Strength in Numbers?
The Power of Women in Icelandic Newsrooms

Nanna Árnadóttir

Lokaverkefni til MA-gráðu í blaða- og fréttamennsku

Félags- og mannvísinandeild
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Ritgerð þessi er lokaverkefni til MA-gráðu í blaða- og fréttamennsku og er óheimilt að afrita ritgerðina á nokkurn hátt nema með leyf rétthaf.

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Reykjavík, Ísland, 2011
Abstract

This dissertation is based on research conducted between January and April 2010 in Iceland. The purpose of the research was to examine the understanding of the distribution of influence between genders in Icelandic newsrooms as well as the perceptions of female news workers employed in the newsrooms of the following media outlets; RÚV, Morgunblaðið and Fréttablaðið. The research was both quantitative, through the collection and dissemination of employment data at each newsroom, as well as qualitative, through the keeping of diaries as well as in-depth interviews conducted with nine participants.

The employment information for each newsroom was split, where possible, into three categories: Journalist, Assistant Editor or Shift Editor and finally Editor. Following this the gender of each employee was recorded and the data compared to conclude not only whether the gender ratios of the employees in each category were equal but also to assess overall the distribution of influence between the genders.

Nine female participants were included in qualitative part of the research. Three from each news outlet. They were each asked to fill out a diary for two working days to reflect upon the role of gender in the newsroom and then asked to attend an in-depth interview to explore their perceptions of gender and power in their place of employment.

The main results show that the most balanced newsroom in terms of gender ratios was RÚV and this notion was mirrored in the perceptions of participants employed there. The newsroom with the least balanced gender ratios was Morgunblaðið, these results were also mirrored in the perceptions of the participants employed there.
Úrdráttur


Þar sem því var við komið, var starfstíttum hverrar fréttastofu skipt upp í þrjá flokka: fréttamaður, aðstoðar-ritstjóri eða vaktstjóri og loks ritstjóri. Því næst var skráð kyn hvers starfsmanns og gögnin borin saman, ekki aðeins til þess að kanna hvort kynjaskipting væri jöfn í hverjum flokki fyrir sig, heldur einnig til þess að leggja mat á almenna dreifingu áhrifa milli kynjanna.

Niú konur tóku þátt í rannsókninni. Þrjár frá hverri fréttastofu. Þær voru beðnar um að halda dagbók, í tvo vinnudaga, þar sem þær hugleiddu hlutverk kynjanna á fréttastofunni og voru söðan beðnar um að taka þátt í djúp-viðtali þar sem könnuð voru viðhorf þeirra til kynjanna og dreifingar valds á vinnustöðum þeirra. Meginniðurstöðurnar eru þær að á fréttastofu RÚV er mest jafnvægi í kynjahlutföllum og gætti þess einnig í viðhorfum þeirra þátttakenda sem þær eru við störf. Sú fréttastofa þar sem ríkir minnst jafnvægi milli kynja er á Morgunblaðinu, og endurspegluðust þær niðurstöður einnig í viðhorfum þeirra þátttakenda sem þær starfa.
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1. Introduction

Gender equality is not a foreign concept in Iceland. In fact Iceland has been praised internationally for the progress the nation has had in levelling the playing field between genders and was in 2010 pegged by the World Economic Forum as the best country for gender equality (Hausmann, Tyler and Zahidi 2010). Despite this gender imbalance can still be found in many aspects of life, not just in terms of pay but even when counting up how many women or men we see represented in the news or in the papers.

Research into the field of media is very important and its results should be taken seriously because it is the media’s responsibility to reflect an existing objective reality (Hanitzsch 2004). As roughly half of every society is composed of men and the other half women it would stand to reason that what we see and read in the media should mirror that fact. Yet in Iceland, we do not (Kristín Loftsdóttir and Helga Þórey Björnsdóttir 2005).

This essay will attempt to examine the gender ratios and the perceptions of Icelandic female journalists by addressing the following questions.

*Is there gender balance in the following levels of employment; Journalists, Assistant Editors or Shift Editor and Editors in the following news outlets; RÚV, Morgunblaðið and Fréttablaðið?*

Secondly, by asking a sample group of nine female journalists (three from each news outlet being investigated) to keep a “Gender” Diary with follow up in-depth
interviews, this essay will attempt to discern overall impressions, themes and common perceptions held by the participants in question.

*Do female media workers employed at RÚV, Morgunblaðið and Fréttablaðið perceived that employing equal ratios of men and women in the newsroom is a priority for their employers?*

*If there were equality within the newsrooms themselves, would there not also be equal representation of the genders within published news? What is the ratio of women and men quoted in the news items of the female participants and their views on gender balance in quoted content?*

The first half of this essay will explore the development of feminist media theory thus far and the research into gender within Icelandic media up until now with special emphasis on Reflection Theory. Following this, the methodology of the essay’s research will be described and explained.

The latter half of the essay will focus greatly on the results of the research which is both quantative and qualititative. The quantative portion of the essay involves analysing employment data from each news outlet and the qualititative portion aims to discover and emphasise common themes and perceptions of female media workers employed in each news outlet. The aim being to gauge whether the participants’ perceptions reflect the outcome of the employment data.

The inspiration for this essay came while the author was interning at an Icelandic newspaper. After the editor in charge of the shift had given the author a tour of the
newspaper’s facilities, a brief cigarette break was had where the usual small talk was spoken. It was there where it came up in conversation that the Shift Editor could not think of a single female editor-in-chief of an Icelandic newspaper, ever. While the author of this essay would later discover that a woman, Gunnhildur Arna Gunnarsdóttir, did in fact for a short period run an Icelandic newspaper, 24 Stundir, in Iceland the conversation was enough to inspire an interest in exploring the distribution of power between the genders in Icelandic media.

The master thesis put forth by the Journalism department of the University of Iceland is two-pronged. The first requirement is to write an academic essay based on research conducted by the student him/herself. The second requirement is a practical project, such as a series of news features, a radio show or documentary. The accompanying practical project of this essay is a short documentary called, *Without Rhyme or Reason: The Role of Gender in Indian Newsrooms* filmed in India where a number of female media workers, journalists and academics were interviewed in an attempt to understand gender ratios and balance in Indian newsrooms. The documentary was burned onto a disc and accompanies this essay.

The advisor for this academic essay was Þorgerður Einarsdóttir and for the practical project, Valgerður Anna Jóhannsdóttir.
2. Theoretical Background of Feminism Media Theory

“Women’s visibility in some media occupations actually hides their absence from others. For although it is true that more women than ever before are entering media industries in almost all world regions, women still have very little real decision-making power.” Margaret Gallagher (Gallagher 2004, pg 280)

2.1 The Evolution of Feminist Media Theory

The study of women's role in the media is a fairly young venture and didn't really take shape until the late 1970's (Zoonen 1996). In *Women Working in the Media: A Reality Check*, Spurgeon Thompson referred to an informative leaflet issued by the Federal Bureau of Labour in Germany in 1972 which claimed: “Women do not have the investigative and analytical skills necessary to become journalists” (Thompson 2005 pg. 88).

The lack of interest in this field of study can be accounted for in a number of ways. It has been argued by Liesbet van Zoonen, one of the leading academic in modern feminist media theory, that it is partly because there were more male media academics and more men in the newsrooms prior to the 1970's which would explain why perhaps, they did not think to study women's role in the industry. Van Zoonen also suggested that the evolution of the women's rights movement worked hand in hand with the rise of the women's media theory.

The official definition of feminist media theory is the unconditional focus on analysing gender as a mechanism that structures material and symbolic media worlds and how we experience them. In her book Feminist Media Studies, van
Zoonen outlines how this field of study has faced trouble because it was, to begin with at least, an inherently political pursuit and very much tied to the aftermath of the women’s movement. Van Zoonen goes on to explain that its political origins can be seen as fundamentally undermining the dominant academic paradigm of objectivity, neutrality and detachment (Zoonen 1996).

Interestingly, one of the main things Liesbet van Zoonen discusses in her findings in *Feminist Media Theory* is the difficulty that she faces trying to keep them within the boundaries of traditional objective media research whereby quantitative data trumps qualitative.

For example, there are so many fragmented feminist ideologies it is almost impossible to create distinct enough groups to make an objective overall analysis of the earlier feminist media theory. In *Feminine Perspectives on the Media*, van Zoonen split feminist thought into three general categories Liberal Feminism, Radical Feminism and Socialist Feminism (Zoonen 1996).

Each of these subcategories – and these are just the three main generalised versions that van Zoonen singles out – had a different approach to femininity in mass media.

Liberal Feminists suggested that by employing more women into the media industry, equality would increase. They also suggest that the media could provoke further positive change by portraying more women in non-traditional male dominant roles.
Radical Feminists argued for female media workers to cut themselves off from men completely and create their own communities. Essentially create their own forms of media communications, their own television content and radio content, even publish newspaper run solely with content created solely by women, etc.

Socialist Feminists shared the belief that women needed to have increased access to the media industry both in terms of jobs and in terms of representation. However Socialist Feminists also took into account society as a whole, including things such as class and economic conditions and more increasingly with time they have tried to incorporate other social dividers such as race, sexual preference, marital status. However the addition of all these sub-categories has lead to an overload of variables meaning an incoherent and incredibly complex theoretical project has taken over.

That said, as more women gain employment in the media, the research and results gathered while investigating gender in communications theory, just as with any sub-group such as age, race or income, gains momentum and validation in academia. The key for validating study into the roles that gender play into media seems to be, as with all media research, an emphasis on empiricism and the objective presentation of results (Curran 1992) but that does not diminish the value of qualitative research.

As pointed out by the liberal and socialist feminists during the early stages of feminist media theory it has been widely believed that as long as there were low numbers of women employed within the newsroom there would be little equality
between the genders in terms of occupational status, and indeed this is has been empirically backed up (Gallagher 1981 and McQuail 2010).

But to what extent can this be applied now that more women are employed within the media industry and the occupational hierarchy within the newsroom remains skewed?

According to the 2006 EFJ survey on Women Journalists in the European Integration Process 47% of journalists in Europe are women, which is nearly half (Witt-Barthel 2006). Yet over all, news stories by female reporters are much fewer than news stories by male reporters and less than one in four news subjects are women (Gallagher 2010).

This suggests in itself that the number of women working in a newsroom does not necessarily reflect a rise in influence or in power.

2.2 Reflection Theory

The reflection hypothesis claims that the media directly reflects the values of the society it represents, so what does the gender gap say about our society and the lack of female presence?

“Do the media create popular values or reflect them? The reflection hypothesis contends that the mass media reflects the values of the general population (Tuchman 1979) the media try to appeal to the most broad-based audience” (Andersen 2000, pg. 72). So if women represent half of society and now that
Europe-wide women represent roughly half the journalists, why does news coverage still unequally distributed amongst the genders?

A fundamental issue with reflection theory is that it, through its definition, ignores the social processes for defining reality. By curtailing interpretations of what reality is and by conceiving it as an autonomous world of objects there is no inclusion of what Berger and Luckmann (1966) explained as the objective and subjective reality. That is to say that individuals experience the world they live in as 'real' and know that the world would continue to exist without them present in it, additionally there is the acknowledgement that others perceive the world differently and that one individual's reality might not apply to everyone else.

Simply put, with communication theory in mind, the reflection hypothesis states that the media reflects the values of the society it represents, but that does not necessarily mean that societal values reflect the reality of a society.

Taking it a step further it is possible to ask, what is reality? And, is it possible to experience reality without objectivity? As is often the case when considering reflection theory issues of objectivity and reality need to be confronted. The philosophy of objectivity is central, as it deals with perception but also in some ways intangible as a universally accepted articulation of objectivity remains to be agreed on.

However it is possible to perceive something as objective provided it is independent of a conscious entity or subject. For example, the population of
Iceland can be objectively claimed as roughly 320,000 people but the proposition that the colour red is ugly, cannot.

Within the media the role of objectivity is thus, despite the personal views of the journalist, the process of creating the news and the techniques of production the a given news item or product portrays an accurate rendering of an objective situation that exists independently of its representation in the news (Hartley 2002).

The importance of objectivity is twofold, not only does the reputation of objectivity play into the credibility of the news organisation but it also plays into the relationship of trust between the journalist (the addresser) and the audience (the addressee).

The philosopher Machan (2004) argues that journalists are obligated to convey information; that is, they are obligated to be accurate, objective, truthful and fair and that false, inaccurate or slanted information is not information but rather disinformation and therefore an evasion of professional responsibility.

However some, like Anna Quindlen (1999) argue that objectivity, as a professional responsibility is a difficult professional standard to live up to, so although it can be strived for the result is ultimately a composition of a journalist’s curiosity. However, Quindlen’s notion of objectivity rests on an idealistic perception of objectivity as pure transparency or impartiality and by presenting objectivity as an unattainable ideal excuses biased reporting (Machan 2004).
In her book, how fantasy becomes reality: seeing through media influence, Karen Dill (2009) argues that one of the fundamentals of media psychology is understanding that the viewer is not directly experiencing other people through media but that the viewer is being given a vision of reality influenced by media producers, in this case journalists.

Perhaps a compromise between these arguments could be that objectivity can be honestly striven for by professionals, but remains, in print or on screen an effect of textual and other semiotic strategies (Hartley 2002).

2.3 Distortion

This leads us to one of the key concepts in feminist approaches to the media, namely 'distortion' that discusses misrepresentation of certain aspects of society through the media. Distortion is certainly applicable here since it is reasonable to argue that women are underrepresented in the media despite composing half of the population and most perplexingly, the journalist population.

But where does the distortion begin? Gayle Rubin suggested in her influential theory of the “sex-gender system” that one should look to the influence of social relations and considers gender as a construct moulded within theoretical frameworks. Frames which are socially constructed through repetitive cultural and historical processes and obtained by socialisation through education, family, the media, friends and religious institutions (Rubin, 1975).
2.4 Socialisation

Socialisation refers to a number of ways in which a person evolves into a social subject. McQuail defined it for example, as the teaching of social norms and moral values. These norms are then reinforced through symbolic punishments and rewards which over time condition people to behave in certain ways given a certain situations and circumstances until eventually people learn what is expected of them depending on their role and social status. With McQuail (2010) in mind one would expect the socialisation process to develop in childhood, though van Zoonen (1994 pg. 34) adds, “socialization can be seen as an on-going long-term process affecting adults as well.”

Van Zoonen puts forth in her book, Feminist Media Studies (1994), that while it is valid to believe that by employing more women in the media industry the consequence will be a kind of equality, it isn’t necessarily just the number of women employed in the media industry that is the issue but rather the influence of women in the media industry.

This would suggest that in order to create actual equality there needs to be a conscious effort to feminise news media, interview more female experts, and of course give women who work in the news room, who are incidentally more likely to create news content that challenges gender stereotypes than their male counterparts, the power and opportunity to do so.

It seems clear that there has been some contention since the conception of feminist media theory and throughout its evolution to the modern field of study we see today.
The main issue has and remains to be, the influence of women working within newsrooms across media formats, and how best to promote and reach gender equality within communications world.

It is precisely this that this essay is hoping to examine, not simply to appraise whether the numbers of men and women working in the media industry in Iceland are equal to one another but also uncover how much power women in Icelandic newsrooms have to wield or perceive themselves to wield as this seems to be as important as having strength in numbers.

2.5. Previous Research Into Icelandic Media and Gender Roles Therein

Studying women in media has not been something Icelandic academics have shied away from and a number of essays, journals, surveys and reports on gender have been published especially in the last ten years.

In 2001, a state appointed committee was commissioned to investigate the situation of women and the media in Iceland. In their report they coined what is now commonly referred to as the 30/70 rule. The 30/70 rule is a somewhat crude cross-sectional generalisation that stipulates that 30% of Icelandic media workers are women as opposed to 70% of men and that 30% of people depicted in the news, either as interview subjects, expert witnesses and so on are women as opposed to 70% which are men (Nefnd um konur og fjölmíðla, 2001).

The 2001 report also stated that 60% of female Icelandic media professionals believed that they were worse off in the newsroom than their male counterparts while 28% believed there to be gender equality in their newsrooms. No female
media worker asked believed that men were worse off than women in the same job.

The survey also revealed that 62% of female and 50% of male media professionals interviewed believed that the work method and the way that women approach a subject differed from men. Both genders therefore believed that women and men differ in style and topics of interest and additionally felt that they tackled problems differently.

An interesting issue confronted in the 2001 survey was also the relationship between that female media workers have with their family life and their jobs. The survey suggests that the limbo between the media professional’s role as a parent and their responsibilities in the newsroom is a topic of daily discussion and that overall it is suggested that these two responsibilities do not go well together.

In relation to this a third of the women who were mothers claimed that their working hours were an advantage in juxtaposition with child-rearing as the hours were flexible. On the other hand however, those who found juggling a family life and a media job very hard claimed that the irregular working hours made it hard to maintain structure and routine and they also felt a tendency to take work home.

The women working in television and in newspapers found they had the hardest time juggling family life and their jobs. Women working within the magazine industry felt there was no problem at all balancing these two aspects of their lives.
It should be noted here that the archetypal Icelandic female journalist is quite young, with many women media professionals either leaving the media industry or retrenched before reaching retirement age. In 2008, of the journalists over 50 years of age working at the online media outlets visir.is and mbl.is none were women (Kristín Ása Einarsdóttir 2008).

De Clercq suggests that the reason behind the lack of women is that women still lose out in appointments to the top jobs, have less access to training, earn less than their male co-workers, are confronted with job segregation, limited promotion perspectives, sexual harassment, and continue to be forced into impossible choices between career and family life. This last is one of the major reasons given by women who drop out of media jobs in their mid-30s (De Clercq, 2002).

In 2005, a second report was commissioned by the Icelandic Ministry of Culture (Nefnd menntamálaráðherra um íslenska fjölmíðla 2005) though it was a more general survey to study overall the state of Icelandic media and did not specifically address women's position within the field. However, it is worth mentioning that the 2005 report states that bias is unavoidable in journalists and that although there was meant to be objectivity, “Most are of the opinion today that the media can in reality never be completely void external pressures be they from owners, advertisers, the opinions of other journalists or their editors.” This highlights once again the conundrum discussed earlier in this chapter, the issue of attaining objectivity in the news media when journalists themselves are a composition of their own experiences and circumstances.
With this in mind it is interesting to think again to the reflection hypothesis mentioned previously, which states the media directly reflects the values of the society it represents. In a country where half the population is female and where presumably, why are so few news items written by women and why are so few women “seen” in the media?

In a study of the cover pages of the Fréttablaðið newspaper done in 2005 by Kristín Loftsdóttir and Helga Björnsdóttir (2005) it was discovered that the gender divide in images was 73% male to 27% female. Additionally, Kristín and Helga's journal discovered that the women featured on the front pages were most often in relation to culture news and least often in connection to sports news.

These numbers had not improved by 2008 when in an essay by Kristín Ása Einarsdóttir (2008) the imbalance remained. Kristín Ása studied images used in online news outlets mbl.is and visir.is over a period of a month and found that in only 22,5% of the images which featured a person was the person a woman as opposed to 77,5% of images featured men.

The 2005 report mentioned earlier in this chapter, which investigated the gender gaps in the Icelandic media world was written by Margrét Valdimarsdóttir (2005). Margrét studied six television news programmes shown on two different television channels and investigated which gender received more airtime and appeared more often in the news.

The results were very clear, men appeared more often in Icelandic news and news related programmes than women. The percentage of men featured in news stories
were far higher than women, this applied with interview subjects as well. The majority of interviews with men were conducted in their workplace and more women were interviewed in their homes than men. Margrét's research reaffirmed the 30/70 rule where by the division of genders remained imbalanced in the men's favour.

It has been noted in these two essays and in the 2001 report on women's status in Icelandic news media that there are more men portrayed in the media, is that because there are more male employees in the media industry?

While this thesis is attempting to confront the distribution of power within Icelandic newsrooms and the gender gap perceptions of the journalists therein there is something worth considering here. If there were equal representation in within the newsrooms themselves, would there not also be equal representation of the genders within published news content?

In the 2001 report when it was asked whether the news gave an honest depiction of Icelandic society and 35% of female media professionals said yes, 40% said no and about a fourth answered that they did not know (Nefnd um konur og fjölmiðla. 2001).

While it could be interpreted as positive that the majority of the participants answered no, it is worth confronting that over a third perceived media coverage to be honest depiction of Icelandic society when the media depicted that the population is composed of just 30% women.
3. Research Methodologies and Execution

The research for this essay was split into three parts, relying on three different methods for garnering information. The first involved collecting the employment information for the three newsrooms in questions in order to assess the employment hierarchy of the newsrooms themselves.

The second part required the involvement of three female journalists or editors working within each newsroom, so nine participants in total, to fill out a diary questionnaire listing questions about the role gender played in their work over a period of two working days.

The third section of the conducted research was a follow-up in-depth interview with each participant who filled in the diary questionnaire. The purpose of the interview was to reflect upon the questionnaire and the answers therein, as well as to investigate overall opinions on the gender gap in their newsrooms, their personal experiences and lastly, whether the questionnaire made them think about gender issues in the newsroom more frequently or raise awareness to issues they had not previously noticed.

3.1 Methodology for the analysis of the employment hierarchy in Icelandic newsrooms

This section of research involved obtaining the current employment records of the newsrooms of three of Iceland's most prominent news medias: Morgunblaðið, Fréttablaðið and National Broadcaster RÚV.
3.1.1 Research Parameters

The parameters of this branch of research are reasonably strict. While a number of people work in a newspaper for example, in this instant I focused on the journalists or editors working in the newsroom. Specifically I did not take into account how many men versus women worked in the newspaper 'inserts' involving, food, weekend leisure or fashion but rather the journalists or editors who dealt in majority with regional, national, international news, culture and sports.

In regards to national broadcaster RÚV, the research parameters extended to include journalists and editors working on radio, television and online news media though not television presenters, researchers or anchors, unless they contributed news content as well.

It should also be noted here that the employment records could have changed since this research was conducted between January and April 2011.

3.1.2 Data Collection

The information pertaining to this research was obtained by two means. The first was the internet where the all employment records for RÚV, Fréttablaðið and visir.is (Fréttablaðið’s online component) were publicly available.

The employment records of Morgunblaðið however, were not accessible on the internet, only the details of correspondents located in varying parts of the country were available for public perusal on Morgunblaðið's website. In this instance Morgunblaðið's Human Resources department was contacted and a list of
employees working directly with the publication of the newspaper itself and mbl.is (Morgunblaðið’s online component) was requested.

3.1.3 Data Analysis
Once collected, the results of the research pertaining to each newsroom were dissected and analysed as follows.

First the numbers of people working in each newsroom were divvied up by gender. Then, aiming to obtain a view of the current employment hierarchy, each gender was divided into three categories: Journalist, Assistant Editor or Shift Editor and Editor. This facilitated an overview of how each of the genders was distributed in terms of power. Then the numbers of men versus the number of women employed in each category were compared.

These results then facilitated the composition of a number of graphs for each newsroom respectively, visually communicating the division of influence in regards to gender; denoting how many women work as editors, shift managers or journalists in comparison the men.

This also allowed for the opportunity to assess the proficiency of each newsroom to promote or install women into positions of influence within the newsroom and to compare each newsroom to one another’s standards.

3.1.4 Aim of Research for Employment Data
The aim of the first branch of research is to gauge the first research question, namely, whether there is gender balance in following levels of employment;
Journalists, Assistant Editors or Shift Editor and Editors in the following news outlets; RÚV, Morgunblaðið and Fréttablaðið.

Rather than solely analysing whether the ratio's between women employed and men employed were the same, the aim of this particular branch of research was to examine where women in these three Icelandic news media's ranked in the employment hierarchy of the newsroom.

3.2 Methodology for discerning gender gaps in Icelandic newsrooms:

The Diary

The point of the “Gender” Diary was to gain a more comprehensive perspective on the role gender plays in Icelandic newsrooms from the perspective of the female media workers in question.

3.2.1 Research Parameters

Not every participant who filled out the Diary was a journalist; rather the female media professionals came from varying positions of power within the newsrooms. They ranged from editors, shift editors and journalists. Each of them was directly involved in published or broadcast content, whether they wrote it themselves, edited it, commissioned and managed other journalists.

The reason for choosing women of varying positions of authority was to obtain a kind of cross section of perspectives within the job hierarchy of each newsroom, so as to diversify the range of answers and preferably get varied responses.

The diary was composed of 5 questions in total pertaining to the participant’s day
at the newsroom. Most, but not all, questions asked participants to think about gender as they reflected on their day in the diary. All the questions were constructed to provoke expressive answers. Questions that could lead to a simple 'yes' and 'no' were avoided by asking the participants to, for example, “describe” their day as opposed to asking whether it was a good or bad day.

The construction of the questionnaire was helped by keeping three of Dillman's (1978) four headings in consideration. With focus aimed at trying to encompass:

1. **Beliefs**, what the interview subjects believe to be true
2. **Attitudes**, what would people prefer to be the case
3. **Attributes**, background information such as their job title

### 3.2.2 Data Collection

The participants were required to fill the diary out over a time period spanning two working days. This diary was also filled out before the scheduled in-depth interview so as to allow the participants time to mull over the aftermath of the diary.

The diary sheet was distributed electronically as an attached Word file in emails to all participants. Once the Diary was completed the participants attached the finished document and returned it via email.

The reasons for distributing and collecting the Diary electronically were both a matter of convenience as well as an issue of cost effectiveness. It was also incredibly helpful in terms of data collection because it allowed for easier
registration of results and saved time in transcription.

The downside however was “abandonment” which is often a problem in synchronous and asynchronous online qualitative questioning (Bryman 2004), after all it is easier to ignore an email than a person and therefore, despite agreeing to filling out the diary several participants were slow to do so. To counteract “abandonment” however, a series of polite email reminders and phone calls were employed to non-responders.

### 3.2.3 Data Analysis

Once all the participants had handed in their “Gender” diary the answers for the following questions were analysed for common complaints, praises, answers and themes to gain an overall picture of each newsroom from a gender perspective.

- a. Did gender play a role in the news items you were assigned or assigned to others?
- b. Did you experience an incident that highlighted gender difference?
- c. Were more men or women quoted in the news items you wrote or commissioned others to write?
- d. Was the day positive or negative?

### 3.2.4 Aim of Research for the Diary

The aim of the Diary was in itself threefold. Firstly it was to function as reinforcement of the in-depth interview allowing for greater range in thoughts or opinions. Often when put on the spot in an interview for example, interviewees can forget the points they intended to come across or perhaps get off track as the
interview evolves. The diary therefore was constructed to give a healthier overall perspective on their newsroom experience.

The second goal was to make the participants reflect on the role that gender played in their day-to-day through the diary.

Thirdly there was an interest in exploring whether thinking about events of the day from a gendered perspective in the diary would lead the participants to consider the influence of gender in their workplace more frequently, which is why it was required to fill out the diary before the in-depth interview.

3.3 Methodology for discerning gender gaps in Icelandic newsroom:

The In-depth Interview

The third research method applied to this thesis was the collection of in-depth interview with each of the nine participants who filled out the questionnaire. The interview lasted roughly half an hour to an hour and was geared towards giving the participants who worked in newsrooms an opportunity to express themselves on issues linked to the questionnaire and also in a more general casual form and setting. At their own request, three of the interviews were conducted at the participants’ place of work. Two were conducted in in the author’s home, and one in a participant’s home. The final three were conducted over coffee at a café chosen by the participant. The interviews were recorded and transcribed.

3.3.1 Research Parameters

The interviews were deep and to an extent semi-structured. That is to say that while the interviews were framed with a predetermined list of questions, the
questions themselves were be open-ended in order to remove, as much was possible, pre-set possible answers in their own words.

While it has been argued that using deep interviews might in a way limit the validity of empirical media research, in this instant it is being used to enrich the quality of data collected.

As Deacon (2007: 65) points out, the strength of structured questioning is that it limits the influence of human factors on the data collection process. However, the interactive dialogue stimulated through less structured interviews, such as is ventured in this thesis, takes on the form and feel of talk between peers: loose, informal, coequal, committed, open ended and empathetic (Lindlof 1995: 164).

The question list for the in-depth interview itself was divided up into four categories:

1. The “Gender” Diary
2. Work Place Gender Perceptions
3. Overall Icelandic News Media Gender Perceptions
4. Additional Personal Opinions, Final Thoughts and Anecdotes.

The Diary section of the in-depth interview was tailored to reflect on the diary experience. The questions were aimed to discuss how they found filling out the diary, whether it was a positive or negative experience. It also investigated what they would have liked to improve about the diary and what they thought worked well. This line of questioning was also constructed to investigate whether upon filling out the diary, they noticed or felt that gender issues in their work place
were somehow highlighted.

The second section of the in-depth interview, which focused on Work Place Gender Perceptions, probed questions of gender equality within their specific place of work. The questions asked how they perceive the balance between genders in their work place, whether they felt that women are allotted positions of power, whether there is an even ratio between genders and finally what they like or would like to improve about the way gender is handled in their place of work.

The third section of questioning in the in-depth interview dealt with their own personal perceptions of how gender is treated in the overall Icelandic News Media. Looking beyond their own newsrooms, did the participants sense that there was greater balance or greater imbalance in the distribution of power amongst women working in the news outlets across the country?

The final section, Additional Personal Opinions, Final Thoughts and Anecdotes, was an open ended and abstract line of questioning that allowed for the participants to impart final thoughts, personal opinions or anecdotes about their experiences on gender equality throughout their career.

3.3.2 Data Analysis

Once completed the interviews were transcribed and grouped by the newsroom the participant worked in. Meaning three sets of interviews for Morgunblaðið, Fréttablaðið and RÚV respectively.

The main points made by the participants in their interviews and the most
prominent points of praise or conflict noted. These were then cross-referenced to discern patterns in opinions and personal conclusions.

Once this cross-reference of opinions and common conclusions had been indexed it was possible to discern the gender perceptions, as seen by the participants, within each newsroom. Following this the results of the in-depth interviews of each newsroom was compared with the results from the other newsrooms. This was done in order to observe whether or not there were any overall common themes or patterns of opinion within all of the newsrooms.

3.3.3 Aim of Research of In-Depth Interviews

The aim of the in-depth interviews was predominantly to discuss and assess how these female journalists, editors and shift editors perceive their position in the newsroom.

As well as to provide an arena to discuss their opinions freely, to discern whether they felt, that there was a gender gap in their workplace, how they felt in terms of power of influence, whether it is harder for them to get ahead and so forth.

It was also to help answer the final research question; Do female media workers employed at RÚV, Morgunblaðið and Fréttablaðið perceived that employing equal ratios of men and women in the newsroom is a priority for their employers?
4. Results and Themes

The results of this dissertation are split into three parts. The first deals with the employment information gathered from the newsrooms of Morgunblaðið, Fréttablaðið and RÚV, the second and third with the qualitative results gathered from the research into the perceptions of the nine participants employed at the previously mentioned media outlets.

The data for this essay was collected in Iceland between January and April of 2011 and since the collection of these data sets there may have been changes to the number of employees in the investigated newsrooms as well as a shift in the ratio between men and women employed.

### 4.1 Employment hierarchy in Icelandic newsrooms

The following results constitute the employment data collected between January and April of 2011 from the following news outlets, RÚV, Morgunblaðið and Fréttablaðið. The graphs display the gender ratios of each level of employment as well as the relationship between job hierarchy and genders themselves.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Raw Employment Data for RÚV</th>
<th>Journalists</th>
<th>Assistant Editors</th>
<th>Editor or other senior positions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1. Raw Employment Data for National Broadcaster RÚV in numbers of Journalists, Assistant Editors and Editors by gender.
4.1.1 Employment hierarchy in Icelandic newsrooms: RÚV

The first set of results was collected from Iceland’s national broadcast agency, RÚV, in January of 2011. As a state run agency, RÚV’s employment records are public and accessible on their website.

**Graph 1.** Ratio of women employed at RÚV working as, journalists, assistant editors as well as editors or other senior positions.

**Graph 2.** Ratio of men employed at RÚV working as, journalists, assistant editors as well as editors or other senior positions.
The results shown in graph 1 conclude that a majority, 70%, of the women employed in the RÚV newsroom are journalists. Assistant editors compose 7% of the female newsroom staff and 23% of the women working in the RÚV newsrooms have editorial or senior staff positions.

The results shown in graph 2 conclude that the majority, 84%, of the male staff working in the RÚV newsroom are also journalists. Assistant editors compose 7% of the male newsroom staff and lastly 9% of the men working in the RÚV newsrooms have editorial or senior staff positions.

**Graph 3. Ratio of male journalists versus female journalists working at RÚV**

The results shown in graph 3 conclude that the majority, 63%, of the journalism staff working in the RÚV newsroom are male and 37% of the journalism staff is female. The number of men employed as journalists outnumber the female journalists employed.
Graph 4. Ratio of male assistant editors versus female assistant editors working at RÚV.

The results shown in graph 4 conclude that the majority, 60%, of assistant editors or shift editors working in the RÚV newsroom are male and 40% of the assistant editors are female. The number of men employed as assistant editors outnumber the female assistant editors employed.

Graph 5. Ratio of men working as editors or other senior newsroom position versus women working as editors or other senior newsroom position at RÚV.
The results shown in graph 5 conclude that the majority, 64%, of the senior editorial staff working in the RÚV newsroom are female and 36% of the senior editorial staff is male. The number of women employed as editors or other senior newsroom position outnumbers the men employed as editors or other senior newsroom role.

4.1.2 Employment hierarchy in Icelandic newsrooms: Morgunblaðið

The second set of results was collected from one of Iceland’s largest daily newspapers, Morgunblaðið, as well as their online component, mbl.is. The employment data was provided, upon request, in April of 2011 by the newspaper itself.

The graphs include a group of employees entitled “Other” which is not present in the graphical data of the other media outlets examined in this dissertation. The “Other” represents the newsroom staff that contributes to the content of the newspaper or website but is neither a journalist nor editor, i.e. photographers, lay out designers and proof readers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Raw Employment Data for Morgunblaðið</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journalists</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2. Raw Employment Data for Morgunblaðið in numbers of Journalists, Assistant Editors, Editors and “Other” by gender.
Graph 6 Ratio of women employed at Morgunblaðið and mbl.is working as journalists, assistant editors, editors or other.

The results shown in graph 6 conclude that the majority, 45%, of the women working in the newsroom of Morgunblaðið and mbl.is fall under the category of “Other”. The percentage of women employed as journalists accounts for the 41% of the total female newsroom staff, 7% are assistant editors and 7% are employed as editors or another senior newsroom position.

Graph 7. Ratio of men employed at Morgunblaðið and mbl.is working as, journalists, assistant editors, editors or other.
The results shown in graph 7 conclude that the majority, 47%, of the men working in the newsroom of Morgunblaðið and mbl.is are journalists. The percentage of men employed as “Other” account for the 27% of the total male newsroom staff, 5% are assistant editors and 21% are employed as editors or another senior newsroom position.

Graph 8. Ratio of male journalists versus female journalists working at Morgunblaðið and mbl.is.

The results shown in graph 8 conclude that the majority, 70%, of the journalism staff working in the newsroom of Morgunblaðið and mbl.is male and 30% of the journalism staff is female. The number of men employed as journalists outnumber the women employed journalists.
The results shown in graph 9 conclude that the majority, 60%, of the assistant editors working in the newsroom of Morgunblaðið and mbl.is male and 40% of the assistant editors are female. The number of men employed as assistant editors outnumber the women employed as assistant editors.

Graph 10. Ratio of men working as editors or other senior newsroom position versus women working as editors or other newsroom senior position at Morgunblaðið and mbl.is

The number of men working as editors or other senior positions is 86% whereas the women working as editors or other senior positions is 14%.
The results shown in graph 10 conclude that the majority, 86%, of those working as editors or in another senior newsroom position at Morgunblaðið and mbl.is are male and 14% of those working as editors or in another senior newsroom position are female. The number of men employed as editors or in another senior newsroom position outnumbers the women working as editors or in another senior newsroom position.

**Ratio of men working as photographers, proofreaders or lay-out designers versus women working photographers, proofreaders or lay out designers at Morgunblaðið and mbl.is**

![Graph 11. Ratio of men working as photographers, proof readers or lay-out designers versus women working photographers, proofreaders or lay out designers at Morgunblaðið and mbl.is](image)

The results shown in graph 11 conclude that the majority, 56%, of those employed in the category “Other” i.e. photographers, proofreaders or lay out designers are female and 44% are male. The number of women employed in the category “Other” i.e. photographers, proofreaders or lay out designers outnumber the men employed as “Other”.

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4.1.3 Employment hierarchy in Icelandic newsrooms: Fréttablaðið

The third set of results was collected from another of Iceland’s largest daily newspapers, Fréttablaðið, as well as their online component, visir.is. The employment data is public and available on the publisher’s, Miðlar 365, website. It was collected in January of 2011.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Raw Employment Data for Fréttablaðið</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journalists</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3. Raw Employment Data for Fréttablaðið in numbers of Journalists, Editors and Editor in Chief by gender.

Graph 12. Ratio of women employed at Fréttablaðið and visir.is working as journalists or editors

The results shown in graph 12 conclude that the majority, 94%, of the women
working in the newsroom of Fréttablaðið and visir.is are journalists and 6% are employed as editors.

Graph 13. Ratio of men employed at Fréttablaðið working as journalists, editors or editor in chief

The results shown in graph 13 conclude that the majority, 80%, of the men working in the newsroom of Fréttablaðið and visir.is are journalists, 17% are editors and 3% represents the editor in chief of Fréttablaðið, a man.

Graph 14. Ratio of male journalists versus female journalists working at Fréttablaðið and visir.is
The results shown in graph 14 conclude that the majority, 63%, of the journalistic staff at Fréttablaðið and visir.is are men and that 37% of the journalistic staff are women. The number of male journalistic staff outnumbers the number of female journalistic staff employed at Fréttablaðið and visir.is.

**Graph 15. Ratio of male editors versus female editors working at Fréttablaðið and visir.is**

The results shown in graph 15 conclude that the majority, 86%, of the editorial staff at Fréttablaðið and visir.is are men and that 14% of the editorial staff are women. The number of male editors outnumbers the number of female editors employed at Fréttablaðið and visir.is.

### 4.2 Discerning gender gaps in Icelandic newsroom: The Diary

In order to lay a foundation in the investigation of gender hierarchies in Icelandic newsrooms each participant in the study was asked to keep a work diary for a period of two working days. The diary consisted of 5 questions to gauge the participant’s day and to help each participant reflect upon their day from a gendered perspective. In this section we will go over the most prominent results
discerned in diaries of all participants. For each set of results are two graphs, the first covering data conveyed on day one of keeping the diary and the second graph displaying data from day two.

4.2.1 Did Gender Play a Role in the news items you were assigned or assigned to others?

Graph 16. Did Gender Play a Role in the news items you were assigned or assigned to others? Day 1

Graph 17. Did Gender Play a Role in the news items you were assigned or assigned to others? Day 2
The results from the first day conclude that a vast majority, 77%, did not feel that gender played a role in the news items they were assigned but 22% found that gender did play a role in the news items they were assigned to write. On the second day all participants felt that gender was irrelevant in the news items they were assigned to write.

When asked to elaborate on which way gender played a role in the news items the participants were assigned, one cited that although she felt that her gender did not play a role in the news items that she was assigned to, she felt that her female colleagues were assigned news items of a "softer" nature, stereotypically assigned to women. Another participant, an editor, felt that gender played a role in the news items she assigned other staff as she prioritised women’s issues and wanted to make sure that news affecting women was not marginalised.
4.2.2 Did you experience an incident that highlighted gender difference?

**Graph 18. Did you experience an incident that highlighted gender difference? Day 1**

![Graph showing 56% Yes, 44% No for Day 1]

**Graph 19. Did you experience an incident that highlighted gender difference? Day 2**

![Graph showing 22% Yes, 78% No for Day 2]

The results from the first day of the diary conclude that a small majority, 56%, of the participants did not experience an incident in their day that they felt
highlighted gender difference. However, 44% reported an incident that, in their opinion, highlighted gender difference.

On the second day 22% of the participants reported experiencing an incident that highlighted gender difference and 78% did not experience an incident highlighting gender difference.

When asked to elaborate on the incident that they felt highlighted gender differences, one participant wrote in their diary that “it happens every day and it is hard to pinpoint what exactly it is”. Another participant felt that her own gender was highlighted as her workplace is predominantly male and found herself alienated by male cliques and “football talk”.

4.2.3 Gender ratio of those quoted in the participants’ news items

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender ratio of those quoted in the participants' news items. Day 1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Men</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Graph 20. Gender ratio of those quoted in the participants' news items.

Day 1
The results from the first day conclude that a majority, 60%, of the participants quoted more men than women in the news items that they wrote or assigned others to write. Twenty per cent of the participants quoted more women than men and for 20% the question was not applicable, meaning that they did not write articles that required or used quotes in.

The results from the second day conclude that a majority, 50% of the participants quoted more men than women in the news items that they wrote or assigned others to write. Ten per cent of the participants quoted more women than men, 10% quoted the same amount of women in their news items as they did men and for 30% the question was not applicable.

One participant made a point of writing in their diary that although she had quoted more men in her news items than women, she had approached several female professionals relevant to the topic but all had declined being interviewed and referred to a male colleague.
4.2.4 Was the day positive or negative?

The results from the first day conclude that a majority of the participants, 89%, had a positive day at work while 11% had a neutral day, meaning neither good nor bad and none of the participants had a negative day.

The results from the second day conclude that once again a majority of the participants, 78%, had a positive day at work while 22% had a neutral day,
meaning neither good nor bad, and none of the participants had a negative day.

Following the diary that the participants filled out, each participant attended an in-depth interview.

4.3 Discerning gender gaps in Icelandic newsroom: The In-depth Interview

Following the diary that the participants filled out, each participant attended an in-depth interview that lasted roughly half an hour. With the diary as a foundation for reflection the participants were given an opportunity to express their opinions on the employment hierarchy of their newsrooms, their perceptions of the Icelandic media market and to share personal experiences or thoughts. In this section of the results chapter, common themes and the connection between perceptions and the data collected will be examined.

4.3.1 Thinking about Gender Gaps

With the diary in hindsight, each participant was asked to consider the impact filling it out had on them. Specifically whether or not they felt that filling the diary out made them think on gender gaps in the newsroom more than they already had. Each participant, barring one reported that the diary had not made them think about gender gaps more. When asked why the most common answer was that they thought on gender equality in the workplace often. One participant said, “I even discuss it openly with my colleagues”. Another participant said, “I think of it often, but then I push it aside because it makes me too angry”. One journalist reported that as a feminist she felt it was important to take stock of the gender situation regularly, “also I am the only [female journalist] on staff in my
newsroom. It’s hard not to notice that”. Yet another participant reported that she feels aware of gender gaps all the time “but when there is so much else going on, unemployment and that, then [gender equality issues] fall by the wayside, people are already afraid of losing their jobs, they might not have time to think about gender inequality, maybe they are afraid to speak up.”

There was only one participant who reported thinking more on gender gaps in the newsroom following the diary. When asked to explain she answered, “I realised [while filling out the diary] that there was more of a slant to interviewing and quoting men. It’s become like a habit because it’s easier to get men to talk to you.”

### 4.3.2 Quoting the Genders

A prevalent theme that surfaced in several of the participant interviews, regardless of the newsroom in which they were employed was the gender balance in the news items themselves. That is to say, the ratio of women interviewed or quoted in news items as opposed to men interviewed and quoted.

One participant complained, “We are not always thinking about how we choose our interviewees or equality and we fall into the same old patterns. This needs to be addressed more.” Another participant, who works predominantly with men, expressed concern over statistics she was presented with in the previous year that stated that the majority of interviews conducted by the staff in her newsroom were with men. She articulated frustration, that despite making a conscious effort to interview the same amount of women as men, her male co-workers might not share the same priorities to maintain a balance in the gender of the news subjects.
She said, “is it only me who interviews women? Is it my responsibility?”

In a separate interview, another participant argued, “I think the female journalists themselves need to prioritise interviewing more women… we need to ask ourselves when we are working, can I interview a woman here?”

Yet another participant said that she had spent a great deal of time thinking on this topic after being asked in the diary, whether she had quoted more men or women during the day. She shared the following anecdote to express her opinion on this matter:

“I overheard the other day, a journalist who was writing an article and wanted to get an interview with a member of a board. All the board members were women except for one man. Then I overhear her on the phone a day later saying, ’Listen I have called every single woman on this board and all of you have referred me to this one man, none of you have let me interview you.’ [Pause] and it wasn’t some tough news story it was just about some gymnastics competition. So the journalist was like ’I want to speak to a woman’, and in the end the last female board member caved and did the interview. Sometimes I find that I too have to really push women into interviews… and sometimes I do ask myself how much is this our responsibility to bully women into giving interviews? And still we do it because we want there to be a balanced reporting… journalists have to be conscious of talking to women, but what I think the issue at hand is, why do we always go straight to the man for an interview? Why are we inclined that way? Why do we have to remind ourselves to interview women? Why is it when I’m standing out in the field and I need to interview someone about a town, or
healthcare, or whatever and I ask a local, do you know of someone interesting with whom I can speak to and I’m always pointed at men… and it makes me crazy that I have to remind myself to talk to other women. I think that female journalists are just as bad at remembering to interview female subjects because for some reason, in our society, we believe that some middle aged man in a grey suit is more believable, even though we know better.”

Another participant expressed concern over women being reluctant to “go on the record” and be quoted for news items or interviews on radio and television and as a result she felt that she saw ”the same women in the media over and over again.”

4.3.3 Experiencing Gender Inequality

The majority of the participants did not feel that they experienced gender inequality in the way they were treated by their male colleagues in the workplace. One participant said, “I don’t experience any gender inequality in my day-to-day... most of the boys I work with are feminists, so that’s just fun.”

Another participant said, “I work with men who, I think, aren’t conscious of the fact that there should be gender equality, but that it simply is normal and natural for there to be gender equality.” She continued by saying, “In my place of work I don’t feel that there is any inequality between the genders. Or rather I don’t get the feeling from my bosses or colleagues that it matters in the slightest whether I am a man or a woman... speaking for myself, I never felt inequality.”

While the majority of the participants did not feel that they experienced gender inequality in the workplace, there were two participants who felt that they did.
One reported that she felt she needed to argue harder to get her article ideas taken seriously whereas a male counterpart would not have had the same problem. Another participant reported that while she did not feel she was treated differently based on her gender but rather was appraised by her experience she often noticed trends where other women in the newsroom where being dealt out “soft news” as opposed to men who were typically allotted “hard news”. It was prevalent in the results that the participants felt they saw gender inequality elsewhere but did not feel they experienced it themselves.

4.3.4 Is Gender Balance Amongst Employees a Priority?

When asked whether the participants felt that their place of employment prioritised keeping gender ratios balanced amongst its employees those participants working in the same newsrooms gave the same answers independently of one another.

The participants who worked at Fréttablaðið all reported that they felt that there were not enough women employed in the newsroom but believed that despite this their employers prioritised gender equality.

One participant said that she felt it was obvious that hiring more women was a priority at Fréttablaðið but “I think they could be more proactive.”

Another participant from Fréttablaðið also felt that in her workplace it was clear that keeping a balanced gender ratio in her workplace was a priority. She said, “there are more men, we need more women... they want to hire more women and they talk about it. I know they want to change it.”
The last participant from Fréttablaðið said, “we do not have enough female staff...there isn’t the right balance and we know it. We are trying to fix this. The next person to be hired will be a woman.” She added, “My boss is very much a gender equality activist, he wants change, and I know that it will happen but as it stands he is not allowed to hire anyone because there is a hiring cap on the paper. If someone quits, then he can hire a woman but as it stands our budgets don’t allow for it.”

In summary, overall the participants from Fréttablaðið expressed that although they did not feel that the ratio between men and women working in the newsroom was equal, they felt that their workplace prioritised the hiring of women.

When interviewing participants from the national broadcaster, RÚV, the following impression was given; that the number of women being hired into the newsroom was on the rise.

All three RÚV participants interviewed believed that RÚV prioritised balanced gender ratios in their hiring process though two out of three felt there was still room for improvement while the third believed that there might be more women working in the newsroom than men.

One participant at RÚV expressed the belief that one of the reasons for a rise in women employed at the national broadcaster boiled down to education, saying, “I think [gender ratios are] shifting with the demands made on education. I think that there are more women in university and as education becomes bigger demand in
this workplace more women will be better qualified candidates.”

Perhaps the most negative perceptions on the prioritisation of gender ratios in the workplace came from participants working at Morgunblaðið. Each reported that they felt that there was a gender deficit and that more women were needed in the newsroom. When asked whether they felt that gender ratios were prioritised one participant said, “no, not at all... there haven’t been so few women in the newsroom in ten years, and when it’s like this you don’t reflect society because it’s fifty per cent women out there and fifty per cent men.”

Another participant said, “I don’t think that [Morgunblaðið] prioritises keeping the gender ratios in balance to be honest. I don’t get the impression that they care or discuss it.”

The last participant said that she did not feel that Morgunblaðið prioritised gender ratios and added that she felt her newsroom did not prioritise the existing female staff, “I actually feel that it doesn’t matter how hard [women] work here, they will not achieve.”

Overall the participants interviewed from Morgunblaðið did not believe that balanced gender ratios amongst its employees was prioritised and all believed that there was room for improvement.

When asked whether the participants believed that women in their workplace were allotted, or given the chance to obtain positions of power within the newsroom, six participants answered, “Yes”. Three participants believed that their
workplace did not allot women positions of power. All three participants that answered no came from Morgunblaðið.

4.3.5 What Would You Change?

When the participants were asked what they would most like to change about the state of the Icelandic media market the majority reported that they would like to see more women in higher positions.

One participant said, “My current boss is the fourteenth editor I have worked under in fifteen years and he is the fourteenth man. I have never worked under a female editor... Would be nice to see a woman on top.”

Another participant said, “There aren’t many women in positions of power. In opposition it is said that not many women seek out positions of power and maybe there is something to that and we can’t judge the women who just want to do their job from nine to five but you can’t use that as an excuse either... The women in charge [in my workplace] aren’t treated like they are less important because they are women but there could be more of them... It would be nice to have more women in charge, doesn’t have to be the absolute to positions either, but more assistant editors or shift editors.”

Another participant believed that the installation of more women in positions of power within the Icelandic media market was only a matter of time; she said, “I think time is a factor, a woman will become an editor, it’s inevitable.”

Yet another participant believed that needing more women in higher job positions
was not limited to the media market, arguing that gender equality applied to all businesses.

One participant said that given the chance to change one thing in the Icelandic media market she would call for greater examination of the gender pay gap, saying: “I would assume there’s inequality in pay, which of course no one knows the details of, but you feel sometimes that you’re not quite on an equal footing with [male] counterparts but maybe you’re not as ‘experienced’ as they are. And everyone who is above me, my boss and my boss’ boss are men… We need to take a serious look at pay gaps between gender in Icelandic media.” This participant was the only one to bring up the topic of gender pay gaps in the in-depth interview.

4.3.6 Personal Experiences

At the end of each interview, participants were asked if they had any personal story, or thought they would like to share. Four of the participants reported noticing a male dominant atmosphere with “football talk” and “crude jokes”. While three of the participants found this off putting one participant said, “it’s not bad, it just is.”

Other participants used the opportunity to share as a way to highlight their experiences or opinions.

One participant said, “I don’t know whether this plays into equality or inequality but one thing that really annoys me is the idea that newswomen are supposed to be cute. Loads of make up and beautifully blown out hair like we’re working for a
big news station out in America or something. Surely the focus should be on the quality of the news item. But I think that this is something that women in part put on themselves, because we’re so used to having to make ourselves look pretty if we know a lot of people are going to be looking at us, like if we go out to clubbing or something and suddenly [the news is] like a show. Which I think is weird and the wrong track. You can look nice but you don’t have to look like a fucking princess.”

Another participant relayed the following, “Once I landed in this situation where I was about to go live on TV in fifteen minutes. Then my boss at the time says, ’Damn, don’t you have to go to make up and hair?’ and he was worried about that, the hair and the time and so on. Then he says, ’wasn’t life just so much easier when there weren’t any women working and they didn’t have to always go to make up?’ And I thought, you must be kidding me! What bullshit. I don’t have to go to make up to do the news. This really bothered me... the idea that women won’t do interviews because they don’t want to look bad on TV. It’s a myth. I’ve never had to deal with that.”

Despite these anecdotes however, overall, every participant expressed a positive attitude towards their career in journalism. One participant said, “This is the best job in the world and worth fighting for. We have to fight for equality, for the future. We just have to do it.” Another said, ”We just need to discuss [gender equality] honestly and openly... everyone has to be on the same team. We can’t be girls bitching out the boys or the boys bitching out the girls. We have to be on the same team.”
5. Discussion and Conclusion

The results of the research conducted certainly do give an impression the state of Icelandic newsrooms from a gender angle. It is important to keep in perspective, the smallness of the Icelandic media market, and smaller still the pool of media workers employed in newsrooms when excluding staff working in magazines or on television programmes. Part of the data is also qualitative as opposed to quantative and relies on the personal perceptions of the media workers themselves. Despite this however, common beliefs and answers emerged amongst the participants despite ranging in age, education and even place of work, as they separately identified key issues.

To begin with, in terms of gender ratios all news outlets employed more men than women on every level of employment save one. That is to say that, at RÚV, Morgunblaðið and Fréttablaðið there were more male journalists than female journalists. The ratio at both RÚV and Fréttablaðið was 63% male journalists versus 37% female journalists. Morgunblaðið had the worst gender ratios in this category with 70% male journalists versus 30% female journalists.

Going up one level of employment, by looking at assistant editors and shift managers, both RÚV and Morgunblaðið had a gender ratio of 60% male assistant editors versus 40% female assistant editors and shift editors. As Fréttablaðið and visir.is have such small employment numbers and a flat management style, the distinction of assistant editors is less applicable.

Going up one level still, by looking at the editorial level, Fréttablaðið and
Morgunblaðið both had a gender ratio of 86% of their editors being male and only 14% of their editors being female. However, in this result it is also important to keep in mind that the employment numbers at Fréttablaðið are significantly smaller than Morgunblaðið, which distorts the result somewhat. In this respect, given that the pool of employees is larger at Morgunblaðið they are the worst performers in this category. RÚV was the best performer in this respect with a surprising majority of women employed in editorial positions in the newsroom. At RÚV in this employment level the women composed 64% of editors while men composed 36%. This was the most surprising result when looking at how drastically it differed from the others.

That being said, the participants from RÚV also expressed the most satisfaction with the gender ratios of their workplace. All participants expressed a belief that RÚV prioritised hiring women and that women were given or had the opportunity to obtain jobs of authority in the newsroom.

Fréttablaðið had more male employees at every rank within the newsroom and each participant from Fréttablaðið expressed a desire to see more women employed as well as in top positions. Despite this however, each participant from Fréttablaðið also expressed a belief that their newsroom prioritised the hiring of female employees. They all believed that Fréttablaðið was an equal opportunity employer and when asked to explain the reason for the imbalance several of the participants emphasised that due to budget limitations there had not been any available positions in some time. Each participant from Fréttablaðið believed that the next employee hired would be a woman.
Morgunblaðið was not only statistically the worst performer in terms of gender ratios in the newsroom but also in terms of the perceptions of the participants employed there. None of the participants believed that Morgunblaðið prioritised balanced gender ratios in the newsrooms and none believed that women were given or had the opportunity to obtain jobs of authority in the newsroom. However, one participant expressed the belief that part of the reason the situation was so critical was due to a recent rash of women quitting their positions in the newsroom. The participant highlighted that a year previously the ratio between men and women in the Morgunblaðið newsroom had been far more balanced and believed it could reach a similar status again.

When interviewed several common themes emerged amongst the participants that did not necessarily involve the workplace hierarchy. One such example is the focus many of the participants put on the question of quotations. That is to say, the ratio between the number of men and women interviewed or quoted in the news items they produced or their colleagues produced. Each participant who brought the topic up felt there was a clear deficit in the number of women quoted or interviewed as opposed to men and one participant even referred to a study conducted the previous year, which proved without qualms that more men were interviewed in her newsroom than women.

Here it is possible to refer to both the Reflection Theory and Distortion. Reflection Theory because less women were quoted than men, despite women composing half of Iceland’s population. Also since there were fewer women working in the newsroom than men there is an argument for the lack of true reflection of Icelandic society. Without either an equal distribution of female
employees or at least an equal distribution of power between the genders how is it possible to reflect the values of all sexes in society? Also, with distortion in mind, it could be argued that the deficit in female experts and interviewees distorts “reality”, with a ratio of female presence in the media that does not add up to the population.

The interesting points of view here were the various takes or beliefs on why there was a gender deficit in the quotation and interview process. One participant blamed the interviewees themselves, saying that she felt that women were harder to convince to go on the record, perhaps because they were obsessed with their appearance. Another participant in a separate interview claimed that she had never had difficulty getting a woman to be interviewed based on her appearance and believed that to be a “myth”.

Yet another participant articulated that she always had an almost flawless record in keeping an equal balance between the genders in her reportage and felt deep frustration that her co-workers did not prioritise quoting men and women equally leading her to ask, “is it only me who interviews women? Is it my responsibility?”

Meanwhile another participant felt that indeed the responsibility for getting women into the news lay on the shoulders of female journalists by saying, “I think the female journalists themselves need to prioritise interviewing more women… we need to ask ourselves when we are working, can I interview a woman here?”

What is interesting here are the contrary opinions on this subject. All the participants agree that they would like to see more female employees in the
newsroom yet the majority quoted more men in their news items than women during the time of the diary. They also have vastly contrasting and enthusiastic opinions on who’s responsibility the quoting of women in the news should be. Some imply the female news subjects are uncooperative, others indicate the lack of effort from the male employees drag the overall effort down and others believe it is the woman’s responsibility.

With a view to answering the third research question, the results suggest that even if more women were employed within the newsrooms that alone would not necessarily equal more women being quoted in published content. Despite all the participants being women, they all quoted more men in their news items than women.

The interest in this subject was perhaps the most passionate in the qualitative research as was the exploration of gender equality in the day-to-day. The majority of the participants did not feel inequality in their day-to-day, however, each said that they were aware of, and often thought about, gender equality.

An interesting contradiction was how many participants perceived gender inequality in the way that other women were treated but did not perceive gender equality in their own personal experience. Yet the majority of participants gave examples of experiencing gender inequality while discussing past work experiences. Raising the question whether it is easier to see gender equality in the way others are treated than admitting to experiencing it yourself.

Despite the majority of participants articulating that they did not feel any direct
gender difference in their everyday, there were still reports of incidents or realisations of gender inequality in the newsroom. The participants who reported such incidents did not come from one particular news outlet but rather reports of such incidents were recorded at RÚV, Morgunblaðið and Fréttablaðið alike.

To go back to the hypothesis, of whether the newsrooms of RÚV, Morgunblaðið and Fréttablaðið employ the same amount of men and women in the following levels of employment; journalist, assistant editor and editor. The answer is clearly no. While predominantly the percentage of men was higher than that of women, there was also a clear gender imbalance amongst the editors at RÚV whereby women represented 64% of the editors as opposed to men.

To address the second question, whether women perceived that employing equal ratios of men and women in the newsroom was a priority for their employers the answer becomes more complex.

All participants employed at RÚV believed that employing equal ratios of men and women in the newsroom was a priority for their employers. This perception was proven somewhat correct when considering that gender ratios were more balanced at RÚV than at Morgunblaðið and Fréttablaðið.

All participants employed at Fréttablaðið believed that employing equal ratios of men and women in the newsroom was a priority for their employers despite the gender deficit in the employment ratios.

All participants employed at Morgunblaðið believed that employing equal ratios
of men and women in the newsroom was a not a priority for their employers. A perception that the statistics on gender ratios in every level of employment backs up.
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