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“If it is our passion we can do it” :

A qualitative study on female journalist students in Kerala.

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## Abstract

This thesis consists of qualitative research on how female journalist students in Kerala cope with the dilemma of being in between traditional values of family life and career ambitions.

The study analyses their dreams, goals and feelings towards their future careers within the field of journalism, versus the obligated norms of society, using their emotions as an analytic tool.

From a perspective of Margareta Melin's theory on tactics of female journalists to stay in the field, the study also discusses how female students develop strategies and ways to come around the obstacles that that they can expect in their future field of work.

Having a deep focus on female students' future, the journalistic field as a gendered space, the thesis is analysed through both Bourdieu's theory of fields and Marie Djerf Pierre's gender logic. The main result is a hopeful and bright reflection of a society, and perhaps a gender role, in change.

Keywords: Female journalist students, Emotions, Kerala, Gender, Journalistic field

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# 1. Introduction

Long before the final decision to go to India was taken, when our thoughts of that kind was only a dream, we could only imagine how it would be. Although many fantasise about India as an exotic and mysterious destination filled with colours, beauty and wonderful smells, the country struggles with a stereotype with far more negative tones. As the journey was finally coming together, other people's stories and experiences of India were just as much negative, as wonderful things flowing in that stream. There were many discussions on how it would be as a Westerner, as a journalist student, as a woman. The curiosity never bowed down in favor for the uncertainties, we are journalists to be!

As the UNDP's annual report shows: even though India has improved its human development rates overall the last decade, the human development index is still low in a worldwide perspective. Adding gender as an indicator of consideration, the country still has far to go, still being low ranked as the 130th country out of 155 listing the world's gender development index.<sup>1</sup>

Kerala, the Indian state in the Southwest, has been pointed out to be a very good example when it comes to women's development, in a country that lacks of such in many ways. Women in Kerala are highly educated and the literacy rate in the southern state is the highest in India. According to Swapna Mukhopadhyay this advantage does not only come with positive effects, but also confusion.<sup>2</sup> She explains how Malayalee women<sup>3</sup>, in many ways, are caught between the responsibility of family life and career ambitions. After getting married, the social pressure of

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<sup>1</sup> The HDI is an average measure of basic human development achievements in a country measured by UNDP. It is an average of long-term progress in three basic dimensions of human development with a long and healthy life, access to knowledge and a decent standard of living. From UNDP: <http://www.in.undp.org/>

<sup>2</sup> Swapna Mukhopadhyay, "Understanding the enigma of women's status in Kerala: Does high literacy necessarily translate into high status?", *The enigma of the Kerala woman: a failed promise of literacy*, red. Mukhopadhyay, Swapna (New Delhi: Social Science Press, 2007).

<sup>3</sup> The people of Kerala are known as Malayalees.

taking responsibility for the family is almost non-negotiable.<sup>4</sup> When looking into the contradiction that dominates the lives of Kerala women, with the responsibility for the family life, with the medial context of India, we found it interesting to investigate the world of female journalist students in Kerala, their dreams and career goals in their future professional area. How do the female journalist students motivate themselves, given the imbalance in responsibility of family life when they are given the chance of a career in the state where the highest education rates for women in India lives?

## 1.1. Background

There are not much statistics on the journalist working force in India, and even less so on what the gender division is like within the field. But researchers witness of an overall increase of female journalists all over the country.<sup>5</sup> Since three decades back women are now possessing positions everywhere within journalism. It is far from equal but nowadays women hold posts at all levels, although the number of women tend to decrease, the further up in the chain of hierarchy.<sup>6</sup>

Women entering media has a direct connection to the democratization process in a country. The organization Network of Women in Media describes this phenomena in the following way: “the power of the press is noted to be more penetrating than the sword, and has

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<sup>4</sup> J Devika , & Avanti Mukherjee, “Re-forming women in Malayalee Modernity: A historical overview”, *The enigma of the Kerala woman: a failed promise of literacy*, red. Mukhopadhyay, Swapna (New Delhi: Social Science Press, 2007), p. 103.f.

<sup>5</sup> Ammu Joseph, “Working, Watching and Waiting: Women and Issues of Access, Employment and Decision-Making in the Media in India”, *Women and media: international perspectives*, red. Ross, Karen & Byerly, Carolyn M. (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2004) p. 134. Also: IFJ Asia-Pacific, *Media and Gender in India, Part of the IFJ Media and Gender in Asia-Pacific Research Project* (2015). Country report from <http://www.ifj.org>.

<sup>6</sup> Women are still witnessing a glass ceiling that prevents them from having the same progression opportunities as their male colleagues. Network of women in India: <http://www.nwmindia.org>; Joseph, p. 135; Also: International Women’s Media Foundation, *IWMF global report* (2011): <https://www.iwmf.org/our-research/global-report>, p. 234f.

even been known to make or break governments by swaying public opinion”.<sup>7</sup> A common way to describe media is as the fourth estate: a powerful institution next to the legislative, executive and judiciary establishments.<sup>8</sup>

Ammu Joseph, who has carried on considerable research on media and gender in India, has described the methods of Indian females who try to enter the field of journalism and many of them match with the universal methods of female journalists. For instance that women find it easier to enter the broadcasting media than the printed press.<sup>9</sup> Another tactic, often so intertwined with our subconscious that it seems natural to us, is to apply the ideals and manners of the field you are entering. This is indeed a survival technique, considering that doing the opposite; refuse to recognize the rules and manners and adapt to them, will make a female journalist hit the glass ceiling sooner than their adapted female colleagues will.<sup>10</sup>

Obstacles that women experience, entering the journalistic field, are partly universal ones for women who are entering a male dominated field, but also specific to problems working as a female journalist in India.<sup>11</sup> Some, peculiar obstacles in the Indian context are the long, irregular working-hours and night-shifts which often clash with family structures and the expectations that come along with them. This makes female journalists miss out on being able to do a full-time reporting job and women from conservative families and/or women who cannot afford domestic help, will face many problems if they choose to stay in the profession.<sup>12</sup> There is also a wide recognised risk for women working night shifts, since being out in public late at night is considered dangerous. Many organisations where women work night shift feel obliged to organise transportations to and from the work and the home. Another difficulty connected to the

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<sup>7</sup> <http://www.nwmindia.org>

<sup>8</sup> <http://mediamagazine.in/content/indian-women-journalism>

<sup>9</sup> And in printed press, newspaper specially. Joseph, p. 140.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid. p. 138.

<sup>11</sup> For example, Ammu Joseph is suggesting that gender-based problems are more acute in the Indian – language press compared to the media distributed in English. The press in native languages are the by far most widespread media. p. 136.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid. p. 137.

responsibility of companies, is the lack of options organisations give women for family planning and childcare. Only 2 % of the journalists surveyed in a study made by IFJ and UNESCO, said their companies could offer help for child support.<sup>13</sup>

The state of Kerala is in many ways distinguished, compared to the other states of India and their own concept, “The Kerala model” is widely recognised and has frequently been the focus of many studies. Kerala gained fame in the 1970s when they proved that poor economic growth is no excuse to not make great achievements in social development.<sup>14</sup> The focus on high literacy, education and health has paid off well. Still, in Kerala modernisation lives side by side with traditional values and many women of the state experience that they are situated in the middle of two strong powers.<sup>15</sup> In Swapna Mukhopadhyay’s study, where this perplexity is in focus, she concludes that there need to be other factors than just literacy to create equality between the genders.<sup>16</sup> Is this other factor something that is traceable in the dreams of the students? Are the dreams of the female students delimited because of the perplexity, the enigma that Mukhopadhyay is pointing out.

## 2. Objective

Our aim with this thesis is to investigate how female journalist students in Kerala cope with being caught between gender related obligations, that follow with the responsibilities of traditional family values, versus the dream of a career as a journalist. Putting their dreams, expectations and reality in focus, we will research how present female journalist students interpret their own future. It is also of importance, and of our interest to collect information about

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<sup>13</sup> The survey showed data where at least 231 journalist had responded. Only 5 of them had pressed yes under the question if their company could provide child support. Similar, less than a third (32.60 percent) said that they had the right to take out maternity leave. From Media & gender in India report.

<sup>14</sup> J. Devika & Binitha V Thampi, “Mobility towards work and politics for women in Kerala state, India: A view from the histories of gender and space”, *Modern Asian studies*, vol. 45(05):1147 - 1175, (2011) p. 3.

<sup>15</sup> Mukhopadhyay, p. 5f.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid. p. 7.

how they wish to solve this dilemma, with patriarchal grounds in Indian society. Therefore, our main question for this research will be:

What do the dreams, expectations and feelings of female journalist students in Kerala say about their careers in their future profession and how do they look upon being situated between traditional family values, and their dream of a career in journalism? This question will be investigated and answered through these interests:

- What kind of experiences and emotions do female journalist students in Kerala express when they think of their professional future?
- How are these emotions connected to the journalistic field and its specific conditions in Kerala?
- What does these emotions and personal experiences say about their position in society?

### 3. Theory

Since we will investigate these women's dreams and expectations on their future we choose to apply the phenomenological research theory and method for our work. Phenomenological methods are particularly effective in bringing forward the experiences and perceptions of individuals from their own perspectives, and therefore, at challenging structural or normative assumptions. Adding an interpretive dimension to phenomenological research, enables the researcher to use the basis for practical theory, allows it to inform, support or challenge policy and action.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>17</sup><https://www.rgs.org/NR/rdonlyres/F50603E0-41AF-4B15-9C84-BA7E4DE8CB4F/0/Seaweedphenomenologyresearch.pdf>

### 3.1. Feelings as an analytic tool

Throughout the years, research within the field of media that focused on feelings, mainly consisted of measurements through experiments that would count and explain the affect and reactions induced by media and communication.<sup>18</sup> From 1960 up until the beginning of 2000 the feelings and reactions at an individual level were of great interest. Especially from the perspective on how media has the power to manipulate the content intentionally and provoke certain reactions. To conclude, one could determine that the research within media and communication has been predominantly influenced by the concept and interpretation of feelings within medicine, psychology and the science of cognition, where it is mostly assumed that the meaning is rather emphasised on the inner life than on what goes on outside the inner world, beyond the individual.<sup>19</sup> Eventually, John Katz challenged this development and requested that the use of the concept feelings in research would be more contextualized. Katz's wish was followed as feelings started to be seen from a more sociological and social psychologist perspective, not only within the social sciences, but also in society over all.<sup>20</sup> This change in development was later named as the "affective turn". To be able to use feelings as an analytic tool to comprehend how the world, or society is constituted, it is necessary to use a double perspective. Feelings have to be something experienced from within the individual to be able to appear as a phenomenon that lives among, and in between the lives of human beings.<sup>21</sup> Frykman and Löfgren argue that it is of great importance to pay attention to how feelings always exist, faceted to its nature, and create presence as much as they work as a way to discover, or foreclose the world.<sup>22</sup> That is how the concept of feelings stands as an analytic tool, more than just a specific phenomenon.

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<sup>18</sup> Mia-Marie Hammarlin, *I stormens öga*, (Båstad: Hammarlin bokförlag, 2015), p. 18.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid. p 18

<sup>20</sup> Ibid. p. 19.

<sup>21</sup> Jonas Frykman & Orvar Löfgren, "Kultur och känsla", *Sociologi idag*, Årgång 35, 1/2005, p. 16.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid. p. 17.

### 3.2. Tactics to cope

When media scholar Melin did her study on the tactics of female journalists in Great Britain and Sweden during the 90's, she could distinguish three main tactics that they used, deliberately or unintentionally, to cope with the journalism field. She named them "one-of-the-boys", "one-of-the-girls" and "sexy marionette".<sup>23</sup> To become "one of the boys", a female journalist had to adopt, or adapt to, masculine ideals, and what is addressed as male culture, to successfully gain power in the field.<sup>24</sup> To not align yourself with the boys, as a girl, and to choose a field and ideals that does not agree with them of the field, is what Melin named "one-of-the-girls".<sup>25</sup> What she called "Sexy marionette", is the tactic that is to accept the gender role that you are given without fighting for the field that you are in to achieve better status.<sup>26</sup> As Melin uses the concept of journalist culture and inspired of Bourdieu she states that "the culture of journalism can be viewed as a shared notion of the world, the reality of a group of journalists, which consists of ideals, values and rules on how to behave, act and deal for example with news".<sup>27</sup>

### 3.3. Social fields

The concept of journalistic culture leads us to the term social field drawn from Bourdieu.<sup>28</sup> The concept of a social field is a complex system; an area where a certain kind of logic is prevailing, and everyone who is in the field is aware about this logic.<sup>29</sup> It is a "competitive system of social

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<sup>23</sup> Margareta Melin. *Gendered journalism cultures: strategies and tactics in the fields of journalism in Britain and Sweden* (Göteborg: Department of Journalism and Mass Communication, University of Göteborg, 2008), s. 144.

<sup>24</sup> Joseph, p. 138.

<sup>25</sup> Melin, 2008, p. 150.

<sup>26</sup> Margareta Melin, "Fäktas genom att fly: Omförhandlad journalistik med digitala hjälpmedel", *Mediers känsla för kön: feministisk medieforskning*, red. Hirdman, Anja & Kleberg, Madeleine (Göteborg: Nordicom, 2015), p. 8.

<sup>27</sup> Freely translated from Melin 2015, p. 2.

<sup>28</sup> Margareta Melin-Higgins, "Fly eller fäkta: kvinnliga journalisters överlevnadstekniker", *Kvinnovetenskaplig Tidskrift*, vol. 2.03 (2003), p. 57.

<sup>29</sup> Melin, 2003, p. 58.

relations, which functions according to its own specific logic or rules”.<sup>30</sup> The journalistic field is one example of a social field. Within a field there is a constant battle going on and domination and subordination is something that all social fields consist of.<sup>31</sup> There is always a dominating- and a dominated class and the one that has the power has the right to define the logic of the field.<sup>32</sup> Since we live in a patriarchy most of the positions of power will be held by a male or by male ideals.<sup>33</sup> The journalistic field can be viewed with these glasses on, with the field specific ideals tied to journalism. Examples of these ideals are to value covering of politics the highest, to live by: “the end justifies the means” and to agree that investigatory journalism is superior everything else.<sup>34</sup> To fully understand Melin’s tactics we need to introduce the concept of *doxa* as well. “Doxa is what we believe about the world and about ourselves.”<sup>35</sup> It is our world of conception. Although not created by Bourdieu from the beginning, the concept is well connected with his ideas of social fields and capital.<sup>36</sup> Doxa is “thought patterns language patterns, dress patterns, ways of acting, dressing, being etc”. Most important; the doxa is so connected to life that no one questions it, would never question it. Doxa can therefore be seen as some kind of common sense, something that everyone in a certain group, certain field, take for granted as common knowledge.<sup>37</sup> Bourdieu distinguished journalism as its own field with its own doxa<sup>38</sup> although the description of the doxa as something omnipresent, it does exist more than one doxa, more than one perceived reality, in a field. What is seen as common sense, the common doxa, are the

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<sup>30</sup> Toril Moi, *What is a woman?: and other essays*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 269.

<sup>31</sup> Djerf Pierre, Monika, “The gender of journalism: the structure and logic of the field in the twentieth century”, *NORDICOM-information*, 2007(29):2, s. 81-104, 2007, p. 97.

<sup>32</sup> Melin 2008, p. 71.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid. p. 64.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid. p. 146.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid. p. 72.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Melin, 2008, p. 72.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid. p. 88.

attitudes and values of the dominating group,<sup>39</sup> and so there is also a doxa for the dominated group, the *alldoxa*. It is an opposite way to see reality, which they try to argue through different tactics.<sup>40</sup>

At the field the capital will be the armour and the more capital, the better position on the field. The capital comes through their habitus which is the social dispositions that a person carries.<sup>41</sup> Symbolic capital is the kind of capital that one can possess by style, language, interests etcetera. But it is not as easy as to just assume a certain behaviour, although it is possible. It is more transient factors such as collective memories (eg. of a body), ways to move, how to think. It is yours and others social experiences that will give you symbolic capital. Depending on what norms and ideals that are momentarily prevailing in the field, and how well fitting you are to these norms, you will gain power equivalent to how much capital you possess. In other words: traits, manners and ways to think are ranked in a field-specific way. Is the field dominated by men, the result will be that men have the power to define the norms. Since there is not a single public field that is dominated by females, one can say that men have defined the rules of the whole public life.<sup>42</sup> If one is defining the rules, one is likely to do it so that it benefits oneself. With this said, traits that could be described as masculine coded, traits that benefit the masculine hegemony as ideals for a participation in a public field.<sup>43</sup>

### 3.4. Masculinity and femininity as opposites

The researcher Monika Djerf Pierre's term "Gender Logic" explains how different areas in journalism seem to be gender specific. With this concept, she is dividing traits and areas into two

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<sup>39</sup> "The common doxa is really the attitudes, values and action patterns of the dominating group in the field" Melin, 2008, p. 72.

<sup>40</sup> Melin, 2008, p. 72.f.

<sup>41</sup> Melin, 2003, p. 55.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid. p. 71.

<sup>43</sup> As mentioned before: nowadays masculinity is often defined as active, rational, objective, culture whereas femininity is passive, irrational, subjective and nature.

categories: masculine and feminine.<sup>44</sup> It has emerged from a Western tradition of using dichotomies while describing the world.<sup>45</sup> Since masculine and feminine has been positioned as each other's opposites, traits that we have connected with the concept of masculinity will be the opposite of the traits of femininity.<sup>46</sup> For example it is only from the 20th century and onwards, the journalism that was focused on the public eye, who portrays reality with distance and neutrality and "where the criteria for quality and ethics is defined by the profession", has been associated with manliness. With the logic of the dichotomist gender thinking, journalism that is focusing on the private sphere, that is looking after the need and interests of the public, aiming for intimacy to the portrayed matter, has been treated as female.<sup>47</sup> To try to create more equality, women have through history been going into masculine coded areas and claimed the right to be there.<sup>48</sup> The journalistic field is in many ways still a male dominated, masculine field, and so women have not had a natural place here.

## 4. Method

### 4.1. Theoretical foundation

Our theoretical frame for our method is from the hermeneutic tradition. By relying on this as a foundation, we can feel more free in doing our interpretation, since interpretations are the backbones of this philosophical standpoint. The hermeneutic philosophy views interpretation as

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<sup>44</sup> Djerf Pierre, p. 97.

<sup>45</sup> Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak. *The post-colonial critic: interviews, strategies, dialogues* (New york: Routledge, 1990), p. 17.f.

<sup>46</sup> Djerf Pierre, p. 96.

<sup>47</sup> Freely translated from Monika Djerf Pierre, "Journalistikens kön: Fältets struktur och logik under 1900-talet", *Kvinnovetenskaplig Tidskrift*, vol. 2.03 (2003), p. 45.

<sup>48</sup> Melin, 2015, p.32.f.

fundamental for understanding human existence. Everything we do and experience we interpret and we are using our pre-understanding to try to make sense of what is in front of us.<sup>49</sup>

Interviewing is one of the most common ways of conducting qualitative research within social sciences and the humanities. Globalization has come to change the role of the researcher, as their work, in a much more wider sense has come to involve not only interviews over and within cultures, but also include the intra-cultural aspect. Naturally, this has led to relevant discussions about how one should approach the field as a researcher, analyse and understand the whole research process in a both critical and reflexive way. It is of great importance to collaborate over nations to contribute to a widespread understanding of global problems, but also to shed light on issues of possible global effect.<sup>50</sup> Our research within the frames of this thesis has obviously consisted of cultural related challenges since we are located in a country that is completely different from Sweden, not only language-wise, but also culturally. Although the issues and themes we want to talk about are specifically related to our interviewees gender, it will not automatically give us advantages, just because of our similarities (also being women and journalism students). We had this in mind throughout the process and embedded a reflexive approach to minimize the distance between ourselves and our informants.<sup>51</sup>

## 4.2. Finding our empirical data

The empirical material consists of qualitative interviews with eight female journalist students and two educators of such. The students came from journalism programmes from all over Kerala. Trough individual in-depth, semi-structured interviews we asked them open

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<sup>49</sup> Peter Dahlgren, “Vad säger medierna och vad betyder de?”, *Vilken metod är bäst: ingen eller alla?*, red. Gunilla Jarlbro (Lund: Studentlitteratur, 2000), p. 77.

<sup>50</sup> Gabriele Griffin (red.). *Cross-cultural interviewing: feminist experiences and reflections*, (London: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2016), p. 1-3.

<sup>51</sup> “The researcher can never step outside of cultural, political, and economic conditions, all of which limit the kind of questions that can be posed”. Quoted from Anna Lindberg, *Experience and identity: a historical account of class, caste and gender among the Cashew workers of Kerala, 1930-2000*, (Lund: Department of History at Lunds University 2001), diss. University of Lund, p. 67.

questions about their dreams and expectations of the future, but also about their current situation and how they experienced their education. We found it important to do the interviews with only one of us at a time, to minimize the asymmetrical power relation as much as possible. All of the interviews were performed at the university of Kerala in Trivandrum. To find our interviewees we introduced ourselves at an event at the same university and asked if anyone was interested. The people we chose were those who contacted us.

### 4.3. Reflections on our roles as researchers

Even though we knew that the cultural differences between us would enhance the asymmetry between us as interviewers and the students as interviewees, it was a bigger imbalance than we expected. The attributes we had in common (as journalist students and women) seemed like a small detail compared to us as foreign, Western students as we were treated more as teachers, than fellow students. We are aware that this is a common asymmetry when it comes to interviews in general: the person that is posing the questions has the power of the situation, but it was enhanced in such a way that we felt it is necessary to bring it up. Since our interviewees came to us rather than we came to them there can be a risk of a fear of disappointment; that the interviewees are giving answers that they think we desire and need. Also taken into consideration is that we spent a lot of time at the campus, becoming close to some of the students. We discussed this when we made the questionnaire to the interviews and posed as open questions as possible, but still the tendency to really express their positivism to the future and their passion for what they do, can be seen as a result of, if not façade, a courtesy. This could perhaps be partly eliminated with even longer interviews and perhaps in a situation further away from the educational system (we performed the interviews at campus).

### 4.4. Thematic fields

When we went through our material we tried to categorize the impressions, what the students had said and expressed during the interviews. It was a mix between what they explicitly said and our interpretations of what they had said. To categorize from something as arbitrary as your own

impression can seem to be dubious but we found it more and more interesting to use the feelings the girls had conveyed during our conversations. Inspired by Peter Dahlgren we decided to use the concept of thematic fields. It is an effective way to categorize our interpretations of the interviews. Like Dahlgren, we wanted to make it more clear to us what the interviews really meant but also to find a common thread in how the interviewees chose to portray their dreams about the future.<sup>52</sup> It did not take us long to realise that many of our interviewees conveyed a sense of passion. From there we tried to identify a few more emotions described or expressed. Like Dahlgren states: this is just an interpretation, but it helped us to navigate throughout our material and makes it easier to answer the question “what does the female students dreams consist of?”. The answer would be: “Careers as professional journalists without any hindrance to get where they want to”. But it could also be: “Passion, courage, and hope”.

## 5. Analysis

When we analysed the material that came out as a result of the interviews, we realised that it is one thing what you dream of and aim for in life, and yet another to make such plans come through in reality. All of the female students we interviewed wanted to get married and have a family in the future whilst everyone but one, were resolute in their decision to pursue a career in journalism. We realised early, while collecting the interviews, that these two life occasions does not contradict each other in the dreams of the female students. We cannot be sure whether these women, all wanting to become journalists except for one, will pursue their dreams and goals when marriage, children and housework seem to be inevitable in their lives as females. Their determination to do so is nevertheless solid. They are convinced that they will succeed with the task of combining both married life and being a parent, with their career goals as journalists, after completing their education. Where Bourdieu exemplifies the individual agent as the embodiment of Habitus, the students expressed conviction of how they will succeed with both their careers and the responsibility for family life, similarly underlines what is notable in the context of the female journalist students in Kerala. Even though the concept of Habitus

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<sup>52</sup> Dahlgren, p. 94-95.

emphasises that the actions of one person is shaped by social and educational background, it is not necessarily impossible to change what has an impact on us at an early stage, and step outside the structure.<sup>53</sup> In other words their expressions and determination could most seriously indicate a change, either of structure, or the battle of change on an individual basis. As Frykman also notes “emotions can work as indicators on that something is happening; a change, something fundamental, a disintegration or a reinforcement”<sup>54</sup>

The expressions shifted widely on how they felt about obstacles that could get in their way, but many feelings were commonly expressed. Many researchers within the culture studies field argue that the risk of doing so could result in the objectifying of feelings when trying to count them by numbers, for example. The concept of feelings is somewhat peculiar in that sense, and maybe therefore very useful because not only does it explain relations as they are, but also spaces in between.<sup>55</sup> Although we agree with this most intangible way to describe feelings, we felt a need to facilitate seeing an overall pattern of what the students expressed, and also to narrow down the spread of this discussion to be able to keep it within the frames of this thesis. As we started to recognise that the students’ feelings were repeatedly used and expressed in different ways, we divided commonly expressed feelings, evolved through their own discussions, into the categories passion, courage and hope.

### 5.0.1. Passion

[Passion: strong and barely controllable emotion<sup>56</sup>]

Passion was the main commonly expressed feeling throughout the interviews. The informants described their passion for the profession almost as an unstoppable force that could make it possible to pursue the idea of their future career no matter what. A marriage, or children for that matter, seemed to be life events that will be possible to cope with in different ways. As Saanvi, one of the students, describes to us:

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<sup>53</sup> Rodney Benson, “News Media as a ‘Journalistic Field’: What Bourdieu Adds to New Institutionalism, and Vice Versa”, *Bourdieu and the journalistic field*, red: Benson, Rodney & Neveu, Erik (Oxford: Polity, 2005), p. 194.

<sup>54</sup> Frykman & Löfgren, p. 9.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid. p. 15.

<sup>56</sup> <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/passion>.

When a child's coming into your life it will be difficult. But if it is our passion we can do it.

Feelings do not only tell something about yourself but also about the world around you. The focus here is on how one's individual feelings are responding to, reflecting, affecting and shaping the world around us.<sup>57</sup> As Kerala society has a very strong culturally based norm of how young girls should make choices and live their lives, it is remarkable to notice how passion seems to overcome the obligations in this context.<sup>58</sup> The majority of the interviewees, often went for a degree or education in other fields before pursuing their passion of studying to get a degree in journalism. The student Khushi explains why her parents were doubtful in the beginning.

My parents were not supporting in the beginning. Because everyone is thinking that the journalistic field is very challenging and that you have a lot of problems...But later, now when I'm doing this work on my own, my parents are supporting my decision, because I'm very interested in this.

Their parents' and other relatives' worries and tension about choosing a career in journalism was the main reason for them to follow the family's wish at first. They had a sense of wanting to pay respect for their parents' opinion since they were still dependent on them economically. After fulfilling their parents' wishes they could more freely move on pursuing their own wishes and dreams, and most important, their passion!

It seems like passion is used as a guarantee of pure intentions, a validation of success. It legitimises actions. If a person claims to feel passion he or she will not be questioned. This is something we have learned from the fairy tales and the classic romantic saga where the passionate lover does anything to get his, rather passive, girl. Passion and everything that it contains, still resonates better with masculine ideals than feminine. Therefore it can be used as a shield, something to protect them from the surrounding that is there to question them. We will later come back to the tactic to use masculine coded traits to cope with a field dominated by masculine ideas.

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<sup>57</sup> Freely translated and interpreted from Hammarlin, p. 20.

<sup>58</sup> J. Devika & Avanti Mukherjee, p. 103.f.

Through centuries, when emotions and feelings have been the objects of research, passion often appears as a crucial part. Either emotions have been interconnected with religious and moral belief or with a more sober scientific approach, passion has been the focal point.<sup>59</sup> Descartes even used passion as the foundation for all other feelings and to give that importance to this heated emotion, actually seems more of a rule than an exception.<sup>60</sup> Even though the content in the idea of what passion is, has changed over time, it can however give reason for why it is used as an authorization of pure intentions by the students; if it historically has been ranked as one of the emotions from where all other emotions stem, it ought to be received with deeper appreciation. That can further explain why we found passion easiest to identify when we categorized the expressed feelings. It comes easy to mind, both for them and for us.

### 5.0.2. Courage

[Courage: the ability to do something that frightens one; bravery<sup>61</sup>].

Discussing our interviews we felt that courage was another of the important emotions to elucidate. It might not have been as explicit as passion, but the students we interviewed said it directly a couple of times and used other expressions to illustrate general situations for a working female journalist where courage is seen as a necessity. But foremost we felt that courage is something that is implicit in the idea of a journalist. It is present but almost unnecessary to mention and when the students did, it was in a manner as when you state something obvious.

Within the discussion of how much of a risk a female journalist is forced to take while working as a journalist compared to a male colleague, we identified several different kinds of risks to be taken into consideration. Not only the risk of actual physical violence but also other forms of risks with a more social character. Many expressed either their parents or their own fear of being exposed to sexual harassment or any other type of violence specially directed to women, while working late night shifts. Saanvi reasoned that it is more important to be prepared rather than live her life, trying to avoid harassment:

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<sup>59</sup> Frykman & Löfgren, p. 6-7.

<sup>60</sup> Frykman & Löfgren, p. 6-7.

<sup>61</sup> <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/courage>.

No one is going to help us or save us when we are in trouble... It could be in a bus or a train. There are many cases like that in India. The only thing we could do is prepare ourselves.

Some would also underline that this kind of risk is also to be taken into consideration even if not working late at night, but always as a woman. Additionally, the risks of a more social character were mentioned, for example being less attractive in the marriage context, lack in the role of being a mother and responsible for the household. When asked how they would address these risks when they enter their professional career, the student Ananya expressed that courage would be needed and brought up solutions that engaged acts of courage.

The only way we can break barriers and come out is to try. Every lady should try. Because once you are ready to accept those discriminative powers, you will stay there. For a lifetime. So, it's always better to try to break those chains and come out of that.

This was a common stance for many of the interviewees. Khushi saw the problems that she would face, but did not see them as determinant when planning her future.

I want to be a journalist, I don't want to deviate my position. I'll be ready to face the problems coming and I'll be working during night and during evenings. If I want to stay in some hostel nearby or stay somewhere else also I will do that.

The determination, the passion, is something that gives them courage. But still all of this are traits and emotions, not support from outside. Thus, these girls will find themselves in an individualistic position, relying more to the self than to the surrounding to help them achieve their goals. To recognize it as a structural problem was common among the girls but we could also perceive another belief that the problem was more of an individual nature. As when Riya responded:

In the field of journalism I think that both males and females are equal. But sometimes there might be a restriction [against women] but today so many females are reporting at night, so there's not a restriction

anymore. (...) but today, not fully equality, but.. there's no great difference in job and salary. All are equal.

This contradictory in the responses was rather the standard, than exceptional. Many of the interviewees started off the interview by saying that they did not expect any problems, to later on state that there certainly are some obstacles they will face. The problems are of a structural nature, which could be viewed the natural order of things, they do not have the nature of an incident, it is a slow and uneventful process. In order to manage the responsibility over family life they will face when having a child in their life, many would choose to take advantage of the collectivistic way of life rather than suffering from it. Even if it means compromising their career, they are ready to do that in order to get back in business as soon as they can. But never give up. Ananya explains her she will try to cope with family life:

I want to compromise my job for two or three years, it is my duty. When he or she grows up they can go to kindergarten. They also have grandmother and grandfather to take care of them. My family will be a great help for me.

No one of the girls expressed or conveyed any thoughts of the inequality being unchangeable, however the “uneventfulness” can be an explanation why it sometimes is not seen as acute hindrance.

### 5.0.3. Hope

[Hope: a feeling of expectation and desire for a particular thing to happen, a feeling of trust<sup>62</sup>]

A third emotion that the interviews left us with, was hope. There was a hope expressed in the sense that the interviewees had faith in that they are going to manage to balance working life and private life without making big sacrifices on their careers. Whatever obstacle they mentioned, it was never in the context that the obstacle was too big to handle. There were very few doubts that

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<sup>62</sup> <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/hope>.

they could become what they said they wanted to become. And there was a hope in the sense that the order of things is not eternally.

When we decided that we wanted to use hope as a category we felt that the concept of this feeling required an addition. Hope can tend to sound passive, a wish for something to happen that is placed outside of your will-power, factors that you cannot affect. This is somewhat applicable to how the girls described their feelings but additionally we interpreted that they felt very active in their hopes and dreams of their future. They knew what obstacles that were about to come and they knew how to, and that they would, do it. We identified this to be confidence. If we view hope in this light, together with passion and courage, we find three very active, powerful feelings.

As mentioned, the obstacles that they would mention are brought up as real and present, but not as a natural or an unchangeable state of the world. This way of viewing the obstacles as hindrances that you can overcome is an act of belief that the obstacles are removable. A hope that the system that puts them in a disadvantage and sometimes harmful position, is not indestructible.

Since I'm just studying it's not a difficult task to be a female and to work as a journalist. We've done so much in our degree (...). So I don't think it will be too much difficulties on the journalism field.

In this quote Khushi puts emphasis on the education, since she will have a lot of competence entering the working field, she will be prepared and qualified. Yet, it is not with a certainty she says these comments. She states in the beginning that she is "just studying" at the moment, which can be seen as an explanation to wrong assumptions, but with a sense of hope.

Another way of expressing hope we identified as the way female students looked at their future marriage. Since all but one of the interviewees were single they could only just imagine their future, but the answers on how they would combine private life and working life were similar in one aspect. They want to choose a person from the media field. Anika explains it that it is easier to understand each other then:

It would make him understand my side. If he do not understand, that is not my problem. I would choose my career.

Riya agrees with this:

One of the best things to do in this field, is to getting married to a man that is experienced in this field so he can understand the problems and sufferings (...). My preference is to choose a person from the journalism field. I think that working in the same field he will understand me more, my problems.

It seems like the communication would be their main weapon against falling into stereotypic gender roles. This is what gives Khushi hope for the future.

I'll talk with them [the proposers] about my career because it's a different string, it's not a timely job, we need to work all the day, but I'll communicate with the partner who's coming... somebody will be there, because the youth are more welcoming the more western style and are all ready to work together, there's no problem, so I communicate with him and I'll carry on with my work in this field.

It is a belief that times are changing and there is no problem in combining these two worlds. If it would be any problem there is a priority for the young female student Riya:

Whatever what will happen, I will not drop my job. Even if the relation is broke, I will not drop my job. Job is important for me. I think as a woman in this society, job is the most important.

### 5.1. Choosing your working field

Although applying masculine traits to fit better into the field they are about to enter, most of the female students we interviewed were dreaming about going into journalistic areas that would help them make a difference. Many were interested in culture and social issues and would prefer being on broadcasting media rather than printed. Both the choice of subjects and media are fields that have been proved easier for women to break into.

I would like to work in culture, and arts in the rural areas. Second choice is environmental.

-Riya

Whether the female students had plans on going to a masculine- or feminine dominated area of journalism in the future, they all expressed these above mentioned emotions of their future. It can be seen as an overall acceptance of the *doxa*, and to take it even further: that there is no “one-of-the-girls”. Either they work with the *doxa* or against it but not outside it. A few of the students told us that they wanted to become a journalist because of journalism itself. They believed they could make a change. They fit well into what Melin calls Educators and Djerf Pierre calls Specialization<sup>63</sup>. They have a clear mission about a message they want to spread.<sup>64</sup>

I have a great idea of the journalistic field since my childhood, by watching television programs.

-Riya

Another student, Pari says that she specifically wants to write for print media, investigative journalism in general and specifically women matters. She expresses that she did not enter the journalistic field for any other reason than that she thinks that she could make a change in society through journalism.

## 5.2. An armour of feelings

The rather stereotypic ideal picture of a masculine person is a warrior, a hunter, a *knight*. A cliché indeed, but still prevailing. In a shiny armour the knight shows his rational bravery, strong and determined. Passionate about his work, so passionate that he can die for it, which one can state is the absolute proof of passion. He does what he does with courage and with a goal, with a hope of that what he does will change the current state.

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<sup>63</sup> Melin, 2008, p. 151.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

While analysing the interviews we found that the same vocabulary and feelings were showed and expressed when talking about the future of the students as a journalist. The ideals, the doxa, of the journalistic field seem to be something that is applied, already when dreaming of a career in the field, that is, even before entering the field. It seems like not only have they recognized the doxa, they accepted it. Additionally, since they were entering a male dominated field with male ideals, expressing these traits as important, one could say they are becoming “one of the boys”.

To become “One of the Boys”, a female journalist needs to “acquire capital that is considered masculine, which has high symbolic value and status in journalism.”<sup>65</sup> To get a position in the journalistic field, is to accept these norms, this doxa. Either you play with it or against it, but either way you need to accept the existence of the norms.

### 5.3. Overestimate the choice

To emphasise the traits or feelings that would be filed under masculine traits rather than feminine, seems to be something that all of the girls did, as to prove their pure intentions, a legitimization of their future profession. To secure their position, to validate their right to be there, there seem to be no other way than to wear the masculine armour of feelings and traits. Even if she later on goes into a feminine-coded field such as culture and soft news rather than covering politics and hard news.

Yet, it is not as simple as to state that there are several options for the students to choose from. Their dreams that we asked them about are merely dreams, and if we look at the other categories from Melin, Sexy Marionette for example, an *alldoxa* is necessary. But don't you need to possess, if not power, at least a position in the field before you can have access to its perspective on reality? In this situation the university can be seen as the gatekeeper and until the students actually entered the field, it will be hard to distinguish other tactic than “one of the boys”. This might show us how the ideals of the working field is very much dominant on the educational level as well, the ideal picture of a journalist is clear. Although we mentioned that

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<sup>65</sup> Melin, 2008, p. 146.

the alternative to become “one of the girls” is absent, if not missing, in the dreams of the students, it does not mean in any way that they can turn into this category later on in their career.

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#### 5.4. The bliss of invisibility

In his work on emotions, Katz brings up the paradox that “the individual becomes invisible as long as he or she is recognisable as a social type doing something ordinary or conventional”.<sup>67</sup> If women are not part of the norm in the journalistic field, then they will be recognized as unconventional per se. They become visible due to their choice of working field. From this situation one can either choose to blend in or stand out even more. There is a conformity in blending in, being “invisible”, to be a part of the norm, without having one’s existence questioned. To not stand as a single individual, representing the trait that is separate from the rest.

Katz describes how this paradox becomes clear during award-shows. During these shows, a person is celebrated for his or hers individuality. In other words; how he or she is distinguished from the norm. The person is placed in front of the admiring gaze of the audience in the mere purpose to show how he or she is distinguished from the others, which can be a prevailing feeling.<sup>68</sup> Katz is taking it as far as saying that the person ready to accept an award, is often crying or blushing because of the separation from the “omniscience of the community”, because he or she now is trying to find a new cover for the self.<sup>69</sup>

In a similar manner yet in a opposite way, we can perceive an involuntary distinction for women in the journalistic field. The gazes from the audience are there, but unlike the described award show, these gazes might be without admiration. The separation from the community is

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<sup>66</sup> Melin, 2008, p. 152.

<sup>67</sup> Jack Katz, *How emotions work* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), p. 320.

<sup>68</sup> Katz, p. 320.

<sup>69</sup> Katz, p. 320.

there, but without the elevated position that an award gives you. The interviewees have conveyed this in the way they portray themselves as journalist students and working journalist to be. It seems like they already at this stage, before even entering the actual working field, are creating a new covering for the self. The prize-winner at the award show needs to recognize the omniscience and existence of the community, otherwise her prize, which has value just because the community has put value into it, would not be of any significance. Similar goes to the female journalist student. She needs to recognise the morals and the rules, the “omniscience”, of the journalist body. If she refuses to do so, it means that she won’t be able to accept her own role as a journalist, since the components and qualities that a journalist consist of, is decided by the community of journalists or of the journalistic field.<sup>70</sup> Margaretha Melin uses Bourdieu to describe this complex standpoint that a female journalists needs to have towards her own working field. To accept or not accept the norms? To work with them or against them? As seen, the concept of doxa is useful for Melin in describing the idea of a journalist culture and the strategies used by the female journalist. It is also applicable in the comparison to the award show. As mentioned, to accept the prize and to feel that one deserves it, one needs to recognize where the prize comes from, otherwise it would not have any value. You can deny the omniscience of the community, and not accept the prize, but then you are standing by yourself. This is what Melin had named, “sexy marionette”. To not recognize the norms as they are, to not accept the doxa. To play outside the game because you do not agree with the rules, the risk you are taking is to not be accepted or recognized by the group so your work is situated outside what would be described as journalism.

## 6. Conclusion/Discussion

The idea of this thesis was born and moulded while reading the research on the enigma that women in Kerala are facing, being caught in between traditional values of family and private life and a working, public life. As the study developed and we went to Kerala we discovered rather quickly that the young students whom we interviewed did not see themselves in this trap.

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<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

Although, recognising the fact that a gendered society is the reality for many, they seemed to be sure that they would not end up giving up working life to fully prioritise the private one. They were like young students are most of the time, wherever you look, full of expectations and dreams about the future. When we tried to decide how to narrow this thesis down, we chose to put focus on the dreams of the students. We thought that dreams and expectations could say something about the current state of the working field and the educational system. We believe that how much you are allowing yourself to dream (and more definitely; the dreams you share with others) is direct connected with your surrounding. Dreams, as well as emotions, are a mirror on the environment around you. Having the results of the interviews and analysis in front of us, we still agree with this.

Our question formulation in our objective was “What do the dreams, expectations and feelings of female journalist students in Kerala say about their careers in their future profession and how do they look upon being situated between traditional family values, and their dream of a career in journalism?”. Through our interviews and research we feel that we can respond this question. The emotions expressed show us an journalistic ideal that the students need to recognise. They allowed themselves to dream, but only with restrictions. It was all coherent with the prevailing norms. Although, we could see some tactics in the way they chose their field, it was mostly a masculine ideal prevailing. Further we could respond the question what their dreams can tell about their future working field. Through Katz and the paradox that the individual becomes invisible as long as he or she is and behaves conventional, we evolved our thoughts. With the help of Melin and our field studies we were able to illustrate and bring understanding to the complex situation a woman is facing, entering a profession that has been seen as a masculine area.

As we stated in the introduction we hoped to see how the above named contraction, would affect the expectations of female journalist students. With this research we found that a considerable factor that seems to affect, and perhaps restrict their expectations would be ideal pictures of how a journalist is, and how well one is suited to that idea. What struck us during our research was how clear the ideal picture is, so clear that everyone is mirroring themselves in this picture without a shadow of a doubt. When it comes to how they would combine working life

and family life the usage of tactics was something that stood out. To get married did not stand as a contradiction to have a fulfilling career, it is only about the man you married. The tactic here was to find someone in the same working field, or at least similar. If we compare to Sweden, where a more individualistic approach to your life is common, no one of the girls interviewed could imagine not to get married. That was a part of the life they looked forward to but, first they wanted to have a stable career.

This study elucidated the homogeneity in emotions expressed among the students. We can not say anything about what emotions they really felt, but the emotions they, deliberately and unintentionally, conveyed to us, all seemed to fit in the same frame. We are satisfied how we manage to draw a connection with the certain emotions expressed: passion, courage, and hope, to the journalistic field and its norms and its condition for women. Our research is situated in Kerala and the formulated question is concerning journalist students from Kerala. We grounded our research in material that concern both the Indian media landscape and the Malayalee situation for women and female professionals. In combination with our interviews we could get, although just a glimpse, an insight in the lives of Kerala journalist students. With further research we could perform more interviews and longer ones to get an even more in-depth material. Additionally, to do further research we would focus on the educational system and how the journalism ideal transpires down to those who have not even entered the field. What does the education do to reinforce or prevent this? How big part does the education have in creating this ideal? In the context of Kerala we believe that putting more emphasis on the educators in future research might actually tell a lot. From what we could experience, educators play a big and important role in the lives of their students, and also very much to their families. Through one of the interviews with Maggie Josephine, assistant professor at Kerala University we found out that the role of the educators sometimes goes far beyond the walls of the campus. The teachers, apart from giving advices that have to do with actual school matters, they also engage themselves in their students' personal matters and give them advices of life. It is not strange or peculiar in any way to invite teachers and other staff at campus to your wedding. Josephine also informed us that she believes that sometimes her influence also might help to persuade parents and other relatives,

if any disagreement would appear, regarding school work and future working conditions. This might give a hint on how important it would be to investigate the educator's role in future research.

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## 8. Appendix

### 8.1. Interview template

#### **Career.**

Why did you decided to study journalism?

-What do your parents do?

What are you dreaming about working with in the future?

-Where and how?

How will you reach your dreams?

How do you think it will be working as a female journalist?

Do you think there is a difference in how easy it is to reach for dreams if you are a man or a woman? (does gender play a part?)

What obstacles/ difficulties/ do you think you will find when you start working as a journalist?

Does your education bring up any gender related issues? How?

- if not: do you think they should? Why?

#### **Private life.**

Describe your family.

How important is family to you?

Do you want to get married?

How do you think your life will look like when you are married?

How will you combine working life and your marriage?

Do you want to have children?

How will you manage motherhood with a career?

