently attributable manner, and yet utterly failing to achieve her ambition for top leadership. See: <http://bit.ly/1gu4mcn>

¹⁸ Zuiderveld (2011) provides an example: “An effective female editor was sometimes labelled a man by newsroom staff.”

¹⁹ Djerf-Pierre (2005) states that female media managers not only work longer hours in the office but also “tend to do much more household work than the men.”

a lose–win for change versus entrenched tradition. The few individual women that have escaped the velvet ghetto and broken through the glass ceiling are therefore unlikely to achieve enduring change without company- and industry-wide institutionalised action.

When the female gender is positive capital!

Yet, the media are not impervious to the benefits of the female gender. When gender is inextricably germane to business and media survival in a dire environment, the media have not hesitated to capitalise on the feminine, which then transforms into positive capital:

“In countries where the level of press freedom is low and the democratic process is in turmoil, the ability to be responsible, maintain order and stand up to pressure seems to be valuable in the newsroom...these particular characteristics are highly esteemed and regarded as more connected to women than men. Women’s skills and character were judged *professionally* when they were chosen to run the newsroom. (Zuiderveld 2011) (emphasis mine)

The reason for the emphasis is that in such a context, it would appear that the business imperative and a professional approach to hiring supersede the network and ‘brotherhood circle’ approach. In a curious reversal, it would appear that the media are fair-weather foes to the female gender, but in ‘bad weather’ and ‘war’ the women then become ‘brothers-in-arms’ but probably only for as long as the crisis lasts, after which in all likelihood they are stripped of their temporary war-time brotherhood credentials.

'Barbie-doll'²⁰ boudoir' – A perverted positive

Kenyan media have 'commodified' women into ***objects of consumer consumption***: the

MCK (2013) report states that there has been:

“...increased sexualisation of the news, with many television stations hiring beautiful young women to present news. Such women are shown in full figure, wearing body-hugging clothing and high heels, strutting the studio as if it were a catwalk. News presentation has effectively been turned into a battle of the hips...”

Consequently, hiring and promotion of women has been controverted into a beauty pageant of sorts, where perceived good looks uncritically and illogically trump and supersede well-honed skills and proven professionalism, with seasoned and mature professionals being sidelined. The press pinup girl of the 1960s and 1970s has been resurrected on television. But there are opportunity costs and negative trade-offs. A survey respondent comments that “mature media women ... find themselves without a job, while to their male counterparts, this [age] is an advantage in terms of experience.” From the comment, the media are sidelining older and experienced women professionals, in favour of young pretty girls for consumption by a presumably male audience, while however retaining mature men.

²⁰ The Barbie doll is a fashion doll manufactured by the American toy-company Mattel, Inc. and launched in March 1959. One of the most common criticisms of Barbie is that she promotes an unrealistic idea of beauty and body image for a young woman, leading to a risk that girls who attempt to emulate could become anorexic. 'Barbie Syndrome' is a term that has been used to depict the desire to have a physical appearance and lifestyle representative of the Barbie doll, which is considered the ***perfect female form***. It is most often associated with pre-teenage and adolescent females but is applicable to any age group. A person with Barbie syndrome attempts to emulate the doll's physical appearance, even though the doll has unattainable body proportions (Source: Lind, Amy. *Battleground: Women, Gender, and Sexuality*. Greenwood Publishing Group, 2008).

Another respondent observes:

“Beauty and youth is key to exposure. I do not see this to the same degree in the West! You will find middle-aged and older women in very key broadcasting and other media positions and they are respected for what they do not how they look. In Kenya, looking and acting like a Barbie doll is what puts you in front of the camera. The reporters in the field take second place! The older experts are sidelined!”

This perverted and seasonal ‘positive’ female capital in fact erodes women’s professional capital. What will the media houses do with the ‘Barbie-doll’ hires as the years set on and the beauty fades? Are they to be used and discarded like the women in the previous example, who are useful in wartime, but probably not premium hires in peacetime?

Low, or no, pay – “Journalism is a woman’s job”

In her sub-Saharan Africa study, Zuiderveld (2011) that women accept wages “men would never work for”, some work on voluntary basis for no pay, one woman “left two jobs because she received no salary” and another “was not placed on the payroll until two years later.”

Journalism becomes a woman’s job where this is low or no pay, or has little prestige, in the velvet ghetto. Zuiderveld cites a woman journalist who said journalism was considered women’s work: “I remember that one of my cousins wanted to do journalism, and his father said to him, well, if you do not want to get rich, and wish to remain poor, then become a journalist.”

Overall, Zuiderveld's central thesis is a departure from the findings of most other scholars in this area. She states: "The study suggests that female gender is regarded as a positive capital, which contradicts other studies of women in media management." But this is obviously a back-handed positive, which Zuiderveld does acknowledge as characteristic of the velvet ghetto. It is a back-handed positive in the sense that the woman media professional is seen as being more amenable to exploitation, and hence a desirable addition to the team in terms of increasing resources and revenue flows without the commensurate increase in personnel expenditures.

Probably the only positive, might be the first case, when women are hired in times of crisis. It is not clear what happens to these female media managers once the crisis is over. The perspective by Moi (1999) cited earlier on gender as variable, carrying different amounts of symbolic capital in different contexts is instructive in inferring what would happen once the context shifts, especially as Moi states that "in most contexts maleness functions as a positive and femaleness functions as negative symbolic capital." In the other low-pay situation where the female gender is positive capital, the outcome is certainly negative.

Media sector and women employees

"...those in positions of authority are invariably men and continue in their patriarchal attitude. There is still a hangover that the profession is solely for men and women who venture out of the 'soft enclaves' are still considered to be 'different and weird.'" – A survey respondent

"It's a man's world! A woman has to work twice as hard to rise...." – A survey respondent

Work–life balance

A media women’s forum report from 1993 (**twenty years ago!**) – *The Double Standard* – described the self-same scenario as the second quote above. “A woman has to work twice as hard to be noticed” and “Journalism is harder for women as they have to work doubly hard to prove themselves... women are forced to work long hours.” Nor does it end there: once women leave the office, more is still expected of them at the household, compared to men: almost invariably, women shoulder the heavier burden of household and childcare, where a couple has children. Describing a dual burden with the odds stacked against them, Djerf-Pierre (2005) says that female media managers not only work longer hours in the office but also “tend to do much more household work than the men.”

Childcare and maternity leave

Sixty percent of Group B respondents indicated their employers provided maternity leave, with most (83%) reporting the statutory 3 months. None provided workplace childcare assistance.

The AWC 2009 Eastern Africa study reported that lack of workplace childcare assistance (94% of media workplaces did not provide it) was not particular to the media, as other employers too did not provide this and that it reflected regional labour market conditions, rather than “insensitivity to gender policies and best practice” in the media sector specifically. Mugwe (2012) reports the same lack of childcare assistance, but condemns it as one of the career barriers facing women in the media, overall giving

management's gender sensitivity a below-average score. That others do not offer childcare does not by any means stop the media from being trail-blazers in this regard, pioneers in creating women-friendly workplaces – a position supported by the intrinsic potential of the media industry in this regard described earlier. AWC would have done well to further investigate the 6% of employers who do provide childcare assistance, why they do, how they do it, and what the results have been. In the absence of further information on this 6%, I drew on other sources to underscore the importance of childcare assistance, and its proven power to enhance career growth for all professional women.

Childcare primarily falls on women. Djerf-Pierre (2005) describes what she terms 'reproductive support' as being provided by a partner, paid household helper or child-minder, singling out this support as "is an important asset if you're to reach the top". She observes that men have greater access to reproductive support than women.

Employer-provided child-care would be a booster and accelerator for women's careers, as the two comments below from survey respondents indicate:

"I left work to be a homemaker for many years, then picked up on my journalism thereafter; Motherhood is good but it has its costs; men do not have to make these decisions."

"If a woman becomes pregnant, she misses out on many opportunities and is not supported in her role as a mother/wife."

The Double Standard, already cited, reported a woman reporter who returned from maternity leave to find herself relegated to the features desk without so much as an explanation, while another sub-editor was transferred to the Sunday paper since the

Chief Sub-Editor had “run out of patience with her repeated need to attend postnatal clinics.” At that same forum, which was attended by five high ranking media executives, Esther Kamweru “called for an institutionalised policy which recognises women as journalists but accommodates the fact that they may be mothers and wives.”

Chege (2012) holds that “many female journalists will bear witness to the fact that chances of losing their jobs or positions after they start families are high. Many return from maternity leave to find either their jobs taken or responsibilities reduced, as many bosses are under the assumption that family women can’t deliver to the optimal levels.”, an observation corroborated by my respondents in the comments above.

Media employers have not only failed to support women in their family roles to enable them advance their careers, they have on occasion severely punished women that dared to combine motherhood with career.

This contrasts sharply with positive measures by a different employer in a media-related sector to lower attrition of new mothers, measures that succeeded without harming the bottom line.

The case of Google, Inc

Internet giant, Google (which competes on the job market with “Apple, Facebook, Amazon, Microsoft and hordes of startups” [Manjoo 2013]), took bold action upon distilling its ‘woman problem’ by establishing that it was unable to increase the numbers of women staff because new mothers were twice as likely as other employees to leave the company:

“...Google increased the maternity leave from three months to five months. The company also changed its pay policy, providing women on maternity leave with full pay. As a result, the number of women leaving decreased by 50 percent.” (Rocketto 2012).

And this was not because women were a majority, but because it *made business sense* to retain female talent - saving on recruitment costs and down-time on employees and retaining valuable skills, while also helping to meet the company’s set goal on gender parity:

“Google is staffed mostly by men, and executives have long made it a priority to increase the number of female employees. But the fact that women were leaving Google wasn’t just a gender equity problem—it was affecting the bottom line.” (Manjoo 2013)

Contrast the position above with the observations below Table 6 on flexiplace and flexitime, based on comment 2 in the table.

Manjoo continues:

“Google calls its HR department People Operations, though most people in the firm shorten it to POPS. ...when POPS looked into Google’s woman problem, it found it was really a new-mother problem: women who had recently given birth were leaving at twice Google’s average departure rate. At the time, Google offered an industry-standard maternity leave plan. After a woman gave birth, she got 12 weeks of paid time off. For all other new parents in its California offices, but not for its workers outside the state, the company offered seven paid weeks of leave....in 2007, [POPS] changed the plan. New mothers would now get five months off at full pay and full benefits.”

But even more importantly:

“...[new mothers] were allowed to split up that time however they wished, including taking some of that time off just before their due date. If she likes, a new mother can take a couple months off after birth, return part time for a while, and then take the balance of her time off when her baby is older. Plus, Google began offering the seven weeks of new-parent leave to *all* its workers around the world. (including male employees. Emphasis mine)

So did these “lavish maternity and paternity leave” (Manjoo 2013) policies hurt the company’s bottom line? Quite the opposite! Six years after these policies, in January 2013, and “for the fourth consecutive year, Google was named the best company to work for by *Fortune* magazine; Microsoft was No. 75, while Apple, Amazon, and Facebook didn’t even make the list.” (Manjoo 2013). In addition, the new leave policy was cost-effective: “factoring in the savings in recruitment costs, [POPS] says that granting mothers five months of leave doesn’t cost Google any more money.” (Manjoo 2013)

One can logically argue that the female gender is neutral capital at Google, given that after revising its maternity leave policy, “Google’s attrition rate for new mothers dropped down to the average rate for the rest of the firm.” (Manjoo 2013)

An interesting but distressing finding from the survey is that 20% of the respondents did not know whether or not paid maternity provided for by their employer. As professional journalists, one would expect that they would be interested in this aspect, not because they have – or plan to have – children: this personal detail is in itself immaterial. Their interest would be spurred by their journalistic sense of justice and fairness in the workplace, and an aspiration for a woman-friendly workplace. How then can they be agents of societal change, which is what nearly a third (58%: see Table 2) of the respondents indicated as their motivation for a media career?

Back to the 1990s: How much has changed?

“I left work to be a homemaker for many years, then picked up on my journalism thereafter; Motherhood is good but it has its costs; men do not have to make these decisions.”

“If a woman becomes pregnant, she misses out on many opportunities and is not supported in her role as a mother/wife.”

These two comments, cited in the previous section as well, demonstrate that in the two decades since the 1993, there has been no progress . In that year, *The Double Standard*, already cited, reported a woman reporter who returned from maternity leave to find herself relegated to the features desk without so much as an explanation, while another sub-editor was transferred to the Sunday paper since the Chief Sub-Editor had “run out of patience with her repeated need to attend postnatal clinics.”

Another key informant who was in media management and has since left, though she retains a very active interest in the media sector and studies in the area, surfaced a curious but very telling finding. An informal survey conducted by women in the media in the 1990s found that almost invariably, women in management were assigned the worst possible office in the ‘management row’. They were usually allocated the office that was next to the toilets, tea station or reception. In short, the office no manager wanted near the service areas! This has parallels with the findings of Nancy Hopkins at MIT, previously cited. Since the office itself is symbolic capital, a low-premium office inevitably erodes the capital of the occupant, in this case, the women.

Another telling anecdote appears in *The Double Standard* (1993) in *Women journalists press for change*:

“According to the managing editor of the *Standard on Sunday*, Ms Esther Kamweru, there has been a sharp increase in media use among women over the past two years, and the paper will have to cater to [sic] this audience. Our survey revealed that only three of the 71 permanent staff in the newsroom and in the newspaper’s bureaux around the country are women. Two of the women work on the subs desks of *The Standard*, while the other is Ms Kamweru, the managing editor. It was with an embarrassed smile that Mr Frank Ojiambo, admitted, “It’s painful giving the statistics.” Mr Ojiambo, who is assistant editor, news, said the nature of the profession made it difficult for women to cope. He cited the travelling, long hours and hazardous assignments. Not many women apply for such jobs in the first place, he added.

But Ms Kamweru said emphatically, “Those are the stereotyped answers that male editors are expected to give.” She said the difficulties cited by Mr Ojiambo were not confined to journalism, and gave examples of other professionals such as nurses or secretaries who also have to juggle demanding jobs with their personal lives. She called for an institutionalised policy which recognises women as journalists but accommodates the fact that they may be mothers and wives.”

Across the street, Nation media house was no better, and were cited as saying they “could not afford to have separate employment policies”, with the then Group Managing Editor, Wangethi Mwangi, saying he “sees the performance of men and women as the same”, stressing that “women cannot be given special consideration,” and further saying that they openly advertised for positions but only men applied. “The organisation cannot be expected to go out of its way to recruit women who might not be interested in the first place.” At the time, Nation had 11 women in a total staff of 90!

The years after 1993

Zuiderveld (2011) states that women’s lack of access to the boys’ networks has been assumed as a possible explanation for their low numbers “in high positions in the media.” Unlike Mr Wangethi Mwangi quoted above, she argues that media management positions are not always publicly advertised. Assumedly, this is because it is an internal process: a 2009 reshuffle in top management in the Nation Media Group

which involved internal promotions did not see any woman promoted to top management.²¹ It was then that Mwangi retired, after 29 years of service, to be replaced by a fellow man.

In her study on media managers (Djerf-Pierre 2005) defines self-reproduction as “the self-perpetuating cycle that preserves the positions for certain groups, while excluding others.” She describes the media field as “characterised by a significant pattern of social and professional self-reproduction” and that “access to the media field in general seems, to some degree, to be ‘hereditary’ for men but not for women.”

This observation resonates with the following comment from a survey respondent:

“...those in positions of authority are invariably men and continue in their patriarchal attitude. There is still a hangover that the profession is solely for men and women who venture out of the 'soft enclaves' are still considered to be 'different and weird.' Promotions purely for cosmetic reasons and not according to the women professionals real power is still the norm especially in the major media houses which should be setting the trend. The attrition rate is still too high for women whose careers come to an end at mid-level management positions!”

In its diversity-positive recruitment guidelines, the CGIAR G&D Program (2006) cautions recruitment panels to be alive to “institutional self-reproduction”, further stating that “Organisational research repeatedly shows that there is no such thing as a gender-blind selection process. It also shows that we are highly biased toward hiring those most like ourselves.” Left unchecked therefore, in making hiring and promotion decisions, the natural tendency is to hire and promote people that are like us, and that think like us. In

²¹ See *NMG makes top staff changes*. Daily Nation. August 6 2009, p 60. Accesible online: <http://bit.ly/HJeNdw>

light of this, the 1993 demographics from the Nation media house above of nearly 10 men for every one woman speak for themselves, as do the single-gender promotions in 2009 cited above.

A 1999 study on the status of faculty women at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology found glaring gender inequities, and that:

“...gender discrimination in the 1990s is subtle but pervasive, and stems largely from unconscious ways of thinking that have been socialised into all of us, men and women alike. This makes the situation better than in previous decades where blatant inequities and sexual assault and intimidation were endured but not spoken of.”

From the foregoing, one may infer that contrary to Wangethi Mwangi’s 1993 assertions on seeing “the performance of men and women as the same” and not having “separate employment policies”, institutional self-reproduction was likely severely disadvantaging women in his organisation, and the April 2009 NMG senior appointments are probable empirical evidence of the same.

This is a comment from a survey on the working environment of Kenyan journalists by MCK (2013):

“As a woman journalist, I have encountered special challenges as many undermine my abilities especially when they see me handling the video camera. Many have the perception that only men can be good camera persons. It is frustrating sometimes but I have learnt how to counter this by doing a great job and proving that I’m as good, if not better, than the others!”

So, two decades since the 1993 Double Standard forum, where a participant reported being trivialised at work and being ‘reminded’ by male colleagues that she is ‘just’ a woman, and another reported her male higher-ups watching her like a hawk and waiting

for her to make a slip ‘Just like a woman’, women journalists are still having to elbow for a place at the table, still battling for opportunities, recognition and respect commensurate with their abilities and potential, and – like their predecessors in the 1990s – still pressing for change that is yet to come.

As already described, some women respond by ‘becoming one of the boys’. The 1993 Double Standard report stated that “women are forced to work long hours, fight for assignments, smoke, drink and generally be one of the boys to fit in.” It would appear that women are still subtly compelled to ‘neuter’ their ‘woman-ness’ in a sector dominated by males, and whose culture is thus predominantly male. This defeminisation and masculinisation as already inferred appears to make women tolerant of, rather than vigilant against, sexual harassment and other anti-woman practises in the workplace, and possibly to gender-based and gender-driven prejudices in society at large.

It may be what leads to some media women behaving like ‘one of the boys’ complete with the uncaring callousness exhibited by a female TV journalist giggling on live television with a male colleague on the sad fate of a woman who had been stripped and sexually assaulted by in the street for dressing in a manner deemed ‘indecent’?²²

²² Aired by the Kenya Television Network (KTN) in April 2013: <http://bit.ly/HlIQna> A telling comment by blogger MissBwalya on April 1 2013: <http://shel.tv/17e4nOO> “Woman new[s]caster misses opportunity to talk forcefully about disgusting practice of publicly stripping women.” The male journalist left the station three months after this incident under unclear circumstances (although Kenyan blogosphere was rife with speculations) and was thereafter hired by NTV, but the female journalist is still in KTN’s employ. This blogpost captures some of the online

The good news

Despite the ‘negative landscape’ the media appears to present to women, they remain *intrinsically* motivated about, and positively disposed towards, careers in the media.

This is despite their employers (see Chart 13, where 70% rate their media house as woman-unfriendly), and despite the industry itself (see Chart 14, where 54% find the media sector in general is woman-unfriendly).

I infer this because the vast majority (80% of the respondents) would nonetheless recommend a media career to a young woman seeking career guidance (albeit with caveats on dos and don’ts).

Below is a sample of some of the explanatory comments (verbatim) given by the survey respondents that could explain this apparent paradox, as well as comments that reflect the women’s intrinsic motivation for the media, despite itself:

“Words & pictures woven into a strong story & captured on film, can change lives, resolve issues whether personal or societal, share human experiences for learning or for pleasure. The scope for this is as wide as the mind can envisage. This creative process can be highly rewarding, especially when working with an experienced & innovative crew.”

interactions on Twitter between these two journalists and a section of the audience, following the broadcast: <http://bit.ly/1a9qaVU> . Very unethically, one of the journalists thereafter deleted a very flippant so-called apology tweet reading “Hey we do apologize for the distasteful intro for the Nyeri woman. Human is to error. It was a barbaric act indeed. Good day”, and the other temporarily locked their tweets, which is a no-no for journalists who elect to be on social media. But the tweet-deleting journalist was following the example of the employer, KTN, who also redacted the script of this offending broadcast, as reported by Wambui Mwangi here: <http://bit.ly/1bdwpWE> KTN did not acknowledge this redaction with a note to viewers, which is not ethical journalism, especially on the online environment that makes it much easier to rewrite history. But as the adage goes, the Internet also never forgets, and both the deleted tweet as well as the original script remain on record, as the two links here demonstrate, which casts the ‘deleters’ in bad light.

"We need more professional, competent and committed women in media so I would definitely recommend it to a young woman with the desire a career in media. But I would be very open with her regarding the nature of it. I would also gladly mentor her as I have done for others in the past."

"A media career has good prospects for personal development, financial reward and the chance to diversify to other professions such as training and communications."

"Women journalists have managed to hang in there, some for the passion they have for the job, others as a necessity to earn a living all despite of the challenges. The number of women journalists is on the increase."

And a 'mixed' comment here, which is a very fitting transition to the next topic on what needs to be done:

"Some media houses have made efforts to encompass women in their operations and treat them as equal to men in opportunities and management. However, still women are marginalised in many areas in the Media industry. For instance, if a woman becomes pregnant, she misses out on many opportunities and is not supported in her role as a mother/wife. Mature media women also find themselves without a job, while to their male counterparts, this is an advantage in terms of experience."

On the balance

Weighing the findings above in conjunction with the statistics in Chart 4 which indicate half the respondents in freelancing have been in their line of work for just 1–2 years, it may be possible that women are increasingly moving to freelancing and media consultancy. These options appear to be more woman-friendly and give higher job satisfaction, thereby providing greater motivation as a working environment. It would be interesting indeed to engage with this demographic of women media professionals to discover the reasons behind their choice, and their markedly high motivation. Sample this comment from one of the respondents that falls in this group:

“As a consultant, my experience in the newsroom is a major asset and I have been able to leverage it to help me transition into a phase in my career in which I am doing a lot of work boosting the capacity of radio stations to develop quality content, and set up listener groups for purposes of feedback and research as well as revenue generation. I am in a position now to choose a path that is taking me deeper into the areas of research, adult learning and behaviour change with specific regard to the media.”

Over the fence, matters seem much gloomier for the women in regular fulltime employment in the media. Some women did not know sexual harassment when confronted with it, nor recognise it for what it was. It is also entirely feasible that for the 70% who report gender as a career-neutral factor, the negative capital is such a ‘normal’ aspect of their organisational environment that they do not even see it, much less recognise it for what it is.²³ Second-class professional citizenship the norm for them, the natural order of things. This too is a disturbing area warranting further research, particularly to unravel the puzzle and to address the reported paradox of “being a woman does not affect my career”, while at the same time, “my employer, and the media sector in general, are not a woman-friendly workplace”.

From the foregoing, it is therefore possible that there are women in regular media employment who do not perceive the glass ceiling and ‘velvet ghetto’ that many others perceive, and as a result, they are unaware of their disadvantaged gender-conferred status. I shall examine each of these two concepts in turn.

²³ The (now defunct) CGIAR Gender & Diversity Program has excellent resources on this topic here: <http://bit.ly/1da3LZ2>

What needs to be done NOW

Despite the good news, much remains to be done. Transforming the media sector into a woman-friendly workplace is not going to happen spontaneously. Concerted, sustained and structured internal and external action is needed. The women themselves, the media houses, legislators, the Media Council of Kenya and the government through its various agencies must all take positive action to attract, retain and support women media professionals. This section outlines much-needed action, many derived from suggestions by survey respondents.

1. Employers should increase the number of women media professionals they are hiring, as recommended by the respondents that made these comments:

"... there is need for more women to be in the profession and provide the catalyst that is needed to push through their visibility."

"... the only way to overcome challenges and stereotypes is to confront the problem – so more should join the field to make it even."

"We need more women so that we can minimise on the male dominance and get equal representation."

2. Employers should stop confining women professionals to the velvet ghetto, and the women professionals should also fight against this. Again, the opinions of my respondents:

"Any young women interested in the profession must fight not to be relegated to the ghetto of reporting on soft subjects, eg, lifestyle, fashion, mothers and babies etc....(gender issues are not solely for women) and fight to be visible as a political reporter/ investigations/analyst commentator which are still the domain of the men. Having more women in these areas will make their numbers less of an anachronism."

"A lot has improved for the women journalist but we still need more and more women to join the media, particularly the investigative and sports desks in the media"

"Women have to hang in there and overcome the challenges, the constitution provides for equality and offers new opportunities that media houses ought to abide by if they are to compete as progressive institutions."

3. Employers should stop the 'Barbie-doll' hires which commodify and demean women, and disregard experience and competence.
4. Media owners should change their erroneous attitude and give competent women equal opportunity to rise into management and leadership
5. The Media Council should look beyond the apparent and address the systemic issues disadvantaging women media professionals. As reported by Chege (2012), Haron Mwangi, Executive Director of The Media Council of Kenya, considers the media woman-unfriendly, though he appears to attribute this to the nature of the job, and not to the policies and practices of the media sector. He says "There are many rigours on the job and heavy conditions to keep these jobs. On top of that, women have family responsibilities and sometimes it becomes demanding, causing some to stop working and venture into new careers such as public relations." He further observes: "Many media owners also don't believe that women can do a good job. They are under the wrong perception that a man can do a better job...There is also a serious need to educate media owners to engage women in top-level management," notes Mwangi." (Chege 2012)
6. Employers should think out of the box, be bold, and support family women. Since family responsibilities are part and parcel of womanhood and central to the survival of the human race, the media should flex their policies and practices

to reflect this reality operationalising the intrinsic advantage the nature of the industry provides for flexitime, flexiplace and functional career on- and off-ramps for women. Others in the private sector have successfully done so, including some with comparable cut-throat competition for talented employees, as was cited in the section *Childcare and maternity leave* using Google Inc as an example. Unfortunately, it may be that the Kenyan media sector as currently constituted is incapable of the bold innovation necessary to achieve a ‘Google miracle’ of its own in gender matters. In their study of Kenyan media, Oriare et al (2010) put it thus:

“The media lack the will, intellectual leadership and capacity to address the diversity of legal, policy and regulatory challenges facing them. Their **desultory** handling of media laws and regulations is indicative of its [sic] lack of commitment to address critical issues facing the sector **radically and speedily.**” (emphasis mine)

7. Government must respect established laws and lead by example, and truly abide by the dictates of the Kenya Constitution and statute laws on gender equity, which require a minimum of one third of either gender in public appointments.²⁴ Such compliance and practice would send a strong message to the private sector, which dominates the industry. Regretfully, the government has not shown the requisite resolute commitment. Recent appointments made by the President to his enhanced communications team flout the constitutional and legal requirements. All the six senior members of the Presidential Strategic

²⁴ This just manages to meet the **minimum** threshold of 30%, widely recommended by organisational science as the critical tipping point before minority dynamics manifest themselves.

Communications Unit (PSCU) created in July 2013 are male!²⁵ The gravity of this is further illustrated by the fact that the media and closely allied public relations profession have a disproportionately large number of women training joining, making equitable treatment particularly important.²⁶ As reported, “The Gender and Equality Commission [rightly] protested the all-male team and pressed for the reconstitution of the team to include at least one woman.”²⁷ The Commission’s plea falls far short of the 30% requirement, and yet as at the time of submitting this study (three months since the initial appointments), there has been no reconstitution of the all-male unit, nor any indication that this could happen in the foreseeable future.

This lack of political will contrasts sharply with the Scandinavian countries where the political establishment is itself a leader, in principle and in practice, in advancing the cause of women, and this doubtlessly has a spill-over effect in national life. Women are not just in communications but in ‘hard-core’ politics as well. “The Nordic countries are often noted for the high level of gender equality. The media sector is no exception and it is true that almost 50 percent of Swedish journalists are female.” (Djerf-Pierre, 2005).

²⁵ Appointees were: Manoah Esipisu, Eric Ng’eno, Edward Irungu, Munyori Buku, James Kinyua and Dennis Itumbi. See *Daily Nation*, July 12 2013 ‘Uhuru unveils new media unit, assures of press freedom’.

²⁶ Chege (2012) reports four out of every five graduates in media and communication are women. Also a 2010 USA (PRSA) study reports 59% of PR professionals are women. While similar figures are unfortunately not available from PRSK, these USA figures could be equally indicative of the Kenyan situation.

²⁷ See *The Standard*, July 18 2013, ‘Jubilee Government's fulfilled pledges, missed targets after 100 days’.

Chapter 5: Conclusions and recommendations for further research, investigation or future action

Conclusions

This study had eight objectives and set out to explore hypotheses linked to those objectives. The results derived from the literature review and the survey administered as part of the study disproved most of the hypotheses and assumptions with which the study commenced. This is captured in the following 10 conclusions.

1. There has been very limited change in the status of women professionals in the media in the last twenty years.
2. Female gender is negative capital in the workplace, except in exceptional and exploitative circumstances, or for window-dressing.
3. In addition to the velvet ghetto and the glass ceiling, the phenomenon of Barbie-doll recruitments has been added, further depreciating the professional standing of women in the media.
4. There appears to be only limited activity by the state, the media establishments and even the media professional women themselves to alleviate the situation of women in the industry.
5. Many women media professionals in fulltime employment in the sector appear to be woefully ignorant of institutional policies that should be of particular interest to them, including policies on sexual harassment, maternity leave and

gender parity in recruitment, raising the possibility that they have become habituated to the inequitable situations in which they work.

6. The classical factors that are assumed to place women on an equal career footing with men (unmarried, childless) do not appear to work in favour of women in the media in Kenya.
7. There appears to be a link between mentoring or being mentored and job satisfaction and motivation amongst women journalists – underscoring the importance of having potential female mentors, that women journalists can readily identify with, placed in positions of leadership and management in the sector.
8. Women media professionals working as independents (freelancers, correspondents) appear to be more highly motivated and happier at their jobs than those in fulltime employment, and in general consider their gender positive capital in that respect.
9. There is a large disparity between the number of women graduating with professional qualifications in media studies, and the number actually working in the media sector, raising the possibility that the sector is particularly unrewarding for women professionals.
10. There is a great need for in-depth studies, with bigger study samples, in a number of these areas – and this would require that the media establishments be more co-operative and collaborative.

Recommendations for further research, investigation and action

The study has surfaced several areas warranting further research, investigation or consideration for future action.

1. **A diagnostic:** This would be to determine why it is that women in the media in Kenya seem to have the essential ingredients for a high-flying career (single and childless, good education, professional training, correct motivations, aspirations for leadership, etc) but are still woefully under-represented in media management.

Chege (2012) states that in every graduation from a media or journalism faculty, four in every five graduates are women. This notwithstanding, women remain heavily under-represented at top-level media management.

And there are also the negative perceptions on women's abilities that go all the way to the very top. According to Haron Mwangi, MCK Executive Director, "Many media owners ... don't believe that women can do a good job. They are under the wrong perception that a man can do a better job, which becomes a disadvantage to women who want to get to the top." (Chege 2012). Yet, as far back as 1993, a women's media workshop observed that "women often make better journalists", which is hardly surprising in this strongly feminised discipline in which women should therefore naturally bloom and grow, but for negative stereotyping and industrial distortions that harm the careers of women in the

media, and for perceptions such as those above of journalism as a man's job, today just as in 1993 (*The Double Standard*).

Such a diagnostic would also help resolve a curious and worrying contradiction surfaced by the survey. A majority of survey respondents indicated that the media is not a woman-friendly workplace, while at the same time indicating that gender is neutral capital, ie, "being a woman has had no effect, positive or negative, on my career." It is apparent from the most perfunctory analysis that if indeed the media sector is not a woman-friendly workplace, then female gender of necessity becomes negative capital.

2. **Media and society:** Various researchers and scholars (AWC 2009; MCK 2013; present study) have cited frustration and inability to obtain even the most basic and uncontroversial information for purely scholarly pursuits from the media. Greater research-friendliness and openness on the part of the media can only benefit them. If the media sector were more forthcoming with the information needed to feed and ground scholarly work, they would also benefit from the cost-free intellectual input and information scholars would provide. The media should see researchers as partners, and not as potential corporate spies or annoying irritants to be ignored. An alliance of media organisations and scholars, built on mutual respect and mutual need, would be a win-win situation for both parties. As Gadzekpo (2009) points out, despite the "small but growing corpus of research material...there is still a 'missing link' of critical

studies that interrogate the democracy–media–gender nexus in Africa.” Media collaboration is a pre-requisite in filling this gap, and again, it can only be a win–win outcome for all.

- 3. Investigating the leaky pipeline:** As already cited, Chege (2012) states that four fifths (80%) of communication graduates are women, and yet MCK (2013) reports women as just slightly over a third (34%) of practising journalists in Kenya. Where then are the bulk of women communication graduates going to, and why? Why is the media not *the* option of choice for these women? The MCK study reports that 73% of the respondents indicated they (journalists) earn less than peers in other fields, including the broad area of communication. Might this partially explain where – and why – women are ending up in areas other than the media sector? If journalists are earning less compared to other communication sectors, are women journalists – already a disadvantaged group – earning even less?²⁸ *The Double Standard* (1993) gives some possible pointers: a highly competent reporter leaves after being shunted to features upon return from maternity leave; while another resigns after being overlooked for a promotion. Without exception, women then said it “took just too long for them to rise through the ranks.” Going by the findings and research since 1993, the situation has not improved. Does the media industry conduct exit interviews,

²⁸ “The ‘velvet ghetto’ is spreading, as women in journalism receive low salaries, if any” observes (Zuiderveld 2011).

particularly for women, to find out why they are leaving? This area (lack of, or exodus of women) and its attendant questions merit further investigation.

4. **Social media:** This area is apparently emerging as a beat, and media houses as well as training institutions would do well to embrace these powerful new media in their core operations and curricula, respectively. Clearly, social media are no longer peripheral in the media business, and their broad, even limitless, geographical reach is incomparable to any traditional media.
5. **Branching out and freelancing are career and motivation builders:** It would seem that women who operate as independent media professionals are faring far better, engaging with the media companies on their own terms. They describe themselves variously as independents, media consultants, bloggers, etc, and, indeed from their descriptions, their role does not fit into the classical definition of freelancer or correspondent as used in the media world today, and in the MCK 2013 report. Incidentally, this MCK survey did not have any female correspondents responding, and *The Double Standard* [1993] reported that Nation Media Group did not have any women correspondents. In fact, the woeful lot of correspondents in this MCK report contrasts sharply with the high motivation and job satisfaction of their closest counterparts in this survey (Group A).
6. **Mentoring:** Is there a definitive link between mentoring and motivation in the media in Kenya? Does mentoring lead to higher professional performance and greater job satisfaction, each of which feeds the other? This study surfaced

some interesting findings that could point to possible links, but further in-depth research would be needed for more conclusive inferences. Media houses that do not have formal mentoring programmes (as reported by 85% of Group B respondents) should probably consider initiating such programmes. The (now defunct) CGIAR Gender & Diversity Program (G&D) has excellent resources for both mentors and mentees, which are available online and accessible to all via this link: <http://bit.ly/1da3LZ2>. The goals described by G&D for mentoring at CGIAR Research Centres, as well as the attendant benefits for the CGIAR, are just as applicable to the media industry.

7. Women continue to be confined to the soft beats of the ‘velvet ghetto’.

However, this imbalance is not incurable and can indeed be remedied. There are practical examples to draw upon from our neighbours, as the AWC Eastern

Africa report states:

“The data...varied across countries. In Kenya and Ethiopia for instance, more men than women cover issues concerning health, but this situation is quite the opposite in Uganda. Investigative and in-depth stories are equally covered by men and women in Uganda and Ethiopia, while in Kenya they are solely covered by men. Women in Ethiopia cover more science-based and technology issues than their counterparts, as the data showed that this is exclusively covered by men in Kenya and Uganda. Such differences go a long way to illustrate that it is possible to eliminate some of the apparent [inequities] in [the] division of labour between men and women by drawing on other countries’ experiences.”

8. **Monitoring the baseline:** The AWC 2009 baseline report filled a yawning gap in statistics on women in the media. It is now probably time to monitor the baseline. My small-sample survey has registered some positive changes on the

status of women in the media since this baseline report, particularly their venturing into beat enclaves that were exclusively male in the baseline report – investigative stories, science and technology and crime. A follow-up survey would also ascertain whether the media continue to follow and mirror the anti-women gender imbalances in society as they have been accused of (Morna 2002), or if they are now pace-setters rather than followers, and are boldly blazing a trail towards a new dispensation.

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Annex: Questionnaire

The questionnaire used for the survey, was a two-in-one questionnaire, to cater for groups A and B, as explained in Chapter 1 (*Method*) and in Chapter 2 (*Survey results – Regular employees vs freelancers*).

In the online environment in which the survey attached was administered:

- Sections 1–4 were for all respondents (ie, Groups A and B):
 1. Introduction
 2. Background
 3. Husband or partner in the media
 4. Professional background
- Sections 5–7 were for freelancers and correspondents only (ie, Group A):
 5. Part II: Freelancers and cross-media-house correspondents
 6. Mentor origins
 7. Work environment
- Sections 8–12 were for fulltime regular employees (Group B):
 8. Placement and terms
 - 9–15. Work environment: Career growth and guidance, On-the-job training, Motivators and satisfiers; Management and leadership training; Mentoring
 - 16–21. Gender relations; sexual harassment; maternity leave; child care; personal perceptions on gender as positive or negative capital
- Section 22 (Media sector and women) was for all respondents (ie, both Group A and Group B)
- Certain sections of the survey were only visible to, and therefore only answered by, those to whom the question applied, eg, whether or not a husband or partner worked in the media was a question only visible to respondents who indicated they were either married, or in a relationship, and likewise for the follow-up questions on mentors; training; existence of employer policies on

mentoring, sexual harassment, maternity leave; response to sexual harassment, only for those who indicated they had encountered it, etc.