

University of Stirling
Department of Film and Media

Working Women in the News

**A Study of News Media Representations of
Women in the Workforce**

by

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DECLARATION

This thesis has been composed in its entirety by the candidate and no part of this work has been submitted for any other degree.

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Abstract

This study examines how working women are represented in the news media, and its main aim is to determine to what extent 'social class' figures in the representations of women in news content. Using language, visual and narrative analysis, the thesis comprises four case studies each focusing on portrayals of different women from different socio-economic backgrounds determined by their occupation. The first two case studies examine portrayals of low paid working women through coverage of the National Minimum Wage introduction into Britain in April 1999 and the Council Workers' Strike in England and Wales in 2002. The latter two case studies focus on women in particular professions: elite businesswomen, military women and women war reporters. The study concludes by noting that multiple voices occur in news texts around the key contrasting themes of progress/stagnation and visibility/invisibility and which can give contradictory discourses on the intersection of gender and class. From the massification and silencing of working class women, to the celebrity and sexualisation of the business elite, and the professional competency news frames of middle class women, class was shown to be a determining factor in how women figure in news content. However, these class determinants combined with other news frames pertaining to gender, whereby powerful and established myths of femininity can come to the fore. These myths can be particularly powerful when women enter non-feminine work 'spaces' such as business and the military, and class, particularly in the latter case, can tend to slip out of view, as sexist coverage is commonplace and debates are formed about the right and wrong behaviour for women.

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Thesis Introduction

Women's mass entry into the workforce is arguably the most fundamental social transformation in western societies of the late 20th Century. Their now largely normalised position as workers in Britain manifests in public discourses and media content with women being represented as active in many roles across the public sphere of society. Yet while on the one hand, the heightened visibility of working women may reflect their 'real' move into more roles in public life, these representations also need to be viewed in the context of class to consider how socio-economic background affects inclusion and exclusion. However, the significance of class as a way to describe and understand society has declined in recent years, and in parallel with this decline in public discourse, since the shift to poststructuralism in the academy, much contemporary work in media and cultural studies also retreated from the concept of class. This thesis aims to bring class and gender back to the fore of media analysis and explore their manifestation in news content. This will be achieved by examining how women from different socio-economic groups, determined by their occupation, are represented in news content.

From the 1980s, a myth of equality emerged in society with an overriding perception that the battle for gender equality in the workplace was now won for *all* women, despite the fact that experiences of the workplace remained to be disparate for different women determined by their socio-economic background. The media, and more particularly the news media, provided (and continues to provide) images of women in the British workforce and therefore remain important in contributing to the 'myth' of gender equality and opportunity that has remained prevalent at the start of the 21st Century. The origins of this study, however, rather than commencing with a concern for the misbalanced notion of women's progress in working life *within* news stories, was initially troubled by the seemingly egalitarian picture placed by those presenting the news itself. In broadcast news programmes for instance, female media workers have proliferated onto the screen in recent years. And while female newsreaders have long been commonplace, they are now joined by an abundance of female journalists, who report widely on all topics from social issues, to war, to sport. Therefore, in terms of exploring portrayals of working women in news media content,

the actual news media *industry* provide the initial representation by the placement of its female employees into highly visible roles.

Yet, while in part, this heightened visibility does appear to reflect progress and greater opportunity for women in the media sector, bringing class to the fore would indicate that these female workers represent a certain societal group of chiefly middle class professional women. This visible move into roles previously held predominantly by men, therefore does not necessarily translate to represent progress and opportunity for the working lives of all women. Moreover, beside class considerations, other motivations for the visibility and inclusion of women being at the forefront of news production must be considered, which reinforce central arguments in feminist media studies and relate to the persistent news value of women in certain contexts. These factors include the pictorial appeal of women; representational tokenism (in the need for the news media industries to be seen to engage in a notion of gender equality), and the novelty factor of focusing on female employees in certain contexts (for example in the case of war reporting). These values are considerations when exploring the broader representation of women within news content, however, how class figures, as an additional determining factor in the portrayal of women in the news, has yet to be a direct consideration in feminist media research.

Research aims, disciplinary origins and existing work

The aim of this research is to explore the intersection of gender and class by examining the representations of working women in news content, and the thesis sought to answer two key questions:

- How are working women represented in the news media?
- To what extent does ‘social class’ figure, explicitly or implicitly, in these representations?

The disciplinary origins of this work are situated chiefly within feminist media studies, by its focus on gender representation in the news media. However, the thesis does also draw from work in feminist sociology (in its emphasis on women, work and class in society) and feminist linguistics (in its emphasis on gender and language-use within news). The study builds most particularly on existing work within the feminist media studies discipline in relation to representation. Its focus on gender and class

builds on existing work exploring this intersection in popular culture media content, such as film and soap opera. It also adds to the feminist work exploring the representation of women in the news, although one key motivation for this study was the relative lack of research in this area. Currently feminist work on the news media tends to focus on the employment of women in the news production environment and how their segregation into particular roles might impact on representation within news content. This thesis most particularly builds on existing qualitative studies of women in news content, which are currently focused in two key areas: the representation of female politicians and the portrayal of women in crime news. Chapter Two discusses these studies in greater detail.

Scope of research

This research is exploring the intersection of class and gender in the news media, and newspapers are the primary focus of analysis, with broadcast news examined as the secondary data source in all the case studies. Additionally, within the scope of this research, two forms of subsidiary data material were examined in certain cases. Current affairs programmes were included in the source data material for the National Minimum Wage chapter, and ‘official’ discourse in the form of government information campaigns also formed part of the minimum wage case and the Women in Conflict chapter. The rationale for analysing the subsidiary data material in these particular instances is outlined in Chapter Three. In choosing to focus on the news media, many other data sources have been excluded, such as advertising, film, and television genres, including soap operas and reality television. While it was noted that these data sources could also provide useful material for exploring working women and the articulation of class and gender, the decision to focus on the news media was taken in the main because of the current lack of work in this area. This dearth of work was first noted by the author of this thesis when carrying out an undergraduate dissertation in the late 1990s, which explored the representation of working class women in the press news coverage of the 1984 and 1985 Miners’ Strike. This study was important not only for revealing how feminist media studies had tended to neglect studies of women in the news, but also for examining how gender and class intersect in this media form. This work was therefore fundamental for forming some of the arguments central to this thesis.

Thesis Organisation

Chapter One opens the thesis and will provide an overview of its two central concepts: ‘class’ and ‘gender’. It will first explore the problematic concept of ‘class’ and cite some reasons for these conceptual difficulties, particularly in terms of where to place women within class structures. The chapter will then proceed to give a historical account of the recent history of class and recount its declining significance in public discourse over the past 30 years. The social, economic and political changes during this period will also be described, particularly in relation to women’s lives. The declining significance of class in political discourse was mirrored by the declining reference to the concept in feminist sociology, in the wake of new social movement and identity politics, and the chapter will next move to recount what feminist sociologists were saying about class, and its relation with patriarchy, within the same timeframe. Chapter One will finally outline the class markers that will be used in this thesis, as the case studies are formed around different groups of working women, determined by occupation. Class is referred to broadly as working class, middle class or elite class, using terms of social differentiation widely reproduced in public discourse. However, the Office of National Statistics (ONS) National Statistics Socio-economic Classifications (NS-SEC) which problematises this classification will be referenced as evidence of the difficulties in locating working women within clear class boundaries.

From this opening overview of ‘class’ and ‘gender’, Chapter Two will consider the third central concept of this thesis ‘representation’, discussing the term broadly and then putting forward a model of representation for the context of this thesis. This study adopts the reflective approach to representation whereby ‘reality’ is the yardstick to measure the quality of news content. However, it also recognises the need to draw on long histories of representation and constructions of femininity from both inside and outside of the news. Chapter Two will then move to place this thesis within the broader field of feminist media studies research. The origins of feminist media studies will be recounted, noting particularly how studies of women and class slipped down the feminist agenda, and building on the arguments already formed in Chapter One. The work that has emerged exploring the intersection of class and gender representation will next be outlined, alongside other studies examining representations of women in news content.

Chapter Three outlines the methodology used to carry out the research. This thesis comprises four case studies, and the case study approach will be discussed in relation to the research question and aims of this thesis. After providing the rationale for choosing this method, the research process will be recounted in some detail. The case study selection will be outlined, alongside details of how the data source material was selected and collected. The decisions determining sample selection will be outlined, plus the precise sample details given. Inventories of data were carried out for the large press samples in Chapters Four and Five, and this process will also be described. This chapter will finally outline the qualitative methodology of textual analysis that was deployed to analyse the data material. The textual analysis comprised three elements: language analysis, visual analysis, and to a lesser extent, narrative analysis, and the execution of each element of this qualitative method will be described in the context of the research objectives.

Chapters Four to Seven comprise the four case studies of this thesis. Each case study was selected with the central aims of the thesis at the fore, to explore the representation of different classes of working women in the news media according to their occupation. The case studies were also selected in light of the theoretical framework put forward in Chapters One and Two, and in the context of existing studies of women, news and representation. Chapter Three outlines the full rationale for selecting each case.

Chapters Four and Five examine the representations of working women in the low paid job sectors - in routine and semi-routine occupations – and each case is formed around a singular ‘hard news’ event. Chapter Four explores the news coverage of the implementation of a National Minimum Wage into Britain in 1999. This new wage introduced by New Labour was set to benefit 2 million workers, many of who were women segregated into low paid low status work. Chapter Five similarly explores the portrayal of this group of working women, but more specifically within the public sector, and in the context of the Council Workers Strike in 2002. In both of these chapters, pay issues are the central theme. However, the two cases differ by the emphasis on a ‘good news’ event in the context of the minimum wage, and a ‘bad news’ event in the case of the strike action.

While the first two cases focus on singular news events and explore the portrayal of low status working women in the context of these events, Chapter Six and Seven focus on women in particular professions: businesswomen, military women and women war reporters. Chapter Six moves to the top end of the socio-economic scale by analysing how elite businesswomen figure in news content. This chapter considers the sub genre of business news and women's representation within these specialist news sections more broadly, before moving to examine news events involving four elite businesswomen: Clara Furse, CEO of the London Stock Exchange; Martha Lane Fox, co-founder of lastminute.com; Michelle Mone, head of the Ultimo lingerie company; and Jacqueline Gold, CEO of Ann Summers.

The final case, Chapter Seven differs from the former cases by exploring the broader theme of how working women are represented in the news coverage of war, thus enabling discussion of how women figure in a key genre of hard news reporting and providing a case with more than one unit of analysis. This chapter also contrasts with the earlier cases by examining the portrayal of two distinct groups of working women: female military workers and women war correspondents. In terms of the socio-economic background of these working women, the class of female military personnel is variable and dependent on rank, while women war correspondents would be regarded as middle class, as semi-autonomous trained professionals. The analytical material for this case can be broadly split into pre-war and wartime news coverage. From pre-war news, debates regarding military women fighting on the frontline in 2000 are explored with particular focus on Lance Bombardier, Heidi Cochrance, while wartime coverage is explored from after the September 11th 2001 attacks in the US. This reportage explores the capture of war correspondent, Yvonne Ridley.

Chapter Eight concludes the thesis and will place the findings of this study in relation to the broader field of feminist media studies research. Finally, it will draw together the key themes of this research regarding the articulation of class and gender in the news media.

Chapter One

Class and Gender:

a historical and sociological overview

Chapter introduction

This chapter explores the concepts central to this study: ‘class’ and ‘gender’, and will give a sense of how these terms will be deployed throughout this thesis. The concept of ‘class’ has always been problematic as well as often contentious, and in recent years the term has moved in and out of conceptual fashion in feminist sociology. This chapter will begin by outlining the difficulties inherent in the concept of class and explore some of the problems with class analysis, particularly in relation to women. The chapter will then move to historically recount the declining significance of class in political discourse since the 1960s, in relation to the social, economic and political changes in Britain over the last 30 years. How these changes have affected the lives of women will be considered throughout this historical overview. The chapter will then move to explore what feminist sociologists have said about class over the same period. Finally, a framework of the class markers (or stratifications) to be used in this thesis will be put forward.

The problem with class

‘Class’ is a problematic and often contentious concept. Crompton (1993) maps many of the contentions of class investigation back to the 19th Century, but remarks that debates have intensified in the latter half of the 20th Century in line with fast economic and social changes in western societies, most particularly in relation to structures of work and employment – the move to the industrial age and the mass entry of women into the workforce (Crompton, 1993: 14; 81). Crompton notes three main problems for class analysis in the post-industrial age, which will each be considered in terms of how they particularly relate to women. These problems concern: where to put people, the failure of class action, and the significance of class identity.

Where to put people

The problem concerning where to place people within class structures raises questions such as where class boundaries should be drawn on stratification scales, particularly as new occupations emerge and others disappear. One of the key traditional areas of class investigation up to the 1970s was the determining of class categories and the placement of people within these categories (Walby, 1990: 7-8). This was pertinent for the study of class and gender because while (male) sociologists claimed 'gender-neutrality' for their work on stratification, women usually did not figure, or were only afforded second hand status (Kuhn and Wolpe, 1978: 220). Feminists thus attacked conventional class schemes that failed to take women into account (Crompton, 1993: xi; Walby, 1986: 23) while some attempted to re-define class stratification indexes to include women (West, 1978: 222; Eisenstein, 1979: 33). Occupational class schemes, however, have remained problematic for women, and they are often still clustered within particular groups on class indexes, usually into low level service sector employment, while their non-standard relationship to the workplace is ignored.

The failure of class action

The second problem for class analysis relates to the failure of class action, whereby class theorists have presupposed that devising class categorisations would lead to class consciousness among groups, which would lead subsequently to class action. Instead, political developments have seen the move away from 'class politics' to New Social Movements, such as the peace and ecological movements, where membership does not necessarily correspond neatly with socio-economic classes. The second wave feminist movement from the late 1960s was seen as particularly relevant in this move away from 'old politics' perceived as 'mass, male and working class' to a newer politics focused on identity (Crompton, 1993: 85-87).

Class and identification

The third and final problem relates in part to the previous problem of class action and identity politics, and raises directly the question of the significance of class as a source of social identity. How important is class identity, when alternative sources of identification, such as gender, age and ethnicity, have been given an increasingly high profile? This question is further emphasised, as class is considered in the context of

cultural consumption, whereby the concept of 'lifestyle' replaces 'class' as consumerism redefines social classification (Crompton, 1993: 100-103; 166).

A recent history of class

This section will begin by exploring historically the changes in perception of class from the 1960s to the beginning of the 21st Century. It will recount the declining significance of class in public discourse about British society, relate this to social, economic and political changes, and explore how women were affected through this period. This section will act as a prelude to considering how feminists, and especially feminist sociologists, were theorising the relation between class and patriarchy within this same period. These developments will be reviewed in the next section of the chapter.

The 1960s was a decade of radical change in Britain. Despite a rise in unemployment due to declining manufacturing industries there was also an overall rise in prosperity (Cashmore, 1989: 29). Since World War II, the country had remained highly polarised in terms of class status and structure (Cannadine, 2000: 147). Now, due to rising prosperity, alongside a changing education system, and the arrival of substantial numbers of immigrants from India, Pakistan and the West Indies, the cultural makeup and social structure of Britain was beginning to alter. The status of women within society was also changing and the second wave women's liberation movement was formed in 1970 around five key objectives: equality in education; free abortion on demand; reliable and free contraception; equal pay and 24-hour nurseries. The Equal Pay Act was passed later that same year with the overriding aim to achieve 'equal pay for equal work' between men and women by December 1975 (Pettman, 1975: 3). Gender issues were at the fore and sexual discrimination had high political currency at this time, being increasingly 'fashionable' for politicians in terms of public policy concerns at the start of the decade (Chiplin and Sloane, 1976: 1).

The women's liberation movement was formed from a shared recognition that women were oppressed and there was a commitment to develop theory and politics to explore and challenge this oppression (Jackson, 1993: 3). The mass media was one of their central concerns and feminists argued that sexist messages and stereotypes worked to naturalise 'dichotomized and hierarchical sex-role stereotypes' (Carter and Steiner,

2004: 2). However, as feminism became an increasing political force there was an inevitable schism towards different tendencies within the movement, broadly split as liberal, radical and socialist. These theoretical divisions will be further explored in the next section of this chapter. Legislative changes during the early part of the decade, were increasingly directed towards gender rather than class inequalities. For example, the Employment Protection Act (1975), among its many points, made it illegal to dismiss a woman due to pregnancy (Pilcher, 1999: 34), while the Social Security Pensions Act (1975) protected women's pension rights in recognition of their role in the home. These two Acts were part of a series of legislative measures introduced by Labour governments during the 1970s, which were concerned with basic human rights and related to groups in society who might be discriminated against, for example, because of their gender or race, rather than 'their ability, or inability, to perform work tasks' (Cashmore, 1989: 23). The significance of class, as central to identity, began to decline during this period, as other sources of identity were brought to the fore through these reforms.

More women entered the workforce during the 1970s, despite the overall rise in unemployment and the further decline in manufacturing jobs (Rowbotham, 1997: 416). Higher numbers of married women were now returning to work after having a family, and a rising divorce rate meant more one-parent families, with single mothers also entering the workplace (Rowbotham, 1997: 407). Many of these women occupied part-time positions and therefore had fewer rights than full-time workers. The economic turmoil and industrial unrest that demarcated the era thus impacted disproportionately on this group of women as they were 'drawn in and out of the labour market most rapidly' (West, 1982: 2). Meanwhile, female professionals were increasingly visible in the business sector, thus the women's movement was continuing to fragment, revealing 'new forms of social division' (Rowbotham, 1997: 416-417).

The 1980s saw the further decline of class politics, as the Conservative Party, under the leadership of Margaret Thatcher, set out to restrict trade union power and denationalise many state-run institutions (Evans, 1997: 15). The Employment Act (1982) and the Trade Union Act (1984) altered the definition of lawful striking and transferred power from collective unions to individual workers (Evans, 1997: 37).

Unemployment peaked in 1985 at over 3 million (Evans, 1997: 29), although the British labour force was continuing to grow in some sectors, most notably the service industries. Much work at the lower end of this sector was poorly paid and often part time with very little job security. Moreover, women predominantly filled these low status positions, while men who had lost their jobs in the declining manufacturing sector made up the larger proportion of the unemployed.

However, while women were increasingly going out to work, their role as the key carer in the family was reinstated, as Thatcher introduced new legislation that would impact disproportionately on women from lower social groups. Despite the increased public discourse on the subject of sex denoting a new liberal approach towards sexuality this failed to correlate with the high moral standards that the Thatcherite era espoused for women relating to sexuality and family life (Rowbotham, 1997: 508). The welfare state was declining and there were cuts in social provision, including benefit claims for part time workers and maternity rights, which were already among the lowest in Europe (Segal, 1983: 210). Yet while Thatcher's policies were indirectly binding *some* women back to the home, others were able to take advantage of the evolving enterprise culture. These women, who were well educated with subsequently better life chances, were well placed to benefit from the contemporary enterprise ethic.

The progress of some women in the workplace was accompanied by a new free market feminism, with the meritocratic and individualistic attitude that 'given notional equal access to the economy, it is up to women to realise their potential by competing in the modern workplace' (Whelehan, 2000: 100-101). Within this discourse, success in the workplace was dependent on the skills and merit of the individual, while the growing gap between rich and poor was politically shrouded in Thatcher's meritocratic vision of 'consumption and classlessness' (Beynon, 1999: 46). The presupposition that Britain was now a meritocratic society emphasised freedom and choice, and 'individualisation'¹ for its subjects who were 'capable of understanding themselves as autonomous agents, producers of their present and their future, inventors of the people they are or may become' (Walkerdine *et al*, 2001: 2). This

¹ The terms 'new individualism' or 'individualisation' were concepts used in the early 1990s by sociologists such as Anthony Giddens and Ulrich Beck to understand social changes in modern society (McRobbie, 2004).

meant a move away from the old structures of social class, as a tool for social regulation, and the move to self-regulation, whereby individuals ‘invent their own structures ... internally and individualistically’ (McRobbie, 2004: 260). The ‘new individualism’ also meant that the concept of class was further demoted as a way to describe and understand inequalities in society. This demotion was similarly reflected in the academy, where the category of difference prevailed ‘as a floating signifier unanchored to structural referents in postmodern thought’ (Gottfried, 1998: 453).

The right-wing desire to abandon class interests was emphasised when Thatcher argued that ‘the more you talk about class – or even “classlessness” – the more you fix the idea in people’s minds’.² Class was pushed to the sidelines, deemed irrelevant as a dividing factor in Britain, despite growing inequality between social groups. These inequalities became most apparent when exploring the increased disparity between the lives of women from different social backgrounds. While from the 1980s, there was a powerful perception in the mass media that women had ‘made it’ (Rowbotham, 1997: 495), these media portrayals contributed to an ‘equality myth’ that often failed to translate to the reality of many women’s lives. At the end of the decade, women’s pay was on average two-thirds that of men (West, 1982: 1) and 5.8 million women were officially living below the poverty line (Figes, 1994: 144).

The gap between rich and poor grew into the 1990s, and the number of officially ‘poor’ peaked in 1992 when figures estimated that 14.1 million people were now living below the poverty line (Evans, 1997: 117), the greater number of whom were women (Rowbotham, 1997: 552). Meanwhile, there were an increasing number of millionaires and executive pay was growing alongside ‘Fat Cat’ salaries (Bradley, 1996: 46). Class re-emerged in political rhetoric as a way of understanding these inequalities, and in the Conservative leadership race to replace Thatcher in 1990, candidates sought to claim their lack of class advantage ‘despite their patrician backgrounds and antecedents’ (Crompton, 1993: 9). The party supporters of the eventual winner, John Major, had emphasised his humble beginnings, as being in tune with the voters. Opinion polling at the close of the 1980s had illustrated that ‘socialist/collectivist’ principles were still largely preferable to the

² Quote cited in Anthony, A. ‘What about the workers?’, *Observer Review*, 13 December 1998: 3.

‘capitalist/individualist’ values that Thatcher had espoused, while 72 per cent believed that trade unions were crucial to protect the worker (Jacobs and Worcester, 1990: 21).

By the middle of the 1990s, opinion polls showed that 81 per cent of the population believed that class struggle still existed in Britain (Beynon, 1999: 36) while increasing numbers identified themselves as ‘working class’³. However, the rhetoric of equality with regards to women still remained evident. The buzzwords from the business world included ‘complexity, adaptability, team work and communications’ and women were regarded as being more suited to the needs of the flexible workplace (Franks 2000: 23). In 1997, a Labour Market Trends survey reported that women now made up 47 per cent of the British workforce (Pilcher, 1999: 34), figures that were contrasted in the media with the rising number of economically inactive working class men, a figure that had risen from 800,000 in 1979 to 2.3 million in 1997 (Greer, 1999: 154). Debates about the changing composition of the workforce subsequently focused on the gender struggle and ‘crisis in masculinity’, and how equality for women had now been met. Yet feminists argued that women were being depicted incorrectly, as being the cause of men’s increased unemployment:

... powerlessness has not been visited upon [men] by women but by other men, the bosses who saw to it that the machines which could have liberated their employees from drudgery and repetitive tasks replaced them instead.

(Greer, 1999: 343)

So while the presupposition of gender equality in the workforce was in fact a misnomer - with part-time work, enduring pay equality and sexual harassment still everyday realities for some women - for Greer (1999) the emphasis on a gender struggle also rendered invisible the ongoing class struggle between the workers and the elite in the dominant capitalist structure.

Moving into the 21st Century and the gap between rich and poor, that had widened since the 1980s, was still a nagging feature of British society, despite reforms by New Labour to tackle poverty and low pay since they had entered office in 1997. Many of these government reforms focused on getting people back to work, such as The New Deal, and included the introduction of new benefits, tax credits and a minimum wage, to make work a more viable option than unemployment. These reforms were

³ In 1998, 55 per cent of people identified themselves as working class (Anthony, A. *op cit*).

beneficial for many lower class women, although they continued to remain segregated in low paid low status work and were also much more likely to live in poverty than men.⁴ Meanwhile, the relationship between New Labour and the trade unions was increasingly tense and there were waves of industrial action regarding low pay by many public sector workers, including teachers, nursery nurses and council employees. Many of these low paid striking employees were women, although this was a fact rarely acknowledged by the media, who continued to focus on the high achievers and gender equality for some in the workplace.

Feminist theory and social class

The declining significance of class in political discourse was mirrored by the declining reference to the concept in feminist sociology. Skeggs (1997a) suggests the investigation of class disappeared from feminist work because of factors both inside and away from the academy. In wider society, this related to the ‘new individualism’, as previously outlined, and the changing workforce, which saw the disappearance of jobs traditionally regarded as ‘working class’. Meanwhile, the move away from class within the academy related to three factors. First, Skeggs refers to how feminist debates on class were using outmoded Marxist frameworks focused on analysis of the family and the sexual division of labour, both in the home and the workplace. Second, she argues that the concepts relating to ‘class’ and Marx were difficult to define in relation to women. Third and finally, as Marx became outmoded in the poststructuralist shift, feminist theory moved upmarket by its application of literary theory. Moreover, Skeggs suggests that the prevalence of feminist academics from privileged backgrounds meant that the exploration of class was neglected because it was ‘not experienced or felt as immediately as gender’ (Skeggs, 1997a: 6-7). This section will explore these factors, alongside considering the feminist work that *did* theorise the intersection of class and gender during this timeframe.

As indicated above, the rise of the women’s movement in the 1970s was accompanied by emerging divisions between liberal, socialist and radical feminist theorists, with differing interpretations of the importance of class. Liberal feminists were concerned with the denial of equal rights for *all* women, most particularly in the spheres of

⁴ Equal Opportunities Commission Press Release, ‘Women’s hidden poverty – EOC calls for action’ (www.eoc.org.uk, date accessed 19 April 2004).

employment and education, and their arguments centred on the reform of 'small-scale deprivations', such as unequal pay and maternity rights (Walby, 1990: 4-5). These reforms for women would be achieved by the passing of legislation, such as the Equal Pay Act (1970) that would outlaw discrimination (Abbott and Wallace, 1997: 32). Liberal feminists however, presumed gender inequality was a consequence of the socialisation of children and of traditional sexist attitudes, and they were not concerned with exploring deep-rooted causes (Walby, 1990: 33; Abbott and Wallace, 1997: 32). In contrast, radical and socialist feminists were concerned with 'overarching structures' (Walby, 1990: 4) and formed early theoretical debates around Marxist politics and its concepts. For example, radical feminist Shulamith Firestone in *The Dialectic of Sex* (1970) departed from the classical Marxist meaning of class as an economic category, by arguing that sex class was the determining social division and that anatomical difference was the natural cause of the unequal privileging of male over female (Firestone in Jackson, 1993: 7; Eisenstein, 1979: 18).

For socialist feminists, gender relations were determined by the system of capitalism, while the system of patriarchy - the domination of women by men - was argued to be incidental to the domination of capital over labour (Walby, 1991: 3-4; Pilcher, 1999: 7). Marxist feminists were concerned with exploring the sexual division of labour in relation to paid and unpaid work, and debated issues such as domestic labour and the notion of women as the reserve army of workers. Class relations were central to Marxist feminism (Pilcher, 1999: 7) and despite the 'gender-blindness' of orthodox Marxism, studies would work to apply theory to women's situation. For example, Dallas Costa in *The Power of Women and the Subversion of the Community* (1972) argued that domestic labour is central to the mode of production. She maintained that housework is the common oppression of all women, and that women should therefore organize, as a 'class' and demand wages for this work (Kuhn and Wolpe, 1978: 199).

The application of Marxist theoretical frames to studies of women was proving increasingly problematic through the 1970s and was argued to be restricting feminist theoretical development. This was in part due to the lack of success in attempts to apply Marxist concepts, such as 'value' and 'mode of production', to the specificity of women's situation (Kuhn and Wolpe, 1978: 1-2). Some feminist theorists stressed the need to part from the constraining influence of orthodox Marxist theory, which they

argued paid little attention to women's subordination (Barrett, 1981; Bryson, 1992; Sydie, 1993). Dual-system theory evolved out of the problems with Marxist feminism. While Marxist feminists worked to either incorporate feminism into a Marxist critique of capitalism, or to extend Marxism to encompass the politics of women's liberation (Jackson, 1993: 3), dual-system theory was a compromise of both socialist and radical feminism, by its dual focus on the two systems working to oppress women: capitalism and patriarchy. The concept of 'patriarchy' was contentious among feminists and had previously been problematised and criticised by Marxist feminists for being essentialistic and transhistoric (Barrett in Jackson, 1993: 12). Moreover, the universalistic assumption of patriarchy was 'insensitive to different cultures, classes and ethnicities' (Walby, 1990: 2). Radical feminists had seized 'patriarchy' as the central concept to understand women's oppression, yet the term remained ambiguous and there was no consensus regarding its meaning (McDonough and Harrison, 1978: 12, 25). Kate Millett's *Sexual Politics* in 1971, which was considered to be the first attempt to theorise patriarchy in terms of women's oppression, was criticised for its 'mirror inversion' of Marxism, and for merely replacing 'class determination with that of sex' (McDonough and Harrison, 1978: 12-14).

Dual-system analysis thus addressed the essentialism and biological determinism of radical feminism, as well as the 'class reductionism' of Marxist feminism. Feminist sociologists might explore the system of patriarchy as 'fused' with the system of capitalism, such as Eisenstein who argued that the two systems have a mutually dependent and reinforcing relationship (Eisenstein, 1979: 5). Alternatively, the two systems of oppression might be regarded as analytically distinct, with the relationship between patriarchy and capitalism being one of tension and conflict (Hartmann, 1979; Walby, 1990). For example, Walby argued that there are two class systems, one formed around patriarchy and one formed around capitalism, however, it is the patriarchal systems that work most particularly to oppress women (Walby, 1990: 13). She distinguished between two main forms of patriarchy - public and private - and argued that during the 20th Century there has been a shift from private patriarchy as the overriding form of women's oppression, to public patriarchy. Private patriarchy refers to the household as being the main site of women's oppression, enforced by individual patriarchs, such as husbands and fathers. Public patriarchy in contrast, refers to employment and the state, whereby women are oppressed collectively

through strategies of segregation and subordination (Walby, 1990: 178). So while women are now incorporated into the workforce, the system of public patriarchy means they remain segregated into particularly types of work, and are subordinated by the enduring pay gap between men and women (Walby, 1990: 179).

While Walby had situated patriarchy at the fore of her dual analysis, Marxist feminists, Hartmann and Delphy (both in Jackson, 1993) both attempted to reconceptualise 'patriarchy' in Marxist terms by arguing that patriarchy has a material base rooted in the sexual division of labour. Delphy conceptualised the notion of 'sex classes' (Delphy in Jackson, 1993: 17) situating housewives as one class and husbands as another. The exploitation of women through their domestic labour was, in Delphy's view, patriarchal exploitation, because men are the direct beneficiaries of this unpaid work (Walby, 1990: 74), as opposed to the system of capitalism benefiting indirectly through its alienation and oppression of women as housewives (Oakley, 1974: 156). Meanwhile, Hartmann illustrated how the interests of patriarchy and capitalism could conflict in the context of paid work, for example, between employers using women's cheap labour in the workplace and men using women's free labour in the home. She argued that while capitalism creates hierarchy in the workplace, patriarchy determines the place of men and women within that hierarchy (Hartmann in Jackson, 1993: 14).

While dual-system theories were developed in part out of the need to move away from economic determinism and structural analysis, the 'stress on structures' was still very apparent (Pilcher, 1999: 9). Studies were criticised for failing to explain 'the logic of capitalism' (Bottero, 1998: 473) while the dual emphasis of these analyses was often difficult to sustain (Walby, 1990: 6; Pilcher, 1999: 5-6). The move away from economic determinism and orthodox Marxism marked the shift towards poststructuralism and a more postmodern approach to feminist theory. Emphasis was now placed on 'complexity, diversity and fragmentation' (Bryson, 1992: 235) while rejecting the 'assumption of a pre-given hierarchy of causation' (Barrett, 1992: 7) which would have implications for studies of women and class:

...such unexceptionable concepts as 'social structure', 'role', 'individual' or 'labour market' have become contentious in terms of what they assume about social totality or infrastructure, or the presumed characteristics of social actors... Contemporary western feminism, confident for several years about its 'sex-

gender distinction', analysis of 'patriarchy' or postulation of 'the male gaze' has found all of these various categories radically undermined by the new 'deconstructive' emphasis on fluidity and contingency.

(Barrett, 1992: 201-202)

Feminist work began to focus on language and its power to construct meaning, as opposed to simply conveying or expressing meaning. The theoretical work of Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure became popular in what was referred to as the 'Saussurian Revolution', alongside the poststructuralist works of Derrida, Lacan and Foucault (Barrett, 1992: 202-203). This saw women's studies shift away from the social sciences arena and into the cultural realm of the academy. Moreover, feminist work was seen to be moving 'up-market' by its application of more literary informed theorists 'drawing on the cultural capital of those who have had access to 'high culture' and higher education' (Skeggs, 1997a: 6). Thus further downplaying the validity and significance of class in feminist academic work and there was an almost complete dearth of new work in this area.

The 'new individualism' of the 1980s, discussed in the previous section, meant that the concept of class was further demoted as a way to describe and understand inequalities in society, and during the 1980s few feminists confronted the disappearance of social class in their work (Pollert, 1996: 652). However, there was a small group of feminist sociologists who did keep class central to their research, such as Carolyn Steedman in *Landscape for a Good Woman* (1986) and Valerie Walkerdine in *Schoolgirl Fictions* (1990) who both used the autobiographical mode to recount working class lives, intersecting experience with theoretical frameworks of class and gender. These studies struck parallels with early work from the British cultural studies movement in the late 1950s, most particularly Richard Hoggart's *The Uses of Literacy* (1957) which had been much criticized in the poststructuralist shift for its oversentimentality and lack of theorization (Medhurst, 1997: 24).

Steedman and Walkerdine worked within poststructuralist paradigms to explore working class identities that were not perceived as fixed, but were discussed as 'fragmented, influx, contradictory, performed, lived as narratives and fantasies' (Lacey, 2000: 42). These authors were influenced by black women writers, such as bell hooks (1981) who were among the first to write about the differences between women in terms of race, class and gender. Black feminist writings were also

influential in that they recounted personal histories and wrote in the experiential style, which was ‘angry, emotional, not dry and rationalist’ (Walkerdine, 1990: 157). These ‘dry and rationalist’ writings on class were chiefly ‘male and Marxist’ and had neglected ‘the elaborate psychological complexities of social class’ (Reay, 1997: 26) which these feminist works sought to explore.

Towards the end of the 1980s and into the 1990s, studies were emerging that theorized class more directly in relation to consumerism and consumption. ‘Class’ was perceived as a more fluid concept and a product of social phenomena, such as ‘taste’, ‘lifestyle’ and ‘consumer desire’ (Lury, 1996: 116). These works, such as Featherstone (1991), Savage *et al* (1995) and Lury (1996) were influenced by the work of French theorist Pierre Bourdieu and were concerned with exploring the ‘new middle classes’ as ‘cultural intermediaries’ who it was argued had grown in size and significance in the shift from industrialism to post-Fordism (Lury, 1996: 93-95). Meanwhile, further feminist experiential work emerged during the 1990s, continuing to explore the lives of working class women (Kuhn, 1995; Walkerdine, 1997; 2001; Skeggs, 1997a). This work was also influenced by Bourdieu, most particularly Skeggs (1997a) who appropriated Bourdieu’s theory of ‘Capital’ in its various forms of economic, cultural, social and symbolic, to understand how class is ‘lived, formed, reproduced and challenged’ (Skeggs, 1997a; Skeggs, 1997b: 127). Skeggs aimed to reinstate ‘class’ as a concept, and working class women as a group, arguing that the working classes remained ‘massified’ and ‘pathological’ in popular representations (1997a: 2). These works were very influential in instigating collections from working class academics within sociology (Mahony and Zmroczek, 1997) and cultural studies (Munt, 2000) with contributors recounting their personal experiences and histories within the academy, as well as seeking to reinstate the investigation of class (Mahony and Zmroczek, 1997; Holloway, 1997; Morley, 1997; Reay, 1997; Lacey, 2000; Medhurst 2000).

More recently, there have been other attempts to reinstate class within social sciences and communications research, and Murdock (2000) has stated the need to reintroduce class as a key concept maintaining that ‘class remains a fundamental structuring principle of every aspect of late capitalism’ (Murdock, 2000: 7-8). Murdock identified three key areas of communications research where he viewed class analysis as being

fundamental: firstly, the examination of cultural labour and the growing importance of social capital in the cultural industries; secondly, the exploration of global shifts, where work had previously concentrated on cultural difference, as opposed to economic exploitation, and finally, the classing of difference, which would be fundamental for studies of women, as Murdock argues:

... while feminists are right to insist that class is always gendered, gender is equally always classed. Consequently it is not a matter of choosing to focus on class or difference but of exploring the ways in which the two intersect.

(Murdock, 2000: 21)

For some feminist sociologists, such as Skeggs, Walkerdine, Steedman and Kuhn, whose work has been outlined above, this call to reinstate class in studies of gender merely justified their maintaining its significance during the period of its decline. Yet while their work illustrates the richness of experiential analyses in sociological work, Murdock suggests the importance of bringing class back to the fore of communications research, utilising a broader range of approaches and methodologies, and exploring class in the three core areas of media research: production; reception and representation. This thesis aims to explore the intersection of class and gender in media representations by examining portrayals of working women in the news media. Before moving to Chapter Two, which will discuss representation and outline the work already carried out in this area which explores the intersection of class and gender in the news, the markers by which class is to be measured and understood throughout this thesis will be explained.

Class markers for this thesis

Crompton (1993) notes the different strategies and structures by which to measure social inequality, and argues that class indexes have existed for many purposes, such as for use in social policy, market research and advertising (1993: 76). There have traditionally been three key types of class structure, all of which use occupation as the central indicator of socio-economic status, and are referred to as the 'commonsense' index, the index of prestige or status, and the theoretical class scheme (Crompton, 1993: 13). The two most commonly used 'commonsense' indexes from the 1970s were the Registrar General's class index developed by the Office of National Statistics (ONS) and the National Readership Survey, the latter of which was most typically used for market research (Crompton, 1993: 55). 'Commonsense' indexes are presupposed to be 'objectivist' class indexes, in comparison to the 'subjectivist'

ranking of prestige indexes. Status scales include the Oxford Mobility Study by Goldthorpe and Hope (1974) whereby occupations are ranked in terms of 'perceived social desirability' (Crompton, 1993: 56). Finally, theoretical class schemes have incorporated Marxism and Weberian theory, most particularly the Erik Wright and John Goldthorpe schemes respectively, and tend to presuppose relations between classes, as opposed to the hierarchical assumption of the 'commonsense' index or the gradational nature of the prestige scale (Crompton, 1993: 13).

During the 1970s and 1980s, new tools were introduced in advertising to 'class' consumers. These included the Target Group Index and ACORN, which moved beyond occupation to take into account consumer lifestyle characteristics. This move to classing consumers in terms of lifestyle factors was in part because of 'growing doubt about the usefulness of occupational status as an indicator of social standing, values and aspirations' (Gough-Yates, 2003: 62) and occupational class schemes have been considered problematic for three key reasons. Firstly, they fail to explain or capture the actualities of class relations. Secondly, they ignore other dimensions of inequality, such as inherited wealth. And finally, they ignore differences such as gender and race (Crompton, 1993: 51). Yet, despite these doubts and problems, occupational structure and class structure are still often regarded as synonymous and some argue that occupational scales remain 'amongst the most useful indicators of patterns of material advantage and disadvantage in modern societies' (Crompton, 1993: 10). This thesis is concerned with exploring representations of working women, and therefore the class markers used will necessarily relate to occupation. For this purpose, the National Statistics Socio-economic Classification (NS-SEC) Analytic Classes will provide the framework for grouping women according to their occupation. This framework is detailed below, however, first it is necessary to explore in greater detail some of the problems with using occupational indexes to measure the social class of women.

At the beginning of this chapter, the problem of placing people on occupational scales was noted as one key issue for class investigation, and this has proved most particularly to be the case with regards to where to place women. Traditional class schemes were devised chiefly for male employment and thus bore the imprint of men's labour in their categorisations. Moreover, while investigations of social

stratification up to the 1980s were claimed to be ‘gender neutral’, women were mainly ignored, as the unit of analysis was the family, with a male presupposed to be at the head. Conventional class schemes were therefore attacked by feminists, most particularly Goldthorpe’s relational index, which only included women as wives, and ‘tucked’ them into the class of their husband or father (Walby, 1990:65). Goldthorpe argued that incorporating women into his index would confuse and ‘obscure the pattern of demographic class formation’ because of their disproportionate segregation in low level and white collar jobs (Crompton, 1993: 95). Moreover, Goldthorpe maintained that the ‘class’ position conceived from the work of women (or wives) was less significant than her ‘conjugal’ class. In Goldthorpe’s view, a wife’s work was ‘intermittent and limited’ due to domestic responsibilities and could therefore ‘properly be ignored’ (Walby, 1986: 25). Criticisms of the Goldthorpe’s index thus centred on its failing to take into account the importance of women’s work and changes in the family, whereby from the 1970s there were more female-headed households, due to divorce and single parent families (Crompton, 1993: 96).

The NS-SEC framework has been in use since 2001 for official statistics and academic research, and replaced previous socio-economic classifications scales: the Social Class based on Occupation (formerly the Registrar General’s Social Class) and Socio-economic Groups. The NS–SEC is an occupational framework, devised by the Office of National Statistics (ONS) in collaboration with sociologists, with its aim being ‘to measure employment relations and condition of occupations... [and show] the structure of socio-economic positions in modern societies’ (ONS Report, 2002: 5). This scale adopts the Goldthorpe Schema, which as outlined above, was subject to particular criticism by feminists because its unit of analysis for measuring ‘class’ was the family, with the household reference person (HRP) presupposed to be either the husband or the father. The NS-SEC now claim to address this ‘overt sexism’ with recognition that ‘conventional’ families are in decline and that women may now bring in the highest income and thus could also be the HRP (ONS Report, 2005: 5).

Many of the earlier outlined criticisms, such as women remaining clustered into particular jobs (and therefore particular groups) do remain unaddressed by the NS-SEC framework. However, it has been argued that many of the debates regarding the inadequacy of the Goldthorpe Schema (as well as other socio-economic scales) in

incorporating women were in fact pseudo-debates, which detracted from the inadequacy of these class indexes in general for explaining or measuring socio-economic inequalities (Crompton, 1993: 94). Certainly, the problems of occupational indexes *per se* have already been outlined, and the limitations of the NS-SEC Analytical Classes are acknowledged in that they fail to explain what socio-economic differences mean, while the focus on occupation fails to take into account other life chances that may impact on social class (ONS Report, 2005:3). However, it should be noted that this thesis is not concerned with devising new more adequate classificatory frames, it is instead concerned with adopting a measurable system by which to broadly group women by their socio-economic background, while remaining alert to the limitations of these models.

The NS-SEC framework comprises eight classes (see Figure 1.1 below) ranging from higher managerial and professional occupations in Group 1 down to the long term unemployed in Group 8:

Fig 1.1: NS-SEC analytic classes

1	Higher managerial and professional occupations
1.1	Large employers and higher managerial occupations
1.2	Higher professional occupations
2	Lower managerial and professional occupations
3	Intermediate occupations
4	Small employers and own account workers
5	Lower supervisory and technical occupations
6	Semi-routine occupations
7	Routine occupations
8	Never worked and long-term unemployed

These classes relate to social relationships and positions within the workplace only, although there is recognition that labour market situation ‘equates to source of income, economic security and prospects of economic advancement’ (ONS Report, 2005: 3). Therefore the classes as well as being illustrative of ‘structures of material inequality’ (Crompton, 1993: 10-11) also denote life chances and are regarded as ‘a

good predictor of health and educational outcomes' (ONS Report, 2005: 2).⁵ However, the NS-SEC scale is not unproblematic, and the ONS notes that there are anomalies in these groupings, most particularly with regard to Group 4, whereby small business owners and own account workers (such as publicans, farmers and drivers) would have more autonomy than those in Group 3's intermediate occupations (which includes secretaries and clerks). This problem is particularly salient when the scale is collapsed into its hierarchical three-category version: salariat (Groups 1 and 2), intermediate (Groups 3, 4 and 5) and working class (Groups 6 and 7) (ONS Report, 2005: 15). For example, Crompton notes how the majority of self-employed men would be placed within the 'Intermediate' group, alongside lower-level clerical workers, who are predominantly women. She therefore incorporates the intermediate group within the working class group (Crompton, 2005: 31).

The NS-SEC framework thus remains problematic for the categorisation of women's work, and this will be demonstrated through instances in this thesis when attempting to 'class' women by their occupation. Furthermore, the NS-SEC groups are not typically referred to in public discourse, and the populist terms 'working class', 'middle class' and 'elite class' remain commonplace. Therefore, as this thesis is exploring news content, it will continue to utilise these terms, while remaining alert to the ONS class markers on the NS-SEC scale. Similarly to Crompton, the NS-SEC Groups 3 to 7 will be combined and referred to as the 'working class', which adheres more closely to orthodox Marxist concepts, whereby class is determined by a worker's relationship to the means of production and levels of work autonomy. Meanwhile, Groups 1 and 2 will remain split according to the NS-SEC eight-category scale outlined in Figure 1.1. The lower managerial and professional occupations of Group 2 will be referred to as the 'middle class', while the large employers and higher managerial occupations of Group 1 will be referred to as the 'elite'.

⁵ For example, it has been noted that those situated in Groups 1 and 2 live on average seven years longer than those further down the scale. They are also more likely to have children who follow them into managerial and professional positions (Raven, C. 'Class: there's no way up' *The Guardian*, 27 March 2001).

Chapter conclusion

This chapter has presented a historical and sociological framework for this thesis and explored in some detail the concept of class in relation to women. It has firstly explored the problems with class analysis, questioning how significant 'class' remains to be as a concept in public discourse and as a means for social identification. By placing class under a broader political and social lens, this chapter has recounted how 'class' has figured in public discourse since the 1970s, outlining its decline during the 1980s with the move to 'individualisation' and 'identity politics' formed around notions of difference, as opposed to inequality. Despite this move however, this period was notably when a gulf in equality grew between the lives of women from different social backgrounds, as some were able to enter the workforce in the new 'meritocratic' Britain, while others were forced out of the workplace, and sometimes into poverty, by changes in the welfare systems. The decline of 'class' in public discourse was paralleled in the academy by the poststructuralist shift, whereby all but a minority of feminist sociologists abandoned the investigation of class and gender. However, class did remain significant for some, and more recently, the concept has re-emerged as relevant for understanding and describing enduring inequalities in society. Meanwhile, within the academy there have been calls to reinstate class investigation influenced in part by the few feminist sociologists who kept 'class' at the fore during its decline. This thesis will now move to other studies exploring the intersection of gender and class, more specifically in terms of representation, and news media representation in particular.

Chapter Two

Representation

Chapter introduction

This chapter will begin by providing a sense of how ‘representation’ is understood in this thesis. It will then move to discuss how this study of representation, with its exploration of the intersection of class and gender, fits into the broader field of feminist media studies. The chapter will map the origins of feminist media studies approaches noting their roots within the second wave feminist movement. It will next outline the shift within the academy away from explorations of structural forces as the cause of women’s oppression towards the poststructuralist emphasis on identity and subjectivity. As noted in Chapter One, this shift was marked by renewed emphasis on language, semiotics and psychoanalysis, while studies of women and class were seen to slip down the feminist agenda. The work that has emerged exploring class and gender representation in the media will be outlined, alongside studies examining representations of women in relation to news. Much of the work to emerge in this area is concerned with language-use and how women are portrayed in the specific genre of crime news, and the approaches to gender and representation utilised in these studies will be examined in some depth. However, this thesis is also concerned with examining visual representations of women in the news and this chapter will summarise key feminist media studies research, chiefly from within film studies, which has explored this area.

Representation

Representation is ‘the production of meaning through language’ or other signifying systems and Hall (1995) refers to two ‘systems of representation’. The first system is the concepts and images in our head, which can stand for or ‘represent’ our world. These concepts could be about people or objects, but may also be about abstract things, such as war or love. Hall maintains that this system of representation is not merely the concepts, but also the means by which the concepts are organized, clustered and classified, and their relationship to one another. These organizations and classifications produce our conceptual map (Hall, 1997: 17-18). Language, or other signifying systems, comprise the second system of representation and the means by

which we are able to ‘represent or exchange meanings and concepts ... with certain written words, spoken sounds or visual images’ (1997: 18). These words, sounds and images are the ‘signs’ that carry meaning. Representation is the process of linking ‘things’, ‘concepts’ and ‘signs’ to produce meaning in language. However, meaning is never fixed, because it is the result of social, cultural and linguistic conventions that can change over time. Moreover, signs can have a polysemic nature and are open to differing interpretations. This is apparent from Hall’s encoding/decoding model (1980) whereby the possibility of various forms of decoding is acknowledged.

Hall outlines three broad theoretical approaches to the study of representation: reflective; intentional; constructionist (Hall, 1997: 16; 24-26). The reflective approach maintains that ‘language works by simply reflecting or imitating the truth that is already there and fixed in the world’ (1997: 24). In this approach, language, or any other symbolic system, functions as a mirror reflecting and/or distorting the reality of the world. The second model, the intentional approach to representation, meanwhile, works in opposition to the reflective model and argues that ‘it is the speaker, the author, who imposes his or her unique meaning on the world through language’ (1997: 25). In both the reflective and the intentional models, meaning is assumed to be fixed, either by ‘things’ in themselves or by individual users of language (1997: 25). Finally, the constructionist approach to representation maintains that meaning in language is constructed using representational systems of codes and signs. In this approach, the material world is regarded as the place ‘where things and people exist’ and ‘signs’ are regarded as having a material dimension. However, it is within language systems that meaning is constructed and produced and therefore meaning is produced ‘through its symbolic function’ not its material quality (1997: 26). The constructionist approach maintains that there is ‘no single, unchanging, universal “true” meaning’. Meaning is therefore opened up to ‘constant ‘play’ or slippage’ (1997: 32).

The constructionist approach to meaning in representation became the dominant approach as a consequence of the ‘linguistic turn’ in social sciences and cultural studies. This move saw theorists adopt the models of Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure and French philosopher and historian Michel Foucault. Saussure’s ‘structuralist’ model of semiotics emphasises the signification system in language,

whereby the signified and the signifiers work to produce meaning. Meanwhile, Foucault's 'poststructuralist' model of discursive practices explores power and knowledge in 'discourse' and perceives the subject as constituted through discourse. Theorists such as Roland Barthes developed the semiotics approach by moving analyses beyond Saussure's systematic 'scientific analysis of language's rules and laws' (Hall, 1997: 42). Barthes introduced the concept of 'myth' as a third level of signification and as the naturalised and culturally shared sets of associations generated by signs.

Saussure's constructionist approach has two key problems. The first is its emphasis on language, and most particularly, on the formal aspects of language. Saussure's model failed to explore language interaction or dialogue, or the variant power of individual language users (Hall, 1997: 35). While Barthes developed Saussure's model to conceive language as broadly referring to both linguistic and visual components of cultural texts, the 'text' or 'discourse' remains privileged. Secondly, while the 'text' or 'discourse' is privileged, the constructionist model of representation denies the material, historic and economic structures within which language is produced. With Saussure's model most particularly, the historic evolution of language is ignored and meaning is conceived from a specific 'frozen' moment in time. Foucault's constructionist approach meanwhile did emphasise historical specificities. However, his tendency to 'absorb too much into "discourse"' also meant that material and economic structures were neglected (Hall, 1997: 51).

This thesis is principally adopting the reflective approach to representation whereby 'reality' is being used as a normative yardstick against which to measure the quality of news reporting. The key rationale for using this model is because of the study's exploration of news content, and analyses of the news tend to explore the relationship between the reporting of 'reality' and the 'referent'. In this case the 'referent' refers to the events in the material world, therefore the constructionist approach, which neglects to explore the material structures within which language is produced, provides an inadequate model for this work. This thesis is exploring the intersection of gender and class in news media representations, and by adopting the reflective approach it uses 'real' women as the measure by which the quality of news reporting is judged. However, there are wider considerations that problematise this approach

and relate to constructions of 'gender'. The reporting of women in news content is in part influenced by, and filtered through, a history of gendered constructions that need to be taken into account when examining representations. How representations of 'real' women are influenced and reproduced by these mythologies, stereotypes and historical constructions of femininity, which can cross both fictional and non-fictional genres, is vital for a feminist exploration of news content. Moreover, by adopting both the reflective model and the 'constructions of gender' approach, this also presupposes that individual journalists do not produce news (and thus create meaning) with unique intent, thus discounting the intentional approach as a useful model for this study.

In considering representations of gender and class, this thesis recognises that the news media does in part have an ideological function in its representation of women. In this sense, ideology refers to the 'widely held ideas or beliefs, which may often be seen as "common sense"' (O'Sullivan *et al*, 1994: 114). Briggs and Cobley (2002) maintain that these 'ideas' work to sustain existing power relations in society, for instance in terms of men over women (patriarchy over feminism) or the elite over the masses (the capitalist bourgeoisie over the proletariat). Therefore an analysis of ideology involves exploring 'the ways in which meaning serves to establish and sustain relations of domination' (Thompson, 1990: 56). Thompson notes five general modes through which he argues ideology can operate: legitimisation, dissimulation, unification, fragmentation and reification (1990: 60) and he links each mode to various strategies of symbolic construction, which are produced through symbolic forms, such as images and texts.

Of particularly relevance to the exploration of gender constructions is the ideological mode of 'reification' whereby processes in representations are described as ahistorical and work towards 'the elimination or obfuscation of the social and historical character of social-historical phenomena' (1990: 65). Thompson describes the strategies of reification, including 'naturalization' whereby the social and historical context of an event or process is ignored and outcome is instead regarded as a consequence of natural characteristics. This is pertinent to the study of gender, whereby socially instituted inequalities (Thompson refers to the sexual division of labour) may be portrayed as the outcome of physiological characteristics and the 'natural' differences between women and men (1990: 66). While these modes and strategies work to

sustain the ideology and power of the dominant groups in society, resistance is implicated in the form of 'ideological sub-systems' whereby:

The ruling or dominant ideology may incorporate elements drawn from subordinate groups or classes, and there may be ideologies or 'ideological sub-systems' which correspond to subordinate groups or classes and which have a 'relative autonomy' with regard to the dominant ideology: they are part of an ideological field which is ultimately structured by the ideology of the dominant class.

(Thompson, 1990: 94)

By incorporating 'resistance' into the dominant ideology, 'hegemony' is secured, which is the Gramscian term referring to the process by which dominant groups achieve power and leadership based on the 'active consent' of subordinate groups (Thompson, 1990: 94).

Developments in Feminist Media Studies

As outlined in Chapter One, the mass media was always a central concern of the second wave feminist movement. This concern initially focused around two interlinking themes, firstly how women were portrayed in the media, and secondly the issue of women working within the media industries, and how their segregation into non-creative and editorial positions might impact on how women were portrayed in content. Much of this work on production was carried out in relation to newsrooms and will be discussed in the news section of this chapter below. During the early 1970s, feminists were, in the main, united in exploring how 'images of women' – the representations and stereotypes in media content - related to women's oppression in society. The root of oppression was seen to lie in the social structure of society, and feminist views, as the previous chapter has indicated, were disparate as to whether these roots lay in capitalism (socialist feminism), in patriarchy (radical feminism) or in a sexist society (liberal feminism) (van Zoonen, 1994: 3). Feminist media studies emerged as an academic discipline at this time and the 'images of women' approach to exploring media content dominated through to the late 1970s with three themes at the fore - stereotypes, ideology and pornography - the former two themes having particular influence within communications and media studies.

This thesis is concerned with exploring the intersection of class and gender in news media content and its theoretical origins are therefore born out of Marxist feminism. Marxist feminists connected the capitalist mode of production to women's oppression

and argued that while gender had been omitted within a Marxist model, it was a crucial component of ideology (van Zoonen, 1994: 21). Yet class has remained relatively absent as a component for analysis in feminist media studies. Similarly, gender has largely been absent in studies of class and ideology in media content, especially in relation to news. This was most apparent from the research emerging from the Glasgow University Media Group (GUMG) from the late 1970s. The GUMG was instrumental in producing empirical studies exploring the broadcast news coverage of industrial disputes during a period of sustained industrial turbulence in Britain. Earlier studies from the group include analyses of news coverage of the strike against the Industrial Relations Act in 1973 (Young and Crutchley, 1977); the Social Contract negotiations (Beharrell, Philo and Hewitt, 1977) and farmworkers pay disputes (Marshall, 1977), both during 1975, and also of the car plant employees at British Leyland (Philo, Hewitt and Beharrell, 1982). These works all conclude by noting the inadequacy of the television news coverage, which they argue gave a one-sided explanation of the events, was largely anti-trade union, anti-working class and endorsed right-wing ideologies. While widely criticised for their methodological approaches from both within academia (Harrison, 1985) and by the UK broadcasting industry, the work of GUMG was highly influential in the media studies and sociology disciplines. It also received wide support from the trade union movement and the Labour party. However, women figured very little in the group's research of television news, probably because they hardly figure as subjects in the hard news content that the GUMG analysed.

Running parallel to the GUMG studies on news media content was growing disquiet concerning the dominant 'images of women' approach to feminist explorations of media representations. Pollock in her article 'What's wrong with images of women?' (1977) argued that the main problems with this approach centred on the notion of what 'images of women' actually meant: 'women as a gender or social group versus representations of women, or a real entity, women, opposed to falsified, distorted or male views of women' (1977 in Betterton 1987: 41). Pollock questioned whether the so-called 'bad images' of women, argued to be endemic in media content, would be simply replaced with 'good images', and how this opened up complexities about what these 'good images' might comprise. Moreover, the taken for granted terms in this

approach, such as 'sexist', 'patriarchal' and 'bourgeois' were, in Pollock's view, inadequately theorised and lacked definition. She argued that:

This conception, represented by the title 'Images of Women', needs to be challenged and replaced by the notion of woman as a signifier in an ideological discourse in which one can identify the meanings that are attached to woman in different images and how the meanings are constructed in relation to other signifiers in that discourse.

(Pollock, 1977 in Betterton 1987: 41)

This thesis is primarily adopting an 'images of women and class' approach, while also recognising the importance of considering that 'woman' can operate as a signifier in an ideological discourse because of the historical construction of femininity. Therefore, unlike Pollock it argues that the latter approach need not 'replace' the former. Pollock's reference to 'signifiers' and 'ideological discourse' marked the start of growing feminist interest in language and the move to the 'constructions of femininity' approach in feminist media work. The shift from structuralism to what was to become known as poststructuralism was a move theoretically from social sciences to philosophy, psychoanalysis and linguistics, and also saw the feminist media studies discipline move to within the cultural studies arena.

Feminist work on language

Feminist linguistics had evolved around the same time as feminist media studies during the 1960s, and was similarly born out of early explorations of media content. For example, feminist linguists explored the language of school textbooks, children's fiction and advertising, to consider how women were portrayed negatively or stereotypically in the mass media and how the language used might relate to gender identity and women's oppression. Cameron (1995) notes three dominant approaches to the study of language and gender: the deficit model; the dominance model; and the cultural difference approach (1995: 33). The deficit model was the original approach of feminist linguistic work, whereby it was argued that society was regarded as a patriarchal system and language was the key component in the social organisation of this system to maintain male power (Cameron, 1985: 3-4). The linguistic determinism of this approach maintained that the lexicon and grammatical structures of a language 'will contain features that exclude, insult or trivialise women' (Cameron, 1985: 72). The dominance model in contrast argued that while language reflected male social privilege, women negotiated their powerless position through language-use, for

example, by using more interactive syntax. Early feminist linguistic analyses adopting this approach focused almost exclusively on women's language (Mills, 1995: 3) and included works such as Lakoff's *Language and Woman's Place* (1975) and Spender's *Man Made Language* (1980). The final model, the cultural difference approach to language, emerged during the 1980s, in conjunction with the poststructuralist shift, and emphasised how social differences, such as class, race, age and so on, interact with gender to affect language-use. In the Saussurian tradition, the cultural difference model adopted the synchronic approach whereby language was separated from its historical evolution. Interactional differences between men and women were perceived as 'misunderstandings' that could be uncovered and reinterpreted, such as in Tannen's *You Just Don't Understand* (1990). In this approach, women and men were perceived as different but symmetrically positioned in society, therefore questions of power all but disappeared (Cameron, 1995: 33-34; 36).

Psychoanalysis and screen studies

Beside of the renewed interest in language, structuralism and semiotics, psychoanalysis also became of heightened interest and importance in the examination of visual content, particularly in relation to feminist film theory. Kuhn notes how the study of the 'signifying systems' of cinematic images brought to the fore 'the issue of the spectator as subject addressed, positioned, even formed, by representations' (1985: 5). Laura Mulvey's article 'Visual Pleasure and the Narrative Cinema' (1975) was of particular importance in the development of feminist film theories around spectatorship, looking and pleasure that have extended beyond the exploration of film to other visual media, such as advertising. Mulvey explored relations of looking in Hollywood cinema and identified how the female image was reduced to 'the status of an object of the male gaze' (Hallam, 1994: 184). She applied Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalytical concepts and assumptions to 'ways of looking' in cinema. These centred on two 'mechanisms of pleasure'. Firstly, 'scopophilia' defined as 'a basic human sexual drive to look at other human beings' (van Zoonen, 1994: 88) and secondly 'narcissistic identification' or the means by which a cinema spectator feels power through identification with 'perfect characters on the screen' (van Zoonen, 1994: 89). Mulvey's article was the catalyst for much criticism centred predominantly on the issue of the male gaze. For instance, Mulvey's approach presupposed that the male gaze was the dominant masculine perspective in cinema and some argued that

this denied a female gaze (Gauntlett, 2002: 39). These criticisms exposed the need for feminist film theory to begin to understand women's pleasure in looking at film, while more broadly cultural studies research began to explore female pleasure and female desire through visual popular culture, exploring the relationship between representation, identification and women's subjectivity.

The shift to poststructuralism meant exploring empirically how audiences engage with the media and moving away from examining the social and economic structures within which media texts were produced (van Zoonen, 1994: 107-108). However, for some the move was problematic. For example, Spence argued how '[m]uch of the work on decoding images of women has underestimated the ways in which the meaning of an image is determined by the historical and institutional contexts in which it is constructed and received' (Spence, 1987: 51). She noted how the emphasis on femininity and male/female oppositions was at the expense of other oppositions, most notably labour and capital (Spence, 1987: 51-53). The exploration of both gender and class representations is a key consideration of this thesis.

Feminist media studies into the 1990s

In Chapter One, the period from the late 1980s and early 1990s was recounted when the Thatcherite era espoused high moral standards for women relating to sexuality and family life, while there was in contrast a new liberalisation towards sexuality and increased public discourse on the subject of sex. McRobbie (2004) pinpoints the period around 1990 when she argues that there was a 'definitive self-critique in feminist theory' within the academy, which overlapped with this paradoxical rise both in neo-conservative values and the processes of liberalisation (2004: 255-256). The move to a feminist self-critique had also been prompted by the sustained challenge of post-colonialist feminists to the representational claims of second wave feminists, while there was a continual rise in the influence of Foucault, which downplayed emphasis on structural forces as determining the relationship between women and society, and meant that class was no longer a central theme of interest.

The new attention to pleasure, desire, and the construction of identities led to debates concerning psychoanalytic and sociological models of the 'audience'. Psychoanalytic explorations of 'the female spectator' such as Mulvey's were based only on 'textual

constructions of subject positions' whereby the audience was 'an imaginary concept without a direct referent in reality' (van Zoonen, 1994: 104). There was a reaction against this position, as some argued the need to investigate audiences as 'social subjects' rather than purely 'textual subjects'. Gledhill (1988) stressed the need to close the gap between textual and social subject in part because of the trans-class nature of the textual spectator and the difficulty of this perspective in 'dealing with the female image or spectator in terms of class difference' (1988: 66). She argued that the concept of 'negotiation' should be deployed to 'accommodate the historical existence of social audiences' and more particularly to conceive a 'socio-historically constructed female cultural space':

For 'femininity' is not simply an abstract textual position; and what women's history tells us about femininity lived as a socio-culturally, as well as a psychically differentiated category, must have consequences for our understanding of the formation of feminine subjectivity, of the feminine textual spectator and the viewing/reading of female audiences.

(Gledhill, 1988: 67)

The theory of 'negotiation' would therefore help feminists rethink relations between 'media products, ideologies and audiences' (Gledhill, 1988: 67) thus returning to a materialist analysis of sorts, but relating to audiences rather than to texts. The 1990s would mark a move further away from the purely text-based analyses of popular cultural content to ethnographic studies and reception analyses that instead explored *actual* audience 'use, negotiation, interpretation and accommodation' of media texts (van Zoonen, 1994: 108).

Feminist work on the intersection of class and gender in representation

There is very little feminist work that explores the intersection of class and gender in media representations, and most of the existing work relates to fictional content. Some notable work in this area is from America, and therefore examines gender and class in the context of US society. For example, Dines and Humez, in their text-reader *Gender, Race and Class in the Media* (1995) argue that, in the US media, texts are shaped by multiple systems of inequality and they bring a collection of studies together to explore how texts are produced, constructed and consumed, with the intersection of gender, race and class at the fore. Butsch (1995) explores representations of class on American television and most particularly the portrayals of white working class males. He examines the political economy of the media industry

and production processes to consider the reasons for these enduring images, concluding that stereotypes of class are a result of structural issues in the industry. These issues are due to economic factors, which place pressure on employees to draw on limited resources and stereotypical cultural ideas when producing television content (Butsch, 1995: 403-410). Ehrenreich, (1995) underpins Butsch's argument that stereotypes of the American working class are produced by middle class creative media workers. However, she argues that rather than creative workers being pressurised by the structural issues pertaining to the media industries, the middle classes are instead suspicious of working class people, their life-styles and their tastes. Ehrenreich maintains that working class Americans are in the main absent from American television and when they do figure, this tends to be in certain limited contexts. For example, the working class feature to a high degree in crime news, but rarely are included in current affairs discussions, even if these shows are discussing issues of relevance to the working class (Ehrenreich, 1995: 40-42). Work exploring gender and class in crime news is examined in more detail below.

Much work exploring the intersection of class and gender in both the US and the UK has focused on popular cultural content, and studies in this area have looked at literature, film, sit-coms, soap operas and reality television. For example, in Rowe Karlyn's (2003) study of the sitcom *Roseanne*, she explores 'Roseanne as Spectacle' through Roseanne Barr's construction of 'self' as 'unruly woman'. She argues that Barr uses the oppositional and 'disruptive potential' of the 'unruly woman' to violate codes of femininity, or 'True Womanhood', thus pushing the limits of what is regarded as acceptable and unacceptable female behaviour (2003: 261). Rowe Karlyn explores the historical construction of the 'unruly woman' and the associations with sexual inversion, usually contained within 'the comic and the carnivalesque' (2003: 253-254). She argues that Barr embodies the unruly qualities of 'excess' and 'looseness' which manifests most particularly in the body, which may be considered 'too fat, too mouthy, too old, too dirty, too pregnant, too sexual (or not sexual enough)' (2003: 253). These qualities are problematic for conventional gender representation because they are 'in opposition to bourgeois and feminine standards of decorum' (2003: 256). Lawler (2000) similarly notes how working class women are distanced from 'real' femininity and marked as 'Other' in her study of the Willy Russell play *Breezblock Park* (2000: 124). She argues that the working class model

of gender with its themes of 'excess' and unruliness is defined in opposition to the middle class model of 'real' femininity, which is both normalised and approved.

If 'real' women are middle class, and if middle-class culture has come to embrace some rhetorical commitment to a gender mutuality and reciprocity, then behaviour which accentuates gender antagonism and gender segregation can be coded as unfeminine.

(Lawler, 2000: 124)

Lawler argues that the construction of working class women is therefore 'deeply ambiguous' and works in the main to endorse 'the 'problem' of working class people while naturalising middle class life (Lawler, 2000: 114; 126).

In soap operas, the centrality of the community to soap narratives means that representing middle class life can be problematic, particularly in relation to work. Geraghty (1991) asserts that while soap characters have emerged since the 1980s to reflect women entering the workforce at all levels, the middle class career woman is consistently portrayed as a problem because her work is at odds with the domestic emphasis of the genre (Geraghty, 1991: 139). Working class labour, meanwhile, is a central theme in soap operas and has the function of highlighting class issues and tensions, particularly in relation to women's work. For instance, Dodd and Dodd (1992) note how work figures in *EastEnders* whereby female characters are situated in a variety of jobs, which illustrate the gender segregation of working class women into low status and low paid work, such as barmaids; shop assistants; market stall and café owners; cleaners and laundrette attendants (Dodd and Dodd, 1992: 127). However, Geraghty (1991) argues that while women are portrayed as performing paid work in soap narratives, the public sphere remains secondary to the centrality of the domestic private sphere. Geraghty argues that the class and gender politics pertaining to work remains mainly implicit, as the workplace instead functions as a site to discuss issues relating to the private. These sites are therefore selected to be conducive as meeting points and for conversations to take place, such as in cafeterias, pubs or local shops (Geraghty, 1991: 51-53) while there is 'little attempt to express the abstractions of modern capitalism and the alienation of workers from their labour' (Geraghty, 1991: 5). May (2001) similarly emphasises the limitations of working class work in *EastEnders* when she notes that:

[No one] works in a factory, a large multinational organisation or a commercial office block ... work in large organisations is impersonal and to represent characters as cogs in a machine is anathema to the soap ... [Places] of work are meeting places ... They are public arenas, where private concerns are viewed and aired ... They are backdrops to the human drama.

(May, 2001: 216)

Therefore, while non-standard forms of employment, such as casual and part-time labour figure and are important for the representation of class and gender, the genre's narrative conventions limit the types of jobs portrayed, and will usually exclude repetitive and exploitative labour (May, 2001: 216-217).

More recently, the reality television genre has attracted attention from some feminist media theorists as an important 'new' site to explore the intersection of class and gender. However, portrayals are argued to be limited similarly to soap operas, so as to maintain the narrative conventions of the genre. Fairclough (2004) argues that this is particularly the case with *Wife Swap* and she discusses the reality programme in the context of its representation of women and its deployment of class. She maintains that while the series has become a 'cultural phenomenon ... because of the overt class warfare on display' (2004: 346) in her view, the portrayal of class and gender is problematic:

The range of class fractions on display is palpable, the lower middle-class women are often portrayed as seeking to distance themselves from the working-class women and this is of course where conflict is fashioned and played out. Indeed, the representation of wives and mothers within this class war is repeatedly outdated and unnecessary.

(Fairclough, 2004: 346)

Fairclough argues that *Wife Swap* says little about the evolving role of women in society, chiefly because the show is almost entirely focused on the domestic sphere and on women's place within it. Careers and the workplace figure little, and the portrayal of women therefore remains 'outdated and conservative' (2004: 345).

Feminist work on the news media

This chapter will now move to explore feminist work on women in news content. The relative dearth of studies in this area, particularly in relation to the intersection with class, was a key motivation for this thesis. As van Zoonen observes, studies of women in the news remain relatively under explored (van Zoonen, 1994: 152). Within feminist media studies, work exploring the news media has tended to be secondary to

explorations of women in relation to popular cultural texts as outlined above. The explanation for this is three-fold. Firstly, McRobbie argues that the sustained investigation of light entertainment/popular cultural media genres is justifiable by noting that 'relations of power are indeed made and re-made within texts of enjoyment and rituals of relaxation and abandonment' (2004: 262). Secondly, following the psychoanalytical intervention into feminist theory, the key concepts of 'desire' and 'pleasure' lent themselves better to the analysis of popular cultural genres than to explorations of news content. Finally, traditional gender polarisations have impacted on academic study, whereby newspapers have in the past been largely regarded as a male genre, while magazines have been regarded as a female genre (Ballaster *et al*, 1991: 148).

Where feminist media studies have engaged with the study of news media production and how women figure in the production environment, this issue has necessarily intersected with representational issues. This is particularly the case in the context of television news journalism and work in this area has noted the verbal and visual representation of women as news media employees (Holland, 1987). Industry research and media monitoring studies have noted the increased visibility of women as television news workers (Anon, 1997; Spears *et al*, 2000; Stephenson *et al*, 2000; Gallagher, 2001). However, women's numerical presence as newsreaders and reporters is not necessarily representative of their role behind the cameras. Feminist media studies research exploring the news media work environment has noted the continual sexism within this workplace (Baehr, 1981; Ross Muir, 1988; Bybee, 1990; Steiner, 1998; van Zoonen, 1998; McRobbie, 2000; Chamber *et al*, 2004) and feminist debate on these issues is not limited to within academia. Studies on women in news production have emerged from professional groups, such as Women in Journalism (Christmas, 1997; Sieghart and Henry, 1998), from institutes such as the British Film Institute (BFI, 1995; 1997; 1999) and from professional individuals (Dougary, 1994; Sebba, 1994; Heller, 2000; Wyatt, 2000; Truss, 2000; Platell, 2000; Leslie, 2000). These articles and reports similarly conclude that the equal presence of women relative to men in certain areas of media employment is by no means indicative of equal status and that other factors should be considered when monitoring the increased visibility of female news workers. For example, the disproportionately high number of female reporters working in war zones can be due to their representational news value

and the uniqueness, drama and glamour they bring to a news story. This heightened visibility was particularly noted during the Gulf War in 1991 when television channels were proliferating and television news programmes were seeking audiences (Wheelwright, 1994).

Studies specifically exploring women's representation in media texts can be split broadly into quantitative and qualitative research. The quantitative work, with links to feminist media studies, provides useful contextual material to pursue more qualitative studies of representation. Most significantly in terms of global scope is the Global Media Monitoring Project (GMMP) organised by the World Association for Christian Communication (WACC). This quantitative media monitoring project was first held in 1995 when nearly 100 countries monitored their media to establish the numerical presence of women and men on television and radio news and within newspapers. Results of the first GMMP in 1995 determined that women only appeared in 17 per cent of news stories (Gallagher, 2001) and a similar exercise in 2000 produced similar results (Spears *et al*, 2000). In 2000, the GMMP concluded that women figured in only 18 per cent of content (Gallagher, 2004: 148). Meanwhile, a quantitative study in 2003 explored women's visibility on broadcast television news in the US, Britain, Germany and South Africa, concluding that men accounted for over 85 per cent of all news actors and speakers (Anon, 2003: 36-37). Moreover, this study concluded that women were most apparent in particular types of news, chiefly sports, entertainment and crime items (2003: 37).

These quantitative media monitoring studies of the news do have limitations that can obscure the complexities of gender representations, most particularly by trying to fit the attributes of gender portrayals in the news into predetermined categories (Gallagher, 2004: 157). Moreover, it becomes more difficult to monitor news content when considering intersections such as class in relation to gender. However, counting the visibility or invisibility of women and men in news content can provide an important quantitative context for more qualitative feminist media research, as qualitative research is needed to examine modes of representation. For example, the GMMP 2000 figures regarding the rise in prominence of female politicians on television news (Spears *et al*, 2000) could be indicative of the increasing number of women in politics. However, qualitative work exploring the representation of female

politicians in the British news has concluded that their portrayal is frequently trivialising (Ross, 1995; Ross and Sreberny-Mohammed, 1997; Stephenson et al, 2000; Pilcher, 1999; Whelehan, 2000; Ross, 2002). Moreover, these studies have noted how sex is the primary descriptor in these portrayals, as women politicians are ‘not simply a politician (male as norm) but a special kind of deviant professional, a woman [author italics] politician’ (Ross and Sreberny-Mohammed, 1997: 88).

Comparative studies of the difference between coverage of male and female politicians have proved particularly useful in exposing how women are marginalized in reporting. For example, research by Ross (1995) exploring the relative press reporting of Tony Blair, John Prescott and Margaret Beckett in the leadership race of 1994, revealed how the media continues to work in gendered frameworks that favoured Blair (as leader) and Prescott (as deputy) over Beckett (Ross, 1995; Ross and Sreberny-Mohammed, 1997). By analysing comparisons between the vocabulary in coverage, Ross and Sreberny-Mohammed noted how:

... the tone and orientation of the press response toward the so-called candidates was strongly delineated. Blair was consistently praised for his sincerity, modernizing tendencies, and stable family life; Prescott was acknowledged for his honest values and political experience; but Beckett was shown as fickle and dishonest, demonized from the start.

(Ross and Sreberny-Mohammed, 1997: 82)

A similar study by Women in Journalism (Anon, 1996) examined the relative coverage of defecting Conservatives Alan Howarth and Emma Nicholson in 1995, concluding that much of the coverage of Nicholson was ‘personal and vitriolic’ with gendered stereotypes ‘parading as informed opinion’. Moreover, Nicholson’s defection was treated very differently to Howarth’s, generating much more negative coverage, and questioning her status as ‘a serious politician’ (1996: 3; 11). These studies therefore illustrate the various news frames used by the media to portray powerful women in public life, including methods of sexualisation, personification and marginalization relative to their male counterparts. Central to these news frames is the preoccupation with women politicians’ outward appearance and femininity, through referrals to their sex, their age, family and domestic life, while journalists additionally have a preoccupation with ‘hemlines, color [sic] coordination and fashion sense’ (Ross, 2002: 89; 93).

As discussed above, women were mainly absent from early studies of news content, such as from the Glasgow University Media Group, because they did not figure in the hard news content that was central to the GUMG's work. There were a couple of exceptions. In exploring how television news constructed an image of the nation during the 1982 Falklands war, the GUMG noted the centrality of women to home front representations (GUMG, 1985). However, the role of women in these representations was, according to the GUMG, carefully controlled and endorsed conventional gender stereotypes about the traditional role of women. Women were situated predominantly within the home and were models of support for the war, providing images of family unity and community solidarity. However, women were rarely shown in active working roles and were additionally not given the opportunity to express their opinions regarding the war. The GUMG argued that opposing viewpoints from women were not given visibility because the act of dissent was at odds with femininity and traditional female roles (GUMG, 1985: 94; 97; 100; 106).

The GUMG's approach to news analysis with its key objective to expose bias in television news reporting was similarly applied to explore the misrepresentation of women in coverage of Greenham Common and the women's peace movement in the early 1980s (Eldridge, 1995). The GUMG argued that the television news coverage of the peace protesters and their cause was problematic because it failed to fit into a routine news framework. There was a reluctance to acknowledge that the protesters were all women, and in earlier coverage of the protests, items referred to the protesters as 'people' or as 'demonstrators'. The women were not invited to speak and therefore no publicity was given to their anti-nuclear message. By failing to give voice to the women peace protestors, the GUMG thus concluded that the full extent of the protest was not covered and the television news was biased towards the Government's nuclear policy (GUMG, 1995: 318; 321; 333; 347). In these GUMG studies, how femininity is constructed and utilised within the frameworks of hard news content is incidental to the explorations of political bias and balance in news reporting. In contrast, Young (1990) in *Femininity and Dissent* explored more directly and comprehensively how women were portrayed as deviant in the press coverage of political protests at Greenham Common through the 1980s. Young maintained that the media created a mythology around Greenham Common that centred on the fact that the peace protestors were women (1990: 2). This mythology was sustained through

thematic devices in press content that pivoted on ‘conceptions of femininity, the maternal, the family, violence and the liberal democratic state’ (1990: viii). These themes were sustained through structural devices of language, such as the use of metaphors and narrative forms, as well as through the use of oppositional constructions relating to femininity (or womanhood) and deviance.

While the interdisciplinary nature of Young’s work draws from criminology, media studies, social theory and feminist theory (1990: 8) she maintains that her textual readings are ‘inspired’ by philosophy, literary criticism, semiology and sociolinguistics (1990: 89). Other qualitative works exploring the representation of women in the news media similarly examine language and constructions of femininity in newspaper reporting, and have their disciplinary roots more directly in feminist sociolinguistics. For example, Caldas-Coulthard (1995) in her study uncovering the structural components of how women speak in ‘hard news’ stories, concludes that ‘there is a rhetoric of silencing and alienation at work in the way women are excluded from speaking in the news’ (1995: 235). She argues that, while women do speak in news content, how they speak, where and when, are also crucial factors in assessing the reinforcement of patriarchy and power relations in society. In addition, she notes that while sections of the quality press are perceived as liberal, politically correct, and as giving voice to women, the vocabulary used to describe women who speak in the news can be denigrating, for example if they are characterised in terms of their age, their marital status (such as, Miss, Mrs) or their relationship to families and/or men (such as, grandmother, mother, widow, wife).

In Caldas-Coulthard’s study, women are regarded as a singular homogenous social group, and she fails to consider how class figures in whether women are given voice in the news. Furthermore, while she performs a systematic quantitative analysis of lexical strategies, she fails to place the examined narratives into any wider contextualisation (regarding social attitudes, historical events), and the dynamics of wider social structures are largely ignored. In short, her study lacks any materialist context and the analysis of female representation in discourse is separated from the text’s production. Meanwhile, Talbot (1997) deploys the concept of ‘coherence’ to examine how an article reporting a sexual harassment case in the *Sun* tabloid newspaper works to endorse traditional assumptions about hegemonic masculinity.

She argues that readers must draw on resources from both within and outside the text to read the 'multiple voices' that occur in the *Sun*, which give 'contradictory discourses on gender and social class' (1997: 175). For example, on the one hand there is a feminist counter-discourse apparent, whereby the article is clearly 'responding to social changes brought about by feminism' (1997: 184). This is notable by the newspaper's coverage of a sexual harassment case; the scrutiny and criticism of the sexual harasser, and the 'wholehearted approval' at his conviction (1997: 183-184). However, a conventional sexist discourse is predominant, whereby women are referred to in terms of their appearance and 'enter into the subject position of visible objects for men's perusal and assessment' (1997: 182). Moreover, the use of selective quotes and titillating '*Sun* discourse' works to normalise sexual interaction between women and men, and endorse assumptions about male and female sexuality, while additionally supporting and stabilising notions of hegemonic masculinity (1997: 185-186).

Gender and crime news

Much work on gender and representation in news language has explored the representation of gender in the genre of crime news, most particularly in the coverage of violent and sexual crimes. The rationale for this emphasis is in part because of the importance feminist academics place on crime news in its shaping of both public perceptions on crime and public policy on crime issues (Meyers, 1997: 6). Crime news, and sex crime news especially, is also a sub-genre of news where women figure to a high degree and the quantity of sex crime coverage has increased in the UK as tabloid newspaper content has become more 'sexualised' since the 1970s (Carter, 1998: 220). The GMMP quantitative studies of news have concluded that women are the subject of 22 per cent of crime news stories in comparison to 14 per cent of items on politics and government (Anon, 2006). The same study also concluded that women were more than twice as likely as men to figure as victims in news reportage (Anon, 2006), and explorations of crime news thus endorse feminist theories regarding the negative portrayal of women in news reporting.

Studies of gender and representation in crime news all similarly maintain that ideologies regarding women and crime are reflected and reinforced in the strategies and structures of crime news (Soothill and Walby, 1991; Benedict, 1992; Clark, 1992;

Meyers, 1997; Carter, 1998; Weaver, 1998; Wykes, 1998; 2001). For instance, feminists have argued that the context of crime news reporting focuses on women in such a way as to give 'certain ideological justifications for male sexual violence' (Carter, 1998: 221). Moreover, studies have concluded that the way that crime is reported and reconstructed on news programmes can 'reinforce and further encourage women's fear of crime' (Weaver, 1998: 262). These works are all united by the presupposition that language is the mechanism by which 'values and interests, norms and deviances' are reproduced (Wykes, 2001: 20) and that crime news reportage perpetuates common stereotypes and myths about the behaviour of women.

Studies of gender and representation in the specific genre of crime news therefore provide important models for research focused on the study of news and language, and especially for methods of analysis that uncover central themes, strategies and structures of the language used to portray women in other news genres. Central themes of women's representation in crime news include the emphasis on women's sexuality, their culpability and their centrality as victims. Meyers (1997), for example, notes how women are polarised and culturally defined in terms of their sexuality as either "virgin-whore" or "good girl-bad girl". Benedict (1992) similarly argues that news accounts of rape tend to use oppositional narratives of 'vamp' and 'virgin' in their portrayal of women that adhere to traditional perceptions of women's behaviour and mythologies of rape (Benedict, 1992: 23-24). This dichotomy works to place women as either 'innocent or to blame for their victimization' (Meyers, 1997: 9) and the female victim of a violent crime may be positioned as deviant and 'deserving of condemnation if she in any way appears to have disregarded or flaunted [*sic*] socially approved gender roles and expectations' (Meyers, 1997: 24). The positioning of women in these 'frameworks of explanation' (Wykes, 2001: 160) means that their culpability in sex crime news is always an underlying consideration (Soothill and Walby, 1991: 146-147).

Many of these works on sex crime news focus to a great extent on the language of crime news reporting and explore the strategies and structures of language-use deployed by reporters of sex crimes. For example, Meyers (1997), Benedict (1992) and Soothill and Walby (1991) all carry out qualitative textual analysis of newspapers and television news to examine the reporting of violence against women, and to

highlight the discursive structures and rhetorical strategies at play. Their work focuses on specific, usually high profile, incidents of sex crime, and the subsequent press and television news that these incidents generated. These studies explore the construction of sex crime news by considering the issues raised in coverage; the attitudes towards women, sex, violence, race and class; the vocabulary used, and how the news subjects (victims and accused) are portrayed. Wykes (2001) and Clark (1992) meanwhile carry out systematic stylistic-oriented analyses to examine how the print news media constructs blame in sex crime reporting. Clark examines two key components of language – naming and transitivity clauses - in the *Sun* tabloid newspaper headlines, and Wykes similarly focuses on attributive or transactive clauses in the press accounts of men and women who killed their spouses. She additionally examines the lexical selection of positive and negative gendered nouns to name women and men, concluding how negative labels were used both to refer to women in the context of an intimate crime they had committed (or a crime they were a victim of) usually in the context of their sexuality.

A final point to note, relates to the intersection of race and class with gender in these studies of crime news. For example, race and class figure to a high degree in Meyers' work (1997) and she maintains that crime news must be explored in the context of gender, race and class to further understand the representation of violence against women.

Relations of domination and control occur within the context of the interlocking nature of multiple oppressions, with the news perpetuating racist and classist stereotypes and assumptions at the same time that it reflects and maintains patriarchal notions of the proper role of women in society.

(Meyers, 1997: 84)

She asserts, for example, that American crime news is more likely to report violence against white middle class women than violence against poor black women (1997: 12) despite the higher proportion of violent crime being committed against the latter group. Meyers notes that journalists defend this imbalance with reference to the guiding principle of 'unusualness' that underpins decisions about newsworthiness (1997: 85). However, Meyers also maintains that crime news is shaped by the middle-class background and biases of journalists and news editors, who tend to either conflate class with race, or ignore it completely (1997: 97). Benedict (1992) underpins Meyers' arguments by stating that American newspapers reflect the class biases of

American culture, which is a key factor in why some sex crimes are given coverage (usually sex attacks on rich white girls), and why some are not (usually sex attacks on poor black girls) (1992: 9; 146). Women victims are also less likely to be blamed for a sex crime if they are from a higher social background than their male attacker. She argues that the press are more likely to interpret sex crimes in the context of class against class, or race against race, than explore sex crime in terms of gender relations and misogyny in American society (Benedict, 1992: 244; 247-248).

Chapter conclusion

This chapter has situated this thesis in the wider field of feminist media studies and outlined its approach to representation. By outlining the different approaches to exploring the representation of meaning, this study has put forward its model for a feminist exploration of news content. This exploration adopts the reflective approach to representation whereby 'reality' is the yardstick to measure the quality of news content. However, this model also recognises the vital need to draw on long histories of representation and constructions of femininity from both inside and outside of the news. The studies of crime news reviewed in this chapter have provided one useful model for this thesis, since these works have explored the correlation between representations of 'real' women and the 'construction of femininity' in sex crime news, while additionally considering intertextual links with fictional constructions of crime. These studies are also useful for the context of this thesis because of their focus on textual representation rather than production or reception. This chapter has also outlined the broader field of feminist media studies and recounted the important theoretical shifts during its history. Most significantly for this thesis, it has recounted the shift from the 'images of women' approach in feminist media research to the 'constructions of women' approach, whereby issues of class slipped off the feminist agenda. Some feminists did regret the retreat from class (Skeggs, 1997; Walkerdine, 2001) and certainly explorations of the intersection of class and gender studies have emerged, although these works have tended to focus almost exclusively on genres in popular culture, and most particularly soap operas. Meanwhile, there remains a dearth of work exploring the intersection of class and gender in news media content and the perpetual emphasis on popular cultural content in feminist media studies research obscures 'the differential considerations feminism needs to develop when thinking about the media' (van Zoonen, 1994: 152).

Chapter Three

Methodology

Chapter introduction

This thesis comprises four case studies exploring how working women are represented in the news media from the period spanning 1999 to 2004. This chapter will describe how the research was carried out and will consider the methods used to analyse the data. The chapter will begin by discussing case study as a research approach and will then consider issues relating to multiple case study design, data collection and data analysis. How the research proceeded and how the different stages of the research project were formulated and implemented will be described in some depth. The chapter will detail the devising of the research problem, give the key motivations for the selection of the particular cases and data sources, and explain how the data was collected. Finally, the chapter will outline how the data was analysed using the qualitative methodology of textual analysis.

Case study research

Definitions, problems and types

There are many discussions of the case study research approach, and many studies that explore and discuss the treatment, the problems, the design and the implementation of the method. For example, Bouma and Atkinson (1995) argue that the main aim of the case study in sociology is to provide a descriptive element to a research problem. They argue that a case study should be typically focused on one group only and that 'no comparison with another group is made' (1995: 110). Hamel *et al* (1993) expand on Bouma and Atkinson's notion that case studies provide a descriptive element to research, by highlighting the approach's qualitative characteristics - to describe, understand and explain - while stating that the case being explored could be 'a specific object, phenomenon, or social problem' (1993: 28; 39). Meanwhile, Yin (1994) describes a case study as 'an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context' (1994: 13).

All research methodologies have strengths and limitations, and the case study approach is no exception. While the qualitative characteristics of the approach would

be considered its main strength, case study research has historically been the subject of much criticism by researchers. Hamel *et al* argue that these criticisms have focused on two key points, firstly its lack of representativeness, and secondly its lack of rigour (Hamel *et al*, 1993: 23; 34). Yin underpins Hamel *et al*'s arguments by citing four potential problems with the case study approach:

- a) The case study's lack of rigour as a research method
- b) The problems making scientific generalisations with case study results (particularly when a single case is studied)
- c) The time-consuming nature of case study research
- d) Researcher bias (Yin, 1994: 9-10)

The criticisms regarding lack of rigour in the case study approach arise, in Hamel *et al*'s view, because of how empirical material for cases is collected, constructed and analysed (1993: 23) where little attention may have previously been paid to a formal design or approach. Yin argues that this claim was historically valid because the research approach tended to lack comprehensive accounts that fully outlined the method and its systems of design (1994: 1). Both Hamel *et al* and Yin argue that by implementing more careful case study design this key criticism can be counteracted, and Yin's study, most particularly, focuses to a great extent on the design and analysis stages of the research approach. His framework for case study design will be discussed in greater detail shortly and placed within the context of this research problem.

Yin lists four main case study types (1994: 38-39). The first two types relate to the case study being a single case or a multiple case, and within these two design types, there may be single (holistic) or multiple (embedded) units of analysis. The aforementioned criticisms relating to the lack of representativeness in case study research and the problems with making scientific generalisations refer, in the main, to single cases. Hamel *et al* discuss the singularity of cases, and question how representative these cases can be, concluding that a single case has 'representative value' if it meets its stated objectives (1993: 34-35). In this sense, careful research design is again fundamental to the case study approach to ensure the right questions are asked, and that cases and empirical data are selected that work to validate the

theory put forward (1993: 28-29). Yin similarly argues that single cases are justifiable if the theory is well-formed or well-tested. Moreover, he argues that the single case can be reasonably used in extreme or unique circumstances, or can be used as a pilot or exploratory device (1994: 38-41).

Nonetheless, Yin maintains that multiple cases could be viewed as somehow “more compelling” and “more robust”, despite having some disadvantages in that they are more time-consuming and may need more extensive resources (1994: 45). In this sense, Yin argues that when selecting the multiple case study approach the researcher should be clear that each case has a specific purpose in the research project’s design. Multiple cases selected carefully and in the light of a rich theoretical framework may certainly provide compelling results with both a representative and a comparative value (1994: 45-46).

Case study design

Underpinning the research design for this thesis was the overriding rationale to use the case study approach. Yin’s multiple case study approach, discussed above, was selected as appropriate to answer the research problem and he argues that the case study methodology is the preferred method to use when three conditions occur in a research problem as follows (1994: 1):

1. ‘How’ or ‘why’ questions are posed.
2. The researcher has little control over events and behaviour cannot be manipulated.
3. The subject is a contemporary real-life phenomenon.

This thesis is seeking to explore how working women are represented in the contemporary news media, thus a key ‘how’ question was asked and a contemporary phenomenon (representations of working women) was to be explored. However, describing working women as a ‘contemporary phenomenon’ does need to be placed into context, as women have historically always worked in many different roles both in the public and private spheres of society. Nonetheless, as Chapter One of this thesis described, the changing working patterns for women in the last 30 years have occurred in conjunction with the declining salience of ‘class’ as an issue in media and political

discourse. Therefore, the second key question this thesis sought to ask was to what extent does 'social class' figure, explicitly or implicitly, in these portrayals of working women.

Thus, while representations of working women were the prime unit of analysis, the multiple case study approach allowed sub units (in this case, portrayals of women from different social groups determined by their employment) to be explored in greater detail. Each case could be regarded as 'single', 'whole' and 'representative', but the conclusions drawn from each would add comparative value to the project (Yin, 1994: 45). The final rationale for selecting the case study approach related to the analytical data. Because the exploration was based on the study of already published primary source data in the form principally of news items from newspapers and to a lesser extent, television items, current affairs programmes and government 'official' discourse, the researcher had no control over this material or its production.

Yin states that the following components are required when designing a case study (1994: 20):

1. The research question
2. The research project propositions (if any)
3. The unit(s) of analysis
4. The logic linking the data to the propositions
5. The criteria for interpreting the findings

Stages 1, 2 and 3 are determined in the development phase of the case study and were shaped and formed in light of the project's theoretical framework outlined in Chapters One and Two.

1. The research question

As stated above, this thesis sought to answer two key questions:

- a) How are working women represented in the news media?
- b) To what extent does 'social class' figure, explicitly or implicitly, in these representations?

2. The research project propositions

The main research proposition is that:

Class background, determinable by work status, is a factor in women's visibility/invisibility in the news media and in differential modes of representation.

3. The units of analysis

This project has one main unit of analysis, representations of working women. Additionally, the sub-units of analysis are groups of working women from different socio-economic background according to their occupation. Each case study explores a different sub-unit, except for Chapter Seven where different sub-units of women are considered within this one case. These sub-units will be discussed in greater detail below. In addition to representations of women being examined, both as main and sub-units of analysis, portrayals of men are also mentioned. However, this is only in some instances and for comparative purposes, therefore the representation of men is not considered a key sub-unit of analysis.

Stages 4 and 5 relate to the data analysis phase of the research and Yin argues that these are the components least developed in case study design (1994: 25). The data analysis method chosen for this project was qualitative analysis and this phase of the research will be discussed in more detail later in the chapter.

Case study selection

The key motivation when selecting the different case studies was that representations of working women, as the key unit of analysis, be visible in news media discourse. The project also sought to have sub-units of analysis particular to each case, as discussed above, which would provide a diverse and comparative picture of how different groups of working women, from different socio-economic backgrounds according to their occupation, figure in news media portrayals. The exception to this was Chapter Seven, where sub-units of analysis were considered within one case under the broad theme of Women and Conflict, and included exploring representations of female soldiers and of female reporters, as well as examining portrayals of individual women, such as soldier Heidi Cochrane and reporter Yvonne Ridley.

While the case study selection was in the main influenced by the research problem, two additional factors affected the cases chosen for this project. The theoretical framework outlined in Chapter One and Chapter Two was one key consideration. These chapters, and Chapter Two most particularly with its emphasis on representation, informed the research question by discussing relevant existing studies of women, news and representation. Case studies were therefore selected to move beyond these existing works. The final factor in selecting the case studies, and combining with the above considerations, was topicality. This factor related to the occurrence of relevant contemporary news events taking place during the 5-year duration of this research project that might work towards answering the research problem. The motivations behind the selection of each case study are now discussed.

Chapter Four: National Minimum Wage

Chapters Four and Five of this thesis were both formed around singular ‘hard news’ events, in contrast to Chapters Six and Seven, discussed shortly, which were focused on women in particular professions. The first case in Chapter Four, explores the news coverage of the implementation of the National Minimum Wage into Britain in 1999. The rationale for selecting this case was two-fold. First and foremost, the news event was relevant because the legislation was set to benefit mainly low paid female workers, in Groups 3-7 of the NS-SEC Analytical Scale, as outlined in Chapter One, and it would therefore be reasonable to predict that this group of women would be highly visible as the sub-unit of analysis in the sample material. According to the class markers of this thesis, the low paid work of this sub-group would be indicative of their working class socio-economic status and therefore it was hoped the case would go some way to illustrate how working class women figure in news coverage. Secondly, the National Minimum Wage would be conceived to be a conventional ‘hard news’ item, defined as news which is ‘serious and fact-based’ (Carter *et al*, 1998: 7) and which includes topics such as politics, the economy, business, foreign affairs, crime news and war (Caldas-Coulthard, 1995: 232). As illustrated in Chapter Two, women have tended to figure most predominantly in the context of crime news in ‘hard news’ content. The National Minimum Wage coverage would potentially conceive their representation in a news event that spanned politics, social affairs and the economy.

Chapter Five: Council Workers' Strike

The second case in Chapter Five, explores the news coverage of the Council Workers' Strike in 2002 and the key rationale for selecting the news coverage of this event was because the strike predominantly involved women workers. This case study has distinct similarities to the National Minimum Wage case study, in that both were 'hard news' events where working class women had a central role. However, the two case studies would also have a comparative value within the multiple case study framework, as the minimum wage introduction was in the main a positive 'good news' event, compared to the invariably negative emphasis of industrial conflict reportage. Female workers, as the sub-unit of analysis, were again from the low paid sector, in Groups 3-7 of the NS-SEC Scale, and would thus be demarcated as from a lower socio-economic background. The Council Workers' Strike was also about pay issues and the centrality of low pay and the low paid workers could again be contrasted with the minimum wage case. Finally, Chapter Two referred to previous studies exploring the news coverage of industrial conflict and expands the observation (previously referred to in Chapter Two) that the portrayal of male workers has previously been the central subject in this research, while women rarely figured. The Council Workers' Strike could therefore explore the similarities and differences when representations of female workers become the central unit of analysis.

Chapter Six: Business Women

As stated, while the minimum wage and industrial conflict cases were both formulated around singular 'hard news' events, Chapters Six and Seven focused on the representation of groups of working women in certain professions. Chapter Six explored portrayals of elite businesswomen, and this case study drew similarities from the work reviewed in Chapter Two, exploring the representation of women politicians. Like female politicians, businesswomen have become increasingly visible in an elite sector of the public sphere that has traditionally been dominated by men, and they have subsequently become more visible in the news coverage of public sphere events. This case study was also selected for the comparative value it would have in the multiple case study framework of this thesis by exploring working women from the opposite spectrum of the socio-economic frame to the two previous case studies, as businesswomen are part of the elite occupational class, in Group 1 of the NS-SEC Analytical scale, according to the class markers outlined in Chapter One.

Chapter Seven: Women and Conflict

Finally, Chapter Seven, explores the broader theme of how the news media represents working women in conflict, and this enables discussion of their inclusion and exclusion in a key genre of hard news reporting. Similarly to Chapter Six, this case study moves beyond the exploration of women in a singular news event, although individual news events are examined within the case. Moreover, multiple units of analysis are examined within this single case, as the portrayals of two distinct groups of working women are considered within the context of conflict, firstly, female military personnel, and secondly, women war correspondents. The latter group, war reporters, are regarded as middle class and in Group 2 of the NS-SEC Scale by dint of their semi-autonomous trained profession. In contrast, the class of military personnel is variable and dependent on rank. The motivation for choosing to focus on working women in conflict was in part because of contemporary world events during the execution of this thesis. From September 2001, when America invaded Afghanistan after The Trade Centre attacks, war and conflict have dominated news agendas. Through initially observing news content over this period, it was noted that women were figuring in multi-faceted, and sometimes contradictory, roles within these wartime news narratives, for example, as military workers, as journalists, and as wives and mothers on the home front. This case study would therefore hope to encapsulate some of the issues and contentions of their portrayal in contemporary conflict news coverage.

Data collection: execution, issues and constraints

The case study approach is commonly referred to as a 'triangulated research strategy' and Tellis states (from Stake, 1995) that the triangulation, or 'the protocols to ensure accuracy' arise from the 'ethical need to confirm the validity of the processes' (Tellis, 1997: 5). Tellis asserts (from Yin, 1984) that multiple sources of data are a valid triangulation of the case study method (others may include the triangulation of investigators or theories). The researcher may therefore select to collect different types of material for analysis, and Hamel *et al* state that analytical material might range from news reports to official documents to personal writings and to novels (1993: 45). They argue that the use of a 'great wealth of empirical materials' can give diversity and depth to a case (1993: 45), although, in their view, it can also present analytical

problems, as different units may require different selection, collection and analysis techniques. This research project used four data sources. The primary data source was press news items, while television news items were the secondary source. In addition to the primary and secondary news data, two further data sources - current affairs programmes and non-news 'official' discourse - were also considered, although to a lesser degree. The selection and collection process for each of these source material types will now be discussed first broadly, and then in relation to each case study.

Press news data collection

Press news items were the primary source for this research and a variety of newspaper types were examined, from quality to mid-market to tabloid – dailies and Sundays - this extent of newspaper types provided further comparative depth to each case. National and regional publications were additionally compared in Chapters Four and Five – the National Minimum Wage and Council Workers' Strike cases. The decision to compare national and regional press was taken during a pilot study of the National Minimum Wage press data. It was felt at this initial stage that there were clear differences between the national and regional reportage of this news event, and that by analysing these differences, more comparative value could be given to the thesis. The samples of press items were far more extensive than the other data sources. This greater depth of coverage in newspapers allowed for sustained longitudinal studies of working women's representation across a variety of newspaper types. By examining the press over periods of time, it was possible to observe how news stories evolved. Furthermore, articles varied in form, from conventional news stories to editorials, features and letters.

This extent of press samples was enabled by the use of the electronic newspaper database *Lexis Nexis*,¹ which enables the researcher to collect articles from an extensive database of globally published newspapers and online news sources. Searches can be narrowed and refined as appropriate to the case in hand. For example, this research project was only concerned with UK newspapers items, and so the search engine was instructed to limit its searches to UK publications. Search terms were selected to identify the articles that would compile the samples. These were either key

¹ <http://web.lexis-nexis.com/professional/>

words associated with the news event (e.g. National Minimum Wage; Council Workers' Strike) or the names of news subjects (e.g. Heidi Cochrane; Clara Furse). These were very specific terms, selected to ensure relevant analytical data was found. The rationale for the selection of these search terms is examined in relation to each case study below.

The limitations of electronic newspaper databases

In the course of gathering the press source data from *Lexis Nexis*, a number of constraints were noted. The implications of these constraints for this thesis will now be discussed. While electronic databases, such as *Lexis Nexis*, have transformed the previously laborious and often expensive task of collating and analysing large samples of press data, this form of data collection and analysis does have limitations. Three key constraints were identified in the course of the research:

a) Extent of regional titles

The *Lexis Nexis* database contains the news items for all of the UK's national newspapers. In addition to this, the database also provides news text from a selection of regional titles (see Appendix A for a full list of the regional and national titles available to access on *Lexis Nexis*). The *2003 Guardian Media Guide* stated that there are 1267 regional newspaper titles in Britain (Peak, 2002: 10) and in consideration of this figure, it should be noted that those included on *Lexis Nexis* comprise under 10 per cent of this total. In this sense, it becomes problematic to make broad analytical generalisations about the representation of working women within regional newspapers. Chapters Four and Five of this thesis, the National Minimum Wage and Council Workers' Strike cases, both include national and regional press coverage and it should therefore be noted that these findings are not representative of all regional newspapers and are drawn only from the data source available. However, despite this limitation, the analysis of content from 50 of the main UK regional titles on *Lexis Nexis* was still viewed as having comparative value.

c) Regional news content

Given that this research does make some use of articles from regional titles, the concentration of regional newspaper ownership, plus the increased use of news

agencies in newsgathering should be mentioned as additional considerations when analysing data collected from online databases. It was noted when compiling the inventories of press data that there was a high occurrence of duplicated news stories across regional publications and some items were clearly used more than once in publications from the same news groups. Fortunately, these duplicate news items were quickly identifiable and for the purposes of this project, replicated news reports were added to the case-study sample only when a different news reporter was designated to that item.

d) Positioning of news items and photographs

The news articles included on *Lexis Nexis* appear on the database in their textual form only. Therefore the researcher is unable to note the positioning of news items within a newspaper. The page number is usually noted on the database transcript, but there were instances where this was not included. In this sense, the researcher is unable to address the prominence (or not) given to particular news items or the juxtapositioning of articles on a news page. However, as language analysis was the central aim of analysing the press items, this limitation with the electronic database was not particularly problematic. This was similarly the case with press photographs, which are also not included on the *Lexis Nexis* database (although the database does indicate when a news item includes a photograph). This thesis does however, make some use of photographs in its analyses, and Chapters Six and Seven, which explore representations of Business Women and Women in Conflict, both include photographs from newspapers. These photographs were accessed from the hard copies of newspapers and were included in the cases in two sets of circumstances. Firstly, to illustrate broad contextual points made about the portrayals of women, so for instance, the photograph of Celine Dion was included in Chapter Six to illustrate how women can feature within the business pages of newspapers. And secondly, a photograph may be included if it was relevant to the language analysis. For example, in the case of Heidi Cochrane in Chapter Seven the publicity shot which appeared across much of the press news media was a central component of this news story. However, the inclusion and discussion of press photographs in this thesis is always subsidiary to the language analysis.

Inventory of press data

Both the National Minimum Wage and Council Workers' Strike case studies had large press samples and inventories were carried out to record and order this data. A coding schedule was devised to enable the recording of each press item's key descriptive categories in these larger press samples (see Appendix B). These categories consisted of each news article's core 'identifiers' (Hansen *et al*, 1998: 106-108) which are detailed as follows in Figure 3.1:

Fig 3.1: Coding Schedule Core Categories

Date:	date news story appeared in the publication
Publication:	the title of the newspaper in which the story appeared, e.g. <i>Sun</i>
Type:	newspaper type defined as regional/national/Scottish national
Headline:	headline of story recorded verbatim
Reporter:	reporter's full name and designation, e.g. industrial reporter
Page no:	the page number of the article noted on <i>Lexis Nexis</i>
Wordage:	the length of items by number of words
Article type:	-main news story (if the article is on the front page of a newspaper) -news story (the article appears away from the front page) -editorial/commentary -reader's letter
Article focus:	the article's focus on women defined as either main focus, secondary focus, referral, signified, or not mentioned (see below for more discussion of these terms)

The final core category of the coding schedule – article focus – recorded how women figured within a news item in terms of the extent of their visibility, and was important for grouping news stories for the first stage of the data analysis. These categories were determined by considering the prominence of news actors and news speakers, alongside considering the overall themes of the news item. If women were central to the news items, whereby the key news actors were female, and/or the key news speakers were female, and/or the news item *was* about women in terms of the news event or the issues discussed, the article's focus on women would be defined as *main focus*. If some of the news actors were women, and/or the news speakers were both women and men, and/or women figured to some degree within the news story, but

were not the main focus, the article’s focus on women would be defined as *secondary focus*. If women were referred to, whereby they were mentioned only in a minor context, either as individuals or as a collective group, and did not speak or appear as significant news actors, an article’s focus was defined as *referral*. If women did not figure as news actors or speakers, and were not directly referred to, but were instead indirectly signified, most particularly, in the context of the family, an article’s focus would be defined as *signified*. Finally, if women did not feature in any context of the news item, the article’s focus was defined as *not mentioned*.

Television news data collection

The secondary source data for analysis was television news items and Fig 3.2 below provides a full list of television news programmes monitored.

Fig 3.2: Monitored UK terrestrial television news programmes

News Programme	Time
BBC One lunchtime	1pm
BBC One early evening	6pm
BBC One evening	10pm
ITN lunchtime	12.30pm
ITN early evening	6.30pm
ITN evening	10.30pm (various times since 1999)
Channel 4 lunchtime	12noon
Channel 4 evening	7pm
Channel 5 early evening	5.30pm
Channel 5 evening	7pm

The location and collection of television news samples differed to the location and collection of press news samples in that no online news archives were used. Instead the researcher made use of the video-recorded news footage in the archives at Stirling Media Research Institute (SMRI) and Glasgow University Media Group (GUMG). Searching through all the news programmes on the video-recorded footage within the selected sample periods identified the relevant television news material to be analysed for each case study. The television news data was secondary to the press news data, and in most cases, television news programmes were monitored over a shorter period than the print news samples. The reason for this difference was because of the

differences between television news and press news, whereby the former does not do background coverage to the extent of newspapers. Stories disappear more quickly and television news is more preoccupied with ‘moments’ in its coverage (Allan, 1998: 121) as opposed to the longitudinal reporting that may feature in the press. The television sample dates are detailed alongside the press sample dates in the following section.

Current affairs programmes data collection

Current affairs programme items were a subsidiary data source analysed in the National Minimum Wage case study alongside the four television news items. Only two current affairs items were analysed, one from BBC Two’s *Newsnight* and one from the Scottish current affairs programme, *Platform*, and the extent and selection of current affairs programmes examined was dictated by the resources available in the SMRI and GUMG news archives. The inclusion of these, usually lengthier programme items, was justifiable because of their similarity in format and content to the television news genre and the decision to include these items was taken because of the further comparative depth they would bring to the case between different types and forms of news content.

Government campaigns data collection

Government campaigns were also a subsidiary data source analysed in the National Minimum Wage and Women in Conflict case studies. The decision to include this ‘official’ discourse was taken in part in relation to Yin’s three conditions for the case study methodology, as discussed earlier, and most particularly the need to link with ‘real-life’ phenomenon. The National Minimum Wage ‘official’ discourse was a government information campaign to make the public and employers aware of the new minimum wage. As Chapter Four will illustrate, the publicity footage was utilised in broadcast news item in its coverage of the minimum wage, while in the press, the campaign became the subject of the news when it exceeded its original budget. The ‘official’ discourse explored in the Women and Conflict case study in Chapter Six, was part of a recruitment drive by the Ministry of Defence (MOD) where women were particularly targeted. It was desirable not to insulate news discourse completely from the ‘official’ perception of working women in this context. Moreover, it was regarded as useful to consider how the news media representation might draw from, or adapt, or

reject the ‘official’ discourse. While the government campaigns could clearly not be placed into the news genre alongside newspapers, broadcast news and current affairs programmes, they provided a useful comparative measure of representation aside the news discourse. This data material was sourced and accessed directly from the Central Office of Information (COI) which devises Government public information campaigns. This chapter will now move to detail the samples for each case study.

Sample selection and sample details

National Minimum Wage sample selection

The National Minimum Wage chapter used four data sources for its analysis. Press news articles were the primary data source; television news items were the secondary data analysed, and current affairs programmes and government campaigns were also examined, but to a lesser degree. For the press sample, a two-month period was chosen and items were collected from the beginning of March 1999 through to the end of April 1999. This time period was selected because of its scope in encompassing events of both indirect and direct relevance to the implementation of the minimum wage. For example, of indirect relevance, this period included the Budget and the start of the election campaigns for the Welsh Assembly and Scottish Parliament. Events of more direct relevance to the new legislation included the government’s National Minimum Wage publicity campaign that ran throughout March and April 1999. In addition, there was the specific implementation date of the NMW on the 1 April 1999. This key event led to a flurry of subsequent union activity throughout April 1999, including a demonstration in Newcastle attended by 30,000 to highlight the issue of low pay. In addition to the primary press sample, the television analysis for this case used items from one day of news (the date of the National Minimum Wage implementation) plus extracts from two current affairs programmes, *Platform* and *Newsnight*.

Fig 3.3: National Minimum Wage case sample details

Press: (national, regional, daily, Sunday)	Sample period: Sample size: <i>Lexis</i> search terms:	1 March 1999 to 30 April 1999 760 articles NATIONAL MINIMUM WAGE <i>MINIMUM WAGE</i>
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Contd over ...

Television:	Sample period:	1 April 1999
	Sample size:	4 items
Current affairs:	Sample period:	1 April 1999
	Sample size:	2 items
Government campaigns:	Sample period:	N/A
	Sample size:	2 items

Council Workers' Strike sample selection

The Council Workers' Strike case study used two key data sources: press and television news items. The sample for the press news analysis spanned four weeks of coverage from mid-July 2002 to mid-August 2002. The length of sample was selected to encompass some pre-strike analysis, the actual strike date and its initial aftermath, in addition to post-strike analysis and the move towards a pay resolution. For example, the first week of the press sample included a spending review by Gordon Brown on 16 July 2002, which would impact on public sector funding and would directly affect the council workers due to strike the following day. The second week of the sample included the one-day strike on 17 July 2002, while the final two weeks were periods of post-strike analysis and negotiation between the unions and the council employers. The television analysis for this case comprised three days of coverage (the strike date and the two following days) and included five news items. As with the National Minimum Wage case study, the television news sample for the Council Workers' Strike case was smaller in comparison to the press sample.

Fig 3.4: Council Workers' Strike case sample details

Press: (national, regional, daily, Sunday):	Sample period:	10 July 2002 to 6 August 2002
	Sample size:	513 articles
	<i>Lexis</i> Search Terms:	COUNCIL WORKERS COUNCIL WORKERS STRIKE
Television:	Sample period:	17 July 2002 to 19 July 2002
	Sample size:	5 items

Businesswomen case sample selection

In this chapter's earlier discussion of the Case Study Selection for this thesis, initial comparisons were drawn between the former two cases studies in Chapters Four and Five exploring the National Minimum Wage and Council Workers' Strike, and the latter two case studies in Chapters Six and Seven exploring Business Women and Women in Conflict. One key comparison noted is that the first two cases of this thesis are concerned with exploring singular news events, and each case is focused on one main news event only – search terms and sample period were therefore established with the central event in mind. Chapters Six and Seven differed by focusing on women in particular professions: businesswomen; military women and women war reporters. Several news events were analysed within these two case studies and the sample sizes and dates for each were much smaller in comparison with Chapters Four and Five. The decision about which analytical material would be selected to comprise these cases was also taken in a different way, which will now be outlined.

As stated earlier, the decision to examine coverage of businesswomen was based on two factors. Firstly, women in elite business positions are in a higher socio-economic position, thus examining their news portrayal would work towards meeting the central aim of this thesis to explore representations of working women from different social backgrounds. Secondly, choosing to explore portrayals of businesswomen was based on the perception that women working in business have become more visible in the news media in recent years and there would thus be ample material to examine. Formulating the case study and selecting the material for analysis, however, did not necessarily support this theory, and by initially surveying the news during the execution of this research, it was noted that coverage of businesswomen tended to rest on a few high profile individuals.

The businesswomen case study is therefore centred on news event involving four women who had elite business positions within the research period. The decision to choose these four women was based on topicality, or the fact that news events took place involving these women during the period of this thesis's execution. In 2001, Clara Furse became the first woman to head the London Stock Exchange, and two years later was at the centre of a sexist-slur campaign in the City. In 2003, Martha Lane Fox departed from the dotcom company Lastminute.com. In that same year,

Scottish businesswomen Michelle Mone, the head of underwear company, Ultimo, was attacked and the designs for her new collection stolen. Also in 2003, Jacqueline Gold, head of Ann Summers, took the Government to court to contest their defining of her business as part of the sex industry (a decision which meant the company was unable to recruit in Job Centres). These news events were thus selected to provide a sense of how different businesswomen in different business sectors (retail; finance; e-commerce) figured in news content in relation to particular news events. Other businesswomen are also referred to in Chapter Six, and their portrayal is considered in individual news items, which were collected during the course of observing the news media closely over the four-year period. This combination of individual news items alongside the more systematic analysis of news samples from the events involving Furse, Lane Fox, Mone and Gold, thus worked to provide a rich case study illustrating the variant representations of businesswomen.

Samples were determined in relation to the temporality of each news event. For example, the sample of news items reporting on the appointment of Clara Furse to Chief Executive Officer at The London Stock Exchange consisted of 100 news items located during one week of coverage. A separate sample, comprising two weeks of coverage, was selected to explore the sexist-slur campaign involving Furse two years later. In contrast, the sample period exploring coverage of Michelle Mone was over one year, a sample period selected to incorporate subsequent events involving Mone, which provided continuity for the original news story. The sample size of coverage that reported the departure of Martha Lane Fox was one day and was selected to illustrate the extent of coverage on one single news day only. Finally, the sample to explore coverage of Jacqueline Gold challenging the Government in court was selected to encompass the first court ruling, and the Government's decision not to appeal, which was taken four week later. The press sample sizes and dates are detailed in Figure 3.5 below. Television data was located only for the Jacqueline Gold news event and the sample encompasses just one day of coverage.

Fig 3.5: Businesswomen case sample details

Press: (national, regional, daily, Sunday)	Clara Furse	Sample period 1: 24 Jan 2001 to 30 Jan 2001
		Sample size 1: 100 articles
		Sample period 2: 17 Feb 2003 to 4 Mar 2003
		Sample size 2: 65 articles
		Lexis search terms: CLARA FURSE
	Martha Lane Fox	Sample period: 21 Nov 2003
		Sample size: 45 articles
		Lexis search terms: MARTHA LANE FOX LASTMINUTE
	Michelle Mone	Sample period: 1 Jan 2003 to 14 Jan 2004
		Sample size: 263 articles
		Lexis search terms: MICHELLE MONE ULTIMO
	Jacqueline Gold	Sample period: 18 Jun 2003 to 19 Jul 2003
		Sample size: 63 articles
		Lexis search terms: JACQUELINE GOLD ANN SUMMERS
Television	Jacqueline Gold	Sample period: 18 Jun 2003
		Sample size: 6 items

Women and conflict case sample selection

The selection of material for the Women in Conflict case study was performed similarly to the Businesswomen case study, in that the samples of analytical data were chosen from topical news events involving military women and female war correspondents during this period. As outlined earlier, the selection of this case study was driven in part by contemporary world events and the ubiquity of war on post 9/11 news agendas. However, half of the analytical material is selected from before this date and the case study was conceived from a news item in 2000 debating women fighting on the frontline. This news story, in the press and on television news, was a launch pad for other news events and thus further analytical material was selected on this basis, such as the defection of Lance Bombardier, Heidi Cochrane and the row about Conservative Party policy on female frontline troops involving William Hague.

These news events provided continuity for the women troops debate in the news media, but for the context of this thesis, separate sub-samples were formed for each news event. This was largely due to the different sample periods. For example, the frontline material was collected from one day of coverage. In contrast, the Cochrane sample examined a year of coverage, as this military woman was repeatedly referred to in the context of negative incidents involving women working in the Armed Forces.

The second half of the analytical material for this case study was selected from post 9/11 events involving war correspondent Yvonne Ridley, who was taken hostage when reporting on the Afghanistan invasion by the US in 2001. The Ridley sample comprised one month of press coverage and two weeks of television news. This period was selected to encompass the war correspondent's capture and subsequent release ten days later. As discussed earlier, television news coverage of events tends to tail off sooner than press news, hence the sample was extended for the print media. Finally, as with the Businesswomen case study, while the troops samples were formed around key news events involving key individuals, other separate items and individual news actors are also referred to, thus adding further richness to the news material in this case.

Fig 3.6: Women in conflict: case sample details

<p>Press: (national, regional, daily, Sunday)</p>	<p>Frontline Sample period 1: 24 Dec 2000 Sample size 1: 1 article Sample period 2: 24 Jan 2001 Sample size 2: 10 articles Sample period 3: 1 Feb 2001 to 1 Feb 2002 Sample size 3: 168 articles <i>Lexis</i> search terms: FRONTLINE WILLIAM HAGUE HEIDI COCHRANE</p>
	<p>Yvonne Ridley Sample period: 28 Sept 2001 to 28 Oct 2001 Sample size: 488 articles <i>Lexis</i> search terms: YVONNE RIDLEY</p>

Contd over...

Television

Frontline

Sample period 1: 24 Dec 2000
Sample size 1: 3 items
Sample period 2: 23 Jan 2001
Sample size 2: 1 item

Yvonne Ridley

Sample period: 28 Sept 2001 to 13 Oct 2001
Sample size: 14 items

Qualitative data analysis

This chapter has so far spent some time discussing the research design for this thesis, the rationale for deploying the case study approach, and the processes involved in selecting appropriate case studies and case study material to meet the research objectives. It will now move to outline how the news data was qualitatively analysed. The qualitative methodology utilised for this thesis was textual analysis, described by Meyers as:

...a methodology [which] pays close attention to language and its usage, exploring the discursive structures and rhetorical strategies of what is broadly termed the *text* – which could be a speech, film, television show, newspaper, photograph, book, magazine, poem, or any other social artefact imbued with meaning.

(Meyers, 1997: 13)

This thesis was primarily concerned with examining news texts across the different data sources already discussed in this chapter, the primary data source of press news (both local and national), the secondary data source of broadcast news, and the subsidiary data material: current affairs programmes and ‘official discourse’. News texts were examined both in their linguistic and visual form to determine how codes and conventions of language-use and visual representation work to form news narratives. Thus narrative analysis, language analysis and visual analysis comprised the three elements of the textual analysis, and each will now be described in greater detail.

Narrative analysis

Marshall and Werndly (2002) in their study of television language argue that the visual scenes and linguistic conventions that structure and organise a story comprise a media narrative. The development of narrative is fundamental in a media text for

creating coherence and meaning, which in turn allows for audience interpretation. Different media texts have different signification characteristics and these signifiers might be linguistic, such as written and spoken words, or non-linguistic, such as sound, music and images (2002: 24). The particular linguistic and visual devices analysed in the news narrative for this thesis are outlined shortly. However, clearly different signifiers are more relevant to certain media forms than others, and Marshall and Werndly note that television may have a higher dependency on visual meaning in forming narrative structures (2002: 30) than say, newspapers. In press news items narratives may be chiefly developed and organised around linguistic devices, although some non-linguistic signifiers are also relevant for exploring layout and images within newspapers.

In addition to exploring particular visual and linguistic features that formulated the news narratives, broader specifics were also considered formed around the central theme of this thesis in terms of its exploration of working women. In examining the narratives of news content, this thesis looked in part to the models of textual analysis utilised in the crime news studies outlined in Chapter Two. For example, Benedict (1992) considered how women figured in the narrative construction of crime news by exploring specifics such as the attitudes towards women by reporters (and whether the reporters were male or female); how women are frequently cast in the roles of the accused or the victims; how the victims were portrayed; which issues were raised and which were ignored (Benedict, 1992: 5). These specifics were adapted for the context of this thesis and included: exploring how working women were represented; considering whether socio-economic background was a factor in the variant portrayals of working women; examining the attitudes towards working women by reporters, and considering the issues raised and those ignored in coverage. Thus by examining how these broader themes manifest in news content alongside the specifics uncovered by the language and visual analyses outlined next, a comprehensive examination of the news samples was assured.

Language analysis

The language analysis of this thesis encompasses examining all the data sources to determine the linguistic devices deployed to represent working women. News language was analysed on a macro level by the determination of how news discourses

in newspaper and on television formed coherent wholes. Additionally, various microelements of language were explored, which included paying attention to linguistic devices such as choice of vocabulary, word play, the use of loaded language, the organisation of syntax, and so on. Particular attention was paid to language-use in newspaper headlines, given the importance of this text for encapsulating a news story and for attracting readers to an item (Reah, 1998: 13). Linguistic features were also considered in the context of the narratives themes outlined above concerned with how working women are represented, and two key components of news language were explored. Firstly, the naming strategies used to refer to or label women were analysed, and secondly how women speak in the news was a key consideration in each case study. How these core elements of news language were analysed is explored next.

Labelling and Naming Strategies

Reah (1998) argues that the naming of people in newspapers is a useful linguistic device to promote attitudes and transmit ideological values about certain social groups, thus naming strategies can have ‘a direct effect on the ideological slant of the text’ (1998: 60-61). She discusses how some naming devices are used most particularly to refer to women in news texts, such as ‘informal naming’ where a woman may be referred to casually by her first name only. Other strategies include referring to women in the context of their relationship to others, such as ‘mother’ or ‘wife’, or using adjectival description and noun phrases to focus on a woman’s physical attributes and/or age, as opposed to their work or actions (Reah, 1998: 67). Benedict (1992) in her study of sex crime news in newspapers also notes the importance of examining the gender bias of language and explores the ‘sexist vocabulary’ used to describe female sex crime victims. She notes, similarly to Reah, how women are usually defined by their relationship to men, and how the press uses words which are ‘consistently sexual, condescending, or infantilising’ (1992: 19-21). Each case study of this thesis examined the naming strategies and labelling methods used both in newspapers and television news to refer to female news actors, paying attention to the devices outlined above. As working women were the main unit of analysis, it was of particular interest to explore whether the traditional reportage convention of describing women in relation to passive, non-work and victim roles would manifest.

How news actors speak

The 'verbal reaction' is a convention of news language, whereby news actors speak directly or indirectly in a news item (van Dijk, 1988: 56). In her study of oral interactions in the quality press, Caldas-Coulthard (1995) utilises the concept of the 'accessed voice' (Fowler, 1991) to explore how women and men speak in news discourses, and to consider who is given voice and how this voice is reported (1995: 226). The representation of speech is a key component of language in the news because it is regarded that 'selection of speakers reflects cultural belief systems and power structures ... women in general are part of the unaccessed voice group' (Caldas-Coulthard, 1995: 226; 230). To analyse verbal reactions in the case studies of this thesis, certain features of oral interactions in news stories were identified using the model of Caldas-Coulthard's study. The speech of both women and men was considered to determine the frequency of male speakers compared to women. The devices used to describe, label or categorise speakers were also examined, and additionally, it was noted if speakers were referred to by their titles and/or professional roles. The verbs used to describe how women and men spoke when they were given a voice was also a consideration. Finally, direct and indirect oral interactions were noted to determine the active and passive grammatical voice in news language. Fiske (1987) refers to these textual devices as 'nomination' being when a news actor speaks directly within a news item, and 'exnomination' when newsreaders and/or journalists speak on his/her behalf (Fiske, 1987: 290). The former strategy gives space for oppositional and radical voices, although speakers may be placed lower down the hierarchy of news speakers, while in contrast, exnominating speaks the final "truth" ... against which the partiality of the subordinated discourses can be assessed' (Fiske, 1987: 290). The roles of women and men, whether they spoke directly or indirectly, and the frequency of oral interactions, were considered across the data material from broadcast news to newspapers.

Visual analysis

While language analysis was the central method, visual analysis, was used to a lesser extent. Some visual aspects of text within newspapers were considered using visual analysis, such as page layout, the position of headlines and graphics. However, as earlier stated in this chapter, using *Lexis Nexis* predominantly to collate the press news items did restrict the visual analysis of newspaper reports, and this was only carried

out in a few instances when the hard copy of an article was analysed. Visual analysis was used in the main to examine selected news photographs and the televisuality of the secondary and subsidiary data sources: broadcast news, current affairs programmes and ‘official’ discourse. Fiske (1987) argues that television content comprises ‘rule-governed systems of signs’ whereby certain codes work to generate meaning within a particular cultural context (Fiske, 1987: 4). Fiske’s model of the codes of television was adopted for the visual analysis of each case study and the hierarchical structure comprising three levels: “reality”, representation, and ideology is reproduced below (Fig.3.7):

Fig: 3:7 Fiske’s Codes of Television (reproduced from Fiske, 1987: 5)

An event to be televised is already encoded by
social codes, such as ...

Level one:
“Reality”

appearance, dress, make-up, environment,
behaviour, speech, gesture, expression, sound, etc.

these are encoded electronically by
technical codes, such as ...

Level two:
Representation

camera, lighting, editing, music, sound

which transmit the
conventional representational codes, which shape the
representations of, for example:
narrative, conflict, character, action, dialogue, setting, casting, etc.

Level three:
Ideology

which are organised into coherence and social acceptability by
ideological codes, such as ...
individualism, patriarchy, race, class, materialism, capitalism, etc.

Fiske argues that “reality” is already encoded through social codes that are relatively easy to define precisely, such as appearance, environment and speech. These social codes are then transformed or encoded by television’s technical codes, such as camera work and editing, which similarly to social codes can be precisely identified and analysed. The social and technical codes combine to transmit conventional representational codes, whose structure forms ideological codes ‘producing a congruent and coherent set of meanings that constitute the *common sense* [author italics] of a society’ (Fiske, 1987: 6). The representational codes are formed around elements of the television text, such as narrative, dialogue, characters and action, the organisation of which forms the ideological codes, such as patriarchy and capitalism. Fiske argues that analysing the representational and ideological codes is less straightforward than determining social and technical codes because they are more elusive and harder to specify, although detailed critical analysis can work to reveal how ‘naturalness’ is constructed (Fiske, 1987: 6).

Chapter conclusion

This chapter has outlined in some detail the research methodology for this thesis. It has discussed the rationale for selecting the case study approach in relation to the broad aims of this research project and outlined the research design in terms of case study selection, data collection, sample selection and sample details. This thesis is a text-based research project comprised of four cases, all of which have been selected to illustrate how women from different socio-economic backgrounds are represented in news content. The comparative value of this multiple case study design by its exploration of portrayals of different groups of women over different news data sources will be one of the key strengths of the thesis. Finally, this chapter has outlined the data analysis methodology for this thesis, describing the qualitative process of textual analysis. The textual analysis of news items comprised three parts - language analysis, visual analysis and narrative analysis, and the execution of each element of this qualitative method has been described in relation to the main research aim objective to explore how working women figure in news discourse. The thesis will now move to the first of its four case studies.

Chapter Four

It pays to know¹

Women and pay: the National Minimum Wage

Chapter introduction

The first case study of this thesis explores the representation of low paid working women in the news coverage of pay issues, focusing on the press and broadcast news relating to the implementation of the National Minimum Wage (NMW) into Britain in 1999. The introduction of a minimum wage aimed to benefit the country's lowest earners and those workers from the lower socio-economic groupings (NS-SEC categories of semi-routine and routine occupations) the majority of whom were women (Manning and Dickens, 2002: 44). As this chapter will illustrate, there was high media interest in the New Labour initiative and much speculation regarding its broader political and economic implications. Moreover, the new wage was seen to be of great significance for business, particularly for those companies reliant on cheap labour, which were now legally obliged to give the base rate to workers or face prosecution. A key aim of this exploration is to consider how working class women, as the key beneficiaries of the Government initiative, would figure in coverage of a news event that was predicted to have a profound economic effect on the business sector. The chapter will commence by outlining a brief history of the NMW and recount the significant events leading up to its implementation. It will then proceed to describe the Government's information campaign to make the public and employers aware of the new wage. The analysis of news coverage of the NMW implementation forms the greater part of this chapter, and will begin with an exploration of press reportage over a two-month period during March and April 1999. In addition to the main newspaper sample, three weeks of coverage are explored in greater detail to consider how women figure in the context of different news events relating directly and indirectly to the NMW, including Budget news coverage, the wage introduction and wage implementation. Finally, the chapter will explore broadcast news coverage from the day of the NMW introduction on 1 April 1999.

¹ The title for this chapter is the name of the Government's official publicity campaign to announce the implementation of the National Minimum Wage, which ran through March and April 1999.

A brief history of the National Minimum Wage²

On the 1 April 1999, Britain became one of the last countries in the European Union to enforce a NMW.³ The introduction of a minimum wage was part of New Labour's manifesto commitment in the run up to the 1997 election, and when they won the election in the May of that year, the new government began its implementation. In July 1997, the Government set up the Low Pay Commission (LPC)⁴ - its nine members drawn from employer groups and unions with their task to report on potential rates for the NMW. Their initial recommendations were presented to Parliament in June 1998. In March 1999, the Regulations received parliamentary approval and the Inland Revenue was held responsible for enforcing the policy of a NMW, set at £3.60, on all British employers. Throughout March and April of this same year, the Government launched a major publicity campaign, costing £5 million, to announce the arrival of the NMW, which eventually came into force on 1 April 1999. Subsequent campaigns were launched: to target those in low paid ethnic minority groups (November 1999); to announce an increase in rates for young workers (May/June 2000); and to advertise an increase in the main rate to £3.70 per hour (September/October 2000). Further increases in the main rate occurred in October 2001 (up to £4.10 for adults) and October 2003 (up to £4.50 for adults and up to £3.80 for workers aged between 18 and 21).⁵

On the date of the NMW introduction in 1999, the LPC released a press notice stating among their initial terms of reference their intention to:

... monitor and evaluate the introduction and impact of the national minimum wage, with particular reference to the effect on ... particular groups of workers, such as young people, women, ethnic minorities, homeworkers, people with disabilities and voluntary sector workers ...⁶

The largest group to benefit from the implementation of the NMW legislation, as the above quote suggests, would be women from lower social backgrounds and women

² The source for this information is from the Department of Trade and Industry website www.dti.gov.uk, date accessed 25 July 2001.

³ *Channel 4 News*, 7pm, 1 April 1999.

⁴ The Low Pay Commission was the 'independent' advisory body set up to advise the Government on the implementation of the NMW.

⁵ Despite these increases, Britain remains one of the lowest waged industrialised countries with 23 per cent of all adults in full time employment earning less than £250 per week (Lee, K. 'Britain: Labour Government announces small rise in minimum wage, World Socialist Website, 3 May 2001, www.wsws.org, date accessed 1 August 2001.

⁶ Press notice 'Low Pay Commission Welcomes Historic Introduction of National Minimum Wage', 1 April 1999 (www.lowpay.gov.uk, accessed 12 November 2003).

from minority ethnic groups.⁷ How the news media reported the event would therefore provide a good site for an exploration of the strategies used to represent the women workers situated in the lower classes of the NS-SEC scale - in semi-routine and routine occupations. In Chapter One, the perpetual segregation of British women into low paid low status work was discussed.⁸ However, discussions of women's pay in public discourse, including the news media, tends to ignore low paid workers and focuses instead on women in high profile highly paid professions, examining their pay relative to male colleagues. And while trade unions⁹, professional institutes, pressure groups¹⁰ and agencies¹¹ have all carried out high profile campaigns to highlight the persistent gender gap in pay, focus on the gender dichotomy is not wholly adequate, as other social elements, such as class background and education impact greatly on a woman's position in the workforce. Pay differentiation can vary considerably in this social context. For example, while women in professional occupations may earn approximately 20 per cent less than men, women in manual lower paid occupations earn on average 65 per cent of a man's wage (Franks 2000: 28).¹² The issue is further complicated by the pay gap for part-time female workers: 'with average rates of only 60 pence for every £1 earned by a male employee'.¹³ Sloane, in his early study of *Women and Low Pay* (1980), summarised the common features of the low paid female job and its worker:

... an unskilled manual occupation involving part time employment in a small establishment in the service sector in a low wage region. There is ... little opportunity for overtime or shiftwork, a time rate method of payment, a lack of collective bargaining arrangements, or wage council coverage. A low paid woman would be typically young (or elderly) with few years experience in the labour market and possessing few educational qualifications.

(Sloane 1980: 52)

⁷ 'Indian, Pakistani and Bangladeshi women earn on average only 84 per cent of the average hourly earnings of White and Black women.' (Anon, 2001a).

⁸ See Pettman (1975) for an interesting (albeit dated) account of the dynamics, reasons and solutions for women's historically and persistently low paid position in the British workforce.

⁹ For example, in 1998, the public sector unions: Unison, Transport and General Workers Union and GMB collectively campaigned to negotiate a new pay deal for public sector workers, which included addressing the gender pay gap (Anon, 2001b)

¹⁰ The pressure group Fawcett carried out a campaign in 2001 to highlight the gender pay gap.

¹¹ The Equal Opportunities Commission are the key UK agency to have carried out campaigns in a bid to reduce the pay gap between men and women (www.eoc.org.uk).

¹² There are numerous figures, reports and surveys that outline the pay gap between men and women in professional occupations. Fawcett's 2001 campaign however, states that 'full-time' women workers earn only 80 per cent of a 'full-time man's pay. (Anon, *Mind the gap? op cit*).

¹³ Lee, K. 'Britain: Labour Government announces small rise in minimum wage, *op cit*.

These 'typical' female worker characteristics are as prevalent at the start of the 21st Century as in the 1980s and will be considered through this analysis of minimum wage news coverage.

It pays to know!

Before commencing the analysis of press and broadcast news, this chapter will firstly discuss the 'official' public discourse of the NMW. As discussed in Chapter Three, the analysis of 'official' discourse is useful to compare the 'real-life' perception of working women alongside the news representations. Moreover, news portrayals may draw from, adapt, or reject the 'official' perceptions put forward. In the case of the Government's publicity footage for the NMW, the campaign was both utilised in some news coverage and also became the central focus of some news items, as the 'official' discourse was regarded as contentious in its portrayal of the key beneficiaries of the new minimum wage. On 6 April 1999, almost a week after the NMW enforcement, the following reader's letter appeared in the *Daily Telegraph* regarding the Government's publicity campaign 'It Pays to Know' to announce the new wage legislation:

The DTI's full-page advertisement on April 1 announcing the national minimum wage was both expensive and pointless. Did it set out to mislead by carrying a picture of a mature, male construction worker, who would clearly have been earning well above the minimum wage? Perhaps the DTI will take another full page to explain precisely how British employers are expected to compete under free-trade conditions with Far Eastern manufacturers paying weekly wages equivalent to half an hour at the British minimum rate.¹⁴

The campaign ran through March and April 1999 on television, radio and in newspapers and did not escape controversy. The budget for publicity was underestimated and subsequently was increased to £5 million (from an initial budget of £3 million). Additionally, as the above letter illustrates, there was a problem regarding whether the campaign, particularly the press element, was reaching and representing its intended audience. Moreover, as the *Daily Telegraph* reader pointed out, the representational strategy of focusing on types of work and workers could be problematic. Beside the question posed of whether a mature male construction worker would be earning more than the NMW, the placement of this advertisement would be unlikely to reach the initiative's low paid beneficiaries (the majority of the *Daily*

¹⁴ Letter to the Editor: Confusion over minimum wage, *Daily Telegraph*, 6 April 1999: 21.

Telegraph's readership deriving from socioeconomic groups ABC1s¹⁵). In this sense, the placement of the advertisement was most likely to be aimed at the employers responsible for enforcing the legislation (the referral to British employers in the letter reflects the wider reluctance to accept the NMW legislation by the British business sector). Many employers also claimed to be unaware of the Government's publicity, despite the DTI stating that it was successful in reaching its target audience.¹⁶

The television advertising campaign was more extensive in emphasising the categories of low status workers in routine occupations who would benefit from the NMW.¹⁷ The first television advertisement consisted of four scenes each representing a particular kind of worker. The introductory scene is a 'typical' family morning setting - children in school uniform dancing around the kitchen and spilling food at the table while the mother looks on with initial concern switching to amused tolerance. The family is black and there is no male present. The second scene is of a commercial kitchen and the focus is on a white male chef with two white female kitchen workers in the background. The third scene is of a textile factory with row upon row of machinists, moving to focus on one female worker of south-Asian origin. The final scene shows four workmen lifting sacks of sand. Again, the camera focuses on one worker, a middle-aged white male, while the advertisement closes with this man joking with a black male colleague, who gives a thumbs-up sign which reverts to the campaign logo and slogan 'It pays to know' (see plate A below).

Plate A: National Minimum Wage advertising logo



The re-occurring motif: 'Minimum Wage £3.60', appears throughout the 40-second advertisement and appears in the context of each scene. For example, as a fridge-

¹⁵ www.telegraph.co.uk, accessed 24 October 2003.

¹⁶ Burton, N. 'Minimum of clarity about low pay rules', *Northern Echo*, 31 March 1999: 4.

¹⁷ The Government Publicity Campaign material was received courtesy of Natalie Craig at the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) via CIO Communications (November 2001).

magnet in the kitchen of scene one, as icing on a cake in scene two, as a patch sewed onto the back of a pair of jeans by scene three's machinist and finally as the script on a sack of sand in scene four. A voice-over accompanies the images, with a female narrator stating:

Whether you are an employer or a worker, from April 1 the minimum wage of £3.60, or £3.00 if you're 18 to 21, will be part of everyday life. To find out what it can do for you call (no.).

The campaign placed great emphasis on the responsibility of the worker to acquire the relevant knowledge and information to ensure that they received the pay they were entitled to. There was also emphasis on ensuring that employers were aware that by law they were required to pay the NMW and that it was a criminal offence not to do so.¹⁸ The television 'official' campaign, with the narrative potential of the moving image that the press campaign lacked, gave a much clearer idea of the categories of workers who were set to benefit – most particularly women from ethnic groups and those working in the service sector. This chapter will now begin its analysis of the news reporting of this event, to firstly explore the type and extent of representation in coverage and then to consider what these representative strategies expose about the media's news reporting of class and gender.

Press news coverage of the National Minimum Wage

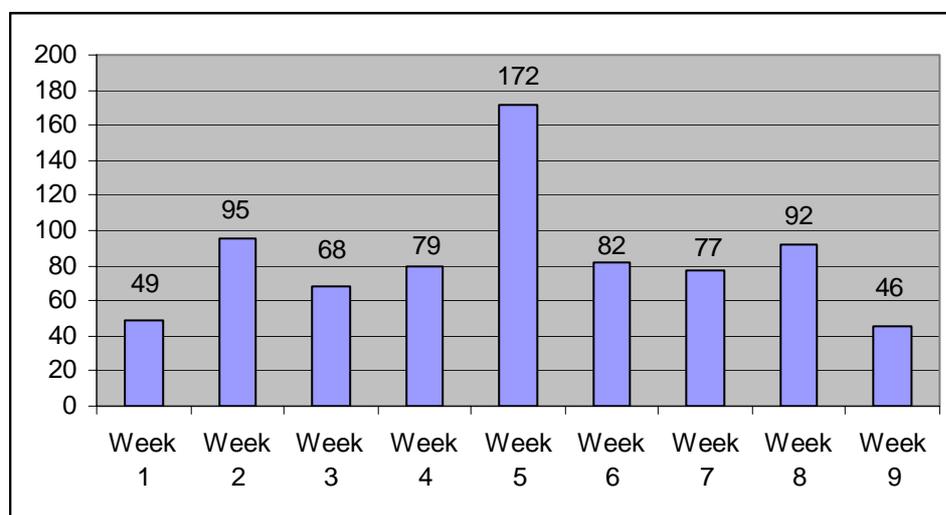
Sample details

Chapter Three outlined the sample selection motivations and collection methods for each case study. The print news sample for the NMW case is based on the exploration of two months of press coverage from 1 March 1999 to 30 April 1999. During these two full months, 760 news stories were located across 49 publications. The newspaper database *Lexis Nexis* was used to locate the stories in the sample based on search terms (also detailed in Chapter Three) and stories were categorised in terms of their focus on women, either as primary focus, secondary focus, referral, signified or not mentioned. These sub-sample groups formed the basis for the textual analysis of the news items, which is described below.

¹⁸ As stated previously, the NMW was enforceable by the Inland Revenue and their compliance officers, who were to police the changes in pay rates. Failure by an employer to comply could result in a fine of up to £5,000 (Anon, 2001c: 4).

Figure 4.1 below displays the number of stories that appeared each week over the two-month sample period. The most intense period of coverage was unsurprisingly, the seven days surrounding the introduction date of the NMW. 172 articles (22.6 per cent of the sample) were located in that week and include the two peak days of coverage, 29 March 1999 (45 articles) and the actual day of implementation, 1 April 1999 (43 articles). Weeks Two and Eight also had significantly high coverage, both containing over 90 articles (more than 12 per cent of the total sample each). These subsections of coverage will be considered in more detail shortly. The chapter will first turn to its core objective and consider the representation of women in the coverage.

Figure 4.1: National Minimum Wage: newspaper articles March and April 1999



Women and press news coverage

The initial most striking finding was that the press coverage hardly discussed the impact of the NMW on women. Table 4.1 below summarises the article focus on women and as the table clearly illustrates, over 50 per cent of the sample failed to mention women in any context. The stark lack of discussion in representing the key beneficiaries of the legislation is further highlighted in Table 4.2 (below). As the table displays, only 19 articles (2.5 per cent of the sample) directly focused on the relationship between women and the NMW:

Table 4.1: Article focus on women¹⁹

Article focus	No.	%
Main	41	5.4%
Secondary	35	4.6%
Referral	222	29.2%
Signified	80	10.5%
No Mention	382	50.3%
Totals	760	100

Table 4.2: Article focus on women and minimum wage

Women	National Minimum Wage Focus					
	Main	%	Secondary	%	Mentioned	%
Main	19	2.5%	7	0.9%	15	2%
Secondary	18	2.4%	8	1.1%	9	1.2%
Referral	105	13.8%	21	2.8%	96	12.6%
Signified	15	2%	7	0.9%	58	7.6%
No Mention	186	24.5%	42	5.5%	154	20.3%
Totals	343	100	85	100	332	100

11 of these 19 main focus articles were located in local titles, 5 in broadsheet UK nationals (*Guardian, Daily Telegraph, Independent*) and 3 in the *Daily Record* (Scottish tabloid). The occurrence of women as the key focus was chiefly in regular news stories (14 articles). In addition, there was one main news story (appearing on page 1 of the local *Torquay Herald Express*), two features, one comment piece and one reader's letter. The considerable dearth of directly relevant coverage conforms to the classic notion in feminist media studies, discussed in the reviewed literature of Chapter Two, that women are underrepresented in hard news discourse, if not all but ignored. However, while women were not present in over half of the sample, they did figure in just under half. This chapter will now consider women's role in the main focus NMW coverage.

Naming strategies

As noted in Chapter Three, exploring how women are named and labelled in the news was a key element of the textual analysis deployed in this thesis. Reah (1998) states that in news coverage, the representation of women in relation to a career is an

¹⁹ Refer to Chapter Three for full definition of these terms.

unusual descriptive strategy (Reah, 1998: 69). However, given the subject matter and the issues surrounding work and pay, this would be more likely in the NMW reporting. Table 4.3 below, displays the frequency-count of the naming strategies referring to women in the primary sub-sample of articles, which focused on women and the wage implementation directly. As the table shows, the female actors in this sample section are largely referred to by their full name or in terms of their job role. In this case, women are described in terms of active working roles including; hairdresser, waitress, nuns, economist, housing employee, chambermaid, marketing manager, nursery owner and director. It is clear immediately that some of these workers would not fall into the low paid category, such as the economist and the marketing manager - a factor that will be explored further shortly.

Table 4.3: Naming strategies in the main focus subgroup

Naming Strategy	No.	%
Full name only	30	26.1%
Job role	22	19.1%
Age	8	7%
Ms	8	7%
Mrs	5	4.3%
Miss	3	2.6%
First name only	20	17.4%
Mother (or Mum)	3	2.6%
Women	14	12.2%
Female	2	1.7%
Totals	115	100

In addition to referral by occupation, there are naming strategies that conform to the more ‘typical’ conventions of referring to women as a general category (Reah, 1998: 63). For example, female news actors in this sub-section are referred to informally, by first name only (20 instances) a strategy that could infer inferior status. Informal naming also works to affiliate news actors with a publication’s readership, particularly in tabloid newspapers. However, Reah argues that certain news actors are less likely to be referred to informally, such as male politicians (1998: 63). The referrals in the NMW coverage also included instances endorsing women’s status in the private sphere and relationship to others. Women are referred to in terms of their marital status: ‘Mrs’ (5 instances) and ‘Miss’ (3 instances), or as mothers: ‘the mother-of-

two’, ‘An angry Paignton mum’.²⁰ In addition, there are instances of referral to age (8 instances), either exact or inferred (e.g. ‘young mother Dawn Clark’²¹), deemed to be a notable descriptive feature of a female. Some of these naming strategies are further demonstrated in the following headlines from the sub-sample:

1. ‘Sam’s wedding wage boost’ (*Herald Express Torquay*, 1 April 1999: 1)
2. ‘Nuns exempt from minimum wage’ (*Independent*, 2 April 1999: 9)
3. ‘Hairdresser claims sacking over minimum wage’ (*Independent*, 4 April 1999: 9)
4. ‘Sarah backs living wage’ (*Exeter Express & Echo*, 7 April 1999: 5)
5. ‘Mum’s anger over teen wage ‘insult’’ (*Herald Express Torquay*, 20 April 1999: 13)

While this small section of the sample is fundamental in exemplifying women’s primary inclusion in the news coverage, it also provides a useful starting point to the factor suggested earlier regarding the categorisation of workers. It begins to become clearer when listing the occupations of key actors, and considering their work status in relation to the NS-SEC analytic class scale, that there is wide disparity in the socio-economic backgrounds of the women in the NMW news coverage. By considering this disparity and variant roles of women, the intersection of class and gender in news content clearly comes into view.

Representing diversity and potential conflict between women

Returning to the press notice issued by the LPC on 1 April 1999 the statement referred to the groups of workers most likely to benefit from the introduction of the NMW: ‘... young people, women, ethnic minorities, homeworkers, people with disabilities and voluntary sector workers ...’. The referral to women in this statement is immediately problematic, as arguably the issue of gender encompasses all these categories of worker. Additionally, some roles such as voluntary sector workers and home-workers are female dominated.²² The representation of women in the news media can reflect the diversity of women’s societal roles and status and this potentially conflicts with the conventional reporting strategies exemplified previously. This problematises the common tactic (illustrated clearly in the LPC press notice) of

²⁰ Gould, A. ‘As the minimum wage comes into force’ *Stoke Sentinel*, 1 April 1999: 14; Anon, ‘Mum’s anger over teen wage ‘insult’’ *Herald Express Torquay*, 20 April 1999: 13.

²¹ Anon, ‘A step in the right direction: the part-timer’ *Daily Record*, 29 March 1999: 23.

²² According to the UK Voluntary Sector Almanac, published by the National Council for Voluntary Organisations, (2000) more than two thirds of paid workers in the voluntary sector are women. (www.voluntarysectorskills.org.uk, accessed 12 November 2003). In Spring 2000, there were around 0.7 million people in the UK who were home-workers and 0.5 million of this group were women (www.statistics.gov.uk, accessed 12 November 2003).

placing women into a collective pot. The notion of ‘women’ is split, exposing an occupational hierarchy with an inevitably strong class theme in its midst.

These points can be further explained by examining in greater depth the news text reproduced below (Plate B) from an article in the *Independent* (4 April 1999), demonstrating the variety of levels and roles in which women may appear in coverage.

Plate B: News story, *Independent*, 4 April 1999: 9

Hairdresser claims sacking over minimum wage

Reporter: Jane Hughes

An 18-year-old hairdresser who claims she was sacked yesterday after asking to be paid the new national minimum wage, intends to take her case to an industrial tribunal.

Nicola Hamman may be the first person in Britain to lose her job as a result of the new legislation introduced last week, which guarantees a statutory minimum wage of £3.60 an hour and £3 an hour to those under the age of 22.

Ms Hamman, who was paid £50 for a 31-hour week, claims she was told to leave Crazy Cuts in Tirphil, Mid Glamorgan, after asking for her salary to be increased to £93. She says her employer, Karen Hill, then offered her a compromise whereby she would be paid £93 a week if she worked an extra day for nothing.

Ms Hill claims she told Ms Hamman she could afford to keep her on at the minimum wage only if her hours were cut. Ms Hamman said her working relationship with her boss of two months had been good before she asked for a wage rise.

“At first she told me I wasn’t entitled to it because she was a small business. Then she said she couldn’t afford to keep me on,” she said. “I am fully qualified but all the other hairdressers I know are being paid the minimum wage, even if they are trainees. I feel really angry because I enjoyed my job and now I will have to sign on until I find something else. But there aren’t many jobs around.”

Ms Hill, denies offering to increase Ms Hamman’s wages and said her employee left “of her own accord” before she had been able to discuss the reduction in her hours.

According to the regional youth organiser of the GMB union, Julia Rallings, an investigation is already under way and the incident could provide a test case for the new legislation, which is expected to benefit about two million people, if it goes to an industrial tribunal.

“It’s an absolutely appalling case and it’s important to make a stand,” she said. “We are encouraging young people to ask for their entitlement because some bosses of small businesses appear to be ignoring their responsibilities in the hope that their employees don’t realise what is going on.”

This article consists exclusively of female news actors: a hairdresser, her employer, and a union spokesperson, while additionally the item is attributed to a female journalist. In terms of socio-economic status, these women would be situated in variant groups on the NS-SEC analytic class scale, but their variant roles also illustrate some of the difficulties in applying this scale. The journalist would be regarded as middle class and at the higher end of the scale by being in a semi-autonomous profession, while the hairdresser would be regarded as working class because of her low status in a semi-routine job. The hairdresser’s employer and the GMB regional

youth organiser are less straightforward to place. The small business owner would be located in Group 4 of the NS-SEC scale, and would therefore be regarded as working class according to the NS-SEC class markers. However, small business owners, by dint of their entrepreneurialism and work autonomy, may be considered, in popular discourse, to be middle class. While the class location of the regional youth organiser of the GMB is difficult to determine from the news text, although she speaks on behalf of the working class.

The report focuses on the key actor, hairdresser Nicola Hamman, and explores how the NMW (implemented four days previously) is impacting personally on her life. There is high use of modal verbs to guide what is essentially a speculative news story, resting on the forceful prediction of events that have not actually taken place. The following extracts exemplify this journalistic device (modal verb in bold):

1. Nicola Hamman **may** be the first person in Britain to lose her job ...
2. ... the incident **could** provide a test case ...
3. ... the new legislation, which is **expected** ...
4. [she] **intends** to take her case to an industrial tribunal

The report is focused on the pay dispute between employer and employee, and the distribution of wealth (a key determinant of inequality) is the underlying conflict at the core of the piece. Yet there are additional tensions present, both actual conflict (in view of the employee's sacking) and potential conflict (by the speculation of anticipated union action). This clash between business and the worker proved to be a recurrent site of friction throughout the NMW coverage. The attempt at wage bargaining by the employee is outlined in depth throughout the narrative, exposing the financial realities for this low paid worker (the focus of the article being on the worker's age rather than gender or employment sector). Her speech is represented directly and in emotive terms about her situation: 'I feel really angry because I enjoyed my job ...'. In contrast, her employer is quoted indirectly, except for a brief paraphrase 'of her own accord', using a detached impersonal businesslike language, which may serve to dehumanise the business owner and heighten the article's affiliation with her ex-employee.

The report concludes with the intervention from a female union representative who speaks directly on behalf of the worker. While the 'Verbal Reaction' is a common

strategy used to enhance the sense of balance and impartiality in news stories (van Dijk, 1987: 56), its usage in this article is aligned with the worker's plight. The union representative (a GMB regional youth organiser), states the intention to take the case to an industrial tribunal and is similarly emotive in highlighting this 'absolutely appalling case' thus intensifying the conflict between employer and employee and emphasising the active role of the unions at this time. This rare female-centric article from the primary subsection shows the variety of roles that women now situate in the British workforce, which are across the class spectrum, by dint of autonomy and income. These women are also situated in work 'spaces' often perceived to be male-dominated, such as the trade union movement and industrial journalism. However, the gender conflict is ignored, as the report instead emphasises class conflict in the context of the higher class women refusing to pay the lower class women a minimum wage.

Key news actors and their verbal attributions

This section of the chapter will explore in greater detail subsections of the sample to reinforce the arguments already placed regarding the intersection of gender and class and will comparatively examine three intermittent weeks of coverage. The coverage to be explored is Week Five, which encompasses the 1st April 1999, the official introduction date of the National Minimum Wage. This week generated the highest number of news articles over the two-month sample period (170 articles). Additionally, Weeks Two and Eight will be examined in greater detail. Week Two, early in the case study sample period, encompassed the Budget and generated the second highest week of coverage (94 articles). Meanwhile, Week Eight in the latter stages of the sample period had no events of notable significance, but generated the third highest number of news articles chiefly discussing the progress of the minimum wage implementation (93 articles). The comparative analysis of these three weeks of coverage will focus on the key news actors and their verbal attributions. As stated in Chapter Three, besides exploring how women from different socio-economic groups figure in coverage, the sub-unit of male news actors is also important in exploring the intersections of gender and class. The inclusion of female and male news will therefore be considered, alongside their class status by dint of their occupation. Each week will be explored separately and comparative conclusions drawn from the data when and where appropriate.

The Budget news week²³

The Budget takes place twice a year in Britain and much news coverage is dedicated at these times to analysing various governments' latest economic initiatives. The framework for Budget reportage comprises unique reporting conventions, such as effectual analysis of how changes will affect different groups in society, and newspapers may dedicate many pages to illustrate the effect of economic change on 'typical' social types, such as families, married professionals without children, single people, single mothers, and so on. With Budget week occurring three weeks before its implementation, the NMW was mentioned in a large number of articles in the Budget Week sub-section of the sample. Chancellor Gordon Brown had centred his 1999 Budget on three priorities: boosting enterprise; making work pay; and supporting families. It was unsurprising then that the NMW would figure as a point for mention and/or discussion, cutting across these three budgetary concerns, albeit in conflicting ways. Women were implied in coverage in the context of families, parents and married couples, yet a large part of the news items in this sub-section, 38.3 per cent (36 articles from the total of 94 items in Budget week) did omit to mention females in any context. Given the enterprise element of Brown's Budget, small businesses figured highly in coverage and there was a great deal of discussion regarding the impact of the new policies on the business world. Because of the constraints on industry in view of the additional legislative red tape, the NMW was largely regarded as a negative initiative and there was less focus on the benefiting workers. This was clear from the business sources being predominant as speakers, over 40 per cent of direct and indirect quotes in Budget Week originating from women and men in the business sector (67 quotes from a total of 165). Quotes from the workers, meanwhile comprised only 6.7 per cent (11 quotes out of 165). Tables 4.4 and 4.5 below summarise the source-attributions in the three compared weeks and detail the extent of female direct and indirect quotes by different news actors in comparison to male direct and indirect quotes.

²³ Week Two of sample dated 8th to 14th March 1999.

Table 4.4: Direct female and male speakers in comparative news weeks

Direct Male						
	Budget	%	Wage Intro	%	Wage Impl	%
Politicians*	30	26.8%	43	29.4%	40	43.4%
Business**	54	48.2%	42	28.8%	27	29.3%
Unions	5	4.5%	27	18.5%	10	10.9%
Public Sector***	1	0.9%	15	10.3%	2	2.2%
Education	-	-	3	2.1%	1	1.1%
Workers	9	8%	11	7.5%	2	2.2%
Organisations†	11	9.8%	5	3.4%	10	10.9%
Other††	2	1.8%	-	-	-	-
Totals	112	100	146	100	92	100
Total direct male quotes = 350						
Direct Female						
	Budget	%	Wage Intro	%	Wage Impl	%
Politicians*	8	26.7%	14	17.3%	5	38.4%
Business**	8	26.7%	31	38.3%	1	7.7%
Unions	-	-	5	6.2%	2	15.4%
Public Sector***	-	-	4	4.9%	-	-
Education	1	3.3%	3	3.7%	-	-
Workers	2	6.7%	15	18.5%	2	15.4%
Organisations†	4	13.3%	8	9.9%	2	15.4%
Other††	7	23.3%	1	1.2%	1	7.7%
Totals	30	100	81	100	13	100
Total direct female quotes = 124						

* Includes quotes from government spokespersons.

** Includes quotes from business groups/organisations and consultancy firms.

*** Includes Job Centres, Inland Revenue, Civil Service, Local Authorities

† Includes CAB, LPU, voluntary sector, action groups, women's groups, churches and charities.

†† Includes members of the public also mothers, motorists, pensioners, etc.

Table 4.5: Indirect female and male speakers in comparative news weeks

Indirect Male						
	Budget	%	Wage Intro	%	Wage Impl	%
Politicians*	13	68.4%	9	56.3%	13	72.2%
Business**	5	26.3%	2	12.5%	2	11.1%
Unions	1	5.3%	1	6.2%	1	5.6%
Public Sector***	-	-	2	12.5%	-	-
Education	-	-	2	12.5%	-	-
Workers	-	-	-	-	2	11.1%
Organisations†	-	-	-	-	-	-
Other††	-	-	-	-	-	-
Totals	19	100	16	100	18	100
Total indirect male quotes = 53						

Indirect Female						
	Budget	%	Wage Intro	%	Wage Impl	%
Politicians*	4	100%	-	-	-	-
Business**	-	-	-	-	2	50%
Unions	-	-	-	-	1	25%
Public Sector***	-	-	-	-	-	-
Education	-	-	2	50%	-	-
Workers	-	-	2	50%	-	-
Organisations†	-	-	-	-	-	-
Other††	-	-	-	-	1	25%
Totals	4	100	4	100	4	100
Total indirect female quotes = 12						

- * Includes quotes from government spokespersons.
** Includes quotes from business groups/organisations and consultancy firms.
*** Includes Job Centres, Inland Revenue, Civil Service, Local Authorities
† Includes CAB, LPU, voluntary sector, action groups, women's groups, churches and charities.
†† Includes members of the public also mothers, motorists, pensioners, etc.

As these figures illustrate, while business speakers were predominant in the Budget week coverage, women figured little in this business context, and the world of the small business owner was deemed to be largely male. This was reflected in part by the high numbers of direct and indirect quotes by businessmen compared to businesswomen (59:8),²⁴ but also by the assumptive rhetoric of some news items, exemplified in the following broadsheet newspaper extracts whereby the entrepreneurs likely to be affected by the minimum wage implementation were presupposed to be male:

Every small businessman I know is being slowly throttled by red tape The burden of regulation discourages him from taking on staff.

Mr Brown is relying on small firms to provide the engine of growth in the next century. The serial entrepreneur is to be the hero of the age, his efforts encouraged by tempting tax breaks.

After this budget, the wannabee entrepreneur will find himself surrounded by eager officials from a new Small Business Service ... By the time he has struggled through all this well-meaning encouragement, he is unlikely to have the time actually to do anything.²⁵

²⁴ All comparative ratios are expressed as male: female.

²⁵ Ridley, M. 'Cut red tape Gordon, not taxes' *Daily Telegraph*, 8 March 1999: 20; Anon, 'Just what we need another agency', *Times*, 10 March 1999; Collins, N. 'Much ado about nothing', *Daily Telegraph*, 10 March 1999: 20.

Quotes from politicians also figured highly in the Budget Week cohort of articles, accounting for 33.3 per cent of verbal attributions (55 quotes out of 165). However, similarly to quotes from business people, MP attributions were more likely to be from male politicians than from female (43:14) thus reflecting their predominance in the political sphere, particularly in the context of the economy. Women politicians did figure in the Budget week, but invariably spoke about issues not directly connected to the Budget. For instance, the 73rd International Women's Day occurred at this time and a debate was held among women MPs regarding why women's pay continued to fall behind men's. The NMW was mentioned in this context as an initiative to begin to address the gender pay gap and improve women's pay. The report in the *Independent* of this event contained a higher occurrence of female politician speakers than in the entire remainder of the week's sample.²⁶ Harriet Harman, the then former social security secretary, was one of the four women MPs to figure in the debate, alongside Tessa Jowell, Theresa May, and Jackie Ballard.²⁷ Harman launched an attack on the 'macho rhetoric' of the government, arguing that it alienated the female British public:

[Ministers] must avoid falling back on militaristic, macho, hierarchical language and behaviour – it's a turn-off for women and alienates them from their government.²⁸

This item illustrates how feminist discourses *about* women's marginalization appear acceptable within quality newspapers. These 'counter-feminist discourses' (Talbot, 1997) may challenge the hegemonic patriarchal order, in this case by the discussion of equal pay relative to men and the deriding of the overtly masculine language and behaviour of male politicians. Female politicians, meanwhile, are at the fore of the article, exemplifying how some women have penetrated this male dominated sphere of public life. However, these discourse co-exist with the practices of that marginalisation when an issue of political and economic importance, such as the Budget, still enables so few female voices to emerge. The Women's Day news item

²⁶ Schaefer, S. 'Inquiry into why women are paid less than men: female rights' *Independent*, 9 March 1999:8.

²⁷ In March 1999, Tessa Jowell was the Minister for Women, Theresa May was the Conservative Women's spokesperson and Jackie Ballard was their Liberal Democrat counterpart.

²⁸ Watson, R. 'Harman hits at macho ministers', *Times*, 9 March 1999: 6.

was reported as an aside to the Budget and to the core Budget news coverage and Harman's statement concerning the alienation of women from government was paradoxically submerged amidst the speculative coverage of the Budget to be announced by Gordon Brown that same day,

Yet while women figured little in the Budget news in a political or business context, the conventions of the Budget's news framework includes the focus on 'typical' individuals and/or groups in Britain to gauge their loss or gain from the Government's economic changes. These groups might include single parents, married couples with or without children, particular sectors of workers, and so on. In terms of speech attributions in the press coverage, these illustrative sectors of society, both female and male, figured little. Only 6.7 per cent of quotes were from workers, as stated above, and 5.4 per cent of quotes (9 from a total of 165) were from other members of the population, such as mothers and pensioners. However, the quotes from workers in this small segment, while minimal, were more likely to be male (9:2), whereas women spoke instead in terms of their relationship to the home and as non-workers, for example as mothers or single parents (2:7). So the family emphasis of New Labour's Budget situated women at the fore in press news coverage, while the focus on 'making work pay' (of which the NMW was a key directive – benefiting women workers more particularly) tended to utilise representations of male workers. Thus there was a return to very traditional notions of gender roles in a bid to give 'typical' portrayals.

The NMW implementation²⁹

Before moving to explore in greater detail news coverage from the week of the NMW's introduction, the chapter will briefly comment on items from Week Eight of the sub-sample. The a-chronological order of these three comparative weeks is so to place the analysis of the NMW introduction aside the broadcast coverage of this news event. In Week Eight, the NMW had been in place for three weeks and coverage was concerned with discussing its implementation, while assessing its early impact for businesses and workers around the UK. This latter sample week generated the third highest number of articles in the eight weeks examined, 93 in total (43 local, 39 national, 11 Scottish titles). Articles provided continuity from the NMW introduction

²⁹ Week Eight of sample dated 19th to 25th April 1999.

news event by judging the progress of the regulation, and news items considered how employers were dealing with the new directives. For this reason, many articles focused directly on the NMW, in comparison to Budget week where the minimum wage tended to be referred to indirectly and in the context of broader economic issues. However, despite the direct focus of news coverage on the legislation, women still figured little in the news reports and 53.8 per cent of news items (50 articles from the total of 93) failed to mention women in any context, while there were no articles that directly focused on women in relation to the wage.

In terms of direct and indirect quotes from news actors, similarly to Budget week, quote sources derived chiefly from politicians (45.7 per cent of quotes), businesspeople (25.2 percent of quotes) and the trade unions' representatives (11 per cent of quotes). However, women figured significantly less as speakers in this subsample with 13.4 per cent of quotes being by women (17 from a total of 127) compared to 86.6 per cent by men (110 from a total of 127). Politicians were eight times more likely to be male speakers than female (direct quotes 40:5), and in business, women were almost entirely absent with only one direct and two indirect quotes across the whole week. This omission from the business orientation of coverage was exemplified by an article in the *Independent* reporting on the plight of care homes forced to shut due to lack of local authority funding, and the news items focused most particularly on one care home run by two sisters. The article identified three causal links forcing closure: nurse shortages, the expense of having to pay employees the new minimum wage, and the Government's new working time directive, bringing new employee rights regarding working hours to the fore. Women figured at every level of the news report, as managers of the care home; as predominant workers in the care and nursing professions, and as the key beneficiaries of the Government's pay and working directives, however the article's five speakers – a healthcare consultant; chairman of the National Care Homes Association; an estate agent; an economist, and spokesman for the Royal College of Nursing - were all male.³⁰

³⁰ Minton, A. 'Care Homes Lose Battle to Survive in Funding Crisis', *Independent*, 21 April 1999: 4.

The week of the historic introduction³¹

New Labour's bid to reduce the gap between rich and poor announced in the March Budget began to be put into force on 1 April 1999 with the introduction of a number of new directives. This included free eye-tests for pensioners, free museum entry for children (with additional emphasis on ending child poverty), and of course the introduction of a minimum wage for the lower paid workers of Britain. The legislation for a NMW was part of the Employment Relations Bill that also included Working Time Regulations and the Teaching and Higher Education Act. Unsurprisingly, the week that encompassed the wage introduction generated the highest number of articles in the sample and 170 items mentioned the NMW in some context (86 local; 58 national; 26 Scottish). News items, editorials and commentaries directly focused on the wage introduction discussing what the new legislation might mean for the business community and the British economy at large. In recognition of the impact on female workers, a higher number of articles than in the two comparable news weeks focused directly on women, although this number was proportionately minimal to the total number of articles in this sub-section (7 per cent, 12 items from the total of 170).

The main source speakers in this cohort of the sample were from similar spheres of public life as in the Budget news week and the implementation news, with politicians and people from the business community figuring foremost and accounting for 57.1 per cent of the source quotes (141 from the week's total of 247). However, while men still spoke more frequently than women (162: 85), female politicians and businesswomen were substantially more visible as direct speakers than in the comparable weeks, as Table 4.4 indicates above. Politicians were still three times more likely to be male speakers than female (52 direct and indirect quotes from male politicians compared to 14 direct quotes only from female political speakers) but there was clearly a heightened visibility for women MPs in the minimum wage introduction coverage. Women also figured slightly higher as trade union spokespeople, however the male dominance of this sector was still starkly clear (28 direct and indirect quotes from male trades union spokespeople compared to just 5 direct quotes from their female counterparts). Meanwhile, businesswomen were the most vociferous,

³¹ Week Five of the sample dated 29th March 1999 to 4th April 1999.

comprising 41.3 per cent of all quotes from the business community (31 quotes from the total of 75 direct and indirect quotes).

This visibility for women on a business level in the week of the NMW introduction was one of the key differences across the compared weeks. Earlier in this chapter the focus on one news story from this sub-sample (Plate B, p.84) illustrated how women cannot be regarded as a singular group and how class is a critical dimension for exploring gender and representation. Indeed, being able to view women, and hear how they speak, in multi-layered work roles is fundamental to exploring the intersection of gender and class. For instance, when speaking in the context of business, women might be critical to the NMW implementation, as the following extract exemplifies:

... Anne-Marie Loughlin, manager of an office cleaning firm in Bristol, said it would have a serious effect on her business. She said: "We have already priced our contracts for the year. Paying the staff more will result in considerable losses." Maggie Love, who runs a dog grooming firm in Bristol, said she would cut the number of trainees she took on. "We pay them a low wage as they get on-the-job training as they work," she said.³²

In this sense, the implementation of a minimum hourly pay rate was only relevant to businesswomen because they were now obliged by law to pay the rate to their own workers. Of course, this does not imply that individuals from the entrepreneurial classes did not agree with the concept of the NMW, views were disparate, and were occasionally supportive of the legislation. Nonetheless, the overall tone from the business community was one of negativity and frustration (albeit verbalised in a reasoned manner) and illustrative of tensions between the middle classes and their lower status workers. For the purposes of this study, this rational counter-voice has been exposed as essentially male in the comparable weeks, as the occurrence of businesswomen was rare. Women featured in coverage chiefly as a collective, united by their low pay and their gender. The social fragmentation of women's lives, which could become apparent by representing differing views and roles in society, was hardly visible.

The above argument relies on the ability to view women explicitly in news coverage, not merely inferred or as a group, and moreover, to view them in a variety of roles, be

³² Pickard, J. '10,000 jobs on the line', *Western Daily Press*, 29 March 1999: 1.

it mothers, low paid workers, or business owners. The Budget and wage implementation news weeks were problematic in this sense, with women workers appearing minimally as speakers (and male workers only figuring slightly better in the Budget Week news). In the week of the NMW introduction however, women workers appeared in heightened numbers to that of their male counterparts (11:15, although in consideration of the wage beneficiaries male workers perhaps did still figure disproportionately). Similarly to the conventions of budgetary news, workers might figure in the context of 'typical' cases, speaking about their personal wage experience and the impact the NMW would have on their lives. The emphasis of inclusion was highly personalised in this sense and this sector of women would be unlikely to comment on the wider political or economic implications of the legislation as the businesswomen had in the previous abstract described above. There was the odd rare exception. For example, the following extract was taken from an item that appeared in the *Daily Record* three days before the NMW implementation:

... Dawn – who worked in the shop for 13 years – added “I support the idea of a minimum wage. It will make a difference to me.” Labour supporter Dawn said the minimum wage had influenced the way she voted at the election back in May 1997. She said: “In the run up to the general election, I heard a lot about the minimum wage and thought it would make a difference to a lot of people. It was something I believed was a good idea and it was one of the policies which made me support Labour...”³³

This article was unusual by its main focus on an individual low paid female worker, although some traditional devices for representing women were also clear in the labelling and descriptive strategies deployed. For example, the women's family life was emphasised, she was described as a 'young mother' and was referred to by her first name only throughout the item. As already mentioned, these descriptive methods are typical for representing women. Yet the report also emphasises the central news actor's political views and affiliation. Her opinion regarding the introduction of the NMW is situated within a wider social context, in terms of its broader impact on low paid workers, as opposed to merely recounting its personal effect on one social 'type'. However, such items reporting the wider political views of working class working women were clearly rare, as this was the single instance of such reportage across the entire NMW press sample.

³³ Anon, 'A step in the right direction: the part-timer', *Daily Record*, 29 March 1999: 23.

Broadcast news coverage of the National Minimum Wage

The chapter will now move to explore the broadcast news coverage of the NMW. As stated in Chapter Three, television news was the secondary data source for this study behind the primary source data of press news. Analysis of television news was therefore less extensive than that of the press, with smaller data samples over shorter sample periods. Nonetheless, the broadcast news analysis provided an important comparison for exploring how women figure in different data sources within the news genre. Current affairs programmes are additionally analysed in this section, as a further subsidiary news data source (Chapter Three outlines in greater detail the rationale for sample selection and size in relation to these two data sources). The sample of television news coverage and current affairs programmes analysed for the NMW news event were from the 1 April 1999 only, the day of the minimum wage introduction. Stories were located on two terrestrial news programmes: *ITN News* (6.30pm, 37 seconds, Excerpt 1) and *Channel 4 News* (7.00pm, 1 minute 40 seconds, Excerpt 2), and two current affairs programmes: BBC Two's *Newsnight* (10.30pm, 16 seconds, Excerpt 3), and the Scottish news programme, *Platform* (9 minutes, 5 seconds, transcript in Appendix C).

Excerpt 1 below outlines the 37-second news story from the *ITN News* on 1 April 1999 and immediately notable is the 'good news' slant of the coverage.

Excerpt 1
***ITN*, 6.30pm, 1 April 1999 (37 seconds)**

(**SHOT**: Newsreader, studio, graphic to right of factory worker, **TEXT**: Minimum Wage) Newsreader: 2 million people in Britain today get a pay rise. (**x2 SHOTS**: Three people releasing balloons into sky) Day One of the new National Minimum Wage. The Low Pay Unit celebrated the wage, which guarantees that all adult workers over 22 will be paid at least £3.60 an hour. (**SHOT**: man wearing sandwich board with **TEXT**: Minimum Wage £3.60) Of those people who will get a wage rise, most will be women, nearly one and a half million will be better off. (**TEXT**: Who will benefit? 1.4 million women) Also parts of the country will do better than others. About 1 in 10 people in the northeast and Northern Ireland will gain more. (**TEXT**: One in ten in Northeast) But there could be a cost. Employers are warning up to 80,000 jobs could go (**TEXT**: 80,000 jobs could go)... although the Government denies this.

The fact that workers would get a 'pay rise', that the Low Pay Unit 'celebrated', that women would be 'better off', and that those in the north would 'gain more'. The accuracy of these statements is not called into question, given the broadcaster's legal requirements to tell the truth, however, they do have an element of incompleteness, which omits pay comparison with the wider workforce. For example, the newsreader declares that women will be 'better off' implying a move to affluence for a homogenous group defined solely by gender, as opposed to a potential move away from poverty for a traditionally exploited sector of low paid women workers. It is similarly emphasised that those in the northeast of England and Northern Ireland are set to 'gain more', giving the sense of a group accumulating wealth, and failing to acknowledge that these geographical areas are historically among the most low paid regions in Britain. Yet, despite the optimistic slant of the minimum wage item, the closing statement strikes a sober warning that: 'there could be a cost' stressing employer concerns regarding potential job losses (a consistent theme in the press sample), while adding that the Government has denied that fact. The positive theme of the story is further emphasised by its placement in the overall news programme. The *ITN* populist programme adheres to the more conventional hierarchical structure of news values, which situates news stories according to their news currency.³⁴ On 1 April 1999, these news values were clear, as the items, in order of occurrence were: the capture and filming of American soldiers in Kosovo; the plight of Kosovan refugees; Britain's first ever war-crimes trial; and the Northern Ireland peace process. The dominant themes of war and conflict were prevalent in all four leading items. News of the NMW was placed after these items (and after the advertisement break) preceding the upbeat sections of sports news and *ITN's* institutionalised 'feel-good' story: 'And finally ...' (a bank holiday heat-wave in Britain on this particular day).

The *ITN* news item is distinguishable by its omission of key facts regarding the UK's low paid workers and its neglect of any historical analysis to help viewers make sense as to why certain groups of workers (women) from certain geographical regions (the north east of England and Northern Ireland) will benefit. It could be argued that a 37-second news item is too short for in-depth analysis on the numerous issues raised by the NMW. This lack of depth is further illustrated by the lack of additional voices in the

³⁴ Galtung and Ruge (1970) are widely regarded to have coined the term 'news values' whereby they identified 11 features that would impact on the inclusion or exclusion of a news story.

item besides the main newsreader. There is no external journalist and news actors do not speak or figure to a high degree. A studio graphic of a male factory worker is situated beside the newsreader with the words 'Minimum Wage' below and connotes one type of worker, the unskilled factory worker in routine labour, who is set to benefit from the NMW introduction. However, no other work or workers figure. Three employees from the Low Pay Unit (two male and one female) feature in additional footage releasing balloons, while a male (Industry Minister, Ian McCartney) parades with a sandwich-board advertising the new minimum wage rate of £3.60. However, no news actors speak and the only dialogue is from the newsreader listing the 'facts' of the NMW - his spoken words appearing additionally as text on the screen. While lack of detail in television news is acknowledged, it is a factor which largely fail to concern broadcasters, who commonly believe that detailed explanations should be left to longer current affairs programmes (Glasgow University Media Group, 1985: 201). However, while brevity may provide rationale for underdeveloped news analysis, with this point in mind, it is interesting to compare the shorter news item with the *Newsnight* coverage.

BBC2 *Newsnight* is one such current affairs programme that would provide the necessary time and space required for more in-depth explorations of key contemporary news issues. However, on 1 April 1999, more extensive news analysis was given to the core conflict items of that day, as with the *ITN* bulletin - the capture of the US soldiers, the Northern Ireland peace process and the war crimes trial. A series of brief slots enveloped a 16-second item on the NMW (Excerpt 2 below) including: news of early treatment for breast cancer, the BP Amoco take-over of Atlantic Richfield, and a cloned sheep called Dolly giving birth to triplets in Edinburgh.

Excerpt 2

BBC Two *Newsnight*, 10.30pm, 1 April 1999 (16 seconds)

(**SHOT:** front of Job Centre) Newsreader: Thousands of low paid workers will get a pay rise, or got a pay rise, today with the introduction of the National Minimum Wage. (**x3 SHOTS:** cleaners, one male cleaning toilet and one female buffing floor) It's been set at £3.60 an hour and applies to all adult workers over the age of 21. Those under 21 must be paid a minimum of £3 per hour.

In contrast to the *ITN* item, the *Newsnight* report labels the beneficiaries of the NMW as ‘low paid workers’ and ‘adult workers’, categorising them as an underpaid group, as opposed to ambiguous social sectors determined by sex and geographical location. The second most notable contrast is the use of footage. As outlined above, the *ITN* item used a combination of footage and textual graphics to illustrate the key ‘facts’ surrounding the NMW introduction, while the shorter *Newsnight* item used footage only. In both cases, the footage provided a visual dimension only, with the *ITN* newsreader and *Newsnight* presenter speaking over the clips and providing the only commentary in the news item. Similarly, neither news item had an external journalist or made use of quotes from news actors to provide additional verbal dimensions. However, while the news footage used in both cases was brief, the two news items differed in terms of the news actors who figured and thus contrasting visual news narratives were developed. For example, the *ITN* footage featured official and organisational sources - the Low Pay Unit³⁵ representatives releasing balloons and the then Industry Minister, Ian McCartney donning the NMW sandwich board. This footage was clearly contrived to announce the NMW introduction and to provide photo and film opportunities for the media. In contrast, the *Newsnight* item used footage of the workers likely to gain - a male and female cleaner – the former cleaning a toilet, while the latter is buffing the floor. Therefore, despite neither set of news actors speaking, the implicit voice of the Government does materialise in the *ITN* item because of its use of the promotional footage to announce the wage. Moreover, the implicit voice of the employers is apparent at the end of the item in the newsreader stating that ‘Employers are warning up to 80,000 jobs could go’. The economic impact of the NMW is at the fore of the *ITN* item, not only in the macro sense of how the wage will impact on business, but also in the micro sense, in terms of the economic gains for women and those in certain geographical regions. However, except for the factory worker graphic displayed aside the newsreader at the beginning of the news item, work and workers do not really figure, a point exemplified by their clear and visible representation in the *Newsnight* programme.

Both of the above news items were less than one minute in length, and it would be reasonable to presuppose that the two lengthier items outlined next might contain

³⁵ The Low Pay Unit campaigned with unions independently over 25 years for a NMW introduction and to protect the low paid against ‘gross exploitation’ (www.lowpayunit.org.uk).

more in-depth news analysis. The *Channel 4 News* item was one minute and 40 seconds in length (see Excerpt 3 below), while the final and most lengthy item (9 minutes and 19 seconds), appeared on the Scottish current affairs show, *Platform* (full transcript in Appendix C).

Excerpt 3

Channel 4 News, 7.00pm, 1 April 1999 (1 minute 40 seconds)

(**SHOT:** newsreader Kirsty Lang) KL: Britain became today, almost the last member of the European Union to adopt a minimum wage. The new statutory rate, £3 an hour for 18-21 year olds and £3.60 for everyone else, should benefit 2 million workers. But there's concern that the rate is too low and that some employers will refuse to observe it.

(**x3 SHOTS:** man wearing sandwich board with **TEXT:** Minimum Wage £3.60) Reporter (Liam Halligan) LH: All smiles from the government today, as Labour delivered the minimum wage. Here's Industry Minister Ian McCartney advertising the £3.60 hourly rate for employees above 21. (**x2 SHOTS:** male waiter carrying plates in restaurant; couple eating at table) The wage floor should help some 2 million workers, many of whom are women working part-time. (**SHOT:** woman walking across road in shopping street; **x2 SHOTS:** sandwich shop workers) Most employees aren't in trade unions, work in retailing, cleaning or elsewhere in the service sector.

(**SHOT:** Head/shoulders of male, **TEXT:** Stephen Byers, Trade and Industry Minister) SB: Well, I think the important message is that employers will know that they'll benefit from having a highly motivated workforce and ensuring that they can retain their staff, that will happen and I'm sure employers will follow the law.

(**x3 SHOTS:** Door with Low Pay Unit on sign; balloons on railing; people releasing balloons into sky) LH: London's Low Pay Unit, adorned with balloons, a celebration after 25 years protesting poverty. But there's concern the minimum rate, less than £8000 annually won't rise with prices, and there's fear employers could sack workers who complain.

(**SHOT:** women at desk, **TEXT:** Bharti Patel, Low Pay Unit) BP: Well, the biggest challenge for the Government now is making sure that it is adequately enforced. We've got thousands of enquiries from low paid workers who are seeking help because the employers are threatening a reduction in their working hours or even dismissal. And I think unless it is enforced effectively, we won't see the 2 million people benefiting from the minimum wage today.

(**x4 SHOTS:** public on shopping street; market trader; commuters) LH: Labour has sold the minimum wage as a populist measure against the will of business and now it's here the Tories are unlikely ever to scrap it. But for many High Street workers, the rate is too low to be meaningful, leaving no way out for poverty pay.

Similarly to *Newsnight*, *Platform* is arguably the sort of current affairs programme to provide space for the in-depth analysis not afforded by the mainstream news broadcasters. The first most notable difference in the *Platform* and *Channel 4 News* items is the inclusion of additional voices from news actors providing verbal reaction and comment about the introduction of the NMW. Both programmes had special news

reports by male journalists performed outside of the studio (the *Channel 4 News* item was by the programme's Economic Reporter, Liam Halligan; the *Platform* item by programme reporter Raman Bhardwaj). In addition, the *Channel 4 News* item had short statements from Stephen Byers (the Trade and Industry Minister) and Bharti Patel (a Low Pay Unit representative). These news actors were placed in opposition to represent two sides to the issue. Stephen Byers stated the positive outcome of the legislation from a Government perspective, while Bharti Patel expressed concerns for the workers (the Low Pay Unit, as stated previously, is independent from the Government and thus is deemed more representative of the workers). The views presented provided an element of balance reinforcing the crucial (and legally required) notion of pluralism on the broadcast news. Yet, despite the reporter's claim that: 'Labour has sold the minimum wage as a populist measure against the will of business', the selected 'message' from Stephen Byers was clearly directed at employers and not at the benefiting workers. He reassures employers ('they'll benefit'), warns them ('employers will follow the law'), and appeases them, by predicting that the increased pay will produce a keener dedicated workforce.

Beside the 'official' news actors, there were more representations of workers, both male and female, in the lengthier news items. The *Channel 4 News* item referred to the beneficiaries of the legislation - '18-21 year olds'; 'part-time female employees'; 'service sector workers'; 'high street workers' – and the subsequent footage worked to illustrate further the groups of workers who would benefit. However, the extent of adequacy in visually representing the workers was mixed. A video montage of brief shots featured a male waiter; a woman crossing the street; a mid-range profile of a random female (again in the street); male and female sandwich shop employees, and commuters walking from a tube station with a male market trader to one side of the shot. The portrayal of service sector employees was unproblematic – as the waiter and sandwich shop workers were all young workers, and in the 18-21 year age group. On the other hand, the male market trader would most probably not be paid an hourly rate by an employer. Moreover, the representation of women workers was also problematic, as the female news actors did not figure in working roles. Instead the footage of women merely featured them situated in the high street, perhaps as high street workers, perhaps as part time workers, but more likely as consumers, and the opportunity to represent working women, as the key beneficiaries, was missed.

Additionally, there was no direct verbal representation for any of the workers and the Low Pay Unit spokeswoman, Bharti Patel, provided the only voice airing the potential problems regarding the realities of the wage implementation. Some key concerns are briefly mentioned, although under-developed, such as the low minimum wage rate of £3.60; the question of whether employers will observe the wage, and speculation as to whether there will be job losses. The reporter concludes on the sober note of the continued likelihood of poverty pay, and the programme returns to the *Channel 4 News* studio directly to an in-depth report on the Kosovo war.

In terms of discussion and analysis, the Scottish Television current affairs programme *Platform* was by far the most in-depth and questioning of the NMW (see Excerpt in Appendix C), as is apparent in the presenter's (Bernard Ponsonby) opening statement:

Today the minimum wage came into effect. It's an important piece of legislation and was one of the key elements of the Government's election manifesto two years ago, but who will it affect and will it do more harm than good?

(Platform, 1 April 1999)

Similarly to the *Channel 4 News* item, *Platform* utilised a separate outside journalist (Raman Bhardwaj) to investigate the NMW news story, who begins his report by referring to the £5 million cost of the Government's advertising campaign. More in-depth information is given regarding the minimum wage statutory rates, with a referral to those excluded from the legislation ('16 and 17 year olds, au pairs, self employed and the Armed Forces'). In terms of additional voices in the news item, those invited to speak, similarly to the *Channel 4 News* item, represented opposing views on the issue. A spokeswoman from Unison indicates the potential ramifications of the initiative on workers, while a spokesman for the Federation of Small Businesses provides the employer angle. In addition, the *Platform* journalist cites an 'official' report from the Economic Consultants Business Strategists stating that 'many firms would be forced to raise prices or cut profits.' The representation of the low paid is, as with the *Channel 4 News* item, limited to short visual montages of particular workplaces – featuring call-centre employees and a street cleaner – which situated work and workers within the news narrative, although these news actors similarly do not speak. There is no focus on female workers and instead news analysis is centred on concerns regarding the exploitation of young workers. With the exception of the

Unison spokeswoman, women only figured in this lengthy current affairs news report as part of the masses and they are represented as consumers in the footage of shopping malls. Thus the active working role of women and the subsequent issues regarding their segregation in the workplace remains unexplored to make room for speculation concerning rising prices in the 'High Street'.

To conclude this section, it is worth briefly examining an item from the day before the NMW introduction on 31 March 1999 to consider the intersection of gender and class in a comparable news event. On this date all the terrestrial news programmes led with the high news currency stories of war in Kosovo and the Northern Ireland peace process. However, there was also a 'good news' story comparable to the NMW item in terms of large numbers of low paid manufacturing workers retaining their jobs at the Longbridge Rover car plant. The Government had finally reached an agreement with the German firm BMW that 11,000 jobs would be secured at the plant, plus a further 50,000 in the area, benefiting 40,000 families (*BBC News*, 31 March 1999, 9.00pm). The item was a key story on all the main news programmes, including the *BBC News* (that surprisingly failed to report on the NMW the following day). Its inclusion could be explained by its high news value in terms of the negotiation between two elite (and former enemy) nations, Britain and Germany, as well as the salvage of a traditional heavy, masculine-oriented industry. Continuity was an additional factor, as the story had appeared on prior news agendas. Similar spokespeople were called to comment on the Longbridge pay deal, as with the NMW - including Stephen Byers and the TGWU spokesmen - plus more interestingly there were comments from the workers outside the gate of the plant. This occurrence of verbal representation, albeit very briefly (*ITN* and *BBC News* both airing the comments of two male workers only) provided an important voice of acceptance and legitimisation by the workers of their place in the current order. It also provided an interesting comparison for the silence of the two million (chiefly female) workers who would benefit from the NMW the following day.

Chapter conclusion

This chapter has explored how working class women figure in news content in relation to pay issues and has explored their representation in the coverage of the minimum wage introduction into Britain in April 1999. Low status working women

were the key beneficiaries of the new NMW, yet this case study has illustrated how they rarely figured in the press and broadcast news coverage of the wage introduction and implementation. However, the male workers who were set to benefit from the new wage rarely figured in the sample either, and instead reportage formed narratives of the wage introduction chiefly around its wider political and economic implications, thus news actors were in the main from the elite public spheres of politics and business, and were predominantly male. Moreover, while trades unions tended to speak on behalf of the workers, the union spokespeople were also predominantly male and further shrouded the centrality of low status working women to the new initiative. In the instances that lower status workers did figure, they were chiefly male workers, while women were more likely to be represented as mothers and wives or consumers. Yet, when women did figure as workers, their inclusion showed the possibility of multi-layered gender representation whereby class differentials were emphasised. Women can be visible and vocal in hard news discourse in a variety of work roles reflective of their social status, thus quashing the essentialism that often underpins the representation of women in the news. Some of these themes will be further explored in Chapter Five, which explores how low status working women figure in the news of industrial conflict.

Chapter Five

It's a dirty job ...¹

Women and industrial conflict

Chapter introduction

The next case study of this thesis explores the representation of low paid women workers in industrial conflict and the case focuses particularly on the Council Workers' Strike on 17 July 2002. The chapter will expand on many of the themes introduced in Chapter Four by similarly considering the portrayal of working class women in low status employment and additionally exploring their representation in relation to pay issues. However, the public sector strike also provides a contrast to the NMW news event, as the minimum wage introduction was in the main a 'good news' event, while coverage of industrial stoppages are invariably 'bad news' stories. The NMW was a one-off news event, while industrial conflicts have a long history and the news media tend to report strikes using a routine framework of codes and conventions. Chapter Two outlined previous work in Sociology and Media Studies that has explored the news media's reporting of industrial conflict and it also recounted how women figured minimally in these studies, usually because the strikes reported were predominantly within the heavy industries and the striking workers were therefore mainly men. The perception of industrial conflict, influenced by these dominant news media portrayals is thus highly masculine. The Council Workers' Strike in 2002 was said to be the biggest walkout ever by women in Britain² and this chapter will explore how the female workers figured in the news coverage of this dispute and how they were incorporated into the conventional industrial conflict framework. This chapter will begin by briefly recounting women's role historically in the trade union movement and in industrial disputes more generally. It will then move to discuss how women figure as public sector workers, and recount industrial disputes in this area of the workforce more specifically. The press reportage of the strike will be examined first through the analysis of four weeks of coverage from mid-July 2002 to mid-

¹ The title for this chapter was the term commonly used by the media in the 1970s when referring to strikes by public sector workers - the Dirty Jobs Strikes - because of their low status, low pay and the usually dirty work that they entailed, such as refuse collectors and cleaners.

² Anon, 'Women on the warpath' *Evening Standard*, 15 July 2002: 5.

August 2002. Finally, the chapter will examine three days of broadcast news coverage from 17-19 July 2002.

A brief history of women, trade unionism and industrial disputes

The history of women and trade unionism is predominantly one of exclusion from membership, and the early movement was essentially a male movement (Boston, 1987: 10). From the origins of industrialisation, there was a widespread belief that women threatened men's jobs, therefore their exclusion from trade unions was justified by the barring of semi-skilled and unskilled workers, positions traditionally held by women, from becoming members, (Hain, 1986: 57; Munro, 1999: 29). However, the move to mechanization through the 19th Century led to fewer skilled jobs, and women were increasingly employed in the repetitive low skilled (and thus low paid) work that replaced it. This in turn led to a growing demand for women to be allowed to join trade unions and their membership doubled from 1906 to 1914 (Hain, 1986: 63, 71). World Wars I and II also saw women join the workforce in ever increasing numbers, only to be rapidly pulled back out of the labour market as men returned. Yet despite increased membership, women continued to have a low status in the trade unions, with little support from the male members and little chance of redress to challenge their post-war loss of employment. Moreover, male workers widely regarded women's wartime work as temporary and saw their return to the private sphere of the home as inevitable.

The long history of exclusion began to change more rapidly and permanently in the 1960s, as increasing numbers of women were recruited into white collar and public sector jobs (employment areas with a traditionally high union membership density). This led to an intense leap in the numbers of female union members, and from 1964 to 1970, women accounted for 70 per cent of the Trade Union Congress (TUC) membership growth (Boston, 1987: 209-210). The Labour Party had earlier included in their manifesto the promise of equal pay for equal work – an issue crucial to women workers, as the gender pay gap was apparent in most areas of employment at this time.³ A notable strike in this decade was the stoppage by the Ford Machinists in 1968. This was particularly groundbreaking, not only because it was deemed an

³ The Equal Pay Act was later implemented in 1970 under a Conservative administration.

important victory for women workers, but it also became closely linked to the activities of the women's movement at that time (Hain, 1986: 107).⁴

Through the 1970s, the main area of trade union membership growth continued to be among women (Munro, 1999: 12). As they became more engaged in wage-labour, the unions became increasingly reliant on their membership and adopted equal opportunity policies similar to those of employers and business organisations. Additionally, these policies received widespread support from business leaders and politicians keen to seize on the contemporary issues of equality and human rights, as outlined in Chapter One (Pilcher, 1999: 47). Membership growth continued into the 1980s, until the middle of the decade when it dropped considerably compared to its heyday in the 1970s. Women at this time formed approximately 30 per cent of members (Boston, 1987: 303), and despite the wider decline, their membership remained largely consistent through to the 1990s (Anon, 2001c). This was in contrast to the decrease in male members, due in the main to the upheaval and closure of the manufacturing industries. Women were also visible in industrial conflict through the 1980s and notable strikes included the Lee Jeans Factory at Greenock in 1981, the Ford Machinists again in 1984, and the strike by the women cleaners at Barking Hospital, which ran from 1984 to 1985.

By 1996, women made up 45 per cent of the British workforce and their union density was 29 per cent compared to 33 per cent of men (Munro, 1999: 5). Yet despite improved numerical representation at membership level, research suggested that the trade unions remained institutionally biased and sexist in terms of their dominant agendas - continuing to exclude issues of importance to women workers:

British unionism is based on the maintenance of divisions among the working class, or more accurately on the maintenance of a hierarchy of labour which is divided by sex. The maintenance of this hierarchy underwrites and reinforces a fundamental difference of interests between men and women in the labour market.

(Munro, 1999: 23)

Moreover, these divisions were most notable when viewing the employees of trade unions, in addition to examining wider membership. In 1996, while 45 per cent of the

⁴ See Friedman and Meredeen (1980) for an extensive account of the 1968 Ford Machinists' strike.

union employee workforce was female, women were represented in very few senior fulltime positions and were rarely present as union officials or as delegates (Pilcher, 1999: 162).⁵ This lack of representation at senior levels continued into the 21st Century and in 2001 women held only 9 senior positions in the 20 largest trade unions in Britain (Anon, 2001c).⁶

Female employees and strikes in the public sector

In the public sector, an early notable strike involving women occurred in the 1950s when female civil servants, typists and machine operators ‘banned overtime and organised demonstrations’ over wage claims (Boston, 1987: 275). Throughout the 1970s, there was a perceived growing militancy among public sector employees with many nationwide campaigns of industrial action. This growth in militancy was, however, viewed as unusual, as the Government had previously been deemed *the* ‘model employer’ (Morris, 1986: 2). Union membership within the sector was high. In 1974, 84 per cent of public sector workers belonged to a union, compared to just 38.6 per cent membership in the private sector. And as with membership more generally, women accounted for much of the increase:

The increase of women union members has been most marked in the public sector where less effort was required from unions themselves. In the public sector groups of women workers tend to be larger and less isolated than many in the private sector ...

(Munro, 1999: 15)

Initially public sector disputes in the 1970s occurred because of changes in income policy, the effect of which ‘disturbed traditional relativities and undermined the principle of comparability’ (Morris, 1986: 3). Because of the frequency of strikes, and the subsequent upheavals they caused, the Government was sometimes forced to directly intervene. This was most apparent in 1978 and 1979, when sustained industrial action, commonly referred to as the Winter of Discontent, led to the deployment of troops and police to perform the tasks of the striking workers. These disputes therefore became viewed as direct conflicts between the Government and the

⁵ Pilcher (1999) cites a Labour Force Survey (1996) which stated that in 1995 only 4 women General Secretaries of Unions were affiliated to the TUC and only 16 women had seats on the TUC General Council of the total 48 (Pilcher, 1999: 162).

⁶ The Fawcett Report (Anon, 2001b) quotes the TUC Directory 2001, stating that among the 20 largest unions there were only 5 women Presidents, 3 Deputy General Secretaries and 2 Vice Presidents.

workers (Morris 1986: 3, 4), yet the high number of women workers involved was never emphasised in contemporary accounts.

The number of women union members stabilised through the 1980s largely because of their sustained employment in the public sector and this factor still holds relevant into the 21st Century:

... women continue to work in the public sector where unions hold a strong position, whereas there has been a decline in traditional male jobs in heavy industry, which were historically strongly unionised.

(Anon, 2001c)

The three unions that represent the public sector are Unison (which in 2001 had 72.1 per cent female membership); the Transport and General Workers Union (TGWU, 20.6 per cent female members in 2001),⁷ and the GMB (40 per cent female membership in 2002).⁸ Pay continues to be an enduring theme in public sector disputes. For instance, in 1998, the public sector unions collectively negotiated a pay deal and new grading structure that would benefit 1.5 million local government workers, predominantly women performing low paid work, such as nursery nurses and home care assistants (Anon, 2001c).

The 2002 Council Workers' Strike

The national strike by council workers on Wednesday will involve the largest walkout in the UK by women employees. Unison, the country's biggest union, is leading the action, and says women who have never taken part in a strike before are sick of being treated as the "poor relations" of the public sector. Teaching assistants, nursery nurses, dinner ladies, home and residential care, social workers and meals-on-wheels workers are among the million-strong workforce expected to walk out in the dispute over pay.⁹

The Council Workers' Strike on 17 July 2002 was unsurprisingly another dispute about public sector pay and women were to have a central role in the row. In the period leading up to the strike, Unison had emphasised the gender pay gap, which they argued was widening in local government. They also brought to light issues

⁷ The Unison and TGWU figures are listed in the Fawcett report (Anon, 2001b) and taken from the TUC website: www.tuc.org.uk/tuc/unions_list.cfm (date accessed 7 August 2002).

⁸ www.gmb.org.uk (accessed 7 August 2002). The union name GMB historically derived from the General Municipal Boilermakers.

⁹ Anon, 'Women on the warpath' *Evening Standard*, 15 July 2002: 5.

surrounding low pay in local government more generally. For example, they stressed the fact that a quarter of full time local government staff earned under £250 per week. This figure rose to over 30 per cent of full time women workers.¹⁰ Their campaign stated that:

Public services in this country have been built on the backs of a skilled and dedicated, and predominantly female workforce – a workforce traditionally undervalued.¹¹

By using intensified publicity, Unison's goal was to alert the public to the fact that 284,000 workers still earned under £5 per hour, thus gaining important public sympathy in the fight to increase this wage. An additional aim was to win equal pay relative to men for 600,000 of their women members.¹²

The dispute on 17 July 2002 was anticipated to involve 1.3 million council workers across England, Wales and Northern Ireland and was the first national strike by local government for 23 years.¹³ Three quarters of the striking workers were women.¹⁴ After the strike, Unison declared the one-day stoppage an unequivocal success reflected in the media's blanket coverage of the day:

Reports from around the country show council offices brought to a standstill, schools shut, leisure centres closed, bins left unemptied and neighbourhood offices locked up, as members take to the picket line and join hundreds of rallies and marches ...¹⁵

In contrast to public sector disputes through the 1970s that tended to point to direct conflict between workers and government, in the 2002 strike, central government was called upon by the unions to act as a mediator in failing negotiations between the workers and management. On 5 August 2002, a pay agreement was finally reached between the local government employers and the three unions, in talks with the advisory and mediatory body ACAS (Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration

¹⁰ www.gmb.org.uk, accessed 7 August 2002. Additionally, while the national average wage is £19,046, two-thirds of Council employees earned under £13,044 in 2002 ('Five sorry facts' www.tgwu.org.uk, accessed 7 August 2002).

¹¹ 'Equal pay campaign' Campaigns (www.unison.org.uk, date accessed 7 August 2002).

¹² 'Unison says ...' (www.unison.org.uk, date accessed 7 August 2002).

¹³ The dispute was also cited as the biggest strike since the General Strike in 1926 (Reiss, C. and Murray, D. 'Council workers mount 'biggest strike since 1926'', *London Evening Standard*, 17 July 2002: 2).

¹⁴ Maguire, K. 'Pay strike to hit council services as anger grows' *Society Guardian*, 17 July 2002.

¹⁵ 'So solid strike' (www.unison.org.uk, date accessed 7 August 2002).

Service).¹⁶ The pay deal finally agreed was to be implemented within six weeks thus postponing a second impending strike planned for mid-August 2002.¹⁷

Press news coverage of the Council Workers' Strike

Sample details

The sample for the press news analysis spanned four weeks of coverage from 10 July 2002 to 6 August 2002. The rationale for the length of sample was outlined in detail in Chapter Three, but in short, the sample period was selected to encompass a substantial amount of pre-strike analysis, the actual strike date and its initial aftermath, in addition to post-strike analysis and the move towards a pay resolution. Week One, the week leading up to the dispute, also encompassed a spending review by Gordon Brown on 16 July 2002, which would impact on public sector funding and would directly affect the council workers due to strike the following day. The second week of the sample included the one-day strike on 17 July 2002, while Weeks Three and Four were periods of post-strike analysis and negotiation between the unions and the council employers. The sample consisted of 513 stories, 138 national items and 375 regional articles.¹⁸ Table 5.1 below details the number of local and national articles from each week of the sample:

Table 5.1: Council Workers' Strike sample summary

	National	%	Local	%	Totals	% of total
Week 1	25	18.1%	94	25.1%	119	23.2%
Week 2	74	53.6%	185	49.3%	259	50.5%
Week 3	19	13.8%	47	12.5%	66	12.9%
Week 4	20	14.5%	49	13.1%	69	13.4%
Totals	138	100	375	100	513	100

As the above table illustrates, coverage was highest in Week Two of the sample, the week in which the strike occurred. Over half of the total items, 50.5 per cent (259 articles) occurred in this week. Additionally, Week Two contained the two peak days of coverage - the day of the strike on 17 July 2002, which generated 12.9 per cent of

¹⁶ The pay deal agreed would result in wage rises from 7.7 per cent to 10.9 per cent over the following two years ('Council workers suspend strike action', www.bbc.co.uk, 6 August 2002).

¹⁷ Despite the decision to suspend action, within two weeks London council workers announced further plans to strike over weighting payments in the capital (Anon, 'New council strike threat over London pay' www.society.guardian.co.uk, accessed 19 August 2002).

¹⁸ The Scottish press was excluded from the analysis, as the strike did not extend to Scotland.

the total press news reports (66 items) and 18 July 2002, which generated 12.3 per cent (63 items). Also notable is the high number of articles from regional publications, which accounts for 73.1 per cent of the sample (375 items) and the comparative reporting of the local and national press will be examined later in the chapter.

Women and press news coverage

In the introduction to this case study, it was argued that the lack of women in the news coverage of industrial stoppages historically was in part because of the media's focus on strikes in the heavy and manufacturing industries. Male workers were predominant in these sectors, and women would figure in coverage in relation to men and the family, as opposed to engaging in active working roles in the public sphere. It was also stated earlier in this chapter that the Council Workers' Strike was the biggest walk-out ever by women employees in the history of industrial disputes in Britain, yet press coverage of the dispute only went half way to reflect this fact and more than half the items in the press sample failed to mention women in any context - a finding consistent with the coverage of the minimum wage. Figure 5.1 and Table 5.2 below summarise the article focus on women in the overall sample and in the local and national publications:

Figure 5.1: Council Workers' Strike article focus on women

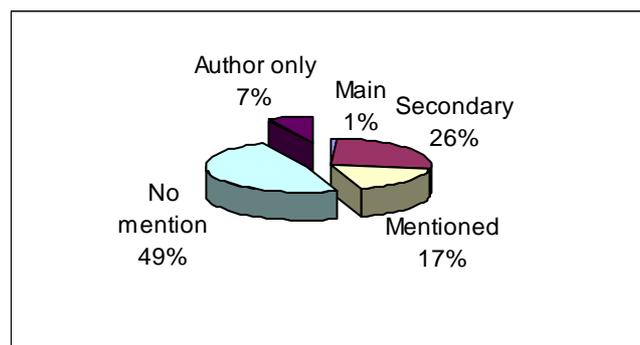


Table 5.2: Council Workers' Strike article focus on women

	National	%	Local	%	Totals	% of total
Main	1	0.7%	5	1.4%	6	1.2%
Secondary	31	22.5%	105	28%	136	26.5%
Mentioned	35	25.4%	54	14.4%	89	17.3%
No Mention	63	45.6%	182	48.5%	245	47.8%
Author Only	8	5.8%	29	7.7%	37	7.2%
Totals	138	100	375	100	513	100

In addition to their exclusion from half of the news articles, the inclusion of women in half of the sample was at variant levels as Table 5.2 indicates. For instance, in 17.3 per cent of the total sample (89 items) women were only mentioned, while in 26.5 per cent of articles (136 items) women had a more substantial role as speakers and/or news actors. However, in only 1.2 per cent of the sample (6 items from the total of 513) were women the main focus. The visibility of women in this small subsection of the Council Workers' Strike press coverage will be discussed next.

Female news actors in strike coverage

Of the six main focus items, all occurred in Weeks One and Two of the sample and five of the stories from this sub-section appeared in local news publications.¹⁹ Despite women being the main focus of this small cluster of items, the women included in the stories were not necessarily the low paid female workers involved in the strike. For example, the local item in the *Derby Evening Telegraph* reported about a female disabled pensioner and labelled her as a victim by reporting how the disruption of the strike would directly affect her.²⁰ The item was overtly anti-strike in tone by emphasising the abandonment of the pensioner by the council carers. Moreover, her fragility and vulnerability were further emphasised by the reference to her disability and her widowed status:

Eileen Warner (75), uses a wheelchair after falling and suffering a compound fracture in her leg ... She says she cannot reach kitchen surfaces or open her

¹⁹ Two of the six main focus items appeared in the *Birmingham Evening Mail* (15 July 2002: 7 and 22 July 2002: 10). The remaining four appeared in the *Evening Standard* (15 July 2002: 5); *Birmingham Post* (16 July 2002: 3); *Guardian* (18 July 2002: 5) and *Derby Evening Telegraph* (19 July 2002: 9).

²⁰ Clensy, D. 'OAP hits out at 'greedy' council workers: Widow missed out on home help during strike' *Derby Evening Telegraph*, 19 July 2002: 9.

curtains. The widow pays £10 per week to cover the cost of three daily visits ... during a strike by council workers ... she was visited only once.²¹

The article then quoted Eileen Warner elaborately, as she emphasised her distress and helplessness at being abandoned, adding that ‘council workers, particularly home helps, are just getting greedy – and if there is one thing that I can’t stand, it is greed’. In contrast, the two main focus items from the local Birmingham press struck more of a pro-worker pro-strike tone by focusing again on a woman away from the core group of striking low paid workers - Solihull Council Chief Executive Katherine Kerswell.²² The Council Chief was exposed for her poorly timed pay increase, speculated to be a rise of 13 per cent (in comparison to the increase for the council workers of around 3 per cent). The claim was a perfect opportunity for the unions to emphasise the disparity in pay between workers and management and there were verbal retorts from union officials, while council leaders responded by announcing they would launch an investigation. Meanwhile, Kerswell who was central to the row was not quoted, instead she was reported to be holidaying in Cornwall at that time.

The remaining main focus items were directly about female council employees. In the *Birmingham Evening Mail*, a letter was published (see Plate C below) from a Birmingham City Council nursery nurse. This short letter from ‘Mrs Jones’ described succinctly her work, her changing responsibilities and her personal experience of issues central to all the striking workers. She stressed her frustration at the low pay she received and the lack of recognition for being a ‘loyal and experienced worker’ to the Council, thus giving a direct account of life as a low paid woman worker. The final two articles from this small subsection similarly reported the Council Workers’ Strike in terms of its direct impact on women. Firstly, the *Evening Standard* item (an excerpt of this report was transcribed previously on p.109) reported how the strike would be ‘the largest walkout in the UK by women employees’.²³ It emphasised how women were ‘sick of being treated as the “poor relations” of the public sector, while additionally listing some of the areas of work where women remain segregated, such

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² Docherty, C. ‘Pay rise for boss as workers strike’ *Birmingham Post*, 16 July 2002: 3; Watts, A. ‘Chief’s pay rise of 13 per cent: union fury as they set strike’ *Birmingham Evening Mail*, 15 July 2002: 7.

²³ Anon, ‘Women on the warpath’ *op cit.*

as ‘teaching assistants, nursery nurses, dinner ladies, home and residential care [and] social workers’.²⁴

Plate C: Letter, *Birmingham Evening Mail*, 22 July 2002: 10

First time I’ve agreed to strike

I have worked for the Education Department within the City Council since I was 16 years old in the early 1970s, with a short career break to have and bring up my children.

In the past I have not backed a union when strike action was mentioned, my work and children were too important. Over the years my job as a Nursery Nurse has changed so much that the work I do now is nothing like the training I received. I am responsible for my own group of children, I complete assessments, I write children’s reports and I plan, just like the teaching staff.

I also often work unpaid overtime and sometimes bring work home with me. Last week, I took part in my first strike action. Why? Because I think that I, and others like me, deserve some recognition for the type of work we undertake. I feel so strongly about not being financially recognised for the job I do that I have finally agreed to strike action. I am a loyal and experienced worker, my whole working life has been in education. If nothing else, please take the time to talk to council workers across the board to find out why we are frustrated.

Mrs Jones, by email

Finally, the *Guardian*’s article focused on a demonstration in Brighton where it was reported that ‘a formerly silent minority of female workers ... took to the streets in the biggest strike ever by women’.²⁵ The group of women was referred to as the ‘Mum’s Army’ – a play on the title of the British comedy series *Dad’s Army* - bringing to light the connection between women’s dominant caring roles within the home and their subsequent low status and low pay within the workplace. This article was particularly distinctive, firstly because it addressed directly the gender issue of pay central to the cause of the Council Workers’ Strike, and secondly because the report contained a high number of female public sector employees who were quoted directly throughout the article:

“I’m here to protest because I’m on a very low wage of £4.80 an hour. I can’t save and I can’t move out of the hostel I live in to better accommodation. It’s really important that local government services are valued more because they are central to the community”

Natasha Izatt, librarian

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ Kelso, P. ‘Public sector strike: on the streets, angry women find a voice over pay that doesn’t add up’ *Guardian*, 18 July 2002: 5.

“We are paid between £5 and £6 an hour, but the job has changed immeasurably. It’s not just picking up the paint pots any more. It’s a skilled job on an unskilled wage...”

Lisa Stern, teaching assistant

“We’re being asked to act as teachers but on the same money as before... The needs of these kids are quite extreme ... and £5.46 an hour just isn’t enough”

Wendy Robinson, classroom assistant²⁶

These women, from various low paid low status jobs, directly expressed their dissatisfaction regarding their poorly paid work. Moreover, the women described the changing nature of their work (as similarly expressed in the reader’s letter in Plate C above) recounting one of the fundamental issues for this sector of female workers concerning employee skills and employer expectations. The news actors provided personal accounts of their experiences in the workplace and contributed towards a broader picture of issues endemic in the low paid public sector.

News actors and news speakers in strike coverage

The above section outlined how some women spoke directly in the main focus subsection of the sample, and the case study will now move to examine in more detail the news actors and source attributions in the four weeks of strike reportage analysed. This chapter noted above that almost half the sample failed to mention women in any context. However, women did figure in over half of the news items in various roles, as the above section began to illustrate by exploring their representation in the main focus subsection. Tables 5.3 and 5.4 below summarise the number of direct and indirect quotes by male and female news actors, week by week across the sample. As the tables illustrate, the speakers were predominantly men (a finding consistent with the NMW sample) and over 70 per cent of verbal reactions where the sex of the speaker was determinable were by male news actors.²⁷

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ 92 quotes were noted during this sample period that could not be attributed to either a male or female speaker. As this research is concerned chiefly with how women figure in news content, these quotes were not included in the analysis.

Table 5.3: Direct and indirect male quotes in strike coverage

Male Quotes				
	Direct	%	Indirect	%
Week One	159	25.2%	17	21.5%
Week Two	355	56.2%	50	63.3%
Week Three	61	9.7%	6	7.6%
Week Four	56	8.9%	6	7.6%
Totals	631	100	79	100

Table 5.4: Direct and indirect female quotes in strike coverage

Female Quotes				
	Direct	%	Indirect	%
Week One	23	14.4%	3	13.6%
Week Two	98	61.2%	13	59.1%
Week Three	26	16.3%	-	-
Week Four	13	8.1%	6	27.3%
Totals	160	100	22	100

As these tables illustrate, Week Two, which incorporated the day of the strike, had the highest number of quotes across the sample from both male and female news actors with 57.8 per cent of all verbal reactions recorded over the four weeks (516 quotes). Tables 5.5 and 5.6 below explore the roles of the male and female news speakers from the week of the strike only, while additionally recording their occurrence in both local and national publications. The domination of male speakers across all categories of news actor becomes more evident when examining this subsection; particularly the male trades union spokespeople, male politicians and businessmen. However, this dominance encompassed nearly all groups of news actors. Speakers from local councils and educational institutions were similarly more likely to be male, failing to reflect these areas of the workplace where women have a stronger presence. In terms of trade union speakers, there was a core of national leaders who were repeatedly quoted across publications, while regional heads (where women again were more likely to figure) also were predominantly male.

Table 5.5: Council Workers' Strike: Week Two male speakers

	Direct				Indirect			
	Local	%	National	%	Local	%	National	%
Politicians*	35	12.2%	13	19.1%	8	24.3%	5	29.4%
Business**	12	4.2%	-	-	2	6.1%	-	-
Unions	129	44.9%	47	69.1%	8	24.2%	11	64.7%
Council	68	23.7%	5	7.4%	15	45.5%	1	5.9%
Education	4	1.4%	-	-	-	-	-	-
Workers	18	6.3%	-	-	-	-	-	-
Other***	21	7.3%	3	4.4%	-	-	-	-
Totals	287	100	68	100	33	100	17	100
	Total direct male quotes = 355				Total indirect male quotes = 50			

* Includes quotes from government spokespersons.

** Includes quotes from business groups/organisations and consultancy firms.

*** Includes members of the public also mothers, motorists, pensioners, etc.

Table 5.6: Council Workers' Strike: Week Two female speakers

	Direct				Indirect			
	Local	%	National	%	Local	%	National	%
Politicians*	19	20.9%	-	-	2	20%	3	100%
Business**	1	1.1%	1	14.3%	-	-	-	-
Unions	22	24.2%	2	28.6%	4	40%	-	-
Council	7	7.7%	-	-	3	30%	-	-
Education	2	2.2%	-	-	-	-	-	-
Workers	21	23%	4	57.1%	1	10%	-	-
Other***	19	20.9%	-	-	-	-	-	-
Totals	91	100	7	100	10	100	3	100
	Total direct female quotes = 98				Total indirect female quotes = 13			

* Includes quotes from government spokespersons.

** Includes quotes from business groups/organisations and consultancy firms.

*** Includes members of the public also mothers, motorists, pensioners, etc.

The large number of local news items compared to national reports in the strike sample meant there were also a substantially higher number of direct and indirect quotes across the local press (421 quotes) in comparison to national publications (95 quotes). Women were more likely to speak in the local press, either directly or indirectly, with over 90 per cent of female quotes occurring in local news items (91 direct; 10 indirect). Moreover, quotes from workers, both men and women were almost exclusively in local publications in Week Two, except for the *Guardian* national news article discussed in the previous section where four women workers spoke directly. The number of quotes from workers was additionally the only category

where female quotes outnumbered male (26:18), although the overall number of worker quotes was in the main small, comprising only 8.5 per cent of the total, so therefore the difference was negligible. Therefore gender became less significant when considering the representation of low status workers because class, as opposed to gender, determined exclusion from coverage. Yet, despite the poor visibility for both female and male workers, women's invisibility appeared to be more pronounced, arguably because of their absence as news actors and in all speaker roles. The traditional masculine framework of industrial coverage was therefore sustained with male speakers predominant from politics, business and the trade unions, and the centrality of women to the news event unacknowledged.

Industrial conflict reportage: a masculine affair

It has been argued that the media's coverage of trade unionism appears inherently masculine largely because of the traditionally masculine image of unionised workers, picket lines and management:

Trade unions have a highly masculine image in the public mind. Men in overalls, men shouting on picket lines, men in suits talking on the television, miners with blackened faces ... Women are invisible.

(Beale, 1982: 31)

Certainly, as outlined above, press coverage of the Council Workers' dispute had low direct focus on women's role in the strike. Moreover, coverage did not acknowledge women's centrality to the strike and how gender impacts on the low pay issues that it was highlighting. The masculine notion of the press coverage was further sustained by other factors relating to trade union hierarchies and the structure of the workplace more generally. For instance, as outlined earlier in this chapter, male union employees hold most senior union positions and it is these leaders who tend to speak on behalf of the workers. Therefore, because the voice of the workers in the strike reportage was male, it could be presupposed that the striking workers were also predominantly male. Aside this point is the fact that industrial conflict reportage makes use of verbal reactions from those at senior levels on all 'sides' of the dispute, from the trades unions, to local government and central government. For this reason, reportage reflects not only male dominance in trade unions, but also in local government, central government and business. And while women have progressed into these work

environments, reflected by their visibility in some of these roles in coverage, men remain to have a substantially greater presence in these roles.

The latter two points to be made with regard to the masculine characteristic of industrial reportage relate to the production of media content more specifically. Firstly, male journalists are more likely to report on industrial relations, a factor reinforced in this case study by the substantially lower number of female correspondents. Only 7 per cent of items in the entire strike sample (37 items) were by female authors, compared to 42 per cent (218 items) by male authors.²⁸ Secondly, the higher numbers of male industrial reporters is one likely explanation for the greater number of male speakers and news actors, as male journalists are more likely to call on male contacts (Rodgers and Thorson, 2003: 658). This is one explanation for the lack of female speakers across all categories of news actors, even in the areas of work where their number is relatively high, such as in educational establishments and local councils.

The final point to make in this section is the problematic correlation with women and conflict. As has already been stated, despite women being widely involved in disputes historically, this factor has never been a focus of industrial relations reportage and for this reason striking workers are expected to be men, while the action of industrial conflict is regarded as masculine. By using conventional frameworks of industrial conflict reportage, there was little reason to assume otherwise in the Council Workers' Strike press news items, except in the rare instances where there was referral to the fact that the striking workers were predominantly female. There were marginally more direct quotes from female workers, but men figured in almost equal measure, and as noted previously the disparity in quote numbers was negligible. The strike were depicted as troublesome by the widespread focus on the disruption that would be caused to the general public at large and it was at this level that women's place in coverage appeared more normalised. The disrupted community included quotes from pensioners, residents, workers in other sectors and parents, and women figured predominantly in this latter category as mothers. For example, an article in the *Derby*

²⁸ These figures include the authors of readers' letters. 50 percent of reports did not have a designated author.

Evening Telegraph quoted three mothers directly and indirectly about the disruption that the strike was causing to them and their children:

“I understand the reason for the strike, but I think it’s disruptive for the children who are missing a day off school. And it’s very inconvenient for parents who have to work full-time.”

Dawn Roe (35)

“I sympathise with the strikers, but I have had to leave work to come and pick up my children. Luckily for me I have an understanding employer.”

Davinder Rai (28)

“It’s not so bad here because the children will be back for lessons this afternoon, but other schools are closed all day. I think it’s disgraceful that people can let industrial action affect children’s education like this.”

Anon²⁹

While two of the women quoted were clearly workers too, the article brought their role as mothers to the fore illustrating how women tend to be labelled in the news by their relation to others, their age and their domestic role (Reah, 1998: 63). There were no comparative quotes from disrupted working fathers and men were more likely to figure simply as disrupted workers or members of the public.

The local press, women and strike coverage

This chapter has already mentioned some of the differences between reportage in the local press compared to national publications, and before moving to explore broadcast news coverage of the strike, these comparisons will be re-emphasised. There was high local press interest in the strike across England, Wales and Northern Ireland with local items comprising 73.1 per cent (375 items) compared to 26.9 per cent (138) national items. The strike had greater news value at a local level, with 54 articles appearing on page one of local publications compared to only 15 front-page items in the national sample. While national reportage was more concerned with the macro elements of the strike in terms of the position of central government and New Labour’s relationship to the trade unions at large, in the local press coverage there was more emphasis on micro issues concerned with the local community. There were more direct quotes from the workers (39 compared to 4 in the national press), and sources were overall of a more local nature, including more verbal reactions from members of the local community disrupted by strike action, and it was at these levels of coverage that

²⁹ Anon, ‘A very civilised strike; return of the pickets’ *Derby Evening Telegraph*, 18 July 2002: 6-7.

women were more likely to figure. While the visibility of women in the local press was still in the main limited it was more extensive than in the national press coverage. Moreover, women were more likely to speak in the local press and appear across all the categories of speakers, reflecting their active role in many areas of public life, from politics to local government and business. This occurrence became diluted at a national level, because of the national press's reliance on the elite of public life - senior politicians, union leaders and council negotiating teams - where women figure less. Additionally, the few articles attributed to female reporters were also more likely to be in the local press than the national. From the 37 items by women writers, 78.4 per cent (29 items) were in the local press, compared to 21.6 per cent (8 items) in the national press.

Broadcast news coverage

Broadcast news coverage of the Council Workers' dispute, as with the minimum wage coverage was limited to items appearing on or around the day of the event. These items would have high news currency given their inclusion on the national television news agenda. Five news items were located, three occurring on the day of the strike on 17 July 2002 and two appearing on 19 July 2002. The former three items ranged in length, from the shorter *ITN News* 6pm item of two minutes, to the lengthier stories on the *BBC News* 10pm (over 5 minutes and headlining that particular bulletin) and the *Channel 4 News* 7pm bulletin (over 8 minutes in length and also featuring as a headline). The latter two items on 19 July (*BBC News* 10pm; *Channel 4 News* 7pm) were substantially shorter (both approximately 20 seconds) and consisted of repeat footage from the earlier news stories.³⁰ The three longer news items were similar in that they were fairly lengthy items consisting of outside reports by journalists and featuring various news actors and sources. These three items will form the basis of this discussion of broadcast news coverage. The *Channel 4 News* item also consisted of a lengthy studio discussion between Unison Secretary for Local Government, Heather Wakefield, and Chair for the Local Government Employers' Organisation, Ian Swithenbank. As with the press reportage, union sources and local government spokespersons figured in all the broadcast news items to represent the opposing sides

³⁰ The strike was included in footage on 18 July 2002 but in the context of the London Tube Workers' Strike on that day. Also on 18 July, Sir Ken Jackson was defeated as leader of Britain's second largest union Amicus by Derek Jackson and the strike was similarly mentioned in these reports.

in the strike. The other key news actors were members of the public and male and female striking council workers.

In contrast to the press news, council employees in broadcast news items had far greater visibility and appeared in various contexts. For example, there was footage showing groups picketing outside council offices and individual male and female workers handing out flyers to passing members of the public. A number of marches had taken place around the country on 17 July 2002 and the reports showed workers taking part in these demonstrations. There was also a personalised emphasis on certain individual council workers, and these employees might be shown performing their work juxtaposed to footage showing them engaged in strike action. The centrality of low status working women and their low pay, which was a core strike issue, became clear from these visual narratives of work and workers. For example, the Pontypridd kitchen workers who featured in the *ITN News* report (see Excerpt 4 below) were shown in a series of shots engaged in the routine labour of serving and cooking school food, before footage moved to show the same group of workers marching and chanting in the strike demonstration. The *ITN News* journalist's commentary meanwhile referred to the women as 'kitchen workers' and 'marchers'.

So in addition to women's visibility as workers, this usually invisible and silent sector of the workforce also had a voice in the television news item. This voice was heard collectively in the strike action as the dissenting women chanted during demonstrations, but they also spoke individually regarding personal circumstances, their poor pay and their decisions to take strike action.

Some of these councillors' ... phone bills and taxi cab fares, I would have to work for three years to earn what they can claim in expenses for their own phone calls and minicabs to get around. We're not nuns, you know, we didn't sign a pact to live in poverty.

Fran Spinks, Learning Support Service
Channel 4 News, 7pm, 17 July 2002

They expect you to do more work, less pay, how far do we go? I'm prepared to fight to the end myself, and I know my colleague here is as well.

Anon, Dinner Lady
BBC News, 10pm, 17 July 2002

Carers, cleansing workers, everybody. I've never seen morale so low.

Jackie Watson, Home Carer
BBC News, 10pm, 17 July 2002

It's not a living wage basically. I think if you're working you should have enough money to live on. I mean, speaking personally, I don't. I'm juggling basically. I could do with a second job, to keep things ticking over.

Margaret Bowditch, Kitchen Worker
ITN News, 10pm, 17 July 2002

Excerpt 4

***ITN News*, 10pm, 17 July 2002 (2 mins)**

News Presenter: Trevor MacDonald

(**SHOT**: Presenter, studio, graphic to right, **TEXT**: Council Strike) TM: Hundreds of thousands of council workers in England, Wales and Northern Ireland came out in strike for more pay today. It's the first big public service strike since the Winter of Discontent in 1979. Most schools stayed open but rubbish went uncollected and libraries and leisure centres were closed in some areas. Here's Lauren Taylor.

(**SHOT**: Demonstration, focus on male striker leading chant "What do we want? More pay. When do we want it? Now." **SHOT**: Low-angle young children next to adults playing instruments. **TEXT**: Lauren Taylor, Political Correspondant) LT: Out on the streets in force in the Rhondda Valley, thousands of council workers joining a nationwide protest against low pay. (x2 **SHOTS**: high angle down on demonstration) Unions estimate that more than a million people around the country took part, in what was the first large scale public service strike for more than 20 years. (**SHOT**: Close-up side view of demo, **SHOT**: Spectator viewpoint, closeup elderly female spectator to right) Among the marchers, four kitchen workers... (**SHOT**: Close-up woman, zoom out to 3 and then 4) ... from the daycare centre for the elderly in Pontypridd.

(**SHOT**: Close-up of woman in uniform working in kitchen placing food over a counter. Zoom out shot to other kitchen workers) LT: They all work between 35 and 40 hours a week serving up 100s of freshly cooked meals a day. (**SHOT**: Close-up of chips in fryer, zoom out low-angle shot to woman pouring chips into metal container. **SHOT**: Low-angle woman washing-up at sink). But not one of them earns more than £9000 per year.

(**SHOT**: Close-up woman, **TEXT**: Margaret Bowditch: Kitchen Worker) MB: It's not a living wage basically. I think if you're working you should have enough money to live on. I mean, speaking personally, I don't. I'm juggling basically. I could do with a second job, to keep things ticking over.

(**SHOT**: School classroom, pan round) LT: Schools and libraries in much of the north-west, including Manchester, were closed for the day as staff stood on picket lines. (**SHOT**: Picket line. **SHOT**: Low-angle to workers holding huge replica pennies, Big Ben and Westminster in background) Demonstrators also took their message to Westminster. (**SHOT**: Banner **TEXT**: "Teaching Assistants say 15p an hour is an insult, UNISON" zoom up to three demonstrators) They reject the 3 per cent pay rise they've been offered, insisting it'll just mean pennies on low salaries, and are calling for 6 per cent instead. (**SHOT**: Pan down line of demonstrators, lifting pennies into air in a Mexican wave)

contd over ...

(**SHOT**: Close-up male, **TEXT**: John Edmunds: GMB Union) JE: If this matter is not settled within the next week we will have a campaign of strikes which will last throughout the summer.

(**SHOT**: Billboard, with **TEXT** “Labour isn’t working”, zoom out to pickets) LT: And given the huge turnout for this strike, the prospect of a summer of disruption is not been taken lightly by employers. (**SHOT**: journalist stood in front of overflowing green rubbish bin. **TEXT**: Lauren Taylor, Southwark, London) Here, as in many places, the rubbish ... (**SHOT**: turns and points to rubbish behind) ... has been piling up all day. But the good news for the public is that services are expected to be back to normal tomorrow and the threats of further strikes by council workers appears to be receding with both unions and employers hinting that they are now prepared to talk about a longterm deal. Lauren Taylor, ITV News, Central London.’

Because issues surrounding pay were central to the strike, this formed a significant focus of the strike reportage exemplified by the above quotes. The annual salaries of some council workers were stated in the television reports and in some instances there were comparisons made with the salaries of senior council staff. For example, the *Channel 4 News* item (see transcript in Appendix D) noted that a council Chief Executive’s salary was £85,000, compared to ‘a bin man’ who would earn just over £10,000 ‘while a school cook earns just £9,500’. The *ITN News* item focused again on the low earning kitchen workers: ‘They all work 35 and 40 hours a week serving up hundreds of freshly cooked meals a day, but not one of them earns more than £9,000 per year’. Meanwhile, the *BBC News* item (see transcript in Appendix D) compared the council workers’ salaries of a dinner lady (£9,300), a school caretaker (£10,900) and a nursery nurse (£12,500) to that of the national average (which in 2002 was just over £23,000). This report also expressed the proposed pay increase in the context of a care worker’s personal wage stating that ‘She earns £5.40 an hour. Under the deal being offered she’ll be better off by 16 pence an hour’.

From these examples, it is clear that low status working women had a central role as news actors and speakers in all the television news item analysed. They figured in active working roles in the public sphere, and were called to speak about the pay issues at the core of the dispute. However, the centrality of gender to the strike, in the context of women workers being segregated historically into these low status low paid jobs, was not addressed. Moreover, some coverage, and the *BBC News* report most particularly, worked to justify the low pay of some working women, by stressing the fact that single parents could claim additional benefits to supplement their income:

But that isn't the whole story. In recent years, the government has given more support to working families on low income. Take a single parent working as a school caretaker with two children. She earns about £209 a week. But she's now entitled to at least an extra £96 a week in working families tax credit. And there are plans to boost the wages of single low paid workers. But is this the right way to raise the income of low paid staff?

This 'typical' scenario of a working woman's work and pay was problematic by its improbable notion of the low status jobs performed by women and men. The Social Affairs Editor suggested that a single mother with two children would work as a school caretaker, which was a dubious example, given that caretakers would in the main be presupposed to be male. Other worker representations in the *BBC News* report were similarly problematic as the item deployed a traditional masculine framework to portray the strike. Women did not feature to a high degree, and instead a group of bin workers were filmed and quoted, and referred to as the 'forgotten army' of low paid workers. Comparisons were made with the militant era of public sector strikes in the 1970s, and historical footage was utilised to illustrate the piles of rubbish that typified the industrial turmoil of this decade. This footage was then juxtaposed with the piles of rubbish as a consequence of the 2002 Council Workers' Strike. The intention of this contrasting footage was to illustrate the low pay awards for public sector workers since the 1970s, but also worked to sustain popular perceptions around industrial disputes, e.g. striking workers are predominantly male and engage in dirty, hard labour.

There were other representations of work and workers in the *BBC News* item where women figured and which gave a more rounded portrayal of the low paid public sector workforce. For example, a female care worker is shown assisting an elderly female, hanging washing onto a clothesline, and is directly quoted regarding the low morale amongst her fellow workers. So while the centrality of gender to the Council Workers' Strike and to low pay more generally was never directly addressed, it did manifest in the television news items analysed in different ways. Working women figured in the representative footage of workers in all the reports. They were labelled in relation to their work, most typically as 'dinner ladies', 'cooks', 'teaching assistants' and 'care workers'. They spoke directly about the strike, their low paid jobs and personal financial situations. Moreover, they were shown engaged in strike activity – marching, picketing and chanting. Thus a usually invisible and silent section of the workforce

was now both visible and vocal, and moreover, these low status working women were in a dissenting and protesting role at the fore of industrial conflict.

While the centrality of gender was not addressed directly by any of the television news reporters, this chapter will close by considering the *Channel 4 News* report where issues particular to women were brought directly to the fore in the studio debate. In the first exchange below, the trio (consisting of presenter Jon Snow, a Unison spokesperson and a local government representative) was discussing recruitment and retention problems in the public sector. Jon Snow refers to the low wages that many of the council employees receive (£4.80 per hour was just slightly above the minimum wage at that time) and the Unison spokesperson retorts that the majority of striking workers are low paid women workers:

Jon Snow: [Ian Swithenbank's] saying that retention of staff is not as big a problem as you make out, other than in London, but on the other hand, the actual wages that people take home are very very low, are they not £4.80 in some cases? An hour.

Heather Wakefield: Certainly. 277,000 of our members, mostly part-time women workers earn less than £5 an hour. These are women who are doing vital jobs contributing an enormous amount to the delivery of healthcare, social services and education, government priorities.

Heather Wakefield thus brought to the fore the fact that the low paid workers were predominantly women working part-time and segregated into particular areas of work. The local government representative later commented on these central concerns regarding pay and working conditions:

Ian Swithenbank: Well, when we talk about pay levels, some of our workers, like care workers, are on fairly modest salaries, but I would argue this, that terms and conditions and the pension is significantly better than the equivalent in the private sector. We are not the worse employers, we are significantly better than that.

Heather Wakefield: Certainly untrue. We know that local government workers on low pay are leaving council employment in droves to go and work in Tesco, in supermarkets, in call centres. They can get higher wages. They can get more family friendly hours of work and certainly less stress.

While Ian Swithenbank referred to the 'fairly modest salaries' of his workers, Heather Wakefield again brought to the fore the wider issues concerning this sector of female worker, most specifically their need for flexible 'family friendly' hours, thus bringing to light women's dominant role within the home and their need for work which takes

this into account. For this reason, as the Unison officer indicated, women were switching to work in supermarkets and call centres, where pay rates would probably not be any greater, but where hours might be more compliant to the particular needs of the female worker.

Chapter conclusion

This chapter has explored the news coverage of industrial conflict, examining how women featured in the reportage of the Council Workers' Strike in both the local and national press, and in television news coverage. Many similarities can be drawn with the conclusions from the minimum wage case study in Chapter Three. For instance, most notable was the dearth of women in press coverage, despite the fact that women were central to the strike action and that they made up the greater proportion of striking workers. However, in the main, representation of the workers, both male and female was limited, and they featured rarely in a direct context and/or as speakers in press reportage. Yet despite this lack of representation for all workers, the strike coverage did appear more masculine because of the news actors and speakers who predominantly figured. As with the minimum wage case study, speakers were chiefly from government, the unions and from business. And because of the reliance on senior sources, particularly within the national press, speakers were chiefly men. Women did feature in some coverage and it was at a local press level that their visibility better reflected their position in society and in the contemporary workforce. For instance, the reportage of local newspapers was more concerned with the microelements of the strike action and its effect on the community. Here, women featured in various roles from local councillors to politicians to union representatives, as members of the public and as low status low paid workers. These roles reflected to a better extent some women's progress and participation into areas of public life, beside the stagnation of other groups of women in low paid sectors of the workplace. This disparity of roles was less apparent in the portrayals of women workers on broadcast news coverage of the Council Workers' Strike. While both male and female workers figured in the television news narratives of industrial conflict, the sources from elite public life were, as with the national press, in the main male. However, low paid female workers were visible in the television news reports and they additionally spoke regarding their personal situations surrounding low status work and poor pay. Moreover, they figured in a dissenting role, although some coverage still rested on an outdated notion of

workplace conflict based on male workers engaged in dirty, heavy work. This conventional framework of industrial strike reportage meant that the broadcast news coverage of the Council Workers' Strike also maintained an overly masculine sense, and that the gender imperatives of low paid public sector work were never directly referred to or explained.

Chapter Six

None of their business ... Businesswomen in the media

Chapter introduction

So far this thesis has explored news portrayals of women from low socio-economic backgrounds determined by their employment in low status poorly paid work. This chapter will now move to the top end of the NS-SEC class scale and explore the representation of elite working women in news content, and more particularly consider the portrayal of elite businesswomen. In September 2003, research company Datamonitor announced that for the first time in history there were more women millionaires in Britain than men. They reported that economic factors, alongside wider social changes had created a new generation of women who became rich by running successful companies and becoming entrepreneurs.¹ Earlier that year, media analyst Louise Barton had won a pay discrimination claim against the City firm Investec and the hearing was reported widely across the news media.² Barton's was one of an increasingly long line of high profile cases that involved individual female City workers bringing sexual discrimination claims against ex-employers. So while the aforementioned report told a story of progress for women as part of the business elite, the high news currency of female employees challenging the patriarchal dominance of big business exposed a continual struggle for gender equality and credibility. This chapter will commence by considering more broadly the portrayal of businesswomen in the news media. It will discuss the hard news sub-genre of business news and the business news sections of newspapers, considering how businesswomen figure in these specialist news pages in comparison to their portrayal in core news items. The chapter will move to explore the press and broadcast news coverage of events involving individual high profile businesswomen: Clara Furse (CEO of the London Stock Exchange); Martha Lane Fox (e-entrepreneur and founder of lastminute.com); Michelle Mone (CEO of Ultimo lingerie company); and Jacqueline Gold (CEO of sex shop Ann Summers).

¹ www.datamonitor.com, date accessed 8 December 2003.

² Barton's case was brought against Investec after she discovered that a male colleague had received a £1million bonus compared to her £300,000 one-off figure (Treanor, J. 'Men's work, women's wage' *Guardian Business Interview*, 5 April 2003: 28).

As outlined in Chapter One of this thesis, from the 1980s, as women have made up a greater proportion of the workforce, they have become increasingly visible in the business sector of the workplace. Alongside this move, have come discussions and research about their role within business mainly from professional and business groups. This industry research can be contradictory regarding the contemporary status of women in the business sector. On the one hand, discussions may focus on why women continue to struggle in this area of work. For example, the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM) in 2003 reported that women totalled less than half the number of male entrepreneurs in the UK (Harding, 2003: 9),³ while The Industry Society⁴ stated that in 2004 women made up only 26 per cent of the self-employed business community.⁵ Alternatively, research has mapped their progress and advancement into different areas of the business world. For example, in 2002, research confirmed that more women were now involved in running Britain's top businesses than ever before, and that the number of female directorships in the FTSE 100 had finally exceeded 100 (Singh and Vinnicombe, 2002), while the aforementioned research company Datamonitor had outlined the growing affluence of some women due to their setting up and heading successful new companies⁶.

News accounts of such reports are commonplace, as gender issues, and the rarity of women in business, have a high news value in news content. As stated in Chapter Three, when discussing the rationale for this case study, it was argued that this was in part based on the perception that there are now more businesswomen in news content, who similarly to female politicians, have penetrated an elite male-dominated sector, and are therefore more visible in the public sphere. In Chapter Two, the feminist works exploring news coverage of elite women politicians were outlined (Ross, 1995; Ross and Sreberny-Mohammed, 1997; Stephenson *et al*, 2000; Pilcher, 1999; Whelehan, 2000; Ross, 2002). This case study will draw on those debates to explore the representation of elite businesswomen and like these studies, this chapter will

³ The GEM report states that 'Female entrepreneurship is less than half (43 per cent) of male entrepreneurship at 3.82 per cent for women compared to 8.91 per cent for men in the total population' (Harding, 2003: 9).

⁴ The Industry Society is now called The Work Foundation and states its key aim to 'work with employers to improve the productivity and quality of working life in the UK' (www.theworkfoundation.com, date accessed 13 January 2004).

⁵ Anon, 'Entrepreneurial women failed by 'sexism'', *BBC Business News Online*, (<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/business/1605029.stm>, date accessed 13 January 2004).

⁶ www.datamonitor.com, date accessed 8 December 2003.

focus to a greater extent on qualitative analysis of news events involving individual elite women. The decision to analyse events involving the four businesswomen in this case study was in the main because of their visibility and topicality during the course of this research thesis, and Chapter Three has outlined the rationale for the case and separate sample selections in some detail. However, before moving to the qualitative studies of this case, the chapter will first discuss business news as a sub-genre and how women can figure in these specialist sections of newspapers and broadcast news coverage.

Women and business news

Business news is a sub-genre of hard news content and a core element of daily news coverage (Caldus-Coulthard, 1995: 232). All newspapers have specialist sections or supplements dedicated to business affairs and the economy, and this sub-genre of news content will usually figure after the core news items. Television news similarly will separate its business news from the core news items by referring to share prices and interest rates, usually in the latter stages of a news bulletin. There may be specialist journalists for both newspapers and broadcast business news, such as economic or business correspondents. Business news is therefore a well-established sub-genre of hard news that has particular codes and conventions. These codes work to endorse the dominant capitalist ideology of western societies, and coverage of business might be formed around the micro reportage of individual companies or macro news about business placed into the broader context of the British (and increasingly the global) economy. Additionally, items might feature analysis of business trends and/or general business issues, FTSE share information and profiles and/or interviews of businesspeople. As outlined in Chapter Two, work in Feminist Media Studies has tended to neglect the exploration of women in hard news content, in part because of the historic exclusion of women from these areas of public life. This is particularly the case with the business news sub-genre, as the business sector has historically being predominantly male. And while there are more women now working within business, as the aforementioned research has outlined, few figure in senior roles at the elite companies that are most likely to figure on the national business news agenda.

The gender blindness, or maleness, of business news then derives chiefly from the historical perception of men and women's traditional roles within the elite business sector (men predominate at senior levels while women are excluded from these roles, or only have an exceptional presence). The news values that determine the inclusion or exclusion of business items pertain to the dominant capitalist ideologies centred on big business and the accumulation of wealth. Therefore the elite and successful companies that generate the biggest turnovers, not only within Britain, but also on a global scale, are more likely to figure in business coverage. And while more women have moved into elite business positions, for example, the aforementioned research stated that in 2002, female directors in FTSE companies had finally exceeded 100 (Singh and Vinnicombe, 2002), senior roles at this level are still in the main filled by men. There also remains a traditionalist presupposition that men will own and run big businesses, which explains the high news interest and reporting of appointments of elite businesswomen. However, as will be illustrated later in this chapter by exploring news coverage after the appointment of Clara Furse as CEO to the London Stock Exchange, news of this nature is less likely to be segregated within business sections, instead appearing amidst the core news items. The reasons for this shift from business news to core news will also be considered later.

When surveying business news sections, the masculinist notion of elite business manifests by the higher occurrence of male actors and speakers who figure in the context of their business roles and activities, although some business news, such as share and FTSE information, may not feature news actors. Profiles and interviews of successful businesspeople also figure, and tend to be less personified than interviews in the lifestyle supplements of newspapers, focusing instead on business accolades, actions and anecdotes. The frequency of male compared to female businesspeople that feature in the profiles of business news is additionally indicative of the patriarchal domination of the elite business sector. For example, the *Guardian's* Saturday back page business interview from January to June 2004 had 23 profiles of businessmen, compared to just three profiles of businesswomen, arguably reflecting more accurately their relative presence in the elite business sector.

By more detailed analysis of the 26 *Guardian* business interviews, certain points were noted about how businessmen and businesswomen feature in business news pages.

The business interview comprises a significant space in the *Guardian's* Saturday edition, taking up the whole back page of the weekend newspaper, with profiles varying from 1000 to 1500 words in length. A large photograph of the interviewee is situated below the interview headline and above the interview text. Additionally, there is a separate boxed section titled 'The CV', which details where and when the interviewee was born, their education, career background, family and leisure interests. All the interviews, regardless of whether the profile was of a male or female businessperson, were substantial in recounting the work of its subject, and the reporting of business activities was clearly at the fore. And while in the businesswomen profiles, there were some instances of sexist reportage, for example, Esther Dyson, internet guru, was referred to throughout the item by her first name only,⁷ which is an informal labelling strategy chiefly used to refer to women (Reah, 1998: 63), in the main, the language-use and format of each profile was the same regardless of gender. In the profile of Tamara Ingram, President of WPPs insight companies, she was named formally by her surname, and there was no referral to her family life detailed in 'The CV' ('Married with one son and one daughter').⁸ This contrasted with the interview of rail regulator, Tom Winsor, which began by recounting how his 'four-year-old daughter is beginning to show signs of following in her dad's footsteps' thus bringing to the fore the businessman's family life and role as a father.⁹ The analysis of these interviews therefore illustrated how businesswomen and men tend not to be treated very differently in the business news pages, as their role in the business world takes precedence over gender.

While businesswomen may not figure to a great extent in business news, arguably accurately reflecting their relative absence from the business world *per se*, non-working women do often figure visually in business news photographs. In 1999, a study of newspaper photographs by the Women in Journalism group revealed that while women are more likely to figure in news photos than men, their visual inclusion is often largely irrelevant to the context of the news story (Carter *et al*, 1999). Moreover, in news photographs, women may figure in certain roles pertaining mainly

⁷ Wray, R. 'Interview: Esther Dyson, internet guru: The clean-up queen', *Guardian*, 31 January 2004: 34.

⁸ Adams, R. 'Interview: Tamara Ingram, President of WPPs insight companies: Never mind the buzz mockers', *Guardian*, 24 January 2004: 28.

⁹ Clark, A. 'Interview: Tom Winsor, rail regulator: Timely departure' *Guardian*, 14 February 2004: 32.

to their sexuality and/or passivity, or their role as celebrities or consumers. In the business news pages, the strategy of using news photographs featuring women appears intensified arguably because of their relative exclusion from business news. For example, a centrally placed photograph of singer Celine Dion (see Plate D below) dominated the *Guardian's* business page on 29 March 2003, accompanying an item about job cuts at the global music companies EMI and Sony.¹⁰

**Plate D: Celine Dion news item
Guardian, 29 March 2003: 26**



Sony Music, recording home to Celine Dion, has been warned of extensive job cuts Photograph: Shaun Best/Reuters

EMI cuts save even more than forecast

John Cassy

The restructuring of EMI's recorded music arm is understood to have yielded higher than expected savings which will safeguard its profits and annual dividend despite dire conditions in the music market.

Alain Levy, the executive recruited in late 2001 to shake up the troubled division, is expected to tell investors attending the group's annual results meeting in May that he has beaten his target of taking

£76m of fixed costs out of the business.

A dividend of 8p per share will be paid, the 2004 payment could, however, be cut if the market deteriorates.

The rationalisation of the group – which has cost one-fifth of its 9,500 staff their jobs since he arrived – is set against a worldwide slump in global music sales due in part to internet piracy.

Sony Music, home to artists including Dido, Bruce Springsteen and Celine Dion, yesterday became the latest music

major to cut jobs, warning its 11,000 staff worldwide that 10% were likely to be made redundant.

"Sony is implementing a series of strategic, structural changes that are necessary to position the company for future growth," chief executive Andrew Lack told employees in a memo.

At EMI the extra savings are understood to have been driven by a move to lower the fixed salary bill by making the remuneration of label managers more performance

based and a tighter control of the money spent marketing new releases.

Analysts say Mr Levy has been forced to make deeper cuts because of the uncertainty surrounding CD sales and flat revenue in the music publishing division. Many investors expect EMI's recorded music sales to decline 10% this year and a further 5% in 2004.

If market conditions deteriorate, the 2004 dividend may be cut. Mr Levy is understood to be reviewing the group's £170m property portfolio.

¹⁰ Cassy, J. 'EMI cuts save even more than forecast', *Guardian*, 29 March 2003: 26.

Dion is irrelevant to the story, except in the context that she is an artist signed with Sony. The job cuts referred to in the news text were set to affect ordinary workers at the music companies, who were unlikely to figure in a news photograph because of their lack of visual value. However, the extent to which Dion's visual currency relates to her sex is unclear, as the image is non-sexual and unflattering (her tongue is poking from her mouth, while her chin is doubled, and she is boggle-eyed, looking away from the direct gaze of the camera). In this sense, Dion's status as a singer is paramount to her visual inclusion in this indirect context, and use of an uncomplimentary image is in keeping with the news media's often derogatory portrayal of celebrities.

From business news item to core news item

This chapter has so far noted features of the sub-genre of business news, and it has argued that businesswomen rarely figure in these specialist sections of the news because of the emphasis on the male-dominated elite business world. Yet businesswomen clearly figure in news content, as earlier stated, and this perception of high visibility was the key rationale for choosing to examine the coverage of this group of elite workers. Moreover, some businesswomen have a very high media profile, feature regularly in main news items and are household names, such as Anita Roddick, co-founder of The Body Shop; City woman, Nicola Horlick, and entrepreneur, Martha Lane Fox. Roddick and, to a lesser extent, Lane Fox epitomise the successful face of female entrepreneurialism, endorsing meritocratic and capitalist ideologies of success, gained through hard work and application. And while successful male entrepreneurs may similarly have high media profiles (the most extreme example being Richard Branson, head of the Virgin group) there is often disproportionate interest in their female counterparts because of the relative lack of women in business.

This intense interest in female businesswomen is additionally fuelled by the problematic correlation of 'typical' business attributes, such as assertiveness and aggression, with conventional codes of femininity, alongside judgements of how women should 'properly' behave. Nicola Horlick came to epitomise the high power City woman in the early 1990s when her employers Morgan Grenfell 'pushed her into

the limelight – recognising her publicity potential’.¹¹ This ‘publicity potential’ rested on Horlick’s ability to maintain a well-paid high-pressure City job while raising five children, and for the news media, Horlick exemplified how women could ‘have it all’ - a top career and a family.¹² However, when her employers later sacked her, a backlash by the news media did ensue, as was acknowledged by the following extract from a female *Guardian* columnist:

How many sacked male bankers get the press interest of a Nicola Horlick? What made her story interesting? ... the shock that a woman can carry such a high price-tag ... and more shocking even, dare to confront her bosses when they sack her? Was it the fact of the five children? ... Was the leukaemia of her daughter mentioned to arouse our sympathy, or to plant a nagging suspicion that, somehow, if she hadn’t been so high-powered ...?¹³

In this extract, columnist Susie Orbach questions the City woman’s high news value bringing to the fore likely factors for the media interest relating to Horlick’s working life. For example, she is in a position of power and receives a high salary in return (her ‘high price-tag’). She is assertive and argumentative (she dared to confront her bosses). Yet, her business position and actions are both at odds with the conventional codes of feminine behaviour relating to passivity and compliance, while the ultimate code of femininity is that Horlick is the mother of five children. However, by supposedly rejecting her femaleness through her working life, this factor is spuriously linked by the press to her competencies as a mother, and most particularly to the question of Horlick’s terminally ill daughter, and whether her high-powered working life was in some way a contributory factor to the girl’s illness (this coverage strikes parallels with the Yvonne Ridley coverage which will be explored in Chapter Seven). Of additional importance in this example was the fact that Horlick, urged to do so by her company, utilised the news media for publicity by highlighting her unique status as mother-of-five and high-powered businesswoman. She clearly succeeded to this end, as she continues to remain synonymous with the ‘having it all’ mantra, yet she also had to suffer the consequences of some sections of the media being highly critical of her dual-role.

¹¹ Financial Mail Women’s Forum, Nicola Horlick, *Financial Mail on Sunday*, June 2001 (www.fmwf.com, date accessed 23 November 2003).

¹² Horlick’s autobiography was titled *Can you have it all?* (1999) London: Macmillan.

¹³ Orbach, S. ‘Devil Women’, *Guardian Weekend*, 1 March 1997: 6.

Thus, when considering Nichola Horlick and her portrayal in the news media, a number of themes surface around the central issue of power, striking parallels with the women and politics studies outlined in Chapter Two, where considerations of the right and wrong behaviour for women come to the fore. These themes, among others, will be further explored by examining news events relating to four high profile elite businesswomen: Clara Furse, CEO of the London Stock Exchange; Martha Lane Fox, co-founder of e-company lastminute.com; Michelle Mone, head of lingerie company Ultimo, and Jacqueline Gold, CEO of sex shop Ann Summers, and the coverage of these four women reveals different points of intersection between gender, status and social class.

Clara Furse: a new CEO at the Stock Exchange

In 2001, the London Stock Exchange (LSE) appointed Clara Furse as its Chief Executive Officer. She was the LSE's first woman CEO, and consequently, her recruitment received blanket coverage across the national and local press news media with over 118 news items discussing her appointment following the week of her appointment.¹⁴ A *Daily Telegraph's* item the day after Furse's appointment appeared central to the front page with the headline: 'Stock Exchange chooses first woman chief in 200 years' (see Plate E below). Beside the item was a photograph of Furse with a caption calling her 'Boudicca'.¹⁵ The naming of Furse by the press, as an ancient warrior queen, was one labelling strategy used to describe the new CEO and worked to enhance the unusualness factor of Furse's appointment, giving her the status of an alpha-female alongside another strong woman in history. Moreover, this historical association also related to the notion of women engaged in conflict and battle, thus it was implied that Furse's appointment was the triumph of a battle. In this case the victory was not just over the men she had 'beaten' to get the top job, but also triumph over the institutionalised sexism of patriarchal society. The LSE is a central point of this society, representing one of the pinnacles of patriarchal wealth and power, thus news that a woman would head this institution was given great significance and Furse was described as a 'tough woman' in many news reports,

¹⁴ Sample week: 24 January 2001 to 30 January 2001 (www.lexis.nexis.co.uk, accessed 10 June 2004).

¹⁵ Simon English, 'Stock Exchange chooses first woman chief in 200 years', *Daily Telegraph*, 24 January 2001: 1.

usually indirectly via anonymous quotes from colleagues and City workers, such as in the following *Times* short home news item:

Clara Furse, 43, a former deputy chairman of Liffe, is the new chief executive of the London Stock Exchange. Colleagues describe her as hard-nosed and outspoken.¹⁶

Some items contrasted this toughness with Furse's feminine appearance: her favourite colour pink and her visits to the gym:

Furse, whose fondness for pastel pink and baby blue suits belies a steely character, was brought into Credit Lyonnais to overhaul its derivatives arm.¹⁷

The petite mother of three arrives at a critical time and insiders say the job will demand every ounce of her sharp intellect and famed toughness. Investment banker Mrs Furse [is] more likely to be seen in a private City gym than one of its bars...¹⁸

In her previous job as chief executive of Credit Lyonnais Rouse, the derivatives arm of the French bank, her sole concession to femininity was to install pink leather furniture in her office.¹⁹

Furse's age was also widely referred to, while the fact that she was married and a mother were regarded as central features used to label and name the new CEO. Headlines such as 'The £1million mother taking the city by storm'²⁰ were commonplace, and language in news reports referred to her as the '43-year old mother of three'; 'Mum Clara'; 'Canadian-born Mrs Furse, 43'.²¹ Furse's appointment exemplified how, by dint of their rarity within the elite business sector, in addition to the problematic correlation between femininity and power, similarly to female politicians (as outlined in Chapter Two), businesswomen and female City employees will be subjected to high media scrutiny. However, this intense interest will tend to rest less on their business affairs and job role, and more on their gender, their private lives and their physical appearance. Women in these roles will likely become household names and often the standard-bearers for their sex by exemplifying how far women have come. In this case, Furse was linked to other 'famous female City high

¹⁶ Anon, 'New SE Chief' *Times*, 24 January 2001: 21.

¹⁷ Sunderland, R. 'Clash of Titans ended in Furse leaving former job' *Daily Mail*, 26 January 2001: 83.

¹⁸ Brummer, A. 'First lady of the city: troubled Stock Exchange turns to mother of three as its chief' *The Daily Mail*, 24 January 2001: 27.

¹⁹ Sunderland, R. 'LSE boss takes on 'job for Lara Croft'' *Daily Mail*, 24 January 2001: 79.

²⁰ Bentley, S. 'The £1million mother taking the city by storm' *Daily Express*, 30 January 2001:3.

²¹ Anon, 'Queen of markets' 25 January 2001: 2; *Ibid*; King, I. 'Furse lady!' *Sun*, 24 January 2001: 32.

fliers',²² such as Marjorie Scardino, Baroness Hogg and the aforementioned 'original Superwoman' Nicola Horlick.²³

Plate E: Clara Furse news item
Daily Telegraph, 24 January 2001: 1



'Boudicca': Clara Furse is expected to be appointed Stock Exchange chief executive today

Stock Exchange chooses first woman chief in 200 years

Telegraph
P. 1 (2)

By SIMON ENGLISH

THE Stock Exchange is to break with a 200-year tradition by appointing its first female chief executive today.

Clara Furse, 45, will be given the task of revitalising a business that has faced constant City criticism in the past year.

The appointment has yet to be officially confirmed but City sources said yesterday that an announcement was expected at today's board meeting.

Mrs Furse is a surprise choice never mentioned by City gossips as a likely candidate. However, most observers drew encouragement from news of her succession.

Brian Winterlood, of Winterlood Securities, normally one of the Stock Exchange's most outspoken critics, was welcoming yesterday, describing Mrs Furse as "Boudicca the second".

"She is exactly what the doctor ordered. She is IT literate and media friendly which is very important," he said. "The boys have made a mess of it so why not let the girls have a go?"

The Stock Exchange has been without a chief executive since last September, when Gavin Casey, under intense pressure from City institutions, stepped down from his £624,000-a-year job.

Mrs Furse, married with three children, speaks several languages. She was born in Canada to Dutch parents

and studied at the London School of Economics before embarking on a City career.

Most recently she worked at Credit Lyonnais Rouse, a French-owned business based in London. She previously worked for the Swiss bank UBS and was on the board of Life, the London International Financial Futures and Options Exchange.

She arrives at the Exchange with a reputation as a cool but strong character.

One former colleague described her as "unperturbable. She is clever but not in a slick way and she is not shy about articulating problems. She is a strong character and certainly has a sharp tongue."

At Credit Lyonnais she was responsible for cutting staff numbers dramatically. One of her biggest tasks will be improving the Stock Exchange technology, which many regard as inadequate.

If she succeeds in what has been seen as one of the least enviable jobs in the City — she is the fourth chief executive in 10 years — she is certain to secure high financial rewards and honours.

She will take charge of what is an all-male board, though that could change after an expected shake-up today.

Stock Exchange shares have languished for months but rose strongly yesterday to £25 on hopes of a more modern approach.

City report: Page 33

²² Anon, 'Katherine the Great breaks City glass ceiling', *Birmingham Post*, 30 January 2001: 21.

²³ Bentley, S. 'The £1million mother taking the City by storm', *Daily Express*, 30 January 2001: 3.

So far, the sexualisation of businesswomen has only been an implicit theme of this chapter notable by the referral in news articles to women's age and appearance. However, the second news event relating to Furse occurred two years after her appointment and would illustrate more explicitly how the news media use a template of sexualised femininity to report on businesswomen and how this sexualisation can become linked to their business role and performance. In February 2003, sexist slurs regarding Furse were supposedly circulating at the LSE.²⁴ The rumours quickly became a news item and typical conventions of sexist reporting emerged, as fresh emphasis was placed on Furse's age, the fact that she was a mother, and her gender, which was regarded as significant because of her role as head of the LSE. However, because of the centrality of sex to the news 'event', Furse's looks were of even greater interest, with items referring to her 'amiable looking appearance'.²⁵ The following extracts from *Daily Express* and *Daily Mail* news items illustrate how Furse was labelled in various ways pertaining to her personal life ('mother of three'; 'Mrs Furse'), her age and her appearance ('Mrs Furse, 45'; 'Petite Clara Furse'), while her work was referred to in the context of her unusual position as the female head of the LSE ('the first woman chief executive'):

Mother of three Clara Furse says she is being undermined by a malicious whispering campaign... Mrs Furse, 45, the first woman chief executive in the Exchange's 242-year history, beat a host of male candidates for the prestigious post ... Despite her no nonsense image – short cropped hair, little make-up and business-like spectacles – Mrs Furse's arrival was not universally popular.²⁶

Her considerable intellect is masked by a prim exterior more associated with a geography mistress; her hair couldn't be more elderly in style – swept up severely in a flick of curls away from her face. Petite Clara Furse has pretty features and a lovely complexion, but she has managed to make herself appear almost totally devoid of sex appeal.²⁷

In both extracts, Furse's appearance was at the fore. Moreover, her working performance was linked to her appearance, which then in turn was linked to her sexuality (or in the news media's view, her lack of sexuality). The *Daily Express* item referred to her 'no nonsense image – short cropped hair, little make-up and business-like spectacles', yet stated that despite this 'image' (which presupposes that her

²⁴ The Furse rumours derived from an ex-City trader's website Angry Towers (www.angrytowers.com/rant, accessed 13 June 2004).

²⁵ McDonagh, M. 'When a woman is right to say nothing', *Evening Standard*, 19 February 2003: 13.

²⁶ Lee, A. 'City's top boss backed over 'sexist slurs' row', *Daily Express*, 18 February 2003: 8.

²⁷ Levy, G. 'Dirty Business' *Daily Mail*, 18 February 2003: 36-37.

appearance was purposely conceived) her appointment ‘was not universally popular’. Thus, there is a presupposition that Furse had deliberately adopted an image that was non-feminine, or as remarked by the *Daily Mail* ‘almost totally devoid of sex appeal’, to enhance her popularity at the LSE (although the *Express* report suggests that these measured efforts by Furse have not been entirely successful).

A number of assumptions may therefore be made about women generally, and elite businesswomen more particularly, through the analysis of language in these extracts. First and foremost, there is an assumption that all women should adhere to conventional modes of femininity through their appearance, which connects in the main to their sexuality and sexual appeal to men. Thus Furse’s supposed non-sexuality, which manifests most particularly in these news extracts through the discussion of her hairstyle (‘short cropped’; ‘swept up severely in a flick of curls away from the face’) and overall image (‘no nonsense’; ‘prim exterior’) is a cause for incredulity because of the rumours regarding the CEO’s sexual behaviour within the LSE. Moreover, there is an assumption that Furse has honed this self-image, thereby ridding herself of her femininity to increase her chances of success in a non-feminine, or traditionally masculine, role. The *Daily Mail* article exposes Furse’s ‘masking’ of her femininity by revealing that she is petite, and that she has ‘pretty features and a lovely complexion’. Her non-sexuality, or her lack of conventional sexuality, therefore is not conceived as inherent, it is instead calculated, because of the commonsensical notion that powerful women are often seen as exploiting their sexuality to acquire power. Meanwhile, Furse’s professional role is less of an emphasis, and is linked loosely to her appearance.

Coverage of the sexist slurs incident at the LSE was extensive with 65 items appearing across the local, national and Scottish national press as the story lingered on the news agenda for over two weeks.²⁸ Aside the news reports, there was discussion amongst female columnists questioning the compatibility of women to the City work environment with its ‘macho attitudes and casual discrimination’.²⁹ Towards the end of the sample fortnight, Furse commented on the episode directly in an after-dinner

²⁸ Local items (18), national items (40) Scottish national items (7). The sample of Furse coverage was from 17 February 2003 to 4 March 2003 (www.lexis.nexis.com accessed 13 June 2004).

²⁹ Pyke, N. ‘City chiefs fight sexist slurs’, *Guardian*, 17 February 2003: 15.

speech for Investment Professionals. Furse's direct voice had so far been quiet, but here she criticised particular sectors of the media for their superficial coverage of City news, and their focus on 'the colour of my suits and the cut of my hair'.³⁰ The *Daily Mirror's* 'Sorted and the City' column written by three male journalists responded with the following backlash item:

Sorted is shocked to hear Clara Furse, boss of the London Stock Exchange, slating City coverage for being too trivial. When the press isn't reporting job cuts, she fumes, it's all about "the colour of my suits and the cut of my hair". Inspired by Clara's call to arms, we've decided to launch the very serious Robin Saunders Fan Club. Looking a decade younger than her 40 years, Robin is the stunning blonde who's known in the City as the "Buyout Babe". Oh, and she's dealt with £15billion of transactions at West LB Panmure bank. Trust us, Clara, there's nothing trivial about Sorted.³¹

The journalists purposely adhered to the charge of trivialising their City coverage by referring to another high-profile businesswoman Robin Saunders³² and discussing her explicitly in terms of her sexual attractiveness. Saunders has a 'stunning' appearance. She is blonde. Moreover, she looks much younger than she is, thus reinforcing connections between sexual attractiveness and youth. The item then latterly acknowledged as a purposeful afterthought that Saunders is a successful businesswoman who deals with multi-million business transactions. Thus the item ironically adhered to superficiality, while adopting an overt sexist tone and mirroring the backlash style of contemporary lad magazines such as *loaded* and *FHM*.

E-Babes in the news and the Martha Lane Fox phenomenon

A row of TV satellite trucks and a gaggle of reporters were waiting in Park Street in London's West End. They were there to cover the stock market debut of a company that had never made a profit... Martha Lane Fox remembers her instant reaction to this welcoming party... 'Bloody hell, why didn't I wash my hair?'

(Cellan-Jones, 2003: 1)

From 1999 to 2000, the number of e-firms in Britain proliferated at the height of the dotcom boom. The impact of this new sector on the business world was predicted to be as radically affecting as the industrial revolution³³ and certainly the wider business

³⁰ Treanor, J. 'Furse hits back at 'frivolous' media', *Guardian*, 27 February 2003: 26.

³¹ Penman, A., Greenwood, M. and Dennis, S. 'Sorted and the City: seriously obsessed', *Mirror*, 4 March 2003: 41.

³² Saunders's high profile has derived both from her work and her private life. Media scrutiny peaked in 2003 after an alleged affair with celebrity chef Marco Pierre White.

³³ 'Easy Money' *Cutting Edge*, Channel 4, 12 December 2000.

community did go into a state of temporary upheaval, as new e-firms edged traditional companies out of the FTSE 100 (Cellan-Jones, 2003). The news media went into a similar frenzy, and for a short time, the business sections of newspapers included sections on e-news and e-finance, underlining the agenda-setting news currency of the dot-com phenomenon. One explanation for this excessive coverage was the social background of the e-firm proprietors. John Cassidy in his study exploring the dot-com phenomenon in America (2002), noted a key difference with the e-influx in Britain:

In Britain, the Internet start-up phenomenon was largely restricted to a small group of young, highly educated professionals, who lived and worked in London, or so it appeared.

(Cassidy, 2002: x).³⁴

He referred to three of the more high-profile dot-com set-ups: Lastminute.com (headed by Brent Hoberman and Martha Lane Fox); Oxygen.com (headed by PR executive Matthew Freud) and Clickmango.com (headed by Toby Rowland, son of Roland 'Tiny' Rowland, multi-millionaire and ex-owner of the *Observer*). This mixture of youth and wealth, usually accompanied by well-bred good looks, certainly livened up the business pages of newspapers. As Cassidy suggests in the above quote, the media were excited by the background of the e-firm entrepreneurs who appeared to emerge from a limited social and geographical sector of the UK. Additionally, the supposedly high number of women involved in the new set-ups was fuelling excitement and it was widely assumed that women were prominent as e-entrepreneurs in this new business sector. For example, a *Sunday Telegraph Magazine* article in March 2000, stated that 30 per cent of new websites registered each month were set up by women.³⁵ The new e-sector was seen as young, flexible, accessible and cooperative with new business structures and new ways of working regarded as being particularly liberating for women, thus e-business was described as 'characteristically female'.³⁶ Alongside these claims were figures stating that women were the fastest growing group of web-users, thus their proliferation as e-entrepreneurs seemed to make perfect sense.³⁷

³⁴ Cassidy compares this to the US, where while the e-firm entrepreneurs were young and educated, they had a wider geographical and social spread (Cassidy, 2002: x).

³⁵ Williams, S. 'Babes on the Web: The women leading the dot.com revolution', *Telegraph Magazine*, 18 March 2000: 38-43.

³⁶ Germaine Greer described the e-sector as being particularly suited to the needs of working women. (*Ibid*).

³⁷ In 1995, women made up 10 per cent of the Internet community. This figure rose to 40 per cent in 2000 (*Ibid*).

The news media's interest in female dot.com proprietors revealed a great deal about the background of the elite entrepreneurial classes in Britain. While the focus on women was clearly misplaced (a report in 2001 revealing that the average dot.com entrepreneur was in fact a middle-aged man between 39 and 45 years old and that women only made up eight per cent of the new proprietors³⁸), their presence in the sector had a dual-impact on the press. Firstly, it placed some women directly onto the business news agenda within the specialist sections of the press. Secondly, the phenomenon of the dot.com era and the presupposed influx of woman into this business sector, shifted business from the business pages into the core news sections. Features appeared in news magazines, with profiles exposing both the private and the public side of these female entrepreneurs. The media revealed the founders' past lives, in terms of their employment history – a usual reporting strategy when assessing the heads of new companies - except the unusual feature in this case was the gender of the proprietors. The work histories of individual women had never featured to such a high degree. Furthermore, by additionally emphasising personal details such as family background and education, it emerged that the news media was profiling an elite, albeit the female elite. High profile female e-entrepreneurs included Julie Mayer (firsttuesday.com); ex-Swedish model Kajsa Leander (boo.com with Ernst Malmsten); Nancy Cruickshank (handbag.com); ex-*Tatler* editor Jane Procter (people-news.com); ex-*Tatler* deputy editor Tina Gaudoin (iVillage UK); fashion journalists Susannah Constantine and Trinny Woodall (Ready2shop); ex-business journalist Helga St Blaize (ace-quote.com); and ex-investment banker Serena Doshi (Liv4Now.com). The women were largely in their early 30s, London-based and university educated. Many had prior careers in the media industries or the City, thus were well-placed in determining fresh ideas which might work as e-firms, as well as knowing how and where to raise capital.³⁹

Probably the most high-profile businesswoman of the dot-com era was Martha Lane Fox who launched Lastminute.com in 1998 with Brent Hoberman (see Plate F below). Lane Fox was to become the media's favourite face of the e-bubble, given that she

³⁸ Anon, 'Myth of dot.com entrepreneurs', *Metro*, 16 January 2001.

³⁹ Julie Meyer's company First Tuesday managed to combine these features by offering a networking service on the first Tuesday of every month where entrepreneurs could meet venture capitalists.

was young (she was 25-years-old at the time of the company's launch), blonde, attractive, and of course, female.

Plate F: Brent Hoberman and Martha Lane Fox, Lastminute.com



Her profile denoted a privileged background, she was the daughter of an Oxford University professor, while her mother was the granddaughter of the 6th Marquess of Anglesey. In the words of many press reports, Lane Fox was 'posh' and her class background was emphasised alongside her appearance, age and wealth:

Smart, posh, attractive and female, she's every marketing man's dream.⁴⁰

She's blonde, she's posh, she's very, very young and she's also fantastically rich.⁴¹

You don't have to have a posh accent, rich parents and friends in high places, but it helps⁴².

There was less emphasis on the class background of her business partner Hoberman, although his background was similarly privileged (the pair both attended Oxford University and Hoberman was an Old Etonian). In fact, despite Hoberman's ubiquity in the media, he was never installed into the public psyche to the extent of Lane Fox, as she was purposely placed to the forefront of publicity. Lane Fox thus became synonymous with the brand of lastminute.com 'glamorous, sexy, spontaneous, successful, fun-loving'.⁴³ Journalists discussed the clever marketing of the company

⁴⁰ Anon, 'Outlook: lastminute.com' *Independent*, 12 Feb 2000: 21

⁴¹ Purcell, S. 'She blagged her way to £40 million: Profile Martha Lane Fox' *Independent*, 13 Feb 2000: 23

⁴² Marks, S. 'You don't have to have a posh accent, rich parents and friends in high places, but it helps' *Evening Standard*, 15 March 2000: 18.

⁴³ McGregor, L. 'Sitting pretty' *Guardian*, 16 March 2000: 7.

by its use of Lane Fox as brand icon, while her visual currency for the news media was also discussed endlessly.

This strategy of placing the female at the fore of media publicity was similarly the case for other high profile dot.com start-ups where there was a male/female business partnership, such as First Tuesday and boo.com. The female partner would become the face of the company, thus contributing to a misleading perception that women were setting up many of the new e-firms. This was despite the fact that in news discussions of Martha Lane Fox's ubiquitous visual presence, there was widespread acknowledgement and acceptance that her looks gave her greater news value:

Her love affair with the camera, which flatters her peachy-cheeked English-rose looks, has secured her both the gratitude of newspaper editors and regular front-page slots normally reserved for film stars or the Royal Family.⁴⁴

Lane Fox is netty totty, her role not a million miles from that of the models draped over car bonnets. But the big difference is that she owns the product she is promoting: she is in control. In this way, the Lane Fox phenomenon is indeed a victory for women. She has, in a cool, calculated way, observed the sexist ways of the world and made them work for her.⁴⁵

Here, just for a change, are some gratuitous pictures of dot.com doyenne Martha Lane Fox.⁴⁶

Lane Fox's sexuality was alluded to by the referral to 'her love affair with the camera', and her sexual attractiveness, particularly to male journalists, was emphasised. Yet Lane Fox's status as the female face of lastminute.com, and subsequently of the dot.com era, was largely deemed to be of her own making alone and she was widely perceived to be an excellent self-publicist with the ability to advance the profile of her business by utilising her gender and sexuality and 'working' the system. The *Guardian* extract above referred to the 'cool, calculated way' Lane Fox had used the media for her own ends and pejoratively portrayed her as calculated and measured. Meanwhile, the news values of the media, which advocate the visual currency of women, and moreover, particular types of women who are 'young,

⁴⁴ Purnell, S. *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ McGregor, L. *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ Moyes, J. 'Here, just for a change, are some gratuitous pictures of dot.com doyenne Martha Lane Fox' *Independent*, 25 March 2000: 3.

blonde, beautiful, posh',⁴⁷ were regarded as commonsensical, thus the pictorial value of women was sustained.

This excessive coverage, while arguably useful in terms of publicity could however be problematic. The aforementioned charge of Lane Fox utilising the news media for her own means was a common charge, which implied negatively that she was a calculated businesswoman, as opposed to, for example, being strategic in her business activities. Meanwhile, when the decision to push Lane Fox to the fore of publicity was remarked as being a strategy by Lane Fox *and* her business partner Hoberman, it was regarded as 'another of the smart moves of this extremely smart pair'.⁴⁸ Additionally, there were charges that business reporting changed its tone to accommodate her:

... when the coverage was in the investment pages, it was perhaps a little less penetrating than it might have been. There is no doubt that middle-aged City editors, accustomed to lunching with grey corporate barons at the Savoy Grill, found it a refreshing change to be spending time with someone rather younger and a lot more fun.

(Cellan-Jones, 2003: 52)

Lane Fox was not only a young and attractive interviewee for the media professionals to enjoy, she was also articulate in her promotion of Lastminute, meaning that broadcasters were keen to use her, and to use her again, confident that she could deliver fast and effective sound-bites (Cellan-Jones, 2003: 53). However, after the initial intense curiosity surrounding Lane Fox, and the blanket coverage of Lastminute.com had relented, a backlash in reporting occurred. The company was under scrutiny from the City, from investors, from competitors and from the media, particularly around the time of Lastminute's flotation on the LSE in March 2000. There was pressure on the company to perform, as it had become the yardstick of the dot.com era and was certainly Britain's most high-profile e-firm.⁴⁹ Lane Fox's ubiquity meant that she had become more of a celebrity than a businesswoman, which led to much less flattering and complimentary media coverage, from the press most particularly. In November 2003, the company finally announced its first real profit.⁵⁰

⁴⁷ McGregor, L. *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ McGregor, L. *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ At its peak, Lastminute.com had three Public Relations companies dealing with its publicity (Cellan-Jones, 2003: 60).

⁵⁰ The first full year profit for Lastminute.com was £200,000.

Shortly after this announcement and only days after being presented with the Business Person of the Year prize at the London Business Awards, Lane Fox announced she was standing down from Lastminute.com. What followed was typical of the press media's interest in Lane Fox. There was blanket coverage of her resignation in the days that followed, with 45 items appearing across the local and national press on 21 November 2003, the day after the announcement of her departure.⁵¹ Headlines included: 'Dot.com spin-up princess pulls out'; 'Dot.com queen makes a dash'; 'I never had time to pay bills or find a boyfriend'; 'The dot.com boom's pin-up is logging off'.⁵² Profiles of her working and private life proliferated, and the explicit agenda of male journalists and picture editors was again brought to the fore, as they were seen to be mourning the loss of Lane Fox in the context of her pictorial currency with further discussion of her attractiveness, sexuality and status as the 'pin-up' of the time:

One former workmate fancied the former managing director of Lastminute.com something chronic. Out to dinner ... this rottweiler hack had all the aggression of a nodding dog. He was not alone. One lesson of this story is that male hacks are suckers for a posh twentysomething.⁵³

The industry has lost its cheerleader, the woman who made technology sexy and convinced us that the Internet wasn't just for geeks eating cold pizza. The picture editors on the City pages hate it. Investors hate it.⁵⁴

Lane Fox's business activities and work at the successful dotcom were less of an emphasis, as the news media returned to explicitly acknowledge her visual worth as her overriding value. She was labelled and sexualised by referrals such as 'pin-up', 'cheerleader' and 'poster-girl', while her sexual allure to men was regarded as the key reason to mourn her departure from lastminute.com.

⁵¹ www.lexis-nexis.com, accessed 8 December 2003.

⁵² *Observer Business Pages*, 23 November 2003: 10; *Daily Express*, 21 November 2003: 21; *Evening Standard*, 21 November 2003: 25; *Sunday Telegraph*, 23 November 2003, 12.

⁵³ Mathiason, N. 'Dot.com spin-up princess pulls out', *Observer Business Pages*, 23 November 2003: 10.

⁵⁴ Arlidge, J. 'Martha Lane Fox: Lady.com', *Observer Profile*, 23 November 2003: 27.

Representing the nouveau riche

This chapter has so far explored portrayals of working women in the elite business sectors of the City and e-commerce. Themes of reportage have emerged regarding the portrayal of women in these sub-sectors, such as their sexualisation and pictorial currency. Emphasis on socio-economic background was also noted, particularly in the case of e-firms, whereby e-entrepreneurs were seen to derive from an elite social sector, a factor that was exposed by the personified coverage of the female businesswomen who were at the forefront of publicity. The chapter will now move to explore the retail sector of business, and will explore the themes already identified by focusing on portrayals of two businesswomen involved in the lingerie and sex product retail world: Michelle Mone, CEO of the MJM International underwear company, and Jacqueline Gold, CEO of sex shop chain, Ann Summers. Mone and Gold are similarly situated in Group One of the NS-SEC class scale, as they both head successful global companies. However, two key factors differentiate these two businesswomen from Furse and Lane Fox. Firstly, while Mone and Gold's class is determined by their status as successful businesswomen for the purposes of this thesis and they are therefore situated in the same social group as Furse and Lane Fox, their backgrounds do differ substantially in terms of their family upbringings and relative lack of education.⁵⁵ Secondly, Mone and Gold are businesswomen in the lingerie retail sector of business, while Gold additionally sells sex products. To what extent, and how, these factors affected the portrayals of Mone and Gold will be considerations when exploring the news events relating to these two businesswomen.

Michelle Mone: girl from the tenements

In April 2003, the *Independent on Sunday* profiled twenty UK elite businesswomen in an article headlined 'The Glass Ceiling: The 20 most powerful women in Britain under the age of 35'.⁵⁶ The report briefly referred to the education and career backgrounds of each woman. Most were university educated and the list included City brokers, an MP, an economist, an oil baroness and a barrister. Nine entrepreneurs were on the list, including Sahar Hashami, Maria Grachvogel and Stella McCartney.

⁵⁵ Michelle Mone left school at 15 with no qualifications and grew up in the east end of Glasgow (www.michellemone.com, date accessed 9 May 2006). Jacqueline Gold left school at 16 with O'levels (Gold, 1995: 18) and while her family have a business pedigree, Gold Group International owned by her father publishes soft porn and sporting magazines (www.ggi.co.uk, date accessed 9 May 2006).

⁵⁶ Goodchild, S. and Johnson, A. 'The Glass Ceiling: the 20 most powerful women in Britain under the age of 35' *Independent on Sunday*, 27 April 2003: 3.

Michelle Mone, the Ultimo ‘bra mogul’ and head of MJM International also was listed, yet her profile contrasted by revealing a very different social background to her contemporaries:

Michelle Mone ... survived a poverty-stricken childhood to design the Ultimo bra and found a company with a £6million turnover ... [she] left school at 15 to look after her father when he woke up one day to find himself paralysed. Mone grew up in the “tough east end” of Glasgow, and her home didn’t have a bath until she was 12.⁵⁷

So while Mone’s was grouped with these ‘powerful women’, she was also portrayed as distinctive by the rags-to-riches tale recounting a hard upbringing in the east end of Glasgow whereby she was forced to leave school at a young age to care for her father. It was noted in the previous section of this chapter, how the ‘posh’ background of Martha Lane Fox was a central emphasis in news reports of the e-entrepreneur. In a similar sense, Michelle Mone’s tough upbringing and success against-the-odds was a common point of reference in news coverage of MJM International’s CEO. This will be exemplified further by exploring the coverage of two news event involving Mone, during 2003. Firstly, in February 2003, Mone was allegedly the victim of a carjacking incident outside her Govan company premises in Glasgow. Secondly, the following month, there was news that a former employee, Helen Graham (ex-head of design at MJM International) was taking Mone to an industrial tribunal for breach of contract and unreasonable behaviour.

Both of these events generated coverage and were repeatedly referred to in subsequent reportage of Mone during 2003. From Jan 2003 to Jan 2004, 263 newspaper articles were located across the local, national and Scottish press that mentioned Michelle Mone (see Chapter Three for sample details and selection rationale).⁵⁸ Press reportage was particularly high in the Scottish Media (145 items) given that Mone is from Glasgow. Articles appeared in the Scottish national tabloid, *The Daily Record* (68 items), the Scottish broadsheets: *Scotsman* and *Herald* (52 items), as well as in various regional publications (25 items). In contrast, in the Scottish editions of the London-based newspapers, reportage of Mone was again chiefly in the tabloid press (69 items) and mid-market publications (26 items). Regional items figured less (16 items), while in the London-based qualities there were only 7 items.

⁵⁷ Goodchild, S. and Johnson, A. *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ www.lexis.nexis.com, accessed 14 January 2004.

In the first incident in February 2003, Mone was attacked in a carjacking incident and the samples for her new underwear collection were stolen. Initial reports of the mugging recounted how Mone was kicked and punched and how ‘she fought back, scratching her attacker, and DNA samples were later taken from her nails by detectives’.⁵⁹ The tabloid press devised headlines playing on the phonological similarity of words, and associating their headings with the Ultimo lingerie products, such as ‘Cups and Robbers’ and ‘Undie Attack’.⁶⁰ Typical naming devices were utilised to refer to Mone, such as her age and the fact that she was a mother-of-three. Moreover, given that the majority of coverage was in the tabloid and mid-market press, Mone was frequently referred to informally by her first name ‘Michelle’. The Ultimo bra and the MJM International company were clearly the central points of interest in most news reports. There were photographs of Penny Lancaster as the Ultimo model (plus referral to the fact that she was Rod Stewart’s girlfriend) and Mone was referred to as the ‘blonde company boss’ with a ‘confident sassy approach’ owner of the ‘saucy Ultimo lingerie range’.⁶¹

Three days after the first press coverage of the attack on Mone, reports began to emerge, which suggested that she had staged the incident to publicise her new collection, and that she had called the Press Association in Glasgow to inform them of the incident for press coverage before she gave a full interview to the police. Mone was pejoratively referred to as a self-publicist who liked to ‘attract drama and attention’ and who was prone to ‘name dropping’ and ‘exaggeration’.⁶² There was speculation that her company was in financial difficulty and that she needed the publicity for her new collection. A sympathetic interview appeared in the *Daily Express* where Mone admitted courting the media in the early days of MJM International to promote her products. Mone’s social background was implicit, as the report recounted her life before the Ultimo bra business:

⁵⁹ Robertson, A. ‘Lingerie tycoon’s knife ordeal in carjacking terror’ *Glasgow Evening Times*, 19 February 2003: 5.

⁶⁰ Carson, A. ‘Cups and Robbers’ *Sun*, 20 February 2003: no page no; Barry, M. ‘Undie Attack’ *Mirror*, 20 February 2003: 7.

⁶¹ Barry, M. ‘Lingerie tycoon’s rise and fall’ *Mirror*, 20 February 2003: 7; *Ibid*; Willey, J. and Volkert, E. ‘‘Treasure chest’ blow; armed carjacker batters bra boss’ *Daily Star*, 20 February 2003: 22.

⁶² Brocklebank, J. ‘Boom and bust’ *Daily Mail*, 22 February 2003: 10-11.

Profiles of Michelle Mone often paint a romantic picture of a junior whizzkid from the tenements who has soared effortlessly through the business world to found her empire. Michelle, now 31, did spend the first 12 years of her life in a flat with no bathroom in the rough end of Glasgow.⁶³

Mone spoke directly throughout the interview about the attack, the subsequent media backlash against her, her business and her family, and while this interview gave Mone a chance to express her side of the story, her direct speech also figured in regular news items reporting on the allegations of a staged attack:

I can't believe people are saying this about me ... I think I'm emotional at the moment ...⁶⁴

I think it's sick. It's just cruel – utterly disgusting. I went through a terrible, terrible attack.⁶⁵

The direct speech of Mone in these examples appeared aside indirect police quotes regarding the incident. The 'nomination' of Mone's voice through the use of direct speech worked to allow for a radical, and not necessarily truthful, version of events, a strategy used often to represent the actions and speech of actors lower down in the hierarchy of news speakers (Fiske, 1987: 290). Moreover, Mone's direct speech is emotive and irrational, failing to give her claims any credibility.

One month later, an ex-employee at MJM International, bra-designer, Helen Graham, began proceedings against Mone at an industrial tribunal. Coverage of this incident was less extensive than the carjacking news event (only 19 items appeared within the main sample across the local, national and Scottish press) and the case never made it to court. Nevertheless, a cluster of articles emphasised Graham's claims that her ex-boss was 'erratic', 'irrational' and 'unprofessional'. The news media was warming up to report on the workplace conflict between two women with the added ingredient of female underwear products to give the story a titillating element. The previous charges against Mone, as being a 'self-publicist' were echoed and a *Sunday Herald* columnist referred to the publicity potential of the case for Mone's company:

⁶³ Anna Pukas interview, 'Lingerie tycoon talks for the first time', *Daily Express*, 12 March 2003: 27.

⁶⁴ Brocklebank, *op cit*.

⁶⁵ Walker, A. 'Disgusting, cruel, low ... the lies that I staged attack: bra boss blasts gossip' *Daily Record*, 24 February 2003: 15.

Ms Mone... insisted she would not back down, no doubt she was unfazed by the prospect of a fresh bout of publicity - adverse or otherwise - given the opportunity it would afford newspapers to show pictures of Penny Lancaster in her smalls.⁶⁶

Beside the cynical claims of some news reports were offensive headlines referring to Mone and her behaviour as an employer, including: 'Michelle Moaner'; 'Big-mouthed egomaniac bra boss forced me out of job'.⁶⁷ The press also again made use of Mone's underwear products to form connotative and sexually visual headlines, such as 'Bust-up!'; 'Bra boss dirty laundry'; 'Bust-up at top lingerie firm'.⁶⁸

While sexuality certainly emerged as a dominant theme, as with the carjacking incident, Mone's social background was again also brought to the fore, but in this instance her 'rags-to-riches' tale and 'impoverished background' were contrasted to the background of her ex-employee Helen Graham. For example, a *Glasgow Herald* article profiled the two working women, emphasising their different educational backgrounds (Graham went to Nottingham Trent University where she gained a degree in fashion; Mone left school at 15 years old with no qualifications). Articles quoted Graham, as charging Mone with being 'foul-mouthed', in addition to her 'irrational demands and erratic behaviour'. There was referral to a BBC Two documentary *Trouble at the Top*, in which MJM International had featured, and Mone was filmed threatening to punch models that refused to wear thongs at a company launch. Her lack of professionalism was also a charge by the ex-employee, and the bra-designer had revealed that Mone did not actually design the Ultimo underwear.⁶⁹ Thus the clash between the company-chief and her ex-designer became a clash not only between two women, but also between a working class boss and her middle class employee. Graham was seen as educated, professional and controlled in the execution of her work. Mone in comparison was represented (indirectly by the news media, via the charges of her ex-employee) as feisty and irrational, prone to aggressive and violent outbursts. Moreover, she was insecure because of her lack of skill in design, skills that her more educated middle class designer possessed.

⁶⁶ Taylor, A. 'She hath betrayed me', *Sunday Herald*, 23 March 2003: 16.

⁶⁷ Both articles in the *Daily Record*, 18 March 2003 (no page number stated).

⁶⁸ Wolstencroft, S. *Sun*, 18 March 2003: no p.no given; Davidson, F. *Express*, 22 March 2003: 26; Anon, *Nottingham Evening Post*, 20 March 2003: 16.

⁶⁹ Anon, 'Designer sues Mone over her 'irrational demands': lingerie firm faces tribunal' *Herald*, 18 March 2003: 7.

*Jacqueline Gold: 'Throbcentre versus Jobcentre'*⁷⁰

This chapter will finally move to explore the press and broadcast news coverage of a news event involving businesswoman, Jacqueline Gold, CEO of Ann Summers. In June 2003, Gold was in court as part of an on-going court case between her company and the Government regarding their right to place recruitment advertisements in Job Centres. Gold's case against Job Centres Plus⁷¹ challenged their right to define Ann Summers as part of the sex industry, which thus disallowed the company to place free job adverts within Job Centres for fear of causing offence to job-seekers. Gold maintained that Ann Summers was not a sex shop and that she was losing out on a core of potential recruits, while spending considerable revenue on recruitment advertising. She argued that shops such as Selfridges and Liberty also sold sex toys, and were in that sense no different to the Ann Summers shops. Gold eventually won the legal battle as the ban was ruled unlawful by the High Court.

News of the legal action received coverage in both the press and on broadcast news. The story had a high news value, first and foremost because of the potential for titillating news coverage and sexual visual imagery (drawing similarities with the previously explored Michelle Mone incidents) because of the sex products and lingerie sold by Ann Summers. The news event also had unusualness value, as it involved a businesswoman challenging the Government, thus the core news value of conflict was also at the fore, with a powerful women central to the clash. 63 items occurred across the press from the initial High Court ruling mid-June 2003 to the decision by the Government not to appeal against the verdict one month later in mid-July 2003 (see Chapter Three for more detail on sample dates and selection).⁷² Coverage spanned tabloids (11 items); mid-market newspapers (1 item); broadsheets (21 items) and regional titles (23 items). In comparison to the news reportage of Michelle Mone, which as noted, was predominantly in the tabloid press, national coverage of the Ann Summers court case was higher in the broadsheets.

The more suggestive and sexually explicit headlines inevitably featured in the tabloid coverage of the Ann Summers court ruling. There was the use of puns and word-

⁷⁰ Larcombe, D. *Sun*, 17 May 2003: no page no. stated.

⁷¹ Jobs Centres Plus is part of the Department for Work and Pensions.

⁷² www.lexis.nexis.com, accessed 1 July 2004.

phonology in headings such as, ‘Throbcentre vs Jobcentre’; ‘Sin when you’re winning’; ‘It’s lust the job’.⁷³ Direct quotes figured from Gold, who was quoted in a *Sun* item as saying: ‘I’m thrilled. It is a fantastic victory for us and common sense’.⁷⁴ The *Sun* report was also interesting by its language-use in naming news actors. Gold was labelled as ‘Jubilant Jackie, 42, CEO of £110million-a-year empire’. Thus in this one referral, Gold was described by her age and occupation, plus she was referred to in a heightened informal manner, as the report also abbreviated her first name from Jacqueline to Jackie, to make use of alliteration and achieve a punchy descriptor of her level of delight and jubilancy having won the court case. Meanwhile, the male High Court judge who overturned the ruling was referred to as ‘Justice Newman father-of-three’. This rare instance of describing a male news actor in relation to his status as a father worked to enhance the victory, which the *Sun*’s ideologies towards sex (through the newspaper’s own titillating content) endorsed. Thus by emphasising that the decision by the High Court judge was also a decision by a father, the report illustrated how even an elite male with children, who would, in the *Sun*’s view, be presupposed to have the most conservative sexual morals, could see this was an ‘illogical ban’.

Television news coverage

The sample of television coverage reporting the Ann Summers legal action was examined on the day of the High Court ruling on 18 June 2003 only (see Chapter Three for discussion about the broadcast news samples). Coverage of the news events was extensive and items were included on six bulletins on different channels across the day, with *BBC News*, *Channel 4 News* and *Channel 5 News* all carrying reports on their lunchtime and early evening programmes.⁷⁵ Items were of varying lengths, from brief 20-second headline slots by the newsreaders on *Channel 5 News*, to lengthier items by reporters on the BBC bulletins and Channel 4’s lunchtime slot, which included public comments and an interview with Gold. The story was not included on any *ITN News* bulletins. Instead, this news programme placed more emphasis on the rape charge against television presenter John Leslie that had occurred on the same day and which led all the ITN bulletins.

⁷³ Larcombe, D. *op cit*; Syson, N. ‘Sin when you’re winning’ *Sun*, 19 June 2003: no page no stated. Anon, ‘It’s lust the job’ *Daily Star*, 19 June 2003: 2.

⁷⁴ Syson, N. *Ibid*.

⁷⁵ The television news items were: *BBC One News* at 1pm and 6pm; *Channel 4 News* at 12noon and 7pm; *Channel 5 News* at 12noon and 5.30pm. Thanks to Jacque Reilly at Glasgow University Media Group for access to this coverage and GUMG archives.

The *BBC News* featured two near identical reports of the Ann Summers news event, one on the 1pm lunchtime bulletin and one on the 6pm teatime news. Each report was introduced by the studio newsreader, Anna Ford on the lunchtime bulletin (see Excerpt 5 below) and George Alagiah at teatime.⁷⁶ The styles of delivery by the male and female newsreaders differed. Anna Ford introduced the item in a formal and conventional news anchor style:

The retail chain Ann Summers won its court battle to be allowed to advertise vacancies in Government Job Centres. The company which specialises in lingerie and sex toys had been banned from advertising. The High Court judge described the ban as unlawful, unfair and illogical.

(Newsreader: Anna Ford,
BBC News, 1pm, 18 June 2003)

In contrast, George Alagiah on the teatime bulletin introduced the item as a moral dilemma, which he posed informally to the audience by direct address, asking the viewer ‘if *you* were unemployed ... what would *you* do?’ [author italics]:

Now if you were unemployed and the Job Centre suggested you work at a branch of Ann Summers selling lingerie and sex toys, what would you do? Well, today the company won a court battle ending a Government ban on them advertising for staff in Job Centres. Jenny Scott has the story.

(Newsreader: George Alagiah,
BBC News, 6pm, 18 June 2003)

The language device of direct address to the viewer was similarly deployed in the news story, as each news bulletin moved to external reports by the same female journalist, Jenny Scott. The status of the report as a business news item was implicated by the journalist’s designation as ‘Economic Correspondent’ that appeared in text on the screen at the start of each item. However, neither report explored the economic issues relating to the story, instead sexual morality was the central theme and both BBC items posed the same moral dilemma to its audience: ‘would you work in a shop that sells sex toys?’:

So ... you want to work in a shop? Maybe selling mobiles, or TVs ... or exotic lingerie?

(Economic Correspondent: Jenny Scott,
BBC News, 1pm, 18 June 2003)

Ann Summers is looking for staff, but would you work in a shop that sells sex toys?

(Economic Correspondent: Jenny Scott,
BBC News, 6pm, 18 June 2003)

⁷⁶ The BBC News 6pm bulletin made use of the same footage, but was re-ordered. Therefore the full extract is not included here and the relevant differences relating to the newsreader and visual imagery are outlined in this section.

Excerpt 5

BBC1@ 1pm, 18 June 2003 (1 min, 48 sec)

Newsreader: Anna Ford

[**Newsreader:** AF, half-body shot, **Text** (bottom left): BBC News, Ann Summers]

AF: The retail chain Ann Summers has won its court battle to be allowed to advertise vacancies in Government Job Centres. The company which specialises in lingerie and sex toys had been banned from advertising. The High Court judge described the ban as unlawful, unfair and illogical.

[**Shot:** High Street shops, **Text** (bottom left): Jenny Scott, Economic Correspondent]

JS: So you want to work in a shop. Maybe selling mobiles, or TV's, or exotic lingerie [**Shot:** Ann Summers shop, zoom in to poster in window of black leather high-heeled boot – tagline 'Careers with a real kick']. Ann Summers won the right today to advertise for staff in Job Centres [**Shot:** High-angle shop exterior]

[**Shot:** Jenny Scott in shop walking amongst Ann Summers products, picks up bottle on display stand] Job Centres had argued that it was unfair to make people come here for interview, after all some of them might be a little bit embarrassed about the sort of products they had to sell. [**Shot:** Close-up bottle 'Passion fruit massage oil'; **Shot:** JS] But Ann Summers says theirs is a respectable business, just like any other on the High Street.

[**Shot:** Two women exits building, walk towards camera smiling] And the judge at the High Court seemed to agree to the relief of the company's Chief Executive. [**Shot:** Cameraman and reporters] The Job Centre ban was costing the company a quarter of a million pounds a year in advertisements.

[**Shotsx2:** woman talking to reporters, Text: Jacqueline Gold, Chief Executive, Ann Summers] This is 2003 and I think the Government has failed to see that, that [sic] Ann Summers is a popular business. We've got 82 stores. We're unable to recruit retail staff. We can't even recruit a tea-lady or secretary. [**Shot:** JG walking to car surrounded by reporters]

JS: The Government is still studying the judgement, although Ann Summers says its ads will be going into Job Centres tomorrow. [**Shotx2:** exterior of Job Centre] Certainly most people we spoke to in Leeds today seemed to have no qualms at all about applying.

[**Shot:** Anon woman] I think it'd be more embarrassing being a customer. Coming in and buying the stuff, really, than just selling it out, you're just doing your job.

[**Shot:** Anon male] I think it'd be something good. I mean it's work at the end of the day. It doesn't matter what you sell, if it's lingerie, suspenders, and ... well

[**Shot:** Ann Summers shop window display, underwear on headless mannequins draped in red tubed lighting] JS: And it's that 'well' that might still be a problem for some. Jenny Scott, BBC News.

To emphasise the moral dilemma further, these questions were posed to the viewer in conjunction with visual imagery relating to Ann Summers. For example, a shot zooms in to a large advertising poster in the Ann Summers window with the image of a black leather high-heeled boot, under which, text states 'Careers with a real kick'. The BBC reporter is filmed walking through an Ann Summers shop, while recounting the Job Centre's claim that people 'might be a little bit embarrassed about the sort of products they had to sell'. The next shot is a close-up of a bottle with the text on the label reading 'Passion fruit massage oil'. The teatime bulletin makes similar use of the Ann Summers products and marketing iconography to provide visual imagery throughout the report. The black leather boot, the bottle of massage oil, plus a shot of a shop window display featuring two female mannequins dressed in lingerie and draped in red tube lighting. The visual imagery of both *BBC News* report thus relies to a high degree on sexual iconography, and the connotative messages tied to this imagery, to support the moral dilemma central to the news items.

Female news actors figure to a high degree in the BBC reports, and as well as featuring in a variety of roles, women also speak in various contexts about the news event. For example, in the lunchtime news bulletin, a female newsreader introduces the item before the programme moves to the external report by a female journalist. Two female members of the public also feature, along with one male, who all speak directly and give their personal response to the moral dilemma posed regarding working in a sex shop:

I think it'd be more embarrassing being a customer. Coming in and buying the stuff, really, than just selling it out, you're just doing your job.

Anon, female
BBC News, 1pm, 18 June 2003

I think I'd be a bit wary of it, coz, I mean, you get people standing outside looking at you.

Anon female
BBC News, 1pm, 18 June 2003

Yeah, I would take the interview. It'd be interesting. It'd be something different. I don't think I'd get the job.

Anon male
BBC News, 1pm, 18 June 2003

The final female news actors to feature in both bulletins were the representatives of the Ann Summers business, including its CEO, Jacqueline Gold. Up to this point, the company had only been portrayed as the faceless victor of the legal battle and quoted indirectly, through terms such as ‘Ann Summers has won its court battle’; ‘Ann Summer says its ads will be going into Job Centres tomorrow’; ‘Ann Summers says theirs is a respectable business, just like any other on the High Street’. Now the human face of the company was shown, as a long distance shot filmed two women exiting a building and walking directly towards the camera. Text appeared at the base of the screen to identify one of the women as Jacqueline Gold, Chief Executive, Ann Summers. Gold began to speak while the other woman remains anonymous and silent by her side:

This is 2003 and I think the Government has failed to see that, that [sic] Ann Summers is a popular business. We’ve got 82 stores. We’re unable to recruit retail staff. We can’t even recruit a tea-lady or secretary.

CEO, Ann Summers, Jacqueline Gold
BBC News, 1pm, 18 June 2003

Gold’s direct quote brings to the fore a number of central themes, both explicit and implicit, relevant for the exploration of working women in the news media. Women are visible at every level of the news items, as media workers, members of the public, businesswomen, and low status working women (by the referral in Gold’s quote to low status women’s work: ‘tea-lady’ and ‘secretary’). Gold notes that ‘this is 2003’ explicitly referring to her company’s modernist viewpoint regarding sexual morality, as being reflective of changes in wider society. This changing world is also apparent by Gold’s status as an elite businesswoman heading a successful global company and taking on the Government, and by the high presence of female media employees reporting on the news story. These working women thus figure in traditionally non feminine working roles in the public sphere and support the modernist ethos of the Ann Summers company’s arguments.

However, women’s role in the private sphere in the context of their sexuality is the central and more overt theme of the news narrative. This is illustrated in a number of ways. Firstly, the sexual iconography that forms the visual imagery for both reports all relates to women’s sexuality: the female mannequins wearing female underwear, the women’s black leather boot, and the red tube lighting indicative of female prostitution. Secondly, as noted in Chapter One, public discourse around sexual morality has

historically tended to focus on the sexual behaviour of women, and the moral dilemma posed by the BBC reporter, alongside the sexual iconography featuring women, maintains this correlation. The final point relates to Ann Summers, which represents the direct threat to these traditional sexual moralities because of the company's liberal attitude towards women and women's sexual behaviour. Ann Summers shops were born out of Ann Summers parties – the female-only private parties held in domestic homes where women could purchase lingerie and sex products. The move to the High Street in 1972 brought women's sexuality into the public sphere and the Ann Summers customer base is approximately 70 per cent female, a rarity in an industry where products are traditionally aimed at men.⁷⁷ Moreover, class figures as the customer-base is regarded to be predominantly lower class status women (Gold, 1995: 58-59; 113). So when the Government attempted to marginalize and categorise Ann Summers, the suppression of women's sexuality, or a particular type of women's sexuality (low class low status women) was implicit, and this theme was sustained by the moral dilemma frame and use of sexual iconography in the *BBC News* reports.

Chapter conclusion

This chapter has explored how businesswomen are portrayed in the press and broadcast news, and has illustrated that while their visibility in coverage might be presupposed to reflect the increasing entry of women into the elite business sector, news conventions and values endure to belie this factor. The reportage of individual businesswomen is often excessive, relative to their occupancy of executive positions, and these women may become high profile individuals with their business activities and personal lives highly scrutinised. Moreover, sexual scandals, violent behaviour, and titillating products also determine whether a businesswoman will appear in the news. However, these reportage frameworks for portraying women in business are in the main situated away from the business news, and the business pages have their own sets of codes and conventions, whereby business roles and activities are at the fore and gender is not a significant consideration. For the women in elite business posts, and thus noting similarities with the news coverage of women politicians, the media's attitude to their positions of power can be secondary with journalists often explicitly acknowledging the values, most particularly visual currency, that affect their decision

⁷⁷ 'Naughty ... but nice!' *GNER Livewire*, Feb/March 2001.

to include these female news actors. However, whichever way a businesswoman receives excessive news coverage, she is still prone to be accused of 'working the system' and manipulating the media for her own means, as illustrated in the cases of Martha Lane Fox and Michelle Mone who were both labelled pejoratively as self-publicists. The personification strategies of coverage also might reveal more about the social background of elite businesswomen, and class factors, such as family upbringing and education, were seen to affect the reportage of gender, and manifested in themes around sex and sexuality. This was most apparent in the e-commerce coverage, whereby 'sexiness' was equated (in the case of Lane Fox) with class, power, wealth and celebrity. In contrast, Mone and Gold, while in the same elite business sector as Lane Fox, had different social backgrounds, and their direct association with sexual products undermined their primary status as entrepreneurs.

Chapter Seven

Frontline, Headline?¹ Women workers at war

Chapter introduction

This chapter explores news representations of women workers involved in war. This case study differs from the previous cases by exploring multiple units of analysis through the analysis of two distinct groups of working women in wartime news coverage. At times of conflict, the news media conforms to conventional wartime reporting where women tend to have a passive and symbolic role away from the frontline of action. However, such conventional wartime coverage has become problematised by the increased visibility of military women active in war and of female news correspondents reporting on war. Women's employment within the military is now regarded as normalised and necessary, and the chapter will begin by briefly outlining how the Ministry of Defence (MOD) portray women's contemporary role in the armed forces through their recruitment campaigns. The analysis of this 'official' discourse will provide a comparison to the exploration of women in news discourses of war, which will form the core of this chapter. By exploring wartime news coverage, the chapter will consider three broad themes of women and conflict. Moreover, it will consider how these different aspects may interlink, and to what extent traditional conventions of wartime reporting might endure. Firstly, it will explore how military women are represented in news reportage by analysing the news coverage of political debates regarding UK army women fighting on the frontline. Secondly, the chapter will consider how women figure in the news media's coverage of conflict by exploring coverage of the Afghanistan conflict in 2001. Thirdly and finally, drawing on earlier debates outlined in Chapter Two, it will examine how female war news correspondents are portrayed, focusing particularly on the capture of *Sunday Express* journalist Yvonne Ridley in 2001.

¹ Sections of this chapter have also appeared in the journal article: Magor, M. (2002) 'News Terrorism: Misogyny Exposed and the Easy Journalism of Conflict' *Feminist Media Studies* Vol. 2, No.1: 141-144.

Recruitment of women in the Armed Forces and Security Services

This chapter will begin by mapping some of the issues regarding the contemporary recruitment of women in the military. It will also examine the MOD's recruitment discourse to determine the 'official' perception of working women in the various sections of the armed forces, and to provide a comparison for the later analysis of representations in news discourse. In May 2002, the security services division, MI5, announced that Dame Stella Rimmington, its chief since 1996, was stepping down from her post. She was to be succeeded by another woman head, Eliza Manningham-Buller.² In addition to being the only intelligence service to have a woman at its head, nearly half of the MI5's 1,900 staff in this year was female.³ In recent years, women have also become increasingly visible as members of the British Armed Forces. In 2003, women made up 8 per cent of the Army's personnel.⁴ The number of new women recruits in that same year made up 13 per cent of the Army's total - a number that had been steadily continuing to rise since 1998 when the number of posts open to females was increased by the MOD.⁵

This expansion was not limited to the Army. In 2002, the MOD stated that 96 per cent of positions in the Royal Air Force were open to women, compared to 73 per cent of Royal Navy posts and 70 per cent in the Army.⁶ While more opportunities are now open to women wanting to enter the military, the rise in women recruits has also been connected to the MOD actively courting groups previously excluded from the Armed Forces. This has been the case with the Army most particularly - with shortfalls of more than 8000 soldiers, this has led to women and ethnic minorities being more actively sought to make up the dwindling numbers.⁷ These factors have been increasingly reflected in the recruitment material and advertisements used by the MOD, where women and those from ethnic groups now figure to a greater extent. Additionally, the MOD have adopted more structured Equal Opportunities policies, in

² The other intelligence services, MI6 and GCHQ - Government Communications Headquarters, have only had men in senior positions. Oldham, J. 'MI5 set to appoint second woman chief', *Scotsman*, 30 April 2002: 8.

³ Norton-Taylor, R. (2002) 'Head of MI5 is second woman to hold post', *Guardian*, 18 May 2002: 2.

⁴ 'Equal opportunities in the Armed Forces' www.mod.gov.uk, date accessed 20 March 2002.

⁵ *Ibid.* www.mod.gov.uk, dated accessed 20 March 2002.

⁶ Ministry of Defence, *Strategic Defence Review*, www.mod.gov.uk (date accessed 20 March 2002).

⁷ Branigan, T. 'Sisters in Arms' *Guardian*, G2, 12 February 2001: 8. An *Economist* article in 2003 stated that fewer than 2 per cent of the British Army are members of ethnic minority groups (Anon, 'Armed Forces: Soldier White', *Economist*, 27 March 2003).

a bid to stress their commitment to hire away from their core white masculine base (Woodward and Winter, 2003b: 5-7).

Despite the MOD's new policies to recruit more women, the actualities of their incorporation have unsurprisingly proved problematic. This is particularly the case in the Army given its 'historically macho and masculine culture'.⁸ Women remain in the lower ranks in all areas of the Armed Forces, as well as being vastly outnumbered by male personnel in war academies and staff colleges (van Crevald, 2001: 11). Debates re-ignite periodically regarding whether women soldiers should be permitted to join frontline infantry regiments, as well as whether they should serve in units such as the Special Air Service (SAS). In April 2002, an official report based on the physical evaluation of women claimed that they are less fit and more prone to injury than the 'average serviceman', thus seemingly concluding the debate and disallowing them to fight in frontline units. This restriction prevented women from entering the SAS, the Special Boat Service (SBS), the Parachute Regiment, the Marines, armoured regiments and submarines.⁹ This chapter will later explore how the television and press news media shaped this debate.

In terms of social class, social stratification is an important factor in the recruitment of military personnel. The hierarchical nature of the Armed Forces means social determinants, such as class background and education, usually affect entry rank. For instance, the Army has traditionally recruited lower class males, the core of its intake deriving from 'northern industrial towns ... [and] the lower echelons of society'¹⁰ and the Armed Forces have traditionally been: 'a refuge for unsuccessful men who were unable or unwilling to make a decent living' (van Crevald, 2001: 43). In 2002, the Channel 4 documentary *Wasted* further emphasised the reliance of the military (and of the Army most particularly) on a core of school-leavers from the north east of England. These young men, whose employment prospects had been displaced by pit closures and the general shutting down of heavy industries, were making up 23 per cent of the Army's annual intake at that time.¹¹ In contrast, women who enter the

⁸ Anon, 'Macho culture holds back women recruits', *BBC News online*, 5 February 2003 (accessed 5 May 2003).

⁹ Bowcott, O. and Norton-Taylor, R. 'Frontline ban on women' *Guardian* 1 April 2002: 7.

¹⁰ Anon, 'Armed Forces: Soldier White', *Economist*, 27 March 2003.

¹¹ *Wasted: After The Fall*, Channel 4, 28 April 2002.

military, while substantively lower in numbers, do tend to be better educated than their male peers (this is similarly the case for recruits from ethnic groups¹²). This point becomes clearer when examining the MOD's recruitment footage where the social features of target recruits become more visible.

The MOD recruitment campaigns and representation

From the 1990s, women have had a more central role in the 'official' discourse of the MOD, paralleling their access to more military posts, as this chapter has outlined above. Class has also figured in these portrayals, although in more subtle ways, as will be illustrated by examining a selection of the MOD campaigns in more detail. From 2001 to 2003, the Navy ran a recruitment advertisement on television and in cinema outlets. The advert is fast and action-filled, comprising 34 cuts in a 40-second timeframe. Dramatic music adds to the energy of the visual narrative, and a deep female voiceover provides accompanying dialogue:

They say in the big wide world, it's dog eat dog, every man for himself (..) but not here (..) out here (..) everything (..) depends on everyone (..) and the man at the bottom of the ladder is just as important as the man at the top. But isn't it true you'll always just be a cog in a machine? Who wants to be a cog in a machine? Depends on the machine.

The opening shots give an essential macro sense of place with a ship sailing through an ocean. Footage moves inside the ship to show the micro activities taking place within by the Navy personnel. The first scene focuses on the ship's mess with footage of men and women sitting at tables eating food and engaged in conversations. This relative inactivity is disrupted when a white male runs along the ship's gangway shouting and alerting sailors to an incident. The following shots become shorter, building tension and emphasising the urgency of the crew's mobilisation. Various job roles and skills are subsequently presented to the potential recruit in the audience, as the operation proceeds with input from controllers, medical staff, a helicopter crew, and a deck team. All roles are represented as vital and equal, correlating with the voiceover emphasising the team nature of working in the Navy. In the closing shots, sailors surround two civilian females, drenched and dazed, and illustrative of the human face of a naval sea rescue.

¹² Anon, 'Armed Forces: Soldier White', *op cit*.

Women's high visibility in this Navy advertisement reflects the MOD's positive attitude towards equal opportunities. Moreover, women are represented in a number of ways. They are seen first and foremost as workers, as active and important to the overall performance of the ship's duties. Additionally, they are portrayed as equal to their male colleagues, as each represented role is accorded equal value by the female voiceover. Additionally the rescue operation involves two women, thus female characters figure at all stages of the narrative in both active and passive roles. The inclusion of passive females and the retention of codes of femininity, are crucial to what essentially remains a masculine narrative. This masculine emphasis is vital to ensure that potential male recruits in the audience, the essential core base of the military's intake, are similarly attracted to the prospect of a Navy career and are not turned off by its feminisation. Here, the language of the female voice-over, transcribed above, becomes significant. The female voice is deep, so not 'typically' feminine, and the repeated use of the term 'man' indicates that despite inviting women into its ranks, the Navy essentially remains a man's world. While women are present and the ship is engaged in a rescue mission (thus stressing a role for the Navy beyond war) the potential of war, an essentially male endeavour, remains explicit. Features of the advert, such as the warship speeding through the ocean, and the dramatic and triumphant warlike anthem, work to ensure that this crucial masculine element remains intact.

This portrayal of contradictory 'masculine' and 'feminine' roles is reflected to a greater degree in the Army's recruitment material. The Army is arguably the more overtly masculine section of the military and inclusion for women on an equal basis to men has proved more problematic. This is reflected in the 'official' discourse of the MOD's recruitment commercials for this section of the military.¹³ Women may figure as potential recruits, competent and skilled, yet they are sexualised to some extent, so as to appear as the suggestion of an achievable sexual goal to attract the crucial male base. For example, this is the dominant theme of Army advert *Floorboards*, where a female character is shown to have the necessary skills for a job in the Army as a Signals Operator, but is perceived ultimately as the sexual reward for a heterosexual male. Social class also figures more explicitly in the Army recruitment adverts, most

¹³ Army recruitment advertisements received courtesy of Jackie Huxley and Eileen Newton, Central Office of Information, April 2002.

likely because the Army take many of its recruits from deprived geographical areas in the UK, as outlined earlier in this chapter.

Class was a central theme of the Army advert *Crossbar*, which focuses on a gang of five teenagers: four males; one female. The youths are shown in a deprived inner-city location, where high-rise buildings and litter strewn across the ground determines the sense of place. A white male walks through a dark ally holding a metal bar and hitting it repeatedly into his other hand. A second black male leaps out from a skip carrying a piece of rolled-up flex. The next shot is of a blonde white female exiting a lift and carrying a long piece of wood. She is wearing a grey vest with a visible black bra (her attire is noted here because unlike the attire of the male characters, it forms a crucial part of the visual narrative). Finally, a third white male jumps over a wall holding a bicycle wheel and the group walk through a dark underpass, carrying their various objects, to emerge onto a football pitch, where a final white male is standing leaning against a broken goalpost. The group next unsuccessfully attempt to mend the broken crossbar using the attained items. The young woman finally looks up at the post, slowly smiling, before the film cuts to the next shot of the group playing football with the goalpost perfectly straight. The female is in goal and the camera pans upwards from a final head and shoulders shot of the girl to the crossbar now strapped firmly together with her black bra. A male voiceover provides dialogue to close the narrative:

The Army has over 1,400 career paths open to school, college and university leavers. Construction Technician is just one of them. If you've got what it takes, the Army's recruiting now.

Crossbar thus offers a complex narrative, pertaining to both gender and class. The initial scene is potentially threatening and there is an underlying suggestion of menace and violence. The advert is clearly aimed at a lower and younger socio-economic grouping of potential recruits, assuming that they may live in deprived areas, with no job or further education prospects, and therefore joining the Army may be their best option. *Crossbar* rests on a number of ideologies regarding lower socio-economic groups, although some of these ideas the commercial does challenge and subvert. The rundown sense of place is an important initial indicator of the low social status of its actors. Additionally, there is a correlation between youth, class and violence, an ideology that is later subverted, as the group are proactive and innovative in

attempting to mend their broken goalpost. The correlation of class and gender in *Crossbar* is more complex. The presence of the young girl, while disrupting the notion of the group's violent intent (and additionally attracting potential female recruits), also provides the sexual titillation essential for the heterosexual masculine base. The visible black bra that is removed so readily (albeit for a practical purpose) serves to draw the male back to the forefront of the narrative and to the potential of sexual liaison (with this type of girl) if they too join the Army. So from analysing the 'official' discourse of MOD campaigns, this section has illustrate how these adverts cleverly manages to portray contradictory elements of the modern day Armed Forces, particularly in terms of the intersection of class and gender. The chapter will now move to consider how these themes manifest in the news portrayals of women at war.

News media coverage of working women in the Armed Forces

This case study has so far explored the intersection of class and gender in 'official' military discourse. The chapter will now move to examine media representations of working women in the military by exploring how servicewomen are represented in news coverage. Three news events will be examined, occurring over a three-month period from December 2000 to February 2001, all of which involved military women. Firstly, in December 2000 it emerged that the MOD, following its most recent field tests, was now seriously considering allowing women to fight in frontline combat units. Following this, in January 2001, William Hague (then leader of the Conservative Party) caused confusion regarding his party's policy on women fighting in the Armed Forces. Finally, in February 2001 the disappearance of a female soldier, Lance Bombardier Heidi Cochrane, received blanket news coverage in the British press, ending a period of unusually high visibility and media scrutiny for military women. The rationale for the selection of news events is outlined in greater detail in Chapter Three.

The debate

On the 24 December 2000, an article headlined on the *Observer's* front page declared that following the outcome of recent field trials involving women soldiers, the MOD was soon to announce their decision allowing women to fight alongside men in frontline combat units. Debates surrounding this contentious topic had emerged and re-emerged in recent years following the 1998 move by the Armed Forces to open up

more military posts to women. The elite viewpoints of senior military personnel, politicians and journalists would be given ample space in the pages of the British press to analyse these arguments regarding this group of working women. Commentary might agree or contest (usually the latter) this unprecedented move towards gender equality in the military workforce.

In addition to the newspaper coverage, on Christmas Eve 2000, three television news programmes headlined with the item that women might soon be allowed to fight on the frontline.¹⁴ With shorter broadcast news programmes, due to seasonal scheduling, plus the fact that Christmas Eve 2000 fell on a Sunday, substantial space was afforded to items based not so much on an actual news event, but rather on the speculative analysis of an unconfirmed development. BBC One's teatime news bulletin led with a report over two minutes in length [see Excerpt 6 below] that sat oddly with the following items on the day's news agenda: the Queen Mother making her first public appearance since a recent fall; news of last minute Christmas shopping and seasonal transport delays; a bus crash in South Africa; shootings in the Middle East, and parliamentary elections in Serbia.

Excerpt 6

BBC News, 4.55pm, 24 December 2000 (2 mins 15 secs)

Newsreader: Fiona Bruce

Opening Headline

(**SHOT:** newsreader, studio) FB: Army move towards allowing women to fight in the frontline of combat. (**SHOT:** Female Army unit marching and chanting) Field trials have already been carried out with mixed sex platoons. (**SHOT:** Pan round to close-up of one woman soldier)

(**SHOT:** newsreader head/shoulders, graphic woman soldier to left) FB: Good afternoon. The Army has moved a step further to allowing women to fight in frontline combat roles. The Ministry of Defence has confirmed that trials have been held to test how effectively women fight alongside men and it has been reported that women matched men in most areas. The Defence Secretary Geoff Hoon will consider a report on the trials in the New Year. (**SHOT:** Platoon of women soldiers, side view, pan round to close-up)

contd over ...

¹⁴ *BBC One News*, 4.55pm; *ITN News* 5.45pm; *ITN News*, 10.30pm. News footage received courtesy of Jackie Reilly at Glasgow University Media Group, February 2004.

(**TEXT:** David Loyn, Defence Correspondent, **SHOT:** Woman soldier putting camouflage paint onto second woman soldier) DL: Almost three-quarters of jobs in the Army are open to women. But although they can put on the war paint (**SHOT:** Close-up to woman soldier with green paint on face) they can't go to war, not in combat roles anyway. (**SHOT:** women soldiers taking part in exercise carrying heavy containers) To join up they have to pass the same stringent fitness tests as men (**SHOT:** close-up to KG signs on side of containers) but then they're not allowed into the same jobs in frontline units. (**x3 SHOTS:** Various men and women soldiers doing sit-ups) They're restricted to artillery and logistic units and kept out of combat.

(**x2 SHOTS:** Women in operations room of ship) Women do serve in almost every job in the Navy except for submarines. (**SHOT:** Close-up and zoom-out to woman in seat of fighter jet) and they go to war as pilots in the Air Force. Britain's top soldier, the Chief of the Defence Task, Sir Charles Guthrie (**x2 SHOTS:** Uniformed man in blue cap walking past Army helicopters and trucks, shaking hands with male soldiers) signalled his opposition towards extending the role of women in his recent controversial speech when he said that disabled people should be kept out.

(**SHOT:** Mast of warship, US flag) But there is gender equality in the American Armed Forces. (**x2 SHOTS:** damaged warship) Two out of the 17 sailors killed in a recent terrorist attack on an American warship were women and that just wasn't an issue.

(**x2 SHOTS:** Women soldiers crawling under barbed wire) America and other NATO countries already sent women into frontline units and now Britain has been testing mixed Army units and all-women units (**x3 SHOTS:** Women soldiers in various combat activities) in mock combat against all-male soldiers. The Ministry of Defence won't confirm a newspaper report that women pass the test.

(**SHOT:** Man reading newspaper on red couch) The Conservatives suspect the Army is being pushed into making the change (**x2 SHOTS:** Reverse close-up shot to newspaper, pan-in to headline stating 'Women to fight on frontline')

(**SHOT:** head/shoulders, Text on screen: Iain Duncan Smith, Conservative Defence) IDS: This is really a partial leak from Government sources who are trying to balance the military into a decision that they have deep misgivings about. And what we have is a hugely effective set of Armed Forces that should not in any way lose that effectiveness and nothing should be gambled on the basis of a politically correct nostrum, which this Government seems intent to do.

(**SHOT:** DL outside building) There will be further consultations before there's a decision, but if women have proved to be effective in combat trials it'll be hard for soldiers to oppose the change without appearing to look reactionary. David Loyn, *BBC News* at the Ministry of Defence.

Substantive in length, the *BBC News* item composed over 30 shots, with footage of military personnel, mainly women, performing various exercises and tasks in different military working environments. The images and the language used in this news item construct an interesting narrative of female military personnel and are worth considering in more detail. The emphasis of the news story is based on the debates regarding women soldiers' physical ability to fight on the frontline in war. Therefore,

the footage used throughout the news item focuses on women's bodies performing certain tasks (or tests) that supposedly prove their strength and their athleticism and, ultimately, their ability to fight in combat. The physical aspect of their performance is under scrutiny and the benchmark by which to measure their physical worth is relative to their male colleagues: "...they have to pass the same stringent fitness tests as men." This focus on women's physicality in relation to work contrasts directly with the Army advertisements previously described, where the physical work relating to military life did not directly feature. The news footage shows groups of women marching, chanting, crawling under barbed wire on assault courses, lifting weights and partaking in mock combat exercises.

On the one hand, the news footage portrays working women in a positive sense, showing female army personnel in active roles, performing physical tasks to an equal standard with men: "...it has been reported that women matched men in most areas." The report also notes women's progress in the different sections of the military, as pilots in the Air Force, and into "almost every job" in the Navy. There are comparisons with the US Army where, the reporter notes, women fight on the frontline and are killed on the frontline, emphasising that the gender of US soldiers is no longer considered an issue in these instances. The debate presented by BBC news correspondent, David Loyn, appears to be an impartial account that presents the contesting arguments regarding the changing role of women in a particular workplace, and their carrying out of particular jobs - in this context fighting in frontline combat - equally to men. However, the news item endorses the patriarchal order in a number of ways.

First and foremost, the institutions central to the story, the British Army and the British political system, are deeply malecentric establishments. The increased number of women workers both into the military and into politics has not been without contention. These institutions have been largely reluctant to welcome women, and have done so only on the basis that women conform to the systems that have been in place for many years. The heads of these institutions are unquestioning of the current social order and women's position within this. The third institution included implicitly in the news story, the news media industry, endorses this position further. The reporter notes that the women must "pass the same stringent fitness tests as men", but he does

not investigate or question this policy and he does not explore whether or not the physical differences between men and women are taken into account. Women are unquestionably expected to adapt to the working environments created by and for men.

Despite being central to the news story, women are conspicuous by their absence as speakers, and the maleness of the debate is endorsed further. The lack of female voices is in stark contrast to the abundance of female images, so the audience looks at women while listening to men debating the physical strength, effectiveness and competence of these women. The male representatives who do speak are from politics and the Conservative shadow cabinet at that time, while the views of “Britain’s top soldier”, Sir Charles Guthrie are also referred to. They all support the opinion that women should not be allowed to fight on the frontline, and there are no representatives to support the counter-argument. Similarly to previous chapters, elite males within UK institutions, shape news debate and are unquestioning of the social order. The military women and men are their subordinates within the Armed Forces work hierarchies and within society at large, but the elite social status of these men is submerged within a gender debate and class is rendered invisible. Moreover, war is regarded as perfectly natural and normal within this social order, as are the passive/active roles of women and men respectively within these conflicts. The gender debate deriving from the news of women fighting on the frontline was, however, largely a non-news item. The story was a headline based only on what was deemed the startling fact that women *might* fight in frontline combat, as the Government had made no official announcement and the lack of fresh news was starkly evident. The Ministry of Defence and then Defence Secretary, Geoff Hoon, were referred to, as were senior military personnel, yet the only verbal reaction came from the Shadow Defence Secretary, Iain Duncan Smith, who referred to the ‘partial leak’ and the newspaper report from which the story derived.

The oddity of this non-news event was similarly reflected in the two *ITN News* programmes where the women troops item was the second headline in both bulletins (after news of a plane crash in Hampshire). Coverage relied similarly on a montage of footage showing female military personnel, while official government statements and sources were absent. Instead, contesting reactions to the news came again from elite

political representatives - Iain Duncan Smith in the teatime bulletin, and the Liberal Democrat Defence Spokesman, Menzies Campbell, in the later evening programme. Both MPs make clear their parties' adverse stance to the speculation:

It's no good working on a civilian agenda of military effectiveness where people can be ordered to kill or be killed, live in incredibly difficult circumstances [sic]... that is the key – their effectiveness in action, in battle – *not* [emphasis] what looks good on paper.

Iain Duncan Smith,
ITN News, 545pm, 24 December 2000

In the Falklands campaign, British troops had to use bayonets to clear the trenches on Mount Tumbledown. Public opinion's got a long way to go in Britain before it accepts that's a proper role for women.

Menzies Campbell,
ITN News, 1030pm, 24 December 2000

The responses from the opposition Defence spokesmen focus on commonsensical arguments centred on the naturalisation of war and women's unnatural place fighting in the frontline of conflict (they could be killed; they might have to use bayonets). Moreover, this 'common sense' position is further legitimised by the spurious use of 'public opinion'. Through lack of other official sources, the adverse expression of opposition party policies on women in the military thus became a core theme of the news items at this time. This focus would be reiterated a few weeks later when the debates regarding women troops re-emerged, exposing confusion in the Conservative Party's official policy on the issue.

The party policy

On the 23 January 2001, William Hague, the then Conservative Party leader, spoke at a seminar in Westminster Central Hall to a group of sixth-formers. During the ensuing question-and-answer session a female student hoping to join the Royal Air Force asked Hague if he thought women should fight on the frontline. Hague replied in the affirmative, instigating an immediate row among his colleagues about Conservative Party policy on the issue. The incident was recalled in a brief item on the *Channel 4 News* that evening (see Excerpt 7 below) providing some continuity to the Christmas Eve headlines and referring to the earlier comments from Iain Duncan Smith regarding women's presence on the frontline having a detrimental effect on military operations.

Excerpt 7

Channel 4 News, 7pm, 23 January 2001 (41 secs)

Newsreader: Kirsty Lang

(**SHOT**: newsreader, head/shoulders) KL: The Conservative leader William Hague upset the party apple cart today by saying that women soldiers should be allowed to serve on the frontline. In the past his shadow defence secretary Iain Duncan Smith (**SHOT**: Hague stood at front of Westminster Central Hall) has described the concept as p.c. gone mad by viewing that women on the frontline would undermine the professionalism of the Armed Forces. Mr Hague was responding to a female student who was hoping to join the RAF.

(**SHOT**: Male speaking in hall] WH: ...but I think in general women should be welcomed into the UN, the Armed Forces ... and, and, let's hope that that is going to be the attitude over the next few years and that you as a RAF recruit will be able to be in the frontline if you wish to be so.

Reportage of the item however, failed to provide any fresh news or analysis of the gender debate, and was instead framed around the conflict within the Conservative Party and the rhetorical mess that Hague had got himself into.¹⁵ The female newsreader (Kirsty Lang) additionally treated the story as a light-hearted piece about the ridicule of Hague, who was forced into a corner by the difficult questioning of a female student. Lang's serious tone switched from the items either side (an oil spill off the Galapagos Islands and the capture of seven Texas escaped prisoners in Colorado) as she recounted Hague's blunder with a raised eyebrow and half smile.

The following day 10 items occurred in the press regarding the incident, chiefly in national broadsheet titles.¹⁶ Similarly to the *Channel 4 News* item, articles were mainly framed on the conflict within the Conservative Party. The incident was thought to have exposed 'serious differences between the Tory leader and Mr Duncan Smith'¹⁷ and that Hague had 'unwittingly lobbed a verbal grenade at the party's official policy'.¹⁸ The *Daily Telegraph's* leader however, used the incident to re-instigate their strong views on women soldiers working on frontline units, in an editorial that was largely sympathetic towards Hague for his unfortunate attempt at pleasing the female student:

¹⁵ In the same speech Hague stated that hundreds of British servicemen had died in the Gulf War when in fact only 12 were killed ('Hague's Defence Blunders Slated' *Daily Record*, 24 January 2001: 4).

¹⁶ 8 national; 1 local; 1 Scottish national, www.lexis.nexis.com.

¹⁷ Watt, N. 'Hague overturns Tory bar on frontline women', *Guardian*, 24 January 2001: 13.

¹⁸ Sherwin, A. and Kite, M. 'Hague wounded by schoolgirl's military question' *Times*, 24 January 2001: no page no. stated.

The presence of women in frontline units, especially in the Army, diminishes efficiency on the battlefield – quite apart from injecting additional sexual tensions into service life off the battlefield. It further deprives young males, perhaps *the* [sic] problem group in society of yet another experience that they can define as specifically masculine. Above all, the concept is highly unpopular with service wives, a traditionally conservative group.¹⁹

The traditionalist right-wing *Telegraph* was very clear in its view that frontline fighting is, and should remain, essentially a masculine endeavour. However, frontline combat, in the *Telegraph's* view, is for a particular class of male as the editorial nods towards the social background of the Army's core intake - disaffected lower class males - "the problem group in society".

The social background of the women military personnel meanwhile, is not mentioned. Instead, the editorial focuses on conventional codes of femininity to discuss the female group, questioning their physical ability and bringing their sexuality to the fore. In the *Telegraph's* view, putting women troops on the battlefield is one more step by women workers to 'deprive' men, and most particularly disaffected males, of their natural and rightful place in the military. Moreover, the leader argues that the presence of women can only have a detrimental effect, both in terms of affecting Army efficiency and because of the unwanted sexual tension that women soldiers would invariably bring to the frontline. However, the *Telegraph's* argument is ultimately framed (by their use of the phrase 'Above all') as being between two different groups of women – female military personnel and servicemen's wives. Class background is implicated by referring to the servicemen's wives as 'a traditionally conservative group'. However, this conservatism is defined by attitudes towards female sexual behaviour and the presupposition that servicewomen are sexually promiscuous and therefore pose a potential threat to the servicemen's wives who are not.

The defection

The first appearance of Lance Bombardier Heidi Cochrane in the national press was on 27 January 2001, when a half page article appeared on the *Daily Telegraph* front page: 'Women to join the frontline', over a month after the initial leak had dominated television news headlines. Central to the broadsheet's front page was a photograph of

¹⁹ Anon, 'When Women Fight', *Daily Telegraph* editorial, 24 January 2001: 29.

Cochrane in camouflage gear, bleached hair poking from beneath her helmet, smiling, showing white teeth, as she pointed an SA80 rifle directly at the camera [see Plate G below]:

Plate G: Lance Bombardier Heidi Cochrane: MOD publicity photograph



The *Daily Telegraph*, customarily intolerant of the women troops debate as illustrated in the previous section, also included in the same edition a full page article on the topic, plus an editorial stating that: ‘Any plan to train female officers for frontline combat should be scotched in its infancy’. A prominent letter from a senior Army Officer, Brigadier the Duke of Wellington, also effectively stated the same, reinforcing the theme identified earlier in this chapter that elite males shaped the debates about female frontline soldiers.²⁰

The front-page photograph of Cochrane is interesting in terms of its codes of femininity. Cochrane’s outfit of camouflage fatigues is unfeminine, as is her action of holding and pointing a gun. However, while her attire and posture are at odds with femininity, her smiling expression, conventional attractiveness and direct gaze to the camera all conform to traditional codes of femininity. The image was to become a familiar sight in newspapers over the coming weeks. On the 1 February 2001, the first cluster of press reports appeared regarding the female soldier, who, it emerged, had gone absent without leave (AWOL) with a male Sergeant six months previously. The newsworthiness of the story was heightened as it came to light that the MOD had issued the photograph of Cochrane for public relations purposes to illustrate the role

²⁰ Tweedie, N. ‘Front-line women fail Army test of strength’, *Daily Telegraph*, 27 January 2001: 4; ‘Army up against the wall’, *Daily Telegraph* editorial, 27 January 2001: 25; Brigadier the Duke of Wellington. ‘A tank is no place for women during battle’, Letters to the Editor, *Daily Telegraph*, 27 January 2001: 25.

of women in the forces, and that they were seemingly unaware of her defection. This led to prominent celebratory coverage in the form of reports, editorials, comment and cartoons, from a British press keen to expose its ignorant and embarrassed government.

While some articles were gleeful of the irony that the MOD had released publicity material to represent the growing role of women working in the Armed Forces, yet were unaware that Cochrane had in fact gone AWOL from her duties, other areas of the press used the Lance Bombardier's actions as an example of why women should not enter more active duties in the military. For example, the *Daily Telegraph* included a commentary piece by its defence editor that provided continuity to its earlier polemics regarding women fighting on the frontline. The article presented a lengthy argument, based on the different physical capabilities of men and women, and the fact that women could not defend or protect men on the frontline. Similarly to the newspaper's earlier debates, the *Telegraph* stated that frontline military roles were male-only reserves. The article ignored the fact that the MoD was purposely courting women to raise their intake of new recruits, and instead the report argued that it was women's responsibility, first and foremost, to withdraw from these frontline roles, and moreover, that they owed it to men, and to Britain, to do so:

Women who really care about the welfare of British society will see that their desire for equality even in the military life must be balanced against the fairness owed to men. It is unfair to men, whose genes make them larger and heavier, to demand that their chances of survival in combat should be reduced by making them dependent on sisters-in-arms who cannot care for them in a crisis. Women's military competence is not in doubt; nor is their bravery.... It comes down to muscle. Feminists should have the imagination – and real concern for the other half of the human race – to leave men alone to look after themselves.²¹

The *Telegraph's* commentary was characteristic of the newspaper's wider viewpoint on the topic of women troops. Yet the argument was problematic by simplifying feminist politics and presupposing that all military women were somehow feminists, or 'sisters-in-arms', by dint of their work in the traditionally male dominated Armed Forces.

²¹ Keegan, J. 'Women in combat – a matter of muscle, not machismo' *Daily Telegraph*, 2 February 2001: 28.

Some newspaper coverage was less overtly opinionated, however enduring conventions of sexist news coverage were apparent. For instance, Cochrane's appearance was a prime focus of much news coverage, particularly in relation to the MOD's publicity campaign. Headlines referred to her pin-up and model status: 'Heidi the photo model soldier goes AWOL'; 'Showcase woman soldier goes AWOL'; 'Army turns blind eye to 'pin-up' who went AWOL' 'Army's model soldier AWOL in love tryst with soldier'.²² Her age was also emphasised, as was her marital status, while her active work in the Army was not described in any detail, despite the fact Cochrane was presupposed to typify contemporary working women in the military. These points are illustrated further in the *Daily Mail* article, reproduced below [Plate H]. In this report, Cochrane is labelled as 'A married female soldier...' and later as 'Mrs Cochrane... married to an Army gunner...', thus the common strategy of naming women in relation to others, particularly men, is utilised (Reah, 1998: 63).

Plate H: News story, *Daily Mail*, 1 Feb 2001: 1

'The Army's model girl soldier has run off with a sergeant'
 Reporter: James Mills

A married female soldier picked as the official image of women in the Army has gone absent without leave suspected of running off with a sergeant.

Lance Bombardier Heidi Cochrane disappeared while serving in Cyprus and has not contacted her family or the Army since.

A picture of the pretty 24-year-old in full combat gear has been distributed by the Ministry of Defence to highlight the growing role that women play in all aspects of the Armed Forces.

It is believed women will soon be given the go ahead to serve on the frontline alongside men.

Mrs Cochrane, who is married to an Army gunner, is said to have disappeared from Cyprus around the same time as a sergeant, fuelling speculation that the pair were having an affair.

Meanwhile, Jason Archer, the male sergeant who had also gone AWOL remained anonymous. His marital status is ignored, even though he was also married when the pair disappeared. He is referred to simply as 'a sergeant', with no additional sex prefix, in contrast to Cochrane, who is described as a 'girl soldier' and a 'female soldier', thus confirming the presupposition that the military workforce is first and foremost male. In addition to being fully named and implicated throughout the report, Cochrane's appearance is also emphasised. She is referred to in the headline as the

²² *Birmingham Post*, 2 February 2001:8; *Guardian*, 2 February 2001: 3; *Times*, 2 February 2001: no page no. stated; *Evening Standard*, 1 February 2001: 1-2.

‘Army’s model girl soldier’ and is later described as a ‘pretty 24-year-old. Thus youth and femininity combine with the sexual scandal of her disappearance to give the story high news currency.

The prime focus on Cochrane, in stark contrast to the lack of interest in Jason Archer, was typical of the press reportage of the incident. For example, a local press article in the *Western Daily Press* headlined ‘Soldier girl Heidi on run ... and a Sergeant has gone missing too’²³. However, there was only one referral to the ‘male Sergeant’, as the article focused on Cochrane, and interviewed her father at length about his daughter’s ‘emotional turmoil’ in the Army. Meanwhile, a female columnist in *The People* speculated whether Cochrane was able ‘to attract females to the forces as well as she was able to lure her male colleagues?’²⁴ Archer was again ignored, as the Lance Bombardier was portrayed as a sexual predator and became the key focus of the media’s wrath and, so the media reported, the Army’s anger. One article in the *Times* outlined how the MOD did not want to find Cochrane, as her disappearance had caused high embarrassment to the military:

Senior officers were so embarrassed by the suspected elopement by Lance Bombardier Cochrane during a tour of duty in Cyprus, leaving behind her soldier husband, David, that they do not want her found... according to the MOD, Royal Military Police are seeking the two missing soldiers but a senior officer admitted: “Frankly, we don’t want to hear of her again. If she’s found and there’s a court martial it will only mean even more bad publicity.”²⁵

While the MOD was clearly seeking to locate both Cochrane and Archer, Cochrane was portrayed as an embarrassment to the Army, as a nuisance and moreover, as dispensable. The report suggested that Cochrane was chiefly responsible for the ‘suspected elopement’, as Archer was not implicated or named, and moreover, there was no suggestion that the Army would disown him if and when they were found. Cochrane would consequently become the focus for wider debates regarding the military workforce, such as absenteeism²⁶ and co-habitation in the military. Moreover,

²³ Anon, ‘Soldier girl Heidi on run ... and a sergeant has gone missing too’, *Western Daily Press*, 2 February 2001: 13.

²⁴ Fergus, L, ‘Armed and dangerous’ *The People*, 4 February 2001: 8.

²⁵ Smith, L, ‘Army turns blind eye to ‘pin-up’ who went AWOL’, *Times*, 2 Feb 2001.

²⁶ In 2001, the MOD declared that a total of 380 personnel were absent without leave (Swift, G. ‘Mystery deepens over Army’s missing pin-up’ *Daily Express*, 1 February 2001: 11). Unpublished figures in 2001 revealed there to be 2,677 incidents of AWOL, a third more than 1999 and nearly twice the 1996 figures (Burke, J. ‘Record numbers desert the Army’ *Observer*, 13 May 2001: 5).

Cochrane's story and photograph would reoccur over the following year, adding continuity to the women troops debate and offering, to some, the prime example as to why *all* women were unsuitable for responsible jobs in the military, largely because of their lack of reliability and their questionable sexual discipline.

The sexualization of women, and the focus away from their working role in the Armed Forces, were once again the common themes used to pejoratively link military women in the following months. In February 2001 an Army fitness instructor, Lance Corporal Roberta Winterton, appeared as 'The First Army Page 3 Model' in the tabloid *Sun* newspaper.²⁷ As a result of this glamour modelling, the Army initially demoted Winterton before dismissing her.²⁸ In the same *Sun* issue, an article appeared reporting the fact that four women sailors had been taken off the ship HMS Sheffield for becoming pregnant.²⁹ It seemed unlikely that any more scandals regarding military women could shock, until a front-page *Daily Record* item at the end of April 2001 claimed that the MOD were funding breast enlargement operations for female soldiers.³⁰ Unsurprisingly, the explicit focus on women's sexuality, and the strategy of grouping women around this core theme, was intensified in the reportage within the tabloid newspapers. However, coverage of this type was far from limited to the tabloid press, as is illustrated by examining the extent of the Heidi Cochrane press news items. From February 2001 to February 2002, 168 stories referred to Cochrane across 34 separate titles. These stories spanned the national dailies (59 articles), Sunday nationals (32 articles), Scottish nationals (13 articles) and local publications (64 articles). Yet, despite the high sleaze currency of the Cochrane story, the amount of coverage was actually higher in the mid-market and quality press than in the tabloid titles.³¹ This differed from the Sunday nationals, where there was a higher occurrence of tabloid coverage.³²

²⁷ Kay, J. 'Atten-Sun! Mission accomplished: The First Army Page 3 Model', *Sun*, 9 February 2001: 3.

²⁸ Kay, J. 'Stripped. Army demotes Page 3 soldier Roberta after topless pose in the sun' *Sun*, 16 February 2001: no p.no. stated.

²⁹ Wooding, D. 'A bun in the ocean', *Sun*, 9 February 2001: no p.no. stated.

³⁰ Smith, S. 'Army Girls' Free Boob Jobs: top bras in cash row storm', *Daily Record*, 27 April 2001: 1.

³¹ 16 national tabloids, 22 mid-market and 21 broadsheet items referred to Heidi Cochrane (www.lexis.nexis.com).

³² There were 19 tabloid stories in the Sunday titles from a total of 32 items. 13 of these items were in the *News of the World* (www.lexis.nexis.com).

The Cochrane incident was also reiterated to discuss the issue of absenteeism in the Army. The increasing number of absentees from their duties was leading to a potential crisis ‘that could jeopardise the ability of Britain’s Armed Forces to fulfil their combat and peacekeeping missions’.³³ Cochrane was referred to as a recent high profile example, in addition to another female recruit, Laura Britten (Britten was similarly utilised in MOD media recruitment material and subsequently went AWOL). No figures were presented to differentiate the gender division of absentees and because the article did not refer to any individual male deserters, the focus on Cochrane and Britten implied that it was chiefly women soldiers who went AWOL. The report also argued that the Army’s ‘macho culture’ was one explanation for women deserting the Army and their skills to cope in this highly masculine work environment were again called into question.³⁴ These connections and conclusions were drawn despite the fact that Cochrane had gone AWOL from her duties with a male officer, so had clearly deserted for very different reasons than the report suggested. Moreover, there was no suggestion that male Army personnel might too be affected by the overly ‘macho culture’ of this section of the military. The male officer who went AWOL with Cochrane was implicated to a much lesser degree in the press coverage, as the actions of the woman soldier were brought to the fore. There was certainly no question that his sexuality might potentially mar the working ability of those around him.

The conventional journalism of conflict

While 2001 began with the media’s coverage of the contentious debate that women troops *might* fight in frontline combat, the possibility of any British troops actually going to the frontline of war had seemed remote. This likelihood changed dramatically after the World Trade Centre attacks of 11 September 2001 and the subsequent Afghanistan conflict. The issue of women fighting on the frontline slipped down the agenda as the news media reverted to a conventional war coverage framework. This framework moved from the initial reporting of a shocking and devastating event – the destruction, the victims, and the rescue mission - to speculation of an impending conflict and world war. Within this coverage of the Afghan conflict, and conforming to traditional wartime news frameworks (as discussed in Chapter Two) women figured in particular roles. For example, press news items at this time focused on the lives of

³³ Jason Burke, *op cit.*

³⁴ *Ibid.*

Muslim women in Britain, on UK-based groups of white female peace protesters, and on the plight of Afghan women (this latter coverage was part of propaganda to support the legitimacy of the war and will be returned to shortly).³⁵ These reports were usually located away from the core news items, appearing as features or within the supplements of national newspapers emphasising women's peripheral role to the war effort. However, women's absence from mainstream news was not only within the predominant 'masculinist narrative frames' of news items (Curry Jansen, 2002: 139) but also at an institutional level, as male newsreaders, spokespersons, experts and reporters came to the fore of news analysis (Branston, 2002: 129; Curry Jansen, 2002: 140).

Aside these common portrayals of women in conflict, either as victims of war or as passive observers of war, were images of women in the core coverage of the conflict and representing their active role in the military, albeit usually in a symbolic and jingoistic manner. As military action became a reality, sections of the British press began to publish morale boosting stories featuring young female soldiers. While the debates regarding women as frontline members of the Armed Forces had periodically occurred in the media throughout 2000 and 2001, there was little sign of these arguments, as young females soldiers 'raring to go' added high currency to war coverage.³⁶ In the case of the sailor Jodie Jones, her symbolic status as the British Navy's youngest recruit was front page news in the *Daily Express*, with a quote from a letter written to her family formulating an emotive headline: 'Dear Gran, we are on red alert. I'm very scared, but I'm ready' (see Plate I below), and the active voice of the female sailor declaring her fear at the imminent mobilisation was at odds with the conventional codes of masculinity, associated with the military, such as stoicism and fearlessness.³⁷

³⁵ Articles include: McDonald, S. 'The silenced women', *Sunday Herald Sevendays*, 30 September 2001:1; Anon, 'We've experienced just crimes, just blackness, just sorrow in our country' *G2, Guardian*, 8 October 2001: 10/11; Watson-Brown, L. 'Suddenly the world sees what has been staring it in the face for years', *Scotsman*, 24 September 2001: 12; Ahmed. A. 'Veiled Truth' *G2, Guardian*, 22 October 2001: 6/7; Wright, A. 'Our challenging life as women of Islam', *Sunday Express*, 30 September 2001: 10/11; Stuart, J. 'I can't just stand by and do nothing', *Independent Friday Review*, 21 September 2001: 7.

³⁶ Rawstone, T. 'We're raring to go', *Daily Mail*, 25 September 2001: 3.

³⁷ Blacklock, M. 'She's the youngest in the fleet and she's ready to fight', *Daily Express*, 26 September 2001: 1, 3.

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AT 17, JODY JONES IS THE NAVY'S YOUNGEST SAILOR AND HER SHIP MAY BE HEADING FOR WAR. THIS IS HER DEFIANT AND COURAGEOUS LETTER TO HER WORRIED FAMILY



**DEAR GRAN,
WE ARE ON
RED ALERT.
I'M VERY
SCARED, BUT
I'M READY**

BY MARK BLACKLOCK

TEENAGE rating Jodie Jones rapidly came of age yesterday as she faced up to the daunting prospect of going to war.

In a moving postcard home the youngest sailor in the fleet admitted to being "very scared" at the thought of being in battle.

But the brave 17-year-old has turned down the chance of being flown home - because she believes

her duty lies with her ship. Just three weeks ago she was a fresh-faced recruit whose ambition was to see the world with the Royal Navy.

Setting off on her first voyage aboard the aircraft carrier HMS Illustrious, she had waved excitedly to her family on the quayside for what she thought would be only a naval exercise. Today, she is at her

TURN TO PAGE 3, COLUMN 1



Non-British women also figured in the wartime news framework. Jessica Lynch became the focus of the world's media when US Special Forces rescued her from a hospital near the city of Nassiriya in an ambush where nine of her comrades were killed. The Jessica Lynch rescue was later remarked upon as 'one of the most stunning pieces of news management yet conceived',³⁸ as she subsequently became the female face of the war. She was widely reported as both an icon and a heroine, although the jingoism of the US media was replaced in the British press with scepticism regarding the 'suspiciously heart-warming liberation'.³⁹ The rescue of the female Private was important in propaganda terms and the 'story' would have been unlikely to be as effective if a male soldier had been rescued. The fact that its key player was a 19-year-old blonde, prompting a column in the *Independent* that headlined 'Even in Battle, Blondes Get All the Attention'⁴⁰ and many other articles referring to the 'apple-pie value' of the young Private.

Meanwhile, portrayals of Afghan women had a similarly jingoistic function. For instance, a *Mirror* feature article, titled 'The Lipstick Warriors', focused on an Afghan woman who had fled the Taliban:

... she is ready to fight [the Taliban] and bring human rights to her land ... She wears lipstick and the nails of her fingers poised on the trigger of an AK-47 rifle are painted in silver varnish.⁴¹

The feature appeared, again, away from the core war news and included a large photograph, central to the page, of an Afghan woman pointing a gun directly to the camera, in a pose similar to the Heidi Cochrane publicity shot discussed earlier. The item had the high unusualness value of portraying women actively involved in conflict and the references to lipstick and nail varnish heightened the femininity of the key actors in the story. Lipstick and nail varnish were also brought to the fore as key signifiers of Afghan women's oppression, as the Taliban banned these items of make-up, and in this case, the oppression of women was being countered. This item exposed further the limitations of representing women in conventional wartime news frameworks, which are unable to conceive women as enemies in conflict. Afghan women were either portrayed as victims of war and victims of oppression in their

³⁸ Kampfner, J. 'The Truth about Jessica', *Guardian*, 15 May 2003: 2.

³⁹ Fleet, K. 'Privates on Parade', *Observer*, 6 April 2003: 20.

⁴⁰ Orr, D. 'Even in Battle, Blondes get all the Attention', *Independent*, 4 April 2003: 16.

⁴¹ Francis, W. and Moore, M. 'Frontline Women: The lipstick warriors', *Mirror*, 25 September 2001: 11.

culture, or, as in this case, active in conflict but fighting against oppression in their own country. Much of the mainstream news reporting of Afghan women was problematic, with the media's focus predominantly on their plight. The oppressed treatment of this group *was* reported prior to the attacks on 11 September 2001, but chiefly in non-mainstream media, such as women's magazines, feminist publications and websites (Friedman, 2002: 138; Sarikakis, 2002: 152). Now part of conventional war news frameworks, these women were used in the narratives on 'war-as-justice' (Friedman, 2002: 138) and in the jingoistic coverage of how the US would 'restore their human dignity' (Walsh, 2002: 154).

The war correspondent

This chapter has so far compared examples of how military women are represented both away from and within wartime news coverage and how different frames apply in different contexts. It has also illustrated how conventional news portrayals of women in conflict endure and contradict the MOD's self-image as a modern egalitarian institution where women and men work side by side. Moreover, in the news, social class is invisible and women are instead principally defined by traditional codes of femininity, such as their sexuality, their passivity or their symbolic value to the war effort. And while there are some signs of change, the emphasis on typical codes of femininity constrains reporting of their active role as military workers and valid involvement in conflict. This conventional news framework of conflict has, however, been disrupted by the increased occurrence of female war reporters. Chapter Two of this thesis discussed this phenomenon arguing that the proliferation of women reporting on war has occurred in conjunction with the increased number of media women working in the news media sector. This is most particularly the case within television news, where women's presence and high visual currency are thought to add glamour and drama to war reporting. Female war correspondents contribute to the shifting portrayal of women in wartime coverage by showing a group of women active within war zones. Unlike military women, female correspondents are visible and vocal. They also represent a more distinct group of women in terms of social status, as these female reporters are middle class by virtue of their professional status. However, as Chapter Two noted, entry into this profession has not been unproblematic and their visibility in war zones can still be regarded as strange and remarkable. For this reason, there have been instances where female war correspondents have become part of the

news story itself, as was the case with *Sunday Express* chief reporter, Yvonne Ridley, in September 2001.

A news story bigger than the war itself

On 28 September 2001, the Taliban captured Ridley after she crossed the Pakistan to Afghanistan border. Ridley was travelling with two Afghan guides and without travel documents. She was arrested and subsequently held for ten days before being released without charge. The news coverage that was to emerge, both while Ridley was in captivity and after her release, was immense in quantity and sparked many debates in news commentaries. The coverage was also important in terms of exploring the correlation of gender and class representation in relation to working women. There were issues raised about the active role of women in wartime, particularly when the site of war was a regime such as Afghanistan where women are mostly oppressed. There was debate about women workers, and more specifically, professional mothers who work, as Ridley's nine-year old daughter was in an English boarding school at the time of her capture. Ridley was coupled with another female professional, Jo Moore, the government spin doctor who suggested the aftermath of the World Trade Centre attacks was a good time to bury controversial government news. Scathing attacks appeared in the press, such as the following *Daily Mirror* item with the headline 'Silly Women Who Should Know Better':

The second silly woman was *Express* journalist Yvonne Ridley, who thought it was a good idea to slip into Afghanistan with no passport, visa or brains ... Her reckless actions could have delayed the Allied attacks on the Taliban ... Even worse, her nine-year-old daughter in England, shunted into second place to Ridley's career, no doubt suffered a week of terror wondering if mum was going to be shot ... when you have children you take on board a new set of responsibilities. Yvonne Ridley should wake up to hers.⁴²

Debate regarding whether mothers should report on the frontline was a common theme of news coverage after Ridley's capture and there were conflicting viewpoints across the news media. There was even commentary about the types of debates the Ridley episode was raising, and that the news media's coverage of the incident was exposing institutionalised sexism within the news media industries. This final point is important to note, as while news items may reinforce common stereotypes of women, news texts may also comment on, and be critical of, contemporary news coverage that

⁴² Furbank, K. 'Furby's Gospel: Silly Women Who Should Know Better' *Sun*, 12 October 2001: 6.

represents women in a certain way. In short, there is the possibility of contradiction and dissent within the news media, away from 'typical' reporting strategies.

The extent of coverage of Ridley's capture was in part because of her elite professional status as a journalist on a national newspaper, and in part because of her gender within this profession. The charge of institutionalised sexism within the news media could well be regarded as valid when comparing the amount of press and television coverage dedicated to Yvonne Ridley relative to her male colleagues who entered Afghanistan in similarly precarious ways. There was far less coverage of John Simpson, the BBC correspondent who had also crossed the border illegally on the back of an open wagon, and donned a burqa (the style of dress mandatory for women under Taliban rule) to do so.⁴³ Moreover, the coverage was different in tone and content. For instance, there was no coverage to suggest that Simpson's act was in any way irresponsible or reckless, rather there were profiles of the male journalist with headlines lauding his act, such as 'The First Man of Kabul' and 'As Bold as Brass, even in a Burqa'.⁴⁴ These headlines implied that Simpson was a brave pioneer entering Afghanistan and he was described as being 'at the sharpest end of the BBC's coverage'.⁴⁵ The success of Simpson thus enabled a 'hero' narrative, which contrasted to the supposed 'failure' of Ridley, where she was situated within a 'silly woman' frame, while the drama and suspense of her capture, made the latter event 'naturally' more newsworthy.

Another example of comparative coverage at this time was the reporting of a French journalist, Michel Peyrard, who was captured two days after Ridley's release. This incident, while instigating no such similarly emotive debate, provided continuity to the Ridley saga. His French national status was probably one reason for the lesser coverage, however the timing of the incident and similarity to the Ridley story, in view of his capture and the potential charges of espionage, meant that inevitable contrasts were to emerge. The *Daily Telegraph* reported that the Taliban 'might be

⁴³ Simpson's crossing into Afghanistan was reported as being the trigger that led to other journalists attempting to get over the border, including Ridley's own ill-fated attempt (McGinty, S. 'A Fool's Errand', *Scotsman*, 15 October 2001: 8).

⁴⁴ Bell, M. *Independent*, 17 November 2001: 5; Jon Snow, *Daily Mail*, 27 September 2002: 56.

⁴⁵ Robins, J. 'The Front Line: The Journalist', *Independent on Sunday*, 7 October 2001: 19.

less lenient' with Peyrard than with Ridley.⁴⁶ While the *Scotsman* published an article exemplifying the male journalist's experience and achievements:

Michel Peyrard ... is an accomplished war correspondent who would not have taken any "unconsidered risks" ... Mr Peyrard has covered the Gulf War, the Bosnian and Kosovar conflicts, outbreaks of fighting in several areas of Africa and the siege of Grozny in Chechnya. Last year he was awarded Le Prix Louis-Hachette for the Grozny siege ... However, the journalist with *Paris Match*, who is married with an 18-year-old daughter, now faces an uncertain future ...⁴⁷

So while the tabloid press overtly berated Ridley, calling her a 'silly woman', criticising her 'reckless actions', and suggesting her selfishness for having a career *and* being a mother - the *Scotsman* framed its item in a near obituarial style, different only because Peyrard was missing and not dead. The article in the broadsheet was, of course, more understated and there were no direct comparisons between Ridley's actions and Peyrard's. Yet the description of the French journalist in terms of his work and competence was in stark contrast to much of the Ridley reportage. He was referred to as an 'accomplished war correspondent' - he would not take risks; he was a veteran in his profession. Referral was made to his 18-year-old daughter, but his role as a father was certainly not emphasised to the extent of Ridley's role as a mother.

The relative coverage of Ridley and Peyrard might be viewed as conventional and contrasts with studies of male and female politicians reviewed in Chapter Two. The tabloid column's tone was more personal, emotive and damning, in contrast to the broadsheet item that was more informed, detached and objective. However, broadsheet commentaries about Ridley were equally as critical and scathing of her actions, as the following quote exemplifies, from the *Scotsman* published while she was in captivity:

Is her copy so marvellous that she thought it worth making her daughter an orphan? ... This may be a strange war, but it is a proper war, not a gender war. We want information, not pictures of blondes in khaki.⁴⁸

The above quote illustrated two important points about women, work and class. Firstly, it exemplified the disparate attitudes amongst women with regard to work and motherhood (this particular article was written by Katie Grant, a columnist at the

⁴⁶ Spillius, A. 'Crowds Stone Reporters Held by the Taliban' *Daily Telegraph*, 11 October 2001: 1.

⁴⁷ Anon, 'Fear for Journalist' *Scotsman*, 13 October 2001: 4.

⁴⁸ Grant, K. 'A journalistic risk that was not worth taking' *Scotsman*, 2 October 2001: 12.

Scotsman) while secondly, it illustrated how middle class women are now present in the journalism profession, as also outlined in Chapter Two, to such a degree that their contesting views have prominence on the commentary pages of the national newspapers. The extent of criticism from female writers was a factor highlighted by Ridley after her release:

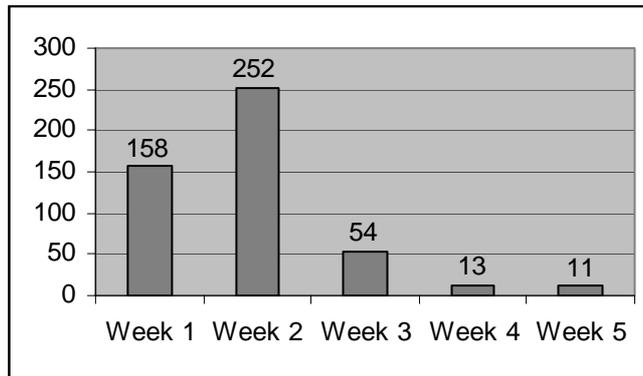
When I returned to England, certain sections of the media were prevaricating, abusive and even downright vicious towards me. Female columnists sat in the safety of their ivory towers, polishing their nails, pontificating about me as a mother, a journalist and a woman.

(Ridley, 2001: 209)

Certainly, criticism of Ridley did appear intensified among her female peers, while the criticism from male columnists was rare, with a seeming reluctance to enter directly into the debate. However, in this instance editorial factors cannot be ignored, as while it appeared during this time that middle class female commentators had good access to agenda-setting news outlets, articles commenting on the war *per se* were less likely to be written by female writers than by male writers. With the Ridley incident, derogatory items and opinions by female commentators were given prominence, and the subsequent debates appeared to be shaped by women. Moreover, these debates largely supported the assumption that women with children are mothers first and foremost, while careers are of secondary importance, particularly careers that might somehow put a woman in danger.

The Ridley coverage was extensive. From the date of her capture on 28 September 2001 and for the following month, 488 articles appeared across the national press (239 items), the Scottish national press (70 items), and in regional titles across the country (179 items). Figure 7.1 below summarises the quantity of stories that appeared each week over the five-week period examined. As the figure illustrates, much of the coverage was intensified in the first two weeks of this period, as Ridley was taken hostage on 28 September and released ten days later on 8 October 2001. 410 items appeared during this time (84 per cent of the total number of articles - 196 national, 51 Scottish national and 163 regional). The number of articles peaked on 8 and 9 October 2001 (64 articles and 56 articles respectively, across all publication types), as Ridley's release coincided with the start of the bombing offensive on Afghanistan (and the commencement of the 'war on terror').

Figure 7.1: Yvonne Ridley: newspaper articles September/October 2001



On these two days the Ridley story became linked to other key war news developments, working to personify a largely faceless wartime news agenda. Reportage of the incident was most predominant in the daily quality press (126 stories) with the *Independent* carrying the highest number of items (24). Between the tabloid and mid-market dailies, the *Daily Mirror* carried the most stories (27), as well as being the publication to carry the most items on Ridley in the total sample. Table 7.1 below summarises the national and Scottish national daily coverage of the incident by publication.⁴⁹ Among the Sunday national newspapers, The *Sunday Express* contained the most articles (19 items), an unsurprising factor, given that Ridley was working for this publication when captured:

Table 7.1: National and Scottish national daily coverage by publication

Quality		Tabloid		Mid-Market	
<i>Times</i>	22	Sun	20	Daily Express	24
<i>Scotsman</i>	23	<i>Daily Mirror</i>	27	<i>Daily Mail</i>	15
<i>Independent</i>	24	<i>Daily Record</i>	14		
<i>Herald</i>	14	<i>Daily Star</i>	11		
<i>Financial Times</i>	8				
<i>Telegraph</i>	13				
<i>Guardian</i>	22				

⁴⁹ Regional coverage of Ridley was also extensive occurring across 27 titles countrywide with the most items cited in the *London Evening Standard* (15). Other regional titles that covered the incident substantially were the *Western Mail*; *Birmingham Evening Mail*; *Bristol Evening Post* and *Northern Echo* (12 items each in the sample).

On the 2 October 2001, the focus of the Ridley story switched more directly to Ridley's daughter Daisy. The young girl's ninth birthday and her subsequent plea to the Prime Minister to help get her mother released were stories covered across the press media (24 items appeared on that day, 11 national, 4 Scottish national, 9 local). There was an abundance of emotive headlines over the coming days: 'Please let Mummy go' [see Plate J below]; 'Will I ever see Mummy again? Fears for journalist'; 'Birthday girl desperate to hear Mummy's voice'; 'Daughter's plea'.⁵⁰ However, while it could be assumed that Daisy was sought out by journalists to provide continuity and personify the story, Ridley later recounted how Daisy was placed onto the news agenda, as part of an orchestrated plan by two of Ridley's ex-Fleet Street colleagues (Ridley 2001: 189).⁵¹ The reporting of Daisy fitted the conventional paradigm of wartime reporting, whereby families, women and children, chiefly exist on the homefront as passive and emotive observers of war. In this instance, a woman was active on the frontline and was subsequently taken hostage, thus the story was newsworthy combining drama and unusualness.

Daisy appeared in over 280 publications worldwide making a plea for her mother's release (Ridley 2001: 191). However, this emotive global coverage of a young child alone in an English boarding school was problematic for the already raging debates about working women. Because of Ridley's alleged poor judgement as a mother, her competencies as a professional journalist were also brought into question. Yet, given the gravity of the situation in terms of her capture by the Taliban and the cross-cultural conflict regarding women's societal role in Afghanistan, this was arguably an unfortunate but necessary sacrifice.⁵²

⁵⁰ *Sunday Express*, 30 September 2001: 1; *Mirror*, 5 October 2001: 6; *Northern Echo*, 4 October 2001: 4; *Times*, 2 October 2001: page no. not stated.

⁵¹ Ridley's two ex-Fleet Street colleagues were Ted Hynds, a former *Cook Report* investigator and James Hunt, a political media consultant (Ridley 2001: 189).

⁵² The oppressed role of women in Afghanistan was most famously documented on the Channel 4 documentary *Behind the Veil* (2001). The programme's reporter Saira Shah filmed members of the group RAWA (the Revolutionary Association of the Women of Afghanistan) to draw attention to their plight.

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PLEASE LET MUMMY GO



YVONNE RIDLEY: Hopes for release

Daughter pleads for
Taliban to free our
arrested reporter

EXCLUSIVE

By Julia Hartley-Brewer

THE DAUGHTER of Sunday Express journalist Yvonne Ridley, who is being held by the Taliban in Afghanistan, has made an emotional appeal for her mother's release.

Daisy, who will celebrate her ninth birthday on Wednesday, is devastated that her mother may not be free to hug her on her special day. But hopes of Yvonne's safe return rose last night when it was reported that Taliban foreign minister Molvi Mutawakil had referred to her case, saying: "She will be held for a maximum of one week

TURN TO PAGE 3, COLUMN 1



BIRTHDAY WISH: Daisy desperately wants her mum home for her special day

In addition to the extensive press coverage, the story about the capture of Ridley also became a regular television news feature over the ten-day period of her captivity up until her release and subsequent return to Britain.⁵³ The first day of her capture, on 28 September 2001, Yvonne Ridley appeared on four television news programmes (*BBC News* 6pm and 10pm; *ITN News* 6.30pm; *Channel 4 News* 7pm) where her capture was announced and her status as a British journalist was outlined. The two teatime news bulletins included only brief announcements of the story by the news anchors (Fiona Bruce for *BBC News* 6pm and Dermot Murnaghan for *ITN News* 6.30pm) given that the event was only just breaking at this point.

The evening news bulletins on *Channel 4 News* 7pm and *BBC News* 10pm were in contrast more elaborate and begin to illustrate how working women can be represented in varying ways. The presenters of each news programme (Jon Snow, *Channel 4 News* and Michael Buerk, *BBC News*) both questioned their overseas correspondents about Ridley's capture. *Channel 4 News*'s male correspondent (Ian Williams) focused on the good fortune that the Afghans identified her as a journalist, as opposed to a spy (Excerpt 8 below). Ridley was grouped with her journalist colleagues as '...one of a number who've gone in [to Afghanistan] illegally...' and as part of the group of 'people [who] have been looking at the border'. Her status as a British journalist was reiterated while her gender was ignored. In contrast, the *BBC News* presenter, Buerk, referred immediately to Ridley as a 'woman journalist' and gender thereafter shaped the story (Excerpt 9 below). Buerk questioned the *BBC News*'s female correspondent, 'what do we know about the fate of this woman journalist...' In her response, the correspondent referred to the Afghani women's 'strict Islamic clothing that the Taliban requires women to wear' as well as to the fact that the Afghans 'particularly don't like western women'. These statements reinforce the earlier point about the limited frameworks that the news media work within to represent women during wartime and the fact that women cannot be conceived of as the enemy and instead are routinely portrayed as victims. Moreover, the presence of western female reporters, both as part of the news story and as working within the news media, constructs a modernity/Islam binary (Branston, 2002: 129), although the

⁵³ The analysis of broadcast news coverage is based on examining the following main evening news programmes; *BBC One News* at 6pm; *ITN News* at 6.30pm; *Channel 4 News* at 7pm; *BBC One News* at 10pm; *ITN News* at 10pm; *BBC Two Newsnight*.

women are united because of their oppressed relationship to the enemy. Therefore, Yvonne Ridley's capture in the course of her job as a journalist to report on the war, instead became embroiled in unexplained gender issues, where both western and Afghan women are victimised by the Taliban males.

Excerpt 8

Channel 4 News, 7.00pm, 28 September 2001 (47 secs)

Newsreader: Jon Snow

(**SHOT:** newsreader, studio) JS to reporter: Now, this British journalist. Is she one of a number who've gone in illegally over the month or what?

(**SHOT:** *Channel 4 News Asia Correspondent, Ian Williams*) IW: Well people have been looking at the border and looking at ways of getting into Afghanistan ... the Islamic Press said she didn't have any documentation, that she'd been dressed in Afghani dress, a burka, a burka [sic] presumably. It also said that she was a journalist, which in itself is quite significant because they could've accused her of being a spy, so we've got a hope that perhaps this can be resolved speedily.

Excerpt 9

BBC News, 10.00pm, 28 September 2001 (37 seconds)

Newsreader: Michael Buerk

(**SHOT:** newsreader, studio) MB to reporter: And briefly, what do we know about the fate of this woman journalist Yvonne Ridley?

(**SHOT:** *BBC News, Northern Afghan Correspondent, Jacky Rowland*): Not a lot. We only know that the Taliban picked her up somewhere near Jalalabad ... she was apparently dressed in the strict Islamic clothing that the Taliban requires women to wear. ... she must be in a very difficult situation now, bearing in mind that the Taliban has expelled all foreign journalists from Afghanistan and that they particularly don't like western women.

Over the next four days, which incorporated a weekend, coverage of the Ridley story was scarce on the television news, with only one brief mention on the *BBC News* at 10pm on 29 September 2001. This was in stark comparison to the blanket coverage across the British press. There are two likely explanations for this omission on television news. Firstly, weekend news coverage is largely less substantial than weekday television news, with shorter programmes and higher sports coverage. Secondly, the item was problematised by the lack of any fresh take or new development to the story and there was subsequently a dearth of footage to accompany a television news item. Instead the weekend was dominated by news of money laundering in the wake of the 11 September 2001 attacks, debates on the

likelihood of identity cards being introduced into Britain and further violence in Israel. However, the Sunday newspapers, produced very separately from their weekday and Saturday counterparts, treated the story as a fresh news item and afforded it ample coverage (on Sunday 30 September 2001, 30 articles occurred; on Sunday 7 October 2001, 29 articles).

The next occurrence of the Ridley story on terrestrial news was on 2 October 2001 (*ITN News* at 10pm) when Daisy was introduced onto the television news agenda. An emotive item shed little new light on Ridley's situation in Afghanistan (see Excerpt 10 below). Instead the main focus of the item, titled 'Child's Plea', was on Daisy writing to Tony Blair for help to get her mother released. The extract (read out verbatim by the news presenter with an accompanying graphic of the letter) placed emphasis on the mother/daughter relationship, referring to Daisy's impending ninth birthday that her mother would miss. Moreover, the repeated request for Ridley to be allowed to return home when used in the context of the daughter, worked to signify 'home' largely as the family house and unit (as opposed to London or Britain) where women with children traditionally should reside.

Excerpt 10

***ITN News*, 10pm, 2 October 2001 (34 seconds)**

Newsreader: Trevor Macdonald

(**SHOT**: newsreader, studio) TM: And still in Afghanistan, the daughter of the British journalist who is being held there has asked for help to get her free. Yvonne Ridley (**SHOT**: photo of Ridley) who works for the *Sunday Express* is being held by the Taliban for entering the country illegally. Her daughter Daisy sent a letter to Tony Blair today (**SHOT**: graphic of letter) asking for help to get her mother home.

(**SHOT**: photo Daisy Ridley and letter) TM: Daisy writes ... (**TEXT** on screen) 'I want her home for my birthday on Wednesday, I will be nine years old. You are the Prime Minister and most powerful person. I miss my mummy very much and will only be happy when she is back home.'

Another cluster of television news stories appeared on 6 October 2001 (*Channel 4 News* 6.30pm; *BBC News* 10pm; *ITN* 10pm) with items reporting the potential release of Ridley, linked to coverage regarding the deployment of US troops and the impending military strike. Yvonne Ridley's mother Joyce (who had become increasingly visible in press news coverage over the week) also began to appear in television news coverage reacting to the imminent freeing of her daughter. Joyce

Ridley proved to be an oddity on the news agenda over the few days surrounding her daughter's release, as the occurrence of the voice of a 72-year-old female was rare amidst the elite male-dominated news war agenda. Moreover, Joyce Ridley provided an even rarer *dissenting* voice against military action, echoing the concerns of a British public feeling increasingly uncomfortable about the impending war.

The *Channel 4 News* 6.30pm programme on 6 October 2001 opened with the news of Ridley's potential release and a provocative lead headline, juxtaposed to the dramatic opening sequence: 'A bargaining chip? Or a sign they're cracking?' implying that Ridley's capture had an overriding significance to the ongoing conflict. Later in the programme, footage showed Joyce Ridley, supported by her other daughter, Ridley's sister Jill, making a statement in the front garden of her home. The shot first focused on the two women walking from the house to the fence, the camera then panned around, sweeping over the abundance of reporters and photographers present to emphasise the high media interest in the story. Joyce Ridley's brief statement suggested an end to the military action which had commenced that day: 'With Yvonne's release I hope that military action can now be delayed and direct communication can start' (see Excerpt 11 below). Similarly the *ITN Weekend News* at 10pm showed the Ridleys in the front garden of the family home and utilised the same section of Joyce Ridley's statement in their item. While this comment of dissent against military action was brief (the Ridley family's criticisms were reported far more extensively in press coverage) this was a rare moment on the television news to report any verbal opposition to the British Government's support of the US war offensive. However, because the Ridley statement was shot outside the family home, this dissent was not deemed to be serious opposition to the war effort and Joyce Ridley's statement was not shaped as political in content. Moreover, her status as a mother and a grandmother within the private sphere was at the fore. Her comments regarding her aversion to military action were situated as non-political and very separate to elite decision-makers, being ultimately formed by the personal situation of her daughter's arrest.

Excerpt 11

Channel 4 News, 6.30pm, 6 October 2001

Newsreader: Krishnan Guru Murthy

(**SHOT**: newsreader, studio) KGM: So the British journalist Yvonne Ridley is to be released from Afghanistan say the Taliban. News welcomed by her family and the Foreign Office. Is it a sign that the regime might be willing to talk? ... Stephen Smith has the latest.

(**SHOT**: graphic of globe, **TEXT** American Nightmare – Ready for Action) SS: The last the Ridley family heard (**SHOT**: two women walking from house to fence, film boom in picture] ... Yvonne was facing trial on possible spying charges. There was great relief after Taliban leaders said she'd be freed (**x2 SHOTS**: Close-up older woman; pan round to film crews).

(**SHOT**: women outside house, **TEXT**: Joyce Ridley – Mother) JR: With Yvonne's release I hope that military action can now be delayed (**SHOT**: close-up JR) and direct communication can start.

(**SHOT**: photo: Yvonne Ridley) SS: The *Sunday Express* reporter was detained eight days ago after apparently entering Afghanistan without papers

The occurrence of Joyce Ridley onto the news agenda can moreover be placed into context by reading Yvonne Ridley's autobiographical account of her capture, and the role of her colleagues and family in her release. While Ridley's colleagues brought her daughter Daisy Ridley onto the news agenda to generate sympathetic global coverage, these media professionals similarly orchestrated Joyce Ridley's news appearances (Ridley, 2001: 191). In this sense, Joyce Ridley cannot be deemed a wholly *ordinary* person in the news coverage as her visibility was largely due to the institutional access, placement, knowledge and skills of the elite media professionals surrounding her. Moreover, her statements were not natural reactions to her daughter's capture but were vetted scripts with the aim for maximum political impact, as opposed to the voice of a usually invisible sector of society.

Ridley's colleagues, without doubt, had good intentions to try and secure her release by drawing the attention of the world's media to the journalist's capture. This was achieved by focusing on what they perceived to be the main news value of the story, which was to personify Ridley and bring her family role to the fore, thus adhering to the journalistic conventions common to representing women. Their efforts were clearly a success. Yvonne Ridley's role as both a mother and a daughter was the prime emphasis of most news coverage, while Ridley's own daughter Daisy, as stated

previously, appeared in 280 publications around the world. However, *how* Ridley was represented as a mother was clearly beyond her colleagues' control. On the one hand, her colleagues and family were keen to promote Ridley as a mother in a positive sense, and to generate emotive and sympathetic coverage by bringing her daughter onto the news agenda. However, the emotive global coverage of Daisy alone in an English boarding school was spawning a much less positive image of Ridley as a mother.

Up to this point, the Ridley story had been demarcated by the absence of its main player. The only visual reference to Yvonne Ridley was a photograph used repetitively across the media (as shown on the *Sunday Express* front page news item on p.193) she had not been quoted directly and there was no indirect speech from the journalist. The lack of a visual subject meant that coverage of the story had chiefly been structured and narrated by news presenters and journalists – the institutional voices of the television news – with brief appearances from Ridley's daughter and mother. On 8 October 2001, Yvonne Ridley was released first to the Afghanistan border, then next into Pakistan on 9 October 2001. She arrived back in Britain on 11 October 2001. Initially, there were largely indirect quotes by Ridley and television news coverage remained dominated by the narrative of its presenters and journalists:

Jon Snow (presenter): '[She's] delighted to be free and desperate to get home to her nine-year old daughter'

(*Channel 4 News*, 7pm, 9 October 2001)

Peter Sissons (presenter): 'Ms Ridley said since her arrest a week and a half ago she'd been treated well by the Taliban'

(*BBC News*, 10pm, 9 October 2001)

Krishnan Guru-Murthy (presenter): 'Yvonne Ridley ... described how she went on hunger strike because her captives refused her access to the phone'

(*Channel 4 News*, 7pm, 10 October 2001)

Trevor Macdonald (presenter): 'Yvonne Ridley arrived at Heathrow Airport ... She said she was desperate to see her 9-year old daughter'

(*ITN News*, 10pm, 11 October 2001)

The only direct speech from Ridley was in footage from a Pakistani interviewer who met her on her release and asked about her welfare:

YR: 'I'm fine, I'm fine. It's good to be here, thank you.' **Contd over...**

Interviewer: 'How did the Taliban treat you?'

YR: 'Excellent. They treated me with respect and courtesy, thank you.'

(*BBC News*, 10pm, 9 October 2001)

On 13 October 2001, Ridley finally appeared on broadcast television news to speak directly about the incident. The interview on *ITN Weekend News* (see Excerpt 12 below) was framed as Ridley's defence against the derogatory press coverage and debates that had saturated the news agenda because of her status as a single parent and working mother. Ridley was not asked about her role as a journalist and she was not asked her views on the situation in Afghanistan.

Excerpt 12

ITN Weekend News, 13 October 2001 (1 min 57 secs)

Newsreader: Mary Nightingale

(**SHOT:** photo Ridley, **TEXT:** 'Captured Journalist' right-hand side screen, **SHOT:** newsreader) MN: The British journalist Yvonne Ridley has been defending her decision to go into Afghanistan without authorisation. She was captured and held by the Taliban. In her first television interview since her release she told *ITN News* she didn't act irresponsibly and was just doing her job. Adrian Brittain reports.

(**SHOT:** Close-up magazine Ridley's face on front, zoom out to Ridley typing at computer. **SHOT:** Side angle of Ridley at computer) AB: Yvonne Ridley believes her Taliban captors probably spared her from execution because she was a woman. Back at her reporters desk today she defended herself against criticism that as a single parent she should not have risked her life for pursuit of a story.

(**SHOT:** Yvonne Ridley in office with Adrian Brittain) YR: There has been a lot of professional jealousy and a lot of the stinging comments that have been laid at me, have been laid by women journalists and that really disappoints me, because ... we've worked and campaigned for many years for equality.

(**SHOT:** footage of Ridley's release) AB: It was 10 days after her capture that Yvonne Ridley was released to the Pakistani authorities, yet she remained cautious when questioned about the fate of her 2 male guides arrested with her (**SHOT:** Rear view Ridley at interview] AB: Do you feel in any way responsible for their captivity?

(**SHOT:** front view Ridley) YR: The whole exercise was conducted by volunteers, adults, not students ... it was all done very professionally and as I say we managed to remain in the country for 2 days. (**SHOT:** photo Daisy Ridley) When reunited with her daughter 9-year old Daisy, Yvonne faced more questioning.

(**SHOT:** front view Ridley) YR: I sat down and asked her if she was angry with me and she said 'no it's all part of your job but why didn't you take your passport. I can't understand that you were so silly to forget your passport.'

(**SHOT:** Ridley typing at computer] AB: The story now in print she says she remains keen to return to Afghanistan. Adrian Brittain, ITN, Central London.

Ridley referred to the 'stinging comments' from her female colleagues and stated that she was disappointed by their 'professional jealousy'. In this sense, with similarity to the press coverage, the debate was framed as being among women. Ridley accused her peers, other female journalists, of being outraged by the presupposed 'good fortune' for Ridley of getting caught, and apparently jealous of the attention this had brought her. The role of the male interviewer, when asking Ridley to recount this conflict between women situated him not only as the interrogator but also as an objective observer of the row.

Yet certain strategies used by the interviewer worked to undermine Ridley's professional status as a journalist. As the item moved to discuss Daisy, Britain referred to Ridley as Yvonne - a much more casual and informal mode of address, often used in the downmarket media and commonly used to address women. The item concluded with a final remark by Daisy, quoted indirectly by Ridley: 'I can't understand that you were so silly to forget your passport'. Thus the straightforward comment of the 9-year-old daughter's questioning the common sense of her mother, was framed as the poignant last word in the interview - overriding Ridley's defence of her professionalism and resembling some of the more derogatory newspaper articles that had appeared over the previous weeks. The interviewer concluded his item by stating that the goal of getting the story into print had now been achieved, implying that Ridley's ambition as a journalist was her key aim and that her role as a responsible mother was secondary.

So while Ridley had access to the news media to talk about her experiences, she had no control over how the item would be framed or that her role as a working mother would be brought to the fore and represented in such contentious ways. Her media colleagues had earlier chosen to enhance Ridley's status as a mother to generate global news coverage of her capture and try to secure her release. Their approach was, in one sense, an overwhelming success, as the item was reported widely and was clearly a diversion from the war coverage. Yet arguably, their strategy had poor consequences for the representation of working mothers *per se*, as coverage skewed towards a traditional framework of femininity where work, or certain types of work, and motherhood rarely combine. Ridley's roles both as a war correspondent *and* as a

mother were therefore widely regarded as newsworthy and became the focus for judgement and debate.

Chapter conclusion

This chapter has explored contemporary representations of women in the military. It has illustrated how in recent years, women have become increasingly visible in the military, how they are sought after in military recruitment footage and how their 'new' more active role has been reported and debated in the news media. However, at the same time, the discourses of women's active military role are in tension with the traditionally passive frameworks of femininity. These tensions are intersected in military discourse, where women might be sexualised, placed in passive roles (such as the 'rescued female') or feature as active military workers. However, women partaking in war and actual combat tend not to feature. Similarly in war news footage, with the onset of actual conflict, the correlation of women with frontline combat is problematic. Instead, the news media conforms to a conventional wartime news framework where women have historically occupied a particular place. Women are usually situated on the home front, as victims of war, or as figures of symbolism. However, contemporary portrayals might extend to report on the remarkable presence of women, as willing participants in war, for jingoistic purposes or to provide a fresh slant to conflict coverage.

Class tends to slip out of view in both internal and external discourses of women during wartime, as gender is the overt emphasis of most coverage. In the MOD's contemporary public discourse, this portrays an egalitarian emphasis, where class is rendered irrelevant by its absence and military workers are represented as equal - regardless of class, gender or race. In war news coverage, this confirms further the notion that women are reported less for their actions and more for their symbolic status, as news narratives are more easily formed around the symbolism of 'femininity', for example, passivity and sexuality. This feminine symbolism becomes difficult to sustain if class divisions are introduced. The only clear indication of class difference in the wartime coverage of women explored in this chapter derived from the increased visibility of female war reporters, and their vocal presence as commentators of war reflecting their higher class professional status. However, the presence of female reporters in war zones can still be contentious, as Chapter Two had

already stressed by emphasising how their unusualness can impact on their reporting work. These earlier points were clearly illustrated in this chapter by examining the news coverage of Yvonne Ridley, her capture in Afghanistan and her subsequent release. Her work as a war reporter became the focus for wider debates about women who combine careers with motherhood, and she was called to defend her competency and judgement on such issues. These debates were inflected by implicit class assumptions, as Ridley was denounced by her middle class female peers, whose arguments were underpinned by the presupposition that professional women should know better. Yet class did not feature as an overt reference point in these arguments and instead the debate was shaped as being between working women and non-working mothers. The fact that Ridley's 'abandoned' daughter was in boarding school - a resource that would only be open to her as a middle class woman - was all but ignored.

Chapter Eight

Conclusion

Representing gender and class in the news media

In April 2004, my local newspaper the *Stirling Observer* included a story headlined ‘Women hold top four uni posts’.¹ The appointment of new principal, Professor Christine Hallett, at Stirling University meant that women now held four senior posts at this institution, which was an historical first for a Scottish university.² The significance of these combined appointments went relatively unnoticed on the city’s campus. The presence of women in senior positions in public life has become normalised to such an extent in recent years, that the appointment at Stirling could be conceived as unremarkable. The local press item could also be regarded as a typical news story. As women have become more visible in public life over the last 30 years, the news media have played an important role in mapping and reporting these changes, thus items reporting the ‘historic firsts’ of working women are now commonplace.

While the increased ubiquity of these types of news item presupposes the further move to gender equality in the workplace, their inclusion in the news is nonetheless in ideological terms contradictory. The fact that working women still make the headlines for entering certain jobs typically filled by male workers indicates that their status as ‘equal’ to men in the workforce is far from met. As Chapter One of this thesis illustrated, the enduring pay gap between men and women, sexual discrimination and harassment within the workplace, plus gender segregation into low paid, low status work are all issues that continue to hinder women’s working lives. These workplace issues affect women from different socio-economic backgrounds in differing ways and can also be the subject of news media discussion, albeit less frequently. Chapter One of this thesis also recounted the declining appearance of class in public discourse and as a relevant concept in feminist studies since the 1970s, yet the enduring inequalities of the last decade and the widening gulf, most particularly between the lives of

¹ Perry, J. ‘Women hold top four uni posts’, *Stirling Observer*, 7 April 2004: 7.

² The posts were Chancellor (Dame Diana Riggs); Principal and Vice-Chancellor (Professor Christine Hallett); Chairman of the University Court (Dr Doris Littlejohn CBE); President of the University’s Students’ Association (Esther Kavanagh), *Ibid*.

women from different social groups determined by the NS-SEC scale, has seen the significance of 'class' return. This thesis has sought to explore how gender and class intersect in the news media by examining representations of working women. It comprised four case studies, selected with the aim to illustrate how women from different socio-economic groups, determined by their occupation, appear in the news. This conclusion will now draw together the key themes and place the findings of this study in relation to the broader field of feminist media studies research.

Talbot (1997) argues that multiple voices can now occur within news texts, which give contradictory discourses on gender and class, but which nevertheless can work to support notions of hegemonic masculinity (1997: 175; 185-186). The contradictory nature of the news media's portrayal of working women was the dominant finding of this thesis and was manifest most broadly by the contrasting themes of progress/stagnation and visibility/invisibility in the representations of gender. Within these contrasting themes, complications of class clearly came into play. So on the one hand, there were portrayals that reflected the advances of middle class and elite women into the workplace and that acknowledged their increasingly active and visible role in public life. On the other hand, visibility in news coverage remained problematic for all groups of women, from the rarity of portrayals of working class women, to the relative lack of female speakers in the news compared to men. Moreover, sexist conventions of reportage did linger and proved to be a persistent feature in portrayals of working women regardless of their social status, thus illustrating the continuing power of conventional myths of femininity. Yet despite this stagnation in reportage, the news media was also shown to have an additional role by providing a space to report and discuss issues of relevance to women workers, thus illustrating further contradiction by the possibility of discussion and/or dissent. These themes will now be explored in greater detail in an articulation of class and gender in the news.

In Chapter Three, the methodology for this thesis was described in some depth, including the rationale for the case study selection. The clear aim was to explore portrayals of working women, and cases were therefore selected on the presupposition that women would be visible and viewable within the selected areas of news content. This theory of selection for the two case studies, considered likely to illustrate the

visible portrayal of working class women, proved misguided. Ehrenreich (1995) argues that on US television news the portrayal of the working classes is usually limited to their representation in crime news, and that they are excluded from broader news issues even when the coverage is directly relevant to their lives. The implementation of the National Minimum Wage and the Council Workers' Strike were events particularly relevant to the lives of working class women, yet this group of women were all but absent from news coverage. Moreover, low pay was the pivotal theme for both of these news events, yet few reports made direct connections between women, class and low status low paid work. However, to what extent the overriding absence of women in these two cases could be regarded purely as sexist coverage is questionable, because both female *and* male working class workers simply did not figure to any great extent beyond being a mass collective group spoken on behalf of by the trade unions. Skeggs (1997a) argues that the working class are 'massified' in popular representations, and certainly in the exploration of these two news events the workers were frequently collectivised into a mass group (although in some areas differentiation did apply) while gender was rarely referred to.

The minimum wage implementation explored in Chapter Four and the public sector strike examined in Chapter Five would both be conceived to be hard news events and were reported in the context of the economy, politics, business and industrial conflict. Caldas-Coulthard (1995) notes how women tend to be silenced in hard news stories, and certainly in coverage focused on the macro implications of the wage/strike, the news actors and speakers were predominantly men from the political and business elite. Some coverage did attempt to contextualise the news events. For example, in exploring the National Minimum Wage, reportage occasionally focused on the social impact of the wage for individual low paid workers. In these rare instances, sexist conventions of news reportage did emerge, as male workers featured to a higher degree than female workers, despite women being the group most likely to gain from the new wage. Instead, women were more likely to figure as consumers, mothers, or members of the public, and in this context they were often referred to informally or in terms of their marital status.

These traditional notions of femininity, whereby women are referred to in the context of the family, the home and in passive non-working roles, were recurrent findings

from Glasgow University Media Group research explorations of hard news from the early 1980s. This thesis has illustrated how twenty years later, despite more women from all social backgrounds being visible in hard news events than ever before, their active working lives can still remain subsidiary. This is particularly the case for working class women, where their low status work rarely has news value. However, this fails to explain why news coverage denies women's working role when this work in question is central to the news story, as was the case with the minimum wage and strike news. One explanation is the theme of conflict as a core news value, which was an inherent feature of the Council Workers' Strike and which became incorporated into the National Minimum Wage news by the emphasis placed on tensions between workers and business. The GUMG discusses the problem of representing women within routine frameworks of conflict, such as in wartime or in protest, and argues that dissenting action by women is at odds with traditional notions of femininity (a point illustrated more extensively by Alison Young in the context of Greenham Common [1990]) and therefore they are often excluded from news discourse in this context (GUMG: 1985).

In the case of the Council Workers' Strike, this was the largest industrial action by women in history, so their exclusion from coverage was even more pronounced. The conventional news framework of industrial conflict in which the strike was placed further problematised conceiving women as central to protest. The predominance of elite male speakers, in addition to male trade unionists meant the tone of coverage was overly masculine. Moreover, coverage portrayed an outdated notion of industrial struggle. This was most particularly the case in broadcast news, as while women workers did figure, they were placed alongside more stereotypical images of low status male workers performing the heavy and dirty work more commonly associated with the militant striking worker. Thus coverage was constrained by the historical perception of industrial conflict where working class men are considered the norm and where working class women have rarely figured, except in the context of traditional supportive roles of womanhood and femininity.

Visibility in the news media is not so problematic for some working women. In fact the intense scrutiny by the news media of a few successful female individuals has contributed in part to the 'equality myth' outlined in Chapter One, which has emerged

in public discourse since the 1980s. For women in elite business roles, the unusualness of their high status in the workplace is the fundamental reason for their prominence in the news, and in the coverage explored in Chapter Six they were often positioned as standard-bearers for other women, while afforded media scrutiny to the same extent as celebrities. Sex is central to the news representation of women in power. Ross (1995) notes how female politicians are often framed in sexual situations and judged by their appearance, and these were both themes common to the portrayal of elite businesswomen. The sexualisation of women in Chapter Six was extensive and was often linked directly to a woman's business role and performance. In the case of Clara Furse, her lack of sexuality was regarded as a calculated ploy to succeed in the business world, while Martha Lane Fox was seen to be correlating her sexuality directly with the brand of her e-firm. The elite class of Lane Fox in this instance was equated with a 'sexiness' comprised of celebrity, power and established wealth. This contrasted with the sexualisation of Jacqueline Gold and Michelle Mone, whereby their nouveau riche class status, combined with explicitly sexual company products, manifested in themes of sexual morality and the striving for credibility. Meanwhile, some reports would explicitly refer to the sexist and superficial values driving the decisions to include businesswomen in the news, most typically referring to the high pictorial currency of individuals, as 'pin-ups', 'babes' and 'stunners' or focusing on the visual worth of their products, in the case of the Ultimo bra company and the titillating sex products of Ann Summers.

The open acknowledgement of a mutually compatible relationship between the (usually male) producers of media content and women from the elite business sector could, however, be problematic. For example, in Chapter Six, both Martha Lane Fox and Michelle Mone were accused of using the media for self-promotion simply because they were women, thus because of their sex. In this sense, the tenuous and contradictory nature of the media in its representation of women was further revealed. For while the inclusion of women based on their visual currency is now an overt and widely accepted convention of news reporting, it is still regarded as unacceptable for a woman to take advantage of this convention. The businesswomen accused of doing so were subjected to charges of being calculated and aggressive, which are of course essential qualities in the business world (where it may simply be perceived as assertiveness). Yet while aggression and forcefulness are attributes at odds with

conventional notions of femininity, the female manipulator is a well-established depiction of women, conceived historically by the representation of the femme fatal across popular culture.

The myths of femininity therefore have perpetual power to cut across change in representations of women, even in working roles that do not easily conform. This is especially the case in relation to war, which in the same way as the business world, is perceived by the news media to be a non-feminine space. Chapter Seven explored how different classes of working women were portrayed around the theme of conflict, and it was found that class tended to slip out of view, as sexist coverage prevailed regarding the 'proper' role of women during wartime. The portrayal of captured war correspondent, Yvonne Ridley, typified alarmist reporting to the extreme, with news items criticising the journalist for pursuing her work while her daughter was at boarding school. As noted in research by *Women in Journalism* (1996) coverage of female politicians can be 'personal and vitriolic' and this was similarly the case with Ridley. Criticisms focused on her selfish actions as a mother first and foremost and she was described as 'silly' and irresponsible, while her professional judgement and ability were also brought into question.

During the Ridley hostage incident and after her subsequent release, issues surrounding women, work and childcare had a central position on news agendas, underpinned by debates about the role of women workers in war zones. In this sense, a 'feminist counter-discourse' was apparent in the news (Talbot, 1997: 184), whereby the social changes brought about by feminism (in this case the possibility of women combining career with parenthood, and the move by women into previously 'male' work) formed a major part of coverage and commentary, although this comment was largely from female journalists who were mainly excluded from writing about war issues at that time. There were implicit class assumptions in these commentaries, which were formed in the main by middle class women, despite the fact the discussion was perceived to be between working women and non-working mothers, and the debate was an acceptable diversion in the conventional wartime news frame. In this war frame meanwhile, working military women remained to have a number of roles, from being rescued, to being sexualised, oppressed and victimised, aside their symbolic value for the jingoistic coverage of conflict.

Class and gender in the news

This thesis has illustrated how class figures as a crucial category in the contemporary portrayal of working women in the news media. Class remains fundamental in news media representations because women from different socio-economic groups are clearly represented in diverse ways. From the massification and silencing of working class women, to the celebrity and sexualisation of the business elite and the professional competency news frame of the middle class woman, class is a determining factor in how women figure within the news. However, these class determinants in portrayals of working women combine with other news frames, pertaining to gender, whereby powerful and established myths of femininity can come to the fore. These myths of femininity can be particularly powerful when women enter non-feminine work 'spaces', such as business and the military, and class, particularly in the latter case, can tend to slip out of view, as sexist coverage is commonplace and debates are formed about the right and wrong behaviour for women.

In Chapter Three, it was stated that to consider the intersection of class and gender in news discourse, it is fundamental to be able to view women in roles that illustrate their variant socio-economic backgrounds. In this sense, the comparative analysis of 'work' and 'working women' has provided a unit of analysis by which to view class, and the fact that women are now in more variant working roles in public life is fundamental. Moreover, this thesis has shown how analysing portrayals of working women enables investigation across news genres and news themes, exploring how the codes and conventions particular to certain 'hard' news frames can affect and change representations.

Of course, there are problems in bringing class back into view. Most prominently in this study, was the rudimentary method of correlating women's work with socio-economic status, which belies the complexity of many women's working lives. Nonetheless, the NS-SEC Analytical Scale also proved to be problematic in this sense, and as noted in Chapter One, placing women within class structures has historically been difficult. Class is a contentious concept, and this study has recognised these contentions in relation to its intersection with gender. Yet this thesis has necessarily re-introduced class back into gender work, illustrating how different women are represented in different ways that correlate with their social background, while at the

same time confirming the power of conventional myths of femininity and how they intersect with class in the representation of 'real' women.

This conclusion has articulated the findings of this thesis in relation to existing theories and literature exploring the intersection of gender and class in the media. This thesis has supported Murdock's (2000) argument that 'class' remains a fundamental concept in contemporary communications research and has illustrated this to be the case in a study of gender representation. Additionally, it has addressed the current lack of work exploring the intersection of class and gender in the news. This thesis therefore makes a distinctive contribution to the communications and feminist media studies disciplines through its articulation of class and gender in the content of the news media.

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World Socialist Web Site	www.wsws.org

Appendix A

**Case Study Press Samples:
UK National, Scottish National
and Local Newspapers List**

Appendix A

Case Study Press Samples: UK National, Scottish National and Local Newspapers List

National (dailies and Sundays)

The Daily Mail
The Daily Telegraph
The Financial Times
The Guardian
The Independent
The Mail on Sunday
The Daily Mirror
The News of the World
The Observer
The Sunday Mirror
The Sunday Telegraph
The Sunday Times
The Times

Scottish National (dailies and Sundays)

The Daily Record
The Herald
The Scotsman
The Scotland on Sunday
The Sunday Herald
The Sunday Mail

Local (dailies and Sundays)

The Aberdeen Evening Post
The Aberdeen Press and Journal
The Bath Chronicle
The Belfast News Letter
The Belfast Telegraph
The Birmingham Evening Mail
The Birmingham Evening Post
The Blackpool Gazette
The Bristol Evening Post
The Burnley Express and News
The Coventry Evening Telegraph
The Derby Evening Telegraph
The Doncaster Star
The Edinburgh Evening Standard
The Exeter Express and Echo
The Gateshead Post
The Gloucester Citizen
The Gloucestershire Echo
The Grimsby Evening Telegraph
The Hull Daily Mail
The Irish News
The Lancashire Evening Post
The Lancaster Guardian
The Leicester Mail
The Leicester Mercury

The Leigh Reporter
The Leyland Guardian
The Liverpool Daily Post
The Liverpool Echo
The London Evening Standard
The Newcastle Evening Chronicle
The Newcastle Journal
The Northern Echo
The Nottingham Evening Post
The Plymouth Evening Herald
The Plymouth Western Morning News
The Scunthorpe Evening Telegraph
The Sheffield Star
The South Wales Echo
The South Wales Evening Post
The Stoke Sentinel
The Sunday Mercury
The Torquay Herald Express
Wales on Sunday
The Western Daily Press
The Western Mail
The Wigan Evening Post
The Wigan Reporter
The Yorkshire Evening Post
The Yorkshire Post

Appendix B

Quantitative Analysis Coding Schedule

Appendix C

**National Minimum Wage news item
Platform, Scottish ITV, 1 April 1999
Transcript**

National Minimum Wage news item
Platform, Scottish ITV, 1 April 1999
Transcript

(9minutes, 5seconds)

Presenter: Bernard Ponsonby

[**Shot:** presenter, studio] BP: Today the minimum wage came into effect. It's an important piece of legislation and was one of the key elements of the Government's election manifesto two years ago, but who will it affect and will it do more harm than good? I'll be raising these and other questions with Donald Dewar, the Scottish Secretary. But first Raman Bhardwaj has been investigating the impact of the National Minimum Wage.

[**Shot:** Government official ad-campaign] RB: The National Minimum Wage was introduced by the Government today. It is designed to stop poverty pay in the UK. The advertising campaign promoting the minimum wage has been extensive costing in excess of £5million. It means employers will be legally bound to meet the following levels [Shot: x3 graphics headed National Minimum Wage] the statutory rate for adults aged 22 and over at £3.60 per hour; for adults aged 18-21 at £3.00 per hour, while 17-year-olds, au-pairs, self-employed and the armed forces miss out.

[**Shot:** Anne Middleton, UNISON] AM: I would like to see them increase the level. I think £3.60 means there are still going to be a substantial number of people earning £3.60 who are going to have to access the state benefit system because they're going to have insufficient to live on. I think the Government has taken positive steps in its last budget to try and increase the level of income for couples with one child, but I still think that there is a need to look at single people.

[**Shot:** call centre, pan round employees in open-plan office] RB: There are concerns that the age threshold may influence employers in recruiting younger staff to limit their wage costs. [Shotsx3: young male worker at computer; reverse view shot of female at computer; medium shot of line of workers at desks] If this does happen, many youngsters may be exploited and standards at work may dip.

[**Shotx2:** High Street] RB: A further concern is that the minimum wage may hit businesses in a big way. Earlier this week a report from the Economic Consultants Business Strategists warned that many firms would be forced to raise prices or cut profits to implement the statutory minimum wage. [Shotx2: Street Cleaners][**Shot:** Reporter on escalator surrounded by shoppers] For businesses in the heart of Glasgow, the introduction of the minimum wage is something they've been preparing for for sometime. It's estimated over 150,000 Scots stand to benefit from the minimum wage, but there is a downside, 1000s of small companies will suddenly meet increasing costs.

[**Shot:** head/shoulders male, **Text** on screen: John Downie: Federation of Small Businesses] JD: Some businesses will have to meet increased costs as the result of the minimum wage, manly industries, particularly the cleaning sector, who are paying around

£3.20 to £3.50 in wages and will have increased overheads. A good example is a federation member in the north east of Scotland whose wage bill will rise by £1000 a week, given that he has 150 part time employees, half beneath the minimum wage level

[**Shot: Graphic** – Red Rose emblem, **Text** to left: Initiatives launched today] RB: The National Minimum Wage is one of many initiatives launched by the Labour Party today. They include [**Graphic** on screen] free eyes tests for over 60s; minimum income guarantee for pensioners; 10p rate in income tax; increase in child benefit, and a cut in corporation tax. [**Shot: Government campaign**] With the election campaign hotting up, it's not merely coincidental that the Labour Party has launched these initiatives at this time. [**Shot: Scottish Parliament construction, pan round**] But the irony is that when the Scottish Parliament assumes its full powers on 1 July, control over these issues will be minimal.

[**Shot: head/shoulders male**, Text on screen: Alf Young: *The Herald*] AY: I think Holyrood's quite marginal to the process. I mean it obviously has some marginal impact, but in terms of all the main leaders, the minimum wage itself, the New Deal activity, in terms of trying to get people off welfare and back into work, all of these things are essentially run from Westminster and will continue to be run from Westminster. I mean the lead agency on the New Deal is the Department of Employment, it's not even the Scottish Enterprise, so its not in that sense going to be a Scottish issue, it's a British issue.

[**Shot: to studio for interview with Donald Dewar**]

[**Shot: Presenter**] BP: And I'm joined now by the Scottish Secretary. Genuinely an historical day Scottish Secretary for low paid people. Some concerns that the minimum wage isn't quite enough, this of course is something which can go up in the future?

[**Shot: Scottish Secretary**] DD: Well, there's a balance to be struck and if you listen to the comments there, some people were saying it's too high and it's going to cost jobs, other were saying it ought to be higher. We did strike a balance that we thought was sensible. We didn't want to put jobs at risk and we did want to hit and strike at exploitation. And there's an awful number of people who are in work and in poverty in this country and I think it's right that that £3.60 should be guaranteed for them. I mean there's a lot to the Budget which is tackling these problems: Working Families Tax Credit for example, where you've got a family with someone in full-time employment and children. They will, from October, be guaranteed a minimum wage of £200 per week, no tax until they're earning £225. There's a concerted attack upon poverty but doing it in a way that is compatible with sensible economic growth. People say, you know, you can't have a successful growth economy and a National Minimum Wage. Try looking at America. Try looking at a number of European countries. I think the great thing is, we've established the principle, we've delivered.

[**Shot: Presenter**] BP: We've established the principle and you did indicate there always has to be a balance which has to be struck, but will the Government keep the level of the minimum wage under review on a yearly basis or will it be done once in the lifetime of a parliament.

[**Shot:** Scottish Secretary] DD: Of course, as you know, we took a great deal of trouble to consult, to talk to all the interest groups that might be affected and I believe that there is now a recognition that the minimum wage is right. It's not only a matter of making sure people aren't exploited, which none of us should be proud of. Also, of course, we're now putting a floor under wages. Before, the lower you paid your staff the more of a financial strain fell upon the tax payer through family credit. So we're going to get better value out of our benefit system as well. So a lot of good arguments for the minimum wage. I mean, I listened to some political comment the other day 'too little, too late' they were saying. These were the parties that fought it, argued against it, and said we were wrong. I'm delighted we've got it. It's a very important piece of social progress.

[**Shot:** Presenter] BP: But tell us, dealing with these types of social policies, doesn't the Government's policy appear to go off in different directions. On the one hand, the minimum wage, very much welcomed by low paid workers and basic incomes for pensioners, again welcomed by pensioners. But on the other hand, caps on lone-parent benefit, disability living allowance changed. Disabled people having their benefits withdrawn. It doesn't appear to add up.

[**Shot:** Scottish Secretary] DD: Well, let me just say to you. You're reflecting there misconceptions. I'm not necessarily blaming you...

[**Shot:** Presenter] BP: Well, is it a misconception that disabled people are having their benefits withdrawn?

[**Shot:** Scottish Secretary] DD: No, wait a moment. When you say lone-parent benefit is cut, you've also got to remember that lone-parents have children and they are now getting as from the 1st of April the biggest increase in family benefit, sorry in child benefit, that the system has ever seen. £15 for the first child, £10 for subsequent children. If you look at the income support scales and these are the most vulnerable of single parents, you'll see that under this Government, if you've children under 11, the amount of money on the income support scale has been increased. I mean the main gainers from the Budget were lone parents, families with low pay and children and old-age pensioners, pensioners and people in retirement. Now those are exactly the kind of social priorities that I believe Scotland wants, and which we are reflecting very very strongly in our policies.

[**Shot:** Presenter] BP: I suppose it doesn't matter what you do for people, voters will always naturally say 'we would like more' [DD: Sure] Um, but that means that Government should try and target its resources as much as possible. Is the priority of the Government, well it appears to be, to cut tax, whereas, a couple of £billion from that Budget could've been used to put into additional money for pensioners, students and lone-parents.

[**Shot:** Scottish Secretary] DD: Well, let's get this quite clear that over the next 3 years we're going to see a massive, I think massive is the proper word, increased turn in public spending in Scotland. It'll create jobs, it'll improve services. By the end of the next 3-year period, we'll in real terms have the highest level of public spending in Scotland that there has ever been. Now against that back ground there seems to me to be quite wrong to say to Scots, 'we're going to up Scotland alone, we're going to pick apart, pick apart [sic]

Gordon Brown's budget, with all its social purpose. Where there were so many winners. We're going to create losers. £225 ...

[**Shot:** Presenter] BP: (interrupts) The only point I'm making in terms of the Budget Secretary of State is that if you hadn't gone for the 1p tax reduction there would've been even more money to spend on some of those social policies.

[**Shot:** Scottish Secretary] DD: Yes, but it's a matter of balance. I repeat to you. I don't think that we should ask people in Scotland to pay higher taxes than the rest of the country. 255,000 pensioners included. Over 200,000 small businesses, who because they're unincorporated pay income tax. Um, why we don't think it's necessary is because we are in fact expanding in education and in housing. If you take the first year of the Labour Government and then look forward three years from now, that is the span of our period ... we'll be spending, in cash terms, we'll be spending in that last year more than £1000 million more on education than we were in the first year. So we're doing that job and it's a matter it seems to me of balance, and it's right because if you unpick the Budget, then what you're doing, you are building unfairness into it and that is exactly what we don't want to do.

BP: Donald Dewar, thank you very much indeed for joining us.

END

Appendix D

Council Workers' Strike Television News Transcripts

**Council Workers' Strike
Broadcast News Transcript
Excerpt One**

Channel 4 News, 7pm, 17 July 2002 (8mins 24secs)

News Presenter: Jon Snow

Headline

JS: No bins today. (**SHOT**: close-up picket banner with text 3% it's a disgrace. Catch-up and match up. Pan out to 11 pickets stood on steps of Haringey Civic Centre holding banners) The first national strike by public sector workers in 20 years. Who's to blame?

(**SHOT**: presenter, graphic of pickets to right) JS: Unions say three-quarters of a million people took part in today's public sector strike in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. But local government employers suggest only half a million workers supported the action. It was the first national stoppage by council workers since 1979 and was called in aid of their claim for a 6% pay rise - that's double what they've been offered. Stephen Smith reports.

(**SHOT**: Replica Gordon Brown giant alongside workers, pan along, holding up huge replica pennies, with Westminster in the background). SS: Chancellor Gordon Brown's been showering coin on the public services this week. But striking council staff complained none of its coming their way. (**SHOT**: Red briefcase budget replica, pan up to giant Gordon Brown) For workers on less than £5 per hour the pay offer is worth only 15p say unions (**SHOT**: Close-up of construction worker, River Thames, Westminster in background, pan-out to include catering employee on left)

(**SHOT**: Close-up male. **TEXT**: Jack Dromey, Transport and General Workers Union) JD: The first message is to the employers. Stop bullying and start talking, come back to the negotiating table. The second message is to the Prime Minister. He should accept responsibility and today tell the employers that he expects them to be back at the negotiating table tomorrow.

(**SHOT**: Haringey Civic Centre picket-line, close-up, pan out) SS: A picket-line at Haringey north London. (**SHOT**: Red van driver beeping horn and waving thumbs up to the camera). The borough has the highest council taxes in the country, but workers say it's not going on their wages. (**SHOT**: Woman handing flyers to young girl walking on street, pan round to man doing the same). They compare unfavourably with what others trouser, it's claimed.

(**SHOT**: Close-up female. **TEXT**: Fran Spinks, Learning Support Service) FS: Some of these councillors, um, phone bills and taxi cab fares, I would have to work for three years to earn what they can claim in expenses for their own phone calls and minicabs to get around. We're not nuns, you know, we didn't sign a pact to live in poverty.

(**SHOT**: Graphic, money, £-signs) SS: Pay varies greatly within local authorities. The average salary for a Chief Executive is £85,000 (**TEXT**). Some earn as much as £160,000. Councillors allowances have risen by 60%, some leaders can claim up to £22,000 (**TEXT**). A binman will make just over £10,000 (**TEXT**: £10,394) while a school cook earns just nine and a half thousand (**TEXT**: £9,585).

(**SHOT**: 2 male pickets sat down on rails outside building) (**SHOT**: Yellow van driving past, collecting rubbish, passenger thumbs up) SS: It wasn't all bad news in Haringey today. The traffic wardens were on strike too. (SS to male): You realise you're delighting London's motorists by taking this strike action?

(**SHOT**: Close-up male, **TEXT**: Simon Carter, Parking Attendant) SC: Er, the basis of the day really [sic] to speak to members of the public. The way the council are treating the poorly paid members of staff, not just directly ourselves but people doing more important things, school meals and meal on wheels, this is what its for.

(**SHOT**: Family of 4 walking along pedestrianised area, pan down to small girl) SS: But do the workers have the backing of the people they serve? [**SHOT**: Male from family] Male: The wages that are available in London today you just can't live. The employers they ain't gonna have any employees if they carry on that way, aren't they. They gotta give. They gotta give. [**SHOT**: Female member of public] Female: It's letting things down [sic] and making things so slow, so it's better they don't have strike [sic]. SS: [**SHOT**: young boy] Is your school off today? Boy: Yes. SS: What do you think about that? Boy: Very lucky.

(**x2SHOTS**: Man walking towards bus with balloons; Workers boarding bus, rearview) SS: As the strikers from Haringey went to a rally in the centre of London (**SHOT**: coach pulling away) the pattern of action around the country was emerging.

(**GRAPHIC**: Map of UK and Ireland. **TEXT**: Nationwide Strikes) SS: In Cardiff (**TEXT**) all the park-keepers shut their gates. Flights in and out of Derry airport (**TEXT**: Londonderry), which is council-owned, were disrupted). In Newcastle (**TEXT**) all but 3 of the schools closed. While in York (**TEXT**) tourists were in danger of been caught short after public loos were locked.

(**SHOT**: Close-up male, **TEXT**: Charles Nolda, Local Government Employers Organisation) CN: Our overall assessment is that about half a million, er, employees have been on strike, out of a workforce of about 1.2 million.

(**SHOT**: Billboard with pickets in front, 'Labour isn't listening', pan round) SS: But the unions, who've adapted an old Tory slogan, say the strike was backed by three-quarters of million workers. (**SHOT**: High angle billboard, pan down) Channel Four News has learnt tonight the two sides are set to resume talks on Monday ... (**SHOT**: Close-up banner, **TEXT**: GMB: London weighting for a fair deal. **SHOT**: Back of male viewing billboard) ... with the unions confident of progress.

(**SHOT**: studio, presenter) JS: Stephen Smith. With me Heather Wakefield UNISON's National Secretary for Local Government. Ian Swithenbank, Chairman of the employer's organisation for Local Government is in Newcastle (**SHOT**: Ian Swithenbank, bridge in background). Ian Swithenbank to get to a point of strike action is a defeat and, um, who's to blame?

(**SHOT**: Ian Swithenbank, **TEXT**, name and position) IS: I think there's a problem of excessive pay claims much greater than the rate of inflation, um, the 3% we've offered is three times the headline rate of inflation, it is what councils can afford. If we were to go beyond this then er, it would possibly cost 85,000 jobs over the next year or perhaps £80 on a Band A Council Tax. Er, we're between a rock and a hard place. We haven't got the money to meet this claim. It's as simple as that.

(**SHOT**: Jon Snow to woman) JS: Heather Wakefield, it's an excessive claim?

(**SHOT**: Heather Wakefield from back then front, **TEXT**, name and position) HW: Not at all. Local government can't afford not to meet this claim John. Every council in the country is facing huge recruitment and retention problems. Local Government services are under threat unless the employers do come towards us and meet our claim. They need to get their heads out of the sand and start talking.

(**SHOT**: Turns to Ian Swithenbank on screen) JS: Well it sounds Ian Swithenbank as if you are going to be talking on Monday. Does this mean you've got something new to put?

(**SHOT**: Ian Swithenbank) IS: No, we haven't. Er, we have absolutely no remit from the council to go beyond 3%. Er, for many of them, they will have to make budget cuts to meet that 3%, um they only have 2 – 2 and a half %. So it'll be extremely difficult, um.

(**SHOT**: Jon Snow: interrupts): JS: So what are you planning to do, what are you planning to do on Monday?

(**SHOT**: Ian Swithenbank) IS: Well, first can I comment about recruitment and retention, for many councils in the country it is not a problem. Obviously there are exceptional problems in the London area, a lot of this is to do with the cost of housing, but elsewhere those problems aren't there to the same extent. (**SHOT**: Heather Wakefield close-up reaction) We have no more money to put on the table than we've got now. What I am prepared to do is to look to the future. If the unions are prepared to sit down with us and start to plan strategically for the future, for future years, rather than looking at one year at a time. Then I'm prepared to argue with my colleagues and councils that those councils should enable us to sit down and become longterm discussions with the union on pay strategy.

(**SHOT**: Jon Snow: interrupts, to Ian Swithenbank) JS: That's, that's something we can raise. IS: I can't guarantee that.

(**SHOT**: Jon Snow to Heather Wakefield): JS: A longer deal?

(SHOT: Heather Wakefield) HW: We wouldn't rule anything out John. If the deal was good enough and if it delivered for our members what we believe they deserve, then we wouldn't rule it out, certainly not, but we want to see what's on the table.

(SHOT: Jon Snow) JS: He's saying that retention of staff is not as big a problem as you make out, other than in London, but on the other hand, the actual wages that people take home are very very low, are they not £4.80 in some cases? An hour.

(SHOT: Heather Wakefield) HW: Certainly. 277,000 of our members, mostly part-time women workers earn less than £5 an hour. These are women who are doing vital jobs contributing an enormous amount to the delivery of healthcare, social services and education, government priorities.

(SHOT: Jon Snow) JS: You've got a problem though in the more you strike the more likely you are to lose public sympathy, aren't you?

(SHOT: Heather Wakefield) HW: This isn't a strike against the public, this is a strike ...
(Jon Snow interrupts) JS: But they feel it is. **HW:** ... for the public.

(SHOT: Jon Snow) JS: They feel the locked loos, the unused swimming pools and the rest of it.

(SHOT: Heather Wakefield) HW: All the evidence today Jon is that the public are right behind us. 76% in one TV poll said they support our claim. We are making a case to the public for what we are doing, that I think they are hearing and that they understand.

(SHOT: Jon Snow) JS: Ian Swithenbank, I mean, there is a missing customer here, that is the government. I mean, what are they doing? We're not hearing a sausage from them.

(SHOT: Ian Swithenbank) IS: Well, the Prime Minister has said, this is an issue between local government and the people we employ ... I agree with that. **(Jon Snow interrupts) JS:** But of course it isn't is it? But it's not is it?

(SHOT: Ian Swithenbank) IS: Well, when we talk about pay levels, some of our workers, like care worker, are on fairly modest salaries, but I would argue this, that terms and conditions and the pension is significantly better than the equivalent in the private sector. We are not the worse employers, we are significantly better than that.

(SHOT: Jon Snow to Heather Wakefield) JS: Heather? **(SHOT: Heather Wakefield) HW:** Certainly untrue. We know that local government workers on low pay are leaving council employment in droves to go and work in Tesco, in supermarkets, in call centres. They can get higher wages. They can get more family friendly hours of work and certainly less stress.

(SHOT: Jon Snow) JS: Heather Wakefield, Ian Swithenbank, thank you both very much, and let's just hope that Monday brings something better than today.

END

**Council Workers' Strike
Broadcast News Transcript
Excerpt Two**

BBC News, 10pm, 17 July 2002 (5 mins 41 secs)

News Presenter: Peter Sissons

Headline

PS: Council workers stage their first national strike since 1979... (**SHOT**: low-angle demonstrators holding banners and huge pennies, Big Ben and Westminster in background) ...and they say there'll be more if there isn't a better offer on pay.

(**SHOT**: presenter, studio, graphic to left, BBC logo and website) PS: Good evening. Union leaders claimed a new national mood of militancy tonight as council workers in England, Wales and Northern Ireland staged their first national strike since the Winter of Discontent. Services hit included schools, libraries and refuse collection, and they say there'll be more one-day strikes unless a pay offer is improved. The employers say the strike was patchy, but it's symptomatic of a growing wave of discontent over pay involving trains and underground, tanker drivers, airport staff and firefighters.

(**SHOT**: Focus one woman picket chanting 'What do we want? More money. When do we want it? Now.' Pan along to other women pickets holding banners and chanting. **TEXT**: Ben Brown: Special Correspondent) BB: The biggest Council Strike since the 70s and on the picketlines today we found everyone from architects to binmen and cooks. (**SHOT**: woman pouring chips from bag to metal container, another woman to right) At this care home for the elderly, management had to prepare the lunch. (**SHOT**: journalist, back to camera, talking to two women, Tower Bridge in background). These school dinner ladies I met today earn only around £5 an hour, which they say is pittance. (**SHOT**: Face journalist, back of dinner ladies).

(**SHOT**: Close-up woman) They expect you to do more work, less pay, how far do we go? I'm prepared to fight to the end myself, and I know my colleague here is as well.

(**SHOT**: Side far-view of man on stage talking to crowd speech illegible) BB: The unions have been offered 3%... (**SHOT**: Crowd holding banners, applauding speaker) ... but they want double that.

(**SHOT**: Head shoulders of male, **TEXT**: John Edmunds: Leader of GMB Union) JE: It is the 21st Century. Public services is meant to be top of the political agenda and we have this terrible low pay problem in the public services. And we're going to solve it.

(**SHOT**: Back of demonstrators, pan round to journalist) BB: The workers here say they are fighting not only for pay but also for respect and for dignity, and they say it's a measure of their frustration that this is the first nationwide strike of its kind for more than 20 years, since the infamous Winter of Discontent.

(**SHOT**: Archive footage. **TEXT**: 1979, overflowing rubbish bin. **SHOT**: Pile of rubbish on road) BB: Then the dead were left unburied and the rubbish piled up high in the streets. It helped bring down the Labour Government at the time. (**SHOT**: Street

with rubbish bags dotted along. **TEXT:** Gwynedd) Today the rubbish was piling up again here in Wales. (**SHOT:** Close-up of ripped bin liner) While schools like this one in Carmarthen... (**SHOT:** School classroom, stools on table, pan round room) ... were closed for the day. For the children, the summer holidays had come early.

(**SHOT:** **TEXT:** Bournemouth. Low-angle of beach, deckchair in foreground, pier in background) BB: Holidaymakers in places like Bournemouth were among those affected today. (**SHOT:** Close-up to sign stating 'Pier Cafe Closed!') The Council Strike closed down the pier. (**SHOT:** Security guard redirecting members of the public, **SHOT:** Close-up 'Ladies' sign) And also the public toilets. (**SHOT:** Girl attempting to get into locked toilets, turns and walks away to right of camera) Visitors were outraged.

(**SHOT:** Close-up, elderly male) They close public toilets and think that this is helping their cause. I think its absolutely the depths of depravity.

(**SHOT:** Pickets in road, pan round to car turning and driving away. **TEXT:** Tyneside) BB: In highly unionised areas like the northeast the strike was well supported. (**SHOT:** Second car turning around, pickets applaud) Pickets at council depots succeeded in turning cars away. (**SHOT:** Crowd demonstrators sat on steps chanting. **TEXT:** Birmingham) But in Birmingham where strikers joined this rally, council leaders claimed the response was much more patchy. (**SHOT:** Banner 'Official Picket' zoom out to show black women holding it)

(**SHOT:** Head/shoulders male. **TEXT:** Sir Albert Bore, Labour Leader, Birmingham City Council) AB: I don't think this represents a victory for the trade unions, er ... Members have voted with their feet so to speak and er, the large proportion of the employees at the City Council have come in for a normal day's work.

(**SHOT:** Demonstration, young boy, zoom out to adults walking, holding banners, playing instruments.) BB: But the strikers are threatening to walk out again in August if they don't get the 6% they want and warning of a Summer of Discontent. Ben Brown, BBC News.

(**SHOT:** Presenter, studio, graphic to left) PS: The unions say the gap between council workers wages and those of other employees is growing all the time. But how true is their claim? Our Social Affairs Editor, Neil Dickson, examines the pay packets of some of Britain's lowest paid workers.

(**SHOT:** Huge replica pennies held up by workers, Westminster behind, Big Ben chimes, pan along line) ND: Some of them came to Westminster today, their message, an extra 15pence an hour is an insult... (**SHOT:** Close-up of pennies) ... or to put it another way, 3% of not very much is not very much. (**SHOT:** Binmen walking around front of bin truck) These low paid workers see themselves as a forgotten army. (**SHOT:** Binmen examining wheel of truck) For more than 20 years, Terry Hinton has worked in the refuse department at Southampton.'

(**SHOT:** Head/shoulders of male, bin trucks in background. **TEXT:** Terry Hinton: Refuse Collector) TH: We have consistently got low pay awards year after year and the gap between the private sector is large. The gap between us and the public sector

is even getting larger now. (**SHOT:** TH and colleague walking around truck and examining the wheels)

ND: Like his colleagues, he was on strike today, as he was back in 1979. (**SHOT:** Archive footage. **TEXT:** 1979. Huge piles of rubbish. **SHOT:** Pile of binbags. **SHOT:** Pickets) Yet since the rubbish piled up during that Winter of Discontent, the gap between council workers and the rest of us has actually widened. In that sense, they're worse off now than they were then.

(**SHOT:** Journalist **TEXT:** Low-paid workers) ND: And at the lower end they're certainly not well paid. A dinner lady would earn about £9,300 (**TEXT**). A school caretaker about £10,900 (**TEXT**). A nursery nurse £12,500 (**TEXT**). Now compare those with the average salary of just over £23,000 a year (**TEXT**). But that isn't the whole story... (**GRAPHIC:** binmen superimposed orange background) ... in recent years, the government has given more support to working families on low income (**TEXT:** Government support). Take a single parent working as a school caretaker with two children. She earns about £209 a week (**TEXT**). But she's now entitled to at least an extra £96 a week in working families tax credit (**TEXT**). And there are plans to boost the wages of single lowpaid workers. But is this the right way to raise the income of low paid staff?

(**SHOT:** Head/shoulders male. **TEXT:** Richard Towers, Director, Low Pay Unit) RT: It's taxpayers money anyway. Why not just pay it to the people and get away from the derisory pay rises. The sort of rise of 3% that's been offered is equivalent to two cups of coffee.

(**SHOT:** Female aiding elderly female through door into domestic lounge and chair) ND: Jackie Watson has been a careworker for 14 years. She earns £5.40 an hour. Under the deal being offered she'll be better off by 16 pence an hour.

(**SHOT:** Head/shoulders female. **TEXT:** Jackie Watson, Home Carer) JW: Carers, cleansing workers, everybody. I've never seen morale so low. (**SHOT:** Jackie Watson in garden unpegging towels from clothesline)

ND: And it's small consolation to these council staff that some of their counterparts in the private sector earn even less. Neil Dickson, BBC News.

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