

An Analysis of Professional Discourses and Gendered Identities in Malaysian Media

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Abstract

This thesis analyses the professional discourses and gendered identities of working women manifested within Malaysian media targeting a female audience. It also interrogates the ideologies of gender that inform, and are espoused by, these discourses and identities. Through the integration of feminist critical discourse analysis and feminist conversation analysis, it examines career advice texts and interviews with high-achieving women produced over a 12-month period in three print and broadcast media: *Her World*, a Malaysian magazine; *Clove*, a Sunday pullout in a mainstream newspaper; and *Capital FM*, a commercial radio station. The analysis of discourses expressed in the conception of women's professional selves and occupational lives fills a discernible gap in gender and language research, as previous empirical work on media directed at women has largely emphasised on beauty, relationships, sex, and parenting.

By interrogating which professional discourses find expression across the different media genres, this thesis makes another key contribution to the field, given that earlier studies often focused on a single media source. In this research, the similarities and variances in the discourses and identities produced by the three media outlets are related to the tensions and relations between wider socio-cultural norms, media commodification, institutional roles, and women's agency. While the radio has been relatively under-valued in gender and language research, in this study, we shall see the potential it holds for disrupting established hegemonic discourses, which is significant in a media landscape where the production of oppositional and alternative discourses is rare.

The analysis identifies a range of mutually reinforcing and oppositional professional discourses that work together to articulate paradoxical female subjectivities that are empowered yet deficient, and strongly associated with stereotypical femininity and motherhood. These discourses and subjectivities mobilise postfeminist and neoliberal ideas in service of the status quo, as the resignification of freedom, choice and agency depoliticises women's work issues in the media. With the widespread proliferation of neoliberalism and postfeminism, this thesis makes a timely contribution to understanding their effects on discourses on women and work in an under-researched socio-cultural context.

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Transcription Conventions

- (.) Pause of up to a second
- (-) Pause of more than a second
- [Point of overlap onset
-] Point at which overlap stops
- = Latching (one speaker follows the previous one with no break)
- A halting or abrupt cut-off
- :: Lengthened syllable; multiple colons represent prolonged syllable
- (#) Inaudible speech
- (()) Non-verbal activity, such as laughing or coughing
- bold** Stressed word

Chapter 1. Introduction

1.1 Thesis Background and Aims

This study lies at the intersection of language, gender, work, and the media. It explores media narratives and messages about women and work that are drip-fed to the Malaysian public. While women in Malaysia have outpaced men in higher education participation, this has not opened up a world of professional opportunities for them, as many leave the workforce in their late 20s and early 30s (Merican and Ghani 2016). This is primarily due to an unjust system of family labour which has left the country with a visibly low female labour force participation rate (United Nations Development Programme 2014). Those who remain in the workforce face gender inequalities that are not uncommon around the world. As with many countries in and beyond Asia, the 'glass ceiling' and gender wage gap persist in Malaysia. Alongside these are issues that are particular to the local context, such as the lack of legal protection against sexual harassment and pregnancy discrimination at work (Women's Aid Organisation 2016; Yuen 2015). Yet, political apathy is apparent. The rise of 'market feminism' in the country has cultivated a collective delusion that "freedom of the market and an unfettered mass-consumer culture are good enough measures to exact personal autonomy and power" (Ng, Mohamad and Tan 2006: 39). It is in this socio-cultural context that this thesis is located.

This research has the emancipatory aim of exposing the gender ideologies that are reflected, maintained and challenged through the media. The ultimate goal is to bring about transformation in media and workplace practices, and ensure professional women are unencumbered by sex-based stereotypes and gendered norms. Feminist research on the role of language in maintaining gender inequalities in professional contexts has grown rapidly since the 1990s, and the large body of research examining workplace interactions and discursive practices has made vital contributions to this domain. Nevertheless, the strong focus on Western societies has led to calls for more diverse investigations in a broader range of geographical settings. In Malaysia, the complex interplay between gender, language, and work has been a highly neglected area of study, despite the clear benefits of conducting such research alongside current government initiatives to increase both the proportion of women in leadership positions as well as female participation in the workforce. Additionally, although there are an increasing number of linguistic studies from non-Western contexts exploring how

gender intersects with the media and the workplace (e.g. Iyer 2009; Kang and Schnurr 2010; Jiogo Ngaufack 2013), there has been only a handful of empirical research on how professional women are positioned by discourses in the Malaysian media (e.g. Zulkifli 2015; Mullany and Yoong 2016).

This thesis fills this empirical gap by producing a political critique of the professional discourses and gendered identities of working women manifested within Malaysian media targeting a female audience, and interrogating the ideological work performed. In this study, a dual definition of discourse(s) is adopted. Firstly, discourse is conceptualised as language above the level of the sentence (Tannen 1989). This thesis also uses discourses in a Foucauldian sense, to mean systematic, socially constitutive signification practices that represent aspects of the world in particular ways (Fairclough 2003; Lazar 2005). The term 'professional discourses' is employed to indicate the domain to which the discourses relate, namely the domain of work. Drawing on Ochs's (1992) theory of indexicality and Butler's (1990) model of performativity, this study adopts a social-constructionist approach to the examination of gendered identities. It investigates both how gender is accomplished in media talk as well as how text producers align themselves and other women with particular subject positions in written texts.

1.2 The Media Sources and Data

The data for this study is drawn from print and broadcast texts collected between October 2012 and September 2013 from three Malaysian media targeted specifically at women: *Her World*, a local magazine; *Clove*, a regular pullout in a mainstream newspaper; and *Capital FM*, a commercial radio station. Two key strengths of this study can be clearly seen here: firstly, the longitudinal data collection of the texts and discourses that the audience could encounter over a 12-month period, and secondly, the inclusion of the radio, which has been marginalised in gender and language research, in comparison to newspapers and magazines.

Print and broadcast interviews with successful professional women and advice texts about work are examined through feminist critical discourse analysis and feminist conversation analysis. While earlier studies on mediated representations of identity as well as women's own constructions of identity in the workplace have typically focused on women in the business world or in political life, the interviews

analysed here cover a broader range of industries and occupations. The advice articles and radio programmes include both those produced for the explicit purpose of providing guidance on professional challenges as well as texts on childcare and domestic life that touch upon women's participation in the world of work. This is another significant contribution of this thesis, as career advice in the media has been a largely under-explored area. Most linguistic research on popular media advice for women has focused on motherhood, beauty, sex, and relationships.

Many CDA and CA studies examining media texts tend to focus on either written data (e.g. Caldas-Coulthard 1996; Iyer 2009; Lazar 2009; Mendes 2012) or spoken data (e.g. Clayman and Heritage 2002; Hutchby 2006). Kauppinen (2013), for example, recently employed CDA to investigate career advice from a single media source: the German edition of *Cosmopolitan*. Hence, another strength of this study lies in drawing comparisons between discourses evoked across different media genres within the same social context. The similarities and disparities in the discourses deployed are located within the wider socio-cultural, economic and institutional contexts shaping media production.

1.2.1 Women Text Producers and 'Synthetic Sisterhood'

Focusing on texts and discourses produced by women in the media adds yet another dimension to this study. Media and communications scholarship has demonstrated that the media continues to sexualise and marginalise professional women (Hammers 2005; Ibroscheva and Raicheva-Stover 2009; Adcock 2010). For example, in the UK media, there is "a repeated celebration of young, 'attractive' women, but often in a way that infantilise[s] them and focus[es] on their looks and private lives rather than on their achievements" (EAVES et al. 2012), and feminists in the Western world are demanding greater female representation in the media to address such issues (Cochrane 2012; EAVES et al. 2012). US scholars have also identified the absence of women journalists and decision makers in the media as a significant reason why feminist voices are generally absent in mainstream news coverage of women's issues, such as the economics of family care (Ross 2002; Rush, Oukrop and Creedon 2004; Stabile 2004; Vavrus 2007).

As yet, the advantages of women's increasing participation in the media have been inconclusive, and more work is needed to gain a clearer understanding of women's linguistic intervention into cultural production. Taking women's lifestyle

magazines as an example, while they are often produced by women, they tend not to problematise inequality in gender relations (Caldas-Coulthard 1996), but merely provide 'advice' on this. There is no shortage of academic research strongly criticising the role of women's magazines in sustaining and perpetuating patriarchy (e.g. Johnston and Swanson 2003; Williams and Fahy 2004). The present study contributes new insights and a Southeast Asian perspective to the existing body of knowledge. By focusing on media texts produced by women, this thesis responds to Lazar's call for analyses of discourse to raise "critical awareness of relations among (groups of) women [such as] how women operating within androcentric cultures (e.g., at home or at salaried workplaces) help perpetuate sexist attitudes and practices against other women" (2007: 150).

By examining media targeted at women, this thesis builds upon Talbot's (1992) work on 'synthetic sisterhood', where women text producers and readers are set up in a synthesised friendship through the construction of a 'big sister' persona for the former and an ideal subject ascribed with particular attitudes, values and preoccupations for the anonymous audience. Talbot argues that "[t]he sisterhood offered in the consumer feature is ... "unsisterly" because it is patriarchal" (1992: 580). Two decades later, I explore whether there has been a shift in the ideologies implicit within the media's message of sisterhood. While Talbot's research was based on magazines, this study extends the existing model by analysing spoken media data.

1.3 Research Questions

The following research questions will be addressed in this study:

1. What are the main professional discourses produced in the chosen Malaysian media outlets, and how do these discourses affect the construction of women's professional identities?
2. What ideologies are implicitly endorsed through these professional discourses and gendered identities, and how do these relate to issues that women face in the Malaysian labour market?
3. To what extent do the media outlets cohere into a larger aggregate in terms of their discourses and conceptualisation of professional women?

1.4 Thesis Outline

This thesis consists of ten chapters. A review of academic literature in relation to the study's social and analytical aspects will be provided in Chapters 2 and 3 respectively. Chapter 2 first defines and explores the three interconnected concepts of discourse, power and ideology, before discussing three gender ideologies in the media: patriarchal, neoliberal and postfeminist ideologies. An interrogation of postfeminist ideas and values forms a central part of this section. The chapter closes with an overview of the social constructionist perspective of identity, and gender stereotypes and 'new femininities' linguistically constituted in contemporary media culture. Chapter 3 contributes to the academic debate surrounding the analytical approaches applied in this study, feminist critical discourse analysis and feminist conversation analysis. It also explains the rationale for integrating them, and discusses the theoretical and methodological issues related to this decision.

Following the literature review, Chapter 4 introduces the socio-economic context for the thesis through a critical exploration of current issues affecting women and work in Malaysia. Then, a detailed account of the data and research methodology is provided in Chapter 5. This chapter begins with an overview of the three Malaysian media sources, before explaining the steps and decisions made during the data collection, initial analysis of discourses, and sample selection. Lastly, it explores the key analytical tools applied in the examination of the media texts. The main professional discourses identified in the preliminary analysis are described in Chapter 6. This is followed by a detailed investigation of these discourses and their linguistic features in the sample: Chapter 7 examines interviews with role models, while Chapter 8 analyses advice texts.

The findings from the analyses are discussed in Chapter 9. Firstly, I compare and contrast the dominant professional discourses identified in the three media sources, and situate the media practices within wider contextual structures. The second section examines the dominant narratives constructed through the key professional discourses identified in the linguistic analysis, and relates them to crucial barriers to gender equality in the workplace discussed in Chapter 4. Lastly, building upon existing research, this chapter provides new insights into the language strategies applied by the chosen media to produce the professional discourses and new feminine subjectivities, while presenting themselves as female allies.

This thesis closes with a summary of the key findings, a critical reflection on the methodology used, and recommendations for future research as well as ways to improve institutional policies and media practices to mitigate the challenges faced by working women.

Chapter 2. Literature Review

This chapter provides a literature review of the main (interrelated) social aspects of this thesis. I will begin with a discussion of discourse, power and ideology, before exploring the gender ideologies perpetuated in the institutional context of this thesis: women's media. The final section will provide an overview of the social constructionist perspective of identity as well as gender stereotypes and 'new femininities' linguistically constituted in contemporary media.

Before commencing with the literature review, I must explicitly state, for the sake of transparency, that I adopt a third wave feminist position. In this thesis, third wave feminism is understood as a theoretical development from the second wave that is dependent on the latter's basic framework (Mills 2008). In other words, the term 'third wave' denotes both continuity and change (Gamble 2001). Like its predecessors, third wave feminism is concerned with a wide range of socio-political issues, and continues "the tradition of feminism as critique, as a critical lens that should be turned on all existing discourses, institutions, and cultural practices" (Snyder 2008: 188). In this study, a critical lens is brought to the examination of discourses produced by the institution of the media. The interrogation of discourses has become popular within a third wave perspective, often following Foucault's (1972) work (Mullany 2009). However, the third wave does not merely contain "elements of second wave critique of beauty culture, sexual abuse, and power structures" (Heywood and Drake 1997: 3); it extends the trajectory of feminism through "its attempt to reformulate a feminist politics less restrictive in terms of class, race, and sexuality" (Leonard 2007: 126).

It is for the third wave's shift away from a monolithic notion of 'woman' and its acceptance of variability that I find its approach very useful for this study. While second wave feminism largely focused on the social injustices that formed part of the daily experiences of white, middle-class, heterosexual women, third wave feminism does not view women as a homogenous group or assume that they experience oppression in similar ways in all situations all of the time (Gamble 2001; Mills 2008; Mills and Mullany 2011). It moves away from "theories that universalize and essentialize "women" based on some women's (straight, white, middle-class) experiences" towards the "study of diversity among women" (Lazar 2006: 515). This development is valuable for this study since the texts and discourses examined are mostly produced by, and for, women who are not white. The third wave view "that gender, race, ethnicity, sexuality and class never

function in isolation but always work as interconnected categories of oppression and privilege" (Henry 2004: 32) is particularly important. In discussing the particular set of challenges and discrimination that Malaysian women face in their local societal context, this thesis will illustrate how the politics of gender and social class play out in women's lives.

The third wave approach views gender as a social construct, with researchers often drawing on Butler's (1990) notion of performativity (Mullany 2009). It "respects not only differences between women based on race, ethnicity, religion, and economic standing but also makes allowance for different identities within a single person" (Heywood 2006: xx). Like most third wavers, I adopt an anti-essentialist stance and reject "the assumption that all members of a particular race, class, gender, or sexual orientation share common characteristics" (Heywood 2006: 122). Taking the view that there is no one way of being a woman, this study attends to an array of potentially relevant identity categories, such as being a workplace leader, an employee, a media producer, a mother and a wife. In examining the complex negotiations undertaken by women in the linguistic construction of their identities in the media, it does not assume that it is only gender that affects their linguistic routines. On the contrary, it takes into account the institutional, social and contextual constraints on an individual's language behaviour.

2.1 Discourse, Power and Ideology

One of the main aims of this study is to examine how unequal gender power relations are reflected, maintained, and resisted through media representations of women's participation in the workforce. Lazar makes the crucial point that power can be operationalised in hidden forms:

[While] overt manifestations of power (or the threat of it) remain a reality for women in many societies ... pervasive and insidious in (late) modern societies is the operation of a subtle and seemingly innocuous form of power that is substantively discursive in nature (2007: 148).

It is this discursive form of power in which this study is principally interested.

There are various definitions of 'discourse' across different disciplines. In this study, discourse is firstly conceptualised in its most traditional linguistic sense, which is as a stretch of written or spoken text above the level of the sentence (Tannen 1989). This micro-level perspective on discourse enables a close analysis

of language features (Mullany 2009). Following Foucault's discourse theory (1972), this thesis also understands discourse as socio-historically contingent signification practices that represent a particular aspect of the world from a particular perspective (Fairclough 2003; Lazar 2006) and "systematically form the objects of which they speak" (Foucault 1972: 49). Given the potentially infinite ways of representing the world as well as naming and classifying discourse perspectives, discourse, in Foucauldian terms, can be a countable noun (Zotzmann and O'Regan 2016). The term 'professional discourses' is used in this thesis to denote the area of social life to which the discourses relate, in this case the domain of work. 'Gendered discourses' refer to discourses that position men and women in different ways (Sunderland 2004), for example the discourse that men should be the primary breadwinners in their families, or that women are difficult bosses¹.

These two definitions of discourse(s) are closely related as *discourses* in the Foucauldian sense are often realised, circulated and subverted through *discourse*, that is writing or speech beyond the level of the sentence. However, as something inherently social, discourses cannot be reduced to their linguistic manifestation, which is perceived rather as a sign of the discourses' presence (Kauppinen 2013). This study integrates the close linguistic analysis of *discourse* with the broader analysis of *discourses* in order to interrogate the connections between the micro-level of language use and broader socio-political structures.

Foucault was interested in the production of knowledge, power, and meaning through discourses. As "practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak" (Foucault 1972: 49), discourses are not only representational, but also potentially constitutive of "situations, objects of knowledge, and the social identities of and relationships between people and groups of people" (Fairclough and Wodak 1997: 258). They are constitutive in the sense that they help to

¹ Following Fairclough (2003), Sunderland defines discourses as "ways of seeing the world" (2004: 6). While I accept that discourses articulate our perspectives on the world (Sunderland and Litosseliti 2002), Sunderland's broad definition is not adopted here since discourses as social practices are more than "form[s] of knowledge about cultural ways of thinking and doing" (Sunderland and Litosseliti 2002: 13). They maintain and transform existing systems of knowledge and belief (Fairclough 1995). Sunderland's definition also does not allow for the importance of the socio-cultural climate and historical conditions from which discourses emerge. This study understands the professional discourses identified as social and linguistic practices that are constrained by the institutional context of their production as well as wider socio-economic influences, and will discuss the connections between these social elements and the discourses in Chapter 9.

maintain and reinforce the social status quo as well as contribute to its transformation (Fairclough and Wodak 1997). Foucault argued that, by defining and producing the objects of our knowledge, discourse “governs the way that a topic can be meaningfully talked about and reasoned about. It also influences how ideas are put into practice and used to regulate the conduct of others” (Hall 1997: 44), thereby reproducing both knowledge and power simultaneously. From this perspective, it is important, then, to identify and critique professional discourses in media texts as they have the potential to regulate workplace norms and behaviour as well as perceptions of working women, which could reinforce (or challenge) current barriers to gender equality.

Power, for Foucault (1978, 1980), is not confined to the institutional control of citizens of a given state or the top-down domination of one group over another. It is fluid, flowing omni-directionally in a web-like fashion through the whole social body. Following Foucault, this thesis conceptualises power as enacted and contested in interactions through the complex and evolving web of discursive positions that speakers take up, and through the discursive resources available to them (Mullany 2007; Thornborrow 2014). Within this view, it is recognised that women have access to power in certain situations, and are able to resist and subvert gender norms and stereotypes through resistant discourses (Mullany 2007). As Foucault points out, in addition to transmitting, producing and reinforcing power, discourse “undermines it and exposes it, renders it fragile and makes it possible to thwart it” (1978: 101). Alongside media talk, another analytic focus of this thesis concerns print media texts. From the ‘multiple’ discourses perspective that I adopt in this study, a range of discourses can be manifested within a text, including competing ones, which can position women in different ways, as powerful or powerless (Baker 2008).

I share Gill’s (2007a) view that women are not dominated or deliberately undermined by a monolithic, capitalist and patriarchal media. Nevertheless, as Gal contends, “the strongest form of power may well be the ability to define social reality, to impose visions of the world” (1992: 160). Therefore, power can be perceived as accruing to the media as they have, to some extent, the capacity to legitimise discourses (Baker 2008), such as through publication and media talk. However, this does not imply that the media is able to define social reality merely by deploying certain discourses in a single text. Fairclough reminds us that “the effects of media power are cumulative” (1989: 54). It is through their repetition of particular ways of representing the world and positioning their audience that they are able to constitute and maintain power relations, including between

women and men. Nevertheless, we must also be careful not to assume that the audience will automatically assimilate the media's worldview. Additionally, in the radio shows examined, although the media interviewers "are interactionally powerful as they call the shots by asking questions and controlling the agenda ..., to make a media interview successful, the interviewer is dependent on the interviewee being 'media-worthy', i.e. forthcoming and interesting to ... listeners in some way" (Weatherall et al. 2010). It is within this understanding of power that this study investigates how relations of asymmetry are discursively produced and resisted by women participating in media culture.

Foucault's work has been significant to the development of an array of theories that have been broadly grouped as 'discourse theory' (Mills 2004). In contrast to Marxist perspectives of power, Foucauldian discourse theory develops a relational understanding of power as a diffuse network that pervades all areas of social life, rather than a substance that is concentrated in a specific site, such as social class or state (Mottier 2008). Social scientists influenced by Foucault's work generally do not attend to the linguistic features of texts, just as Foucault himself was more concerned with discerning the rules that 'govern' bodies of texts rather than conducting close textual analysis (Fairclough 2003). As stated earlier, Foucault's interest in discourse stemmed from its connection to knowledge and power. For Foucault, discourse as historically contingent cultural systems of knowledge and power did not require paying close attention to the details of language form (Bucholtz 2003).

Within linguistics, on the other hand, discourse is predominantly understood as "the linguistic level in which sentences are combined into larger units" (Bucholtz 2003: 44). Discourse analysis emerged in this field as a response to formal linguistics that focused on idealised and abstracted language at or below the level of the sentence. Discourse analysts are interested in naturally occurring language that is larger than a single sentence, particularly the "higher level organisational features of conversation and text" (Mills 2004: 121) as well as "processes of producing and interpreting speech and writing" (Fairclough 1992: 3). Questions of power and social issues have little bearing upon the research goals of these linguists. However, I follow van Dijk's view that while this work has allowed us to know more about "the rules, the moves, and the strategies of everyday talk [and] coherence and cohesion" (1985: 4), the explication of the complex structures of talk and text becomes more interesting if we can relate them to "the creation, the maintenance, or the change of such contextual constraints as the dominance, the power, [or] the status" of the participants (1985: 5). However, Fairclough points

out that “one cannot simply ‘apply’ Foucault’s work in [linguistically-oriented] discourse analysis” (1992: 38) given Foucault’s neglect of linguistic analysis of real texts, as discussed above. Additionally, whereas linguistically-oriented discourse analysis is interested in any written or spoken texts produced in social situations, Foucault was concerned with “a quite specific sort of discourse – the discourse of the human sciences” (1992: 38). Given the cultural context of this thesis, it must also be noted that Foucault’s oft-noted Eurocentrism (e.g. Said 1984) could also create doubt about whether his work can be a fruitful resource for discourse analysis in non-Western settings. I share Fairclough’s (1992) view that despite the issues in bringing discourse theory and discourse analysis together, we can “put Foucault’s perspective to work” in the latter (Courtine 1981: 40, cited in Fairclough 1992: 38). There are several useful insights into discourse and power from Foucault’s work that linguists can draw on, which have been discussed earlier in this chapter, including the constitutive nature of discourse, the discursive nature of power, and the discursive nature of social change (Fairclough 1992; Fairclough and Wodak 1997).

For linguistic research with a feminist aim, one issue with adopting Foucault’s concepts of discourse and power is that “agency resides both everywhere and nowhere” (Bucholtz 2001: 73). According to Foucault, power “is always already present, constituting that very thing which one attempts to counter it with” (1980: 82). This is problematic since, when we take Foucault’s discourse theory to its logical conclusion, power seems to be agentless (Mullany 2007). One key reason for this seemingly agentless power is that Foucault resists the notion of ideology, particularly the dualist Marxist account of ideology as a ‘false consciousness’ that could be opposed to a hidden ‘truth’. For Foucault, truth is relative to particular discursive formations, where the conditions of truth are contingent on current forms of discourse (Fairclough 1992; Hook 2001). However, this study retains the concept of ideology because, as the analyses in Chapters 7 and 8 will show, linguistically constructed identities are inflected by gender ideologies, alongside other social constructs (Bucholtz 1999a).

This study views discourse and ideology as related, but separate, phenomena. Ideologies, in this thesis, are understood to be:

significations/constructions of reality (the physical world, social relations, social identities) which are built into various dimensions of the forms/meanings of discursive practices, and which contribute to the production, reproduction or transformation of relations of domination (Fairclough 1992: 87).

Discourses can be perceived as “*carrying* ideology” (Sunderland 2004: 6, emphasis in original). Ideologies are “embedded in discursive practices” (Fairclough 1992: 87) that can sustain asymmetrical power relations through the ways in which they represent things and position people (Fairclough and Wodak 1997). This study recognises that not all ideologies are oppressive. Some, like feminist ideologies, challenge an unjust social order. Nonetheless, many ideologies serve the interests of those with social power, that is, people with privileged access to social resources, such as knowledge and wealth (Mayr 2008).

Althusser (1971) explains how people can be complicit in their own oppression through his model of interpellation. Like Foucault, Althusser rejects the Marxist notion of a ‘false consciousness’, though he does not resist the concept of ideology. For Althusser, ideology has a material existence embedded in the practices of subjects. He argues that Ideological State Apparatuses (ISAs), such as the media and educational and religious institutions, consistently constitute subjects by ‘hailing’ individuals into a temporal form of subjectivity. Through the repeated interpellation of people and their acceptance of these subject positions as common sense, the dominant discourses that interpellate the individuals, their associated practices, and the ideologies they espouse are naturalised. Althusser refers to these common sense assumptions and the ‘naturalness’ of practices as an ‘obviousness’, which can lead to people’s compliance in their own domination. Applied to gender, Althusser’s understanding of power implies that the gender order is produced through the construction of the ‘obviousness’ of particular social structures and gendered practices. Within this view, gendered discourses interpellate people as gendered subjects, but individuals who accept their ‘obviousness’ do not view this as a form of regulation of their lives (Glapka 2014). On the contrary, they see themselves as free agents.

Both Althusser and Foucault see human thought and behaviour as regulated by discursive power. However, while the former believes in the possibility of a power-free social analysis, the latter maintains that truth, being relative to discourse, is not open to critique from positions outside of these particular systems of power/knowledge. Foucault’s relativism, as it has been often pointed out, contradicts his commitment to certain forms of critique (Fairclough 1992). I share his and Althusser’s position that discourse is imbricated with power relations and can influence individuals to behave in ways that are beneficial to dominant social groups. However, I also hold the view that reality is not reducible to discourse (Zotzmann and O’Regan 2016). Representations in discourse always relate to something in existence and, therefore, can be perceived as forms of

'recontextualisation' (Chouliaraki and Fairclough 1999). This study is grounded on Fairclough's (2014) perspective that it is possible to critique the existing social reality, and this begins with a critique of discourse.

Althusser's theorisation of how ideology operates through 'interpellating subjects' and fixing persons in subject positions understates individual agency and pays too little attention to struggle and transformation in power relations (Fairclough 1992). Consequently, feminist researchers have been drawn to the Foucauldian conceptualisation of power, which allows for the possibility of resistance, and post-structuralist theories that perceive identities and subjectivities as dynamic and multiple rather than fixed within an ideological structuring view of the world (Thornborrow 2014). This view of identity as fluid and plural is one that this thesis adopts, and it will be discussed in further detail later in this chapter. Nonetheless, the concept of interpellation is useful for researchers to examine "Who is being addressed, and as what?" (Sunderland 2007: 214). It is applied in the present study to analyse the ways in which ideologies operate through the constitution of gendered subjects in the media, while recognising that individuals have the capacity to challenge these ideologies and may not accept the ideological representations as common sense.

Ideologies are most effective when they become normalised, but as Fairclough (1992) warns us, we should not overstate their stability. Gramsci's (1971) notion of hegemony provides a way of theorising the transformation of ideologies and 'common sense'. Gramsci observes that the maintenance of power does not rest solely on brutal force, but also on winning the consensus of the majority, or 'hegemony'. Hegemony can be achieved through various means, including by the dominant group ceding certain privileges to the marginalised one, though never enough to actually disrupt the existing social order (Koller 2004; Fairclough, Mulderrig and Wodak 2011). This strategy is illustrated by the fact that although women in the business world are given the opportunity to ascend to senior management positions, their rise often ends at the 'glass ceiling' (Koller 2004). Nevertheless, no hegemony can be absolute (Eagleton 1991). The relation of dominance is tenuous, and consent has to be won. This is largely achieved through discursive means, particularly "in the ways ideological assumptions are constantly re-enacted and circulated through discourse as commonsensical and natural" (Lazar 2007: 147). However, since hegemony is based on consent, every status quo is temporary and open to being challenged and transformed (Koller 2004), including through counter discourses that provide alternative versions of

reality. This view that the exercise of power is contestable is important for research with a feminist aim of bringing about social change (Talbot 2010).

While ideologies can shape people's needs and desires, they have to engage significantly with genuine hopes and concerns in order to be effective. They must "make at least some minimal sense of people's experience [and] conform to some degree with what they know of social reality from their practical interaction with it" (Eagleton 1991: 14). Historically, many ideological principles appear to be invented by a small number of conscious and articulate intellectuals, revolutionaries or leaders with access to means of communication that allow the spread of these ideas. However, for a set of ideas to develop into an ideology, they must be shared by the members of the social group 'for' whom these elites claim to speak and act. An important condition for this social sharing is that the group's values, position, practices and goals must be applicable to its members' daily experiences (van Dijk 1998). As Eagleton states, ideologies that are powerful are able to "intervene in the consciousness of those it subjects, appropriating and reinflecting their experience" (1991: 45).

This, then, leads us to the crucial question of how people can transcend ideologies. Eagleton emphasised the role of consciousness in bringing about change:

Any ruling power requires a degree of intelligence and initiative from its subjects, if only for its own values to be internalized ... If the oppressed must be alert enough to follow the rulers' instructions, they are therefore conscious enough to be able to challenge (1991: 46).

In contrast to many dominant ideologies which tend to be implicit or seem so 'natural' that people are barely aware of having them, oppositional ideologies are often more explicit and conscious among group members. For dominated groups or social movements, raising their members' awareness of the ideological basis of their group membership through various means, such as media messages, propaganda and 'consciousness-raising', is crucial in order to counter the effects of ideological hegemony (van Dijk 1998). Second wave feminists, for example, saw self-conscious reflection on the experience of living as women under patriarchy as an important political tool for transforming female experience into feminism. In consciousness-raising groups, women shared their individual stories to demonstrate that these were common experiences of being female (Grant 2015). Such experiences were used not only to gain insight into the social structures in which they live, but also to demonstrate the gaps between dominant discourses and women's lived reality (Snyder 2008). This was an important

political tool since any dominant ideology that failed to mesh with its subjects' everyday experiences can become vulnerable (Eagleton 1991). I will return to the feminist notion of consciousness-raising in the next section of this chapter.

Although early studies on gender ideologies conveyed the impression that only one gender ideology exists within a given society, all societies have a diverse range of gender ideologies endorsed by interdependent civil and state institutions in spheres such as religion, family, education, and law, with ideologies articulated by state institutions being particularly powerful (Phillips 2003). Within the institution of the media, there are several opposing ideologies being espoused (Milestone and Meyer 2012). In the next section, three key gender ideologies in women's media will be discussed in the next section: patriarchal, neoliberal and postfeminist ideologies.

2.2 Gender Ideologies in Women's Media

2.2.1 Patriarchal Ideologies

The concept of patriarchy was developed by radical second wave feminists to refer to "a system of social structures, and practices in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women" (Walby 1990: 214) in the home, the workplace and other social domains, particularly religion and politics (Phillips 2003). Kate Millett (1970), in her classic work *Sexual Politics*, introduced the feminist use of the term 'patriarchy', extending the notion from the rule of the father to the rule of men over women. Her theorising of patriarchy as a political institution provided the second wave movement with a vocabulary and model for expressing and understanding the systemic character of male dominance and female subordination (Wilson 2000). Conceptualising patriarchy as an all-pervading institution perpetuated by techniques of control, Millett argued for the definition of politics to be broadened to include personal life because everyday routines and practices were "a set of stratagems designed to maintain a system" (1970: 23). Since patriarchy is ubiquitous, second wave feminists concluded that no method of social analysis was bias-free and, therefore, the most reliable viewpoint from which to theorise would be women's personal experiences (Grant 2015).

Personal politics, 'experience' and 'woman' were three core concepts of the second wave feminist movement. One classic argument of second wave feminism is that women in patriarchal society have a shared reality. Through self-conscious

reflection about their experiences living under patriarchy and by sharing these with each other in consciousness-raising groups, it was hoped that women would be able to develop a more political understanding of their oppression and see that their experiences were structural issues, rather than individual problems. The viewpoint of female experience and consciousness-raising about patriarchal power led to the development of feminist theory (Snyder 2008; Grant 2015). The sharing of life experiences still functions as a form of consciousness-raising for third wave feminists, even though they rightly reject the idea of a shared reality among all women, an argument that will be discussed in more detail below.

The radical feminist view of patriarchy as a total system of male domination across culture, class, time and place (Lerner 1986) has been strongly criticised. For Millett, patriarchy preceded class stratification and was “sturdier than any form of segregation” (1970: 25). Second wave Marxist-socialist feminists, however, rightly pointed out that although women in capitalist patriarchies may occupy a subordinate position relative to men, not all women are equally oppressed since it may be worse being a poor woman or man than a rich woman in a capitalist patriarchy (Tong 2007). Another criticism against the notion of a unitary patriarchy is that it implies a biological basis for patriarchy (Barrett 1980; Rowbotham 1981). Nevertheless, while some discussions did suggest this, most, including Millett, agreed on the ideological and social foundations of patriarchy (Wilson 2000).

Rather than seeing male domination of women as the original social hierarchy, Marxist feminists maintained that much of what is perceived as the subjugation of women is rooted in colonialism, capitalism, and world systems. They argued, for instance, that it was the shift from agriculture to industrial economies that led to “the isolated nature of women's domestic work, the separation of the private realm from public life, and the glorification of women as frail dependents” (Wilson 2000: 1496). Mitchell (1971) extended this monocausal explanation for patriarchal oppression to include women's role in reproduction, childrearing, and sexual relationships. Nevertheless, Mitchell's argument was, ultimately, class-based (Tong 2007), whereas a patriarchal social order can be shaped by a number of social forces specific to the cultural and historical context of the society. To give an example, in Malaysia, two kinship systems exist in the Malay world: ‘adat temenggong’ and ‘adat perpatih’, which are bilateral and matrilineal practices respectively. The matrilineal ideology and practices, which include reversals of certain patriarchal systems, date back to the fourteenth century. However, they have weakened over time as result of increased migration, political

attempts to abolish matrilineal laws, and the endorsement of Islamic ideologies. Matriliney conflicts with Islam, particularly over family law, and in contemporary Malay society, patriarchal Islamic practices mostly prevail (Stivens 1987; Gomes 1999; Frisk 2009).

This thesis adopts a post-structuralist understanding of power and rejects the notion of “a monolithic and totalising system of oppression in which all men dominate all women” (Walsh 2001: 17). In this study, a patriarchal social order is understood as “relations of power that systematically privilege men as a social group and disadvantage, exclude and disempower women as a social group” (Lazar 2005: 5). Within this view, while women do continue to experience systematic discrimination, including at a structural level (Mills 2003), the intersection of gender with other axes of inequality, such as sexual orientation, social class and ethnicity, means that this discrimination is neither experienced nor discursively enacted in the same way by and for all women (Lazar 2007). Women with economic, racial or national privilege hold power not only over other groups of women, but also over some groups of men (Wilson 2000). Given the cultural context of this study, it is important to stress that although Asian women have often been perceived as marginalised on account of their sex as well as status as a cultural and ethnic minority, not all are oppressed or oppressed in the same way (Bong 2016).

Another reason for rejecting theories of a universal, all-encompassing patriarchy is that they foreclose the possibilities for political change, when it is clear that women can – and do – resist dominant power relationships and improve their circumstances (Wilson 2000; Phillips 2003). Patriarchal ideologies are produced in social contexts and can be transformed through talk and action (Eckert and McConnell-Ginet 2003). Collective political action, in particular, is important for many feminists, including myself (Chen 2013). While individual resistance in everyday rituals and critical conversations have the potential to disturb power relations that sustain and normalise gender inequality, they may not pose an imminent threat to patriarchy (Taylor, Johnston and Whitehead 2016). In Malaysia, women NGOs, often acting jointly as a coalition, have been pivotal in transforming patriarchal norms, such as through the formulation of a Domestic Violence Act and by advocating changes to existing legislation on rape (Ariffin 1999).

However, such political organising, which is essential to undo patriarchal structures, can be hampered by the historical and religious context of a particular

society. Many women in Malaysia, a former British colony, eschew a feminist identity because feminism is associated with Western white women and Western values, which, according to recurring nationalist political rhetoric, are antithetical to Asian values (Arrifin 1999; Bong 2016). Although Malaysia is not an Islamic state, its state-sponsored Islamisation (Bong 2016) also means that women activists have had to be careful not to upset the religious establishment, for instance, on issues surrounding women's sexuality and autonomy over their bodies. Importantly, feminism has also been perceived as 'elitist' as many well-known Malaysian women activists are professionals or academics from middle or upper-class backgrounds (Ariffin 1999).

Returning to the Gramscian notion of hegemony, we can also argue that some women live by patriarchal norms and even resist changes to them because these norms have been naturalised and appear to serve the interests of society as a whole (Diabah 2011; Jones 2016). Dominant gender ideologies, as Pawelczyk (2017) points out, typically carry certain commonsensical ideas about how men or women are, which are often taken for granted as unchangeable and part of ordinary life. Nonetheless, as van Dijk remind us, completely implicit attitudes "are rare in most contemporary societies, where most members have access to the mass media: in such a situation people quickly learn to legitimate their personal opinions in terms of the shared attitudes of the group" (1998: 99). Nguyen's (2011) critical analysis of Vietnamese media articles published on International Women's Day provides an example of how positive attitudes towards patriarchal norms can be reinforced in the public domain. The study uncovers patriarchal ideologies in which mothers are still expected to be the main caregivers. Nguyen argues that by showering women with praises for shouldering this responsibility, the media can make women "feel that they want to do so" (2011: 214).

Patriarchy is also kept in place through denials that gender inequality is still a serious social issue. Such denials, which delegitimize the goal of feminism to end patriarchy and sexism, can be clearly seen, for example, in Mendes's (2012) critical discourse analysis of articles in 8 US and UK newspapers published across 40 years. Her study shows that by 2008, with equality laws firmly in place in both countries, women were held personally responsible for their own professional failures. Those who spoke out against patriarchy and gender discrimination were dismissed as whiners or old-school. McRobbie claims that celebrations of female power and freedom, particularly in feminine popular culture, hide "a tidal wave of invidious insurgent patriarchalism" (2008: 539). The false notion that we live in a

post-patriarchy will be discussed further in the subsequent sections of this chapter.

One patriarchal ideology that has been strongly critiqued by the women's movement promotes the view that men are biologically superior to women, which makes them more intelligent and less emotional (Phillips 2003). Nonetheless, not all patriarchal ideologies project women as inferior, such as those that associate women primarily with their reproductive roles. In Sha and Kirkman's analysis of Australian women's magazines, for example, they found evidence of the "discursive endorsement of pronatalism" (2009: 367), which they argue is consistent with patriarchy:

Celebrations of pregnancy and birth are not intrinsically patriarchal, of course; it is the use to which these icons of 'women's business' are put that defines them as such. In these magazines, motherhood as women's destiny and as the definer of her social position were dominant, and organised explicitly to regulate women's appearance, role, and behaviour (2009: 367).

In finding that women are further dichotomised as 'good' and 'bad' mothers, Sha and Kirkman remind us that the "binary categorisation of women into Madonna or Whore has long been identified in feminist theory as intrinsic to patriarchal discourse" (2009: 367). We shall see that motherhood is also celebrated in the media texts examined in this study, and like Sha and Kirkman, I do not see this as "intrinsically patriarchal" (2009: 367) or inevitably negative. O'Reilly notes that "[m]otherhood scholarship, whether its concern is mothering as institution, experience, or identity, has tended to focus on how motherhood is detrimental to women because of its construction as a patriarchal entity" (2010: 3). However, from a third wave feminist position, I believe that it is important to examine motherhood from an intersectional perspective as the experiences of being a mother are complex, varied and greatly shaped by the individual's culture, race, sexuality, religion, and social class. As this study will demonstrate, while the institution of motherhood is a key site for the regulation of working mothers in Malaysia, it is more fruitful to discuss the expectations placed upon these women in the media texts within the framework of neoliberalism rather than the framework of patriarchy. Neoliberal ideologies will be discussed in the next section of this chapter.

Women's media has also been accused of being complicit in upholding the patriarchal way of evaluating women by their appearance. Talbot's (1992) examination of *Jackie*, a British publication for teenage girls, shows that in the

process of cultivating teenage girls to be competent consumers, the magazine presents the use of cosmetics as a natural aspect of being women. She argues that by positioning its readers as heterosexual consumers of beauty products, the magazine is in fact upholding patriarchal standards of femininity under the guise of 'sisterhood'. It is important to note here that women's media have historically played a significant role in the growth of consumer femininity: "a feminine identity that women achieve for themselves when they buy and use commodities" (Talbot 2010: 154). Since the mass media is ultimately seeking to make a profit through advertising revenue, editorials in magazines contain a lot of information based on advertising copy provided by clients, who often demand for advertorials as a condition for buying advertising space (Talbot 2010). As a result, the content and tone of commercial magazines are heavily influenced by the commodities being pushed to the readers (Sunderland 2004), and consequently, readers of women's magazines are exposed to the views of beauty and cosmetic companies while critical perspectives of beauty are mostly absent. Even when adjacent articles within the same magazine seem to contradict each other on the surface, such as when one promotes body acceptance while the other plugs a cosmetic product, they all contain some element of advertising and indirectly subject position the reader as a consumer (Talbot 2010).

Third wave feminism has sought to address a broad range of political, economic, and cultural factors that contribute to gender injustices (Budgeon 2011). Due to the growing wealth gap resulting from globalisation and the new world economic order, the key site of political struggle for many third wave feminists in the US, for example, has shifted from patriarchy to the World Trade Organisation (Heywood and Drake 2007). This does not mean that patriarchal ideologies have lost ground. As we shall see in Chapter 4, patriarchal norms, such as those relating to domestic labour, are entrenched in Malaysia. Rather, such ideologies are largely indirect, especially in advanced capitalist democracies where women have formal access to important institutions (Walby 1990). Baker argues that with the removal of some social constraints on women, a highly individualised concept of self and circumstances has emerged, which does not leave space to confront issues of gender inequality that still persist:

Reflexive modernization, or individualization, in the late modern era has been conceptualized as extensive moves away from tradition and habitual practice (Beck 1992, 1994; Giddens 1991, 1994), with the implication being that girls and women are increasingly untethered by gendered constraints. According to Beck and Giddens, where the life course has lost much of its pre-ordained and institutionalized nature, new forms of autonomy and an increased call for decision making emerge, which are

more internally referential than externally structured. The decline of earlier social expectations and constraints (with girls and women positioned as particular beneficiaries) means, in Giddens' words, that 'we are, not what we are, but what we make of ourselves' (1991: 68). The individual is conceived as, above all, a choosing, enterprising subject who is obliged to construct a self-reflexive biography in the pursuit of self-actualization. Thus, our identities are not static but can be changed and improved (2010: 187).

We will delve deeper into this in the next section, where we will discuss neoliberalism, a capitalist ideology that perpetuates patriarchy through a new form of governance that works from within by "addressing individual desires, aspirations, habits and self-interest", rather than from the top down or outside, making traditional criticism of normative power increasingly difficult (Chen 2013: 446).

2.2.2 Neoliberal Gender Ideologies

Developed by the Chicago School of Political Economy during the post-war years "to advocate market supremacy and competitive freedom against Keynesian state planning" (Chen 2013: 441), neoliberalism refers to the political and economic school of thought that promotes the ideas of privatisation, deregulation, and the withdrawal of state support. It has strongly influenced socio-cultural values in the Western world since the Thatcher and Reagan administrations (Gill and Scharff 2011), and is now the hegemonic mode of discourse globally, with "pervasive effects on ways of thought to the point where it has become incorporated into the common-sense way many of us interpret, live in, and understand the world" (Harvey 2005: 3).

Neoliberal market values have extended their sway beyond socio-economic policies to increasingly conceptualise human life in entrepreneurial terms, where the individual is made personally accountable for their progress and adaptation, no matter the disadvantages faced due to their circumstances (Brown 2003). This self-responsible neoliberal subject is assumed to be free, but the meaning of freedom has changed. Universal freedom from power has been replaced with what Chen terms "positive freedom", that is "the active ability to respond to power and the autonomous ability to realise one's potential through one's own efforts and active choice" (2013: 443). Choice and agency have also been resignified to refer to the ability "to choose maximum material gain and profit in order to construct one's own self [and] to be active in this materialistic, profitable self-actualising project" (2013: 443). The self-directed, reflexive "entrepreneur of the self" (Gordon 1987: 300) is expected to ceaselessly take up the "obligation of

self-surveillance [in] obedience to the structures of neoliberalism that require more regulation of interiority" (Baker 2010: 191).

Feminist researchers are increasingly identifying neoliberalism as a critical dimension of gender equality struggles. In contrast to feminist movements, which place emphasis on collective action and third-party intervention (Mendes 2012), the incorporation of the political into "the all-absorbing domain of marketised self-governance" (Chen 2013: 446) has reversed the second wave rallying cry 'the personal is political', and reduced the political to personal and individual (Dow 1996). With the privatisation of issues of inequality, which places the responsibility for change on the individual, power is ignored and blame is relocated onto women's personal choices. As Crittenden maintains, "[t]hose who benefit from the status quo always attribute inequalities to the choices of the underdog" (2001: 234). Even among new feminists in Germany, Scharff (2011) observes tension between the acknowledged need for a continued feminist politics and neoliberal individualism that is autonomous and self-regulating. Chen warns that motivated by self-interest, the "homo economicus who freely deliberates every action based on a rational cost-benefit calculation" (2013: 443) may make choices that reinforce the patriarchal norm and the status quo. Additionally, as an ideology grounded in capitalism, neoliberalism "equates consumption with freedom, liberation and empowerment. As a result, although drawing from liberal feminist arguments, which focus on individual rights and freedoms, it poses a serious challenge to more radical feminist theories which stress collectivism and social responsibility" (Mendes 2012: 557-558).

Vavrus asserts that "[a]s with any ideology that becomes hegemonic, popular consent to neoliberalism is gained through its promotion by significant social institutions, such as think tanks and media organizations" (2007: 49). This is illustrated in her study of the US media. She argues that neoliberal beliefs and values, promoted through the rhetoric of choice, individualism, and privatisation, underlie the news stories' "pre-feminist notions about mothering and family care" (2007: 47). However, neoliberal principles are more than just being endorsed - they are "so firmly entrenched in corporate media culture that they prevent the pursuit in news stories of solutions associated with social democracy" (2007: 59). In her study, it is not only neoliberalism that upholds "the patriarchal ideology that has historically undergirded mainstream media treatments of women and families" (2007: 51), but a fusion of neoliberal and postfeminist ideologies. We will now turn to postfeminism and its intimate relationship with neoliberalism.

2.2.3 Postfeminist Ideologies

The term 'postfeminism' is used in four main ways, namely to signal (1) an "epistemological break within feminism"; (2) "a historical shift after the height of second wave feminism" in the 1970s; (3) "a backlash against feminism" (Gill and Scharff 2011: 3); and (4) an entanglement of both feminist and anti-feminist ideas where selected choices and freedoms are offered in place of social change and feminist politics (McRobbie 2009). This thesis will adopt the final definition since postfeminism cannot be simplified as anti-feminist. It both rejects and invokes feminism² with an emphasis on choice, individualism, empowerment, consumerism, and the resexualisation of women's bodies (Gill and Scharff 2011). In fact, postfeminism is contingent upon this contradiction where feminism is both appropriated and reviled (Budgeon 2011).

There is a strong resonance between neoliberalism and postfeminism:

First, and most broadly, both appear to be structured by a current of individualism that has almost entirely replaced notions of the social or political, or any idea of the individual as subject to pressures, constraints or influence from outside themselves. Second, it is clear that the autonomous, calculating, self-regulating subject of neoliberalism bears a strong resemblance to the active, freely choosing, self-reinventing subject of postfeminism. These two parallels suggest, then, that postfeminism is not simply a response to feminism but also ... partly constituted through the pervasiveness of neoliberal ideas (Gill 2007b: 163-164).

The synergy between neoliberalism and postfeminism is also apparent in neoliberalism's gendered nature. As Gill writes, "[t]o a much greater extent than men, women are required to work on and transform the self, regulate every aspect of their conduct, and present their actions as freely chosen" (2007b: 164).

² 'Postfeminism' has been used synonymously with third wave feminism (Gill and Scharff 2011) as it positively draws on many ideas associated with the third wave. For instance, both postfeminism and third wave feminism celebrate feminine beauty norms as well as women's agency and sexual autonomy (Wolf 1993; Riley and Scharff 2013). However, despite the resonances between the two, they cannot be conflated with each other. One important distinction between postfeminism and third wave feminism is that the former lacks a critical political consciousness and, therefore, unlike the latter, cannot be located within a feminist trajectory. Whereas postfeminism operates from the assumption that feminist struggles have ended (McRobbie 2004), third wave feminists recognise the continued salience of gender inequality, with many working to "create conditions of freedom, equality, [and] justice" (Snyder 2008: 192) for women through "a diverse range of activist projects including black feminism and working-class feminism" (Chen 2013: 450).

While some claim that postfeminism empowers women as it popularises feminist ideas and makes them more mainstream (Squire 1997), I stand with those who have problematised and criticised postfeminism for promoting myths that sustain the status quo. These myths are discussed below.

2.2.2.1 Postfeminism and Gender Equality

My first argument against postfeminism is that “it lulls one into thinking that struggles over the social transformation of the gender order have become defunct” (Lazar 2007: 154). McRobbie (2004) argues that postfeminism positively invokes feminism, but only to suggest that it has accomplished its goal of achieving gender equality and to replace it with a range of new postfeminist ideas. For example, one dominant postfeminist discourse is that due to the success of the second wave feminist movement, women can now ‘have it all’. The feminine mystique challenged by Friedan (1963) in the 1960s has been replaced by the superwoman mystique where, since young, women have been “told that they could be anything, but heard that they had to be everything” (Martin 2013a). This postfeminist discourse that women can ‘have it all’ has resonances of third wave feminist ideas that celebrate “women’s newfound power and achievements” (Lazar 2007: 154). It constructs hybrid subjectivities that require women to be both intelligent and physically attractive, heterofeminine and a successful learner, aggressive and nurturing, and self-sufficient and still closely tied to family and community (Gonick 2004; Ringrose 2007), placing impossible demands on postmodern women and causing them to feel inadequate or guilty if they do not meet these unreasonable expectations.

The universalisation of third wave discourses highlighting women’s advances in some societies not only constructs the postfeminist narrative of self-determination and self-efficacy, but is also used to reject the political aspects of feminism that direct attention to gender inequality for the reason that this positions women as victims and hinders them from embracing their empowerment (Budgeon 2011). By dismissing feminism as irrelevant, redundant, and belonging to the past (Milestone and Meyer 2012) and creating the illusion that feminism’s goals have been achieved without the need for any changes on the part of those who hold patriarchal power (Brundson 1986; Hollows 2000; McRobbie 2009), postfeminism cultivates “a culture of post-critique” (Lazar 2009: 372).

Besides the assumption that gender equality has been achieved, another obstacle that hinders support for feminism is the rise of individualism within society (Redfern and Aune 2010), and the two are closely linked. In Lazar's critique of the postfeminist assumption that women can 'have it all' if only they try hard enough, she makes the following observation:

[Postfeminism] reframes women's struggles and accomplishments as a purely personal matter, thus obscuring the social and material constraints faced by different groups of women. Ironically, this represents a backsliding on (second-wave) feminists' efforts to put the 'personal as political' on the social agenda. Concomitantly, there seems to be an inward-looking focus, and contentment only in the achievement of personal freedoms and fulfilment. A self-focused 'me-feminism' of this sort shifts attention away from the collective 'we-feminism' needed for a transformational political program (2007: 154).

This last point reiterates my earlier argument in Section 2.2.1 that collective political action is crucial for bringing about gender equality. Thus, this shift from feminism as a collectivist ideal to an individualistic, de-politicised one (McRobbie 2009) must be reversed.

By asserting that women have attained equality, postfeminist rhetoric also encourages women to pursue individualised self-actualisation and self-expression through a consumer lifestyle (Budgeon 2011). Chen points out the "increasing trend since the 1990s towards a celebration of conspicuous consumption and solipsistic individual gratification, embodied above all in the image of the empowered, assertive, pleasure-seeking, 'have-it-all' woman of sexual and financial agency" (2013: 441). The next section problematises the postfeminist commodity culture.

2.2.2.2 Postfeminism, Beauty Work and Consumerism

The third wave perspective that beauty practices and the decoration and transformation of the body are sources of pleasure for women (Wolf 1993; Walter 1998) has been subsumed into postfeminism and offered as a "rationale for guilt-free consumerism disassociated from the 'burdens' of reproachful (second wave) feminism" (Lazar 2009: 374). However, while it has been argued that consumerism offers women personal freedom and more varied lives (Hymowitz 2007), Lazar (2007) rightly warns that patriarchal and consumerist ideologies interact in sophisticated ways. Advertisers, for example, have co-opted feminism and market their products as a form of empowerment. Although this empowerment does not relate to any actual collective gains for women (Redfern and Aune 2010), female consumers are lulled into a false sense of security that

"numbs resistance and deflects criticism" (Lazar 2009: 371), thinking that "a lifestyle based on commodity consumption is universally shared and freely accessible to all" (2009: 397).

In women's magazines, the pursuit of beauty is taken for granted (Talbot 2010), and in some contexts, the achievement of beauty is even presented as a right (Lazar 2011). However, the narcissistic postfeminist identity grounded on a feminine entitlement to consume "offers a rather limited and problematic vision of femininity and gender equality" (Lazar 2009: 371) because an intrinsic aspect of this consumer culture is the hyper-commodification of the objectified and fragmented female body to be endlessly worked on and improved (Tincknell 2011), promoting "an oppressive, negative culture of body hatred" (Redfern and Aune 2010: 20). The marketing of beauty products has been criticised for oppressing women through the promulgation of unrealistic standards, objectifying women, and exploiting female insecurities (Lazar 2009). Beautification may be presented in postfeminist advertisements as a form of emancipation where women are offered a range of self-determined choices, but the option not to consume is not presented (Lazar 2011). On the other hand, Lazar's (2011) analysis of beauty ads found that the 'freedom' offered to consumers is liberation from their physical 'flaws'. It is implied that they are not fully emancipated until they meet the beauty ideals.

Another related criticism against postfeminism is that it is very age-conscious, placing high importance on youthfulness and encouraging women to be described and treated as little girls (Lazar 2009). Unlike male attractiveness, female beauty and sexual desirability is conflated with youthfulness or the appearance of youthfulness (Tincknell 2011), and cosmetic companies have turned women's bodies into battlegrounds by constantly reminding women, including through the media, to work towards having younger-looking skin and avoid ageing (Redfern and Aune 2010). As Wearing points out, "older women's bodies are subject to increasing scrutiny, discipline and sexualisation" in a range of popular cultural texts (2011: 173).

Although wearing makeup is often presented as a self-determined decision, Jeffreys takes the view that this practice is due to "the pressures arising from male dominance" (2005: 38), and that through makeup, "women are required to fulfil men's needs in public places and do not have the freedoms that men possess" (2005: 44). This thesis does not go so far as to claim that wearing makeup always endorses "women's subordinate status as objects of male sexual

desire within patriarchal systems” (Pedwell 2011: 190). The meanings that women attach to beauty work are multiple and complex. Beauty work can be a creative outlet or a form of self-care. Women’s decisions about their physical self-presentation also have to be located in the broader cultural context. For example, in 2008, the (predominantly male) municipal council of Kota Bharu, a Malaysian city administered by the Pan-Malaysian Islamic Party, released a circular ‘discouraging’ Muslim women from wearing thick makeup and bright coloured lipstick in order to preserve their “morals and dignity” (CNN 2008). This was strongly criticised by both Muslim and non-Muslim women as a move to pressure women to dress based on male dictates. Therefore, simply viewing the continued usage of makeup among Muslim women in this city as patriarchal would be failing to consider the diversity of women’s gendered experiences. The aspects of pleasure, resistance and choice behind their beauty practices need to be understood in relation to their socio-religious context without foreclosing critical discussion about capitalist and media constructions of feminine beauty.

In many societies, ‘doing’ beauty is considered a significant aspect of ‘doing’ femininity (Lazar 2011). ‘Femininity’ has often invoked a negative stereotype, and is ascribed less value and status than ‘masculine’ characteristics and practices. However, from a social constructionist perspective, the categories ‘feminine’ and ‘masculine’ are ideological constructs (Weatherall 2002), and there is nothing inherently negative about normative feminine social practices such as beauty work. Wolf (1990) observes that within the images of femininity in popular culture, commodified beauty is closely linked to female sexual desirability. However, Talbot maintains that femininity concerns more than sexualisation:

[W]omen are not just turning themselves into ‘sex objects’. They are actively involved in self-creation. We could turn **feminine** into a verb, to **feminize**. When women go shopping for clothes and cosmetics, they make decisions about how to feminize themselves (2010: 138, emphasis in original).

In other words, “embodied practice, subjectivity and agency often develop simultaneously, in and through one another” (Pedwell 2011: 195). Nevertheless, I agree with Lazar (2011), who argues that conforming to beauty ideals, even as a form of expressing oneself, does not always contest social norms and expectations (Lazar 2011). Even if these practices offer women the opportunity to create their own unique beauty (Weingarten 2006), this does not lead to real social change or true emancipation for women due to the depoliticisation of consumer femininity (Lazar 2011).

In reclaiming stereotypical feminine practices, postfeminism has not only construed them as a source of pleasure, but also a mark of confidence (Lazar 2009). Part of successful femininity now involves exercising individualised agency, which was formerly a male privilege (Gonick 2004). However, this agency is directed towards relentless self-improvement and the production of (conventional) sexual attractiveness that is conflated with social class. Postfeminist rhetoric and imagery convey the message that success, glamour and happiness can be achieved if a woman has the 'right' appearance (Press 2011). In popular culture, women are often encouraged to self-monitor and discipline themselves in order to fulfil the cultural ideal of successful femininity (Gill and Scharff 2011), or risk being perceived as a failure (Walkerdine, Lucey and Melody 2001). Hence, the subject position of consumer is presented as a fundamental aspect of being feminine (Talbot 1992). The differences in the representations of the 'ideal' and 'unfeminine' women do ideological work (Cameron 2003). Postfeminist culture which prioritises individual consumption, self-improvement and the endeavour to be part of an affluent elite keeps women focused upon themselves rather than on wider socio-political issues (Mills and Mullany 2011).

2.2.2.3 Postfeminism and Sexual Subjectification

Central to postfeminism is a discourse of sexual agency and subjectification. Within postfeminist culture, "a whole series of signifiers are linked to promote a new liberated, contemporary sexuality for women; sex is stylish, a source of physical pleasure, a means of creating identity, a form of body work, self-expression, a quest for individual fulfilment" (Attwood 2006: 86). This contemporary sexualisation of women is maintained by postfeminist discourses of empowerment, choice, and celebrity (Harvey and Gill 2011). It is not only framed in contrast with the misconception of second wave feminism as repressive and opposed to sex and bodily display (Attwood 2011; Press 2011), but also appropriates the third wave view of women's sexuality:

If a woman wants to ... wear sexually provocative clothes, sell her sexual services, [then] she should feel free to do so provided that she feels empowered by her actions and not somehow demeaned, diminished, or otherwise objectified by them ... third wave feminists maintain that a woman can be a feminist and a porn queen (Tong 2007: 35-36).

As a result, certain practices that were previously associated with the sex industry have been "respectabilized" (Harvey and Gill 2011: 53), for instance, pole dancing as a fitness activity.

According to Chen, it is the shift from sexual objectification to sexual subjectification that “marks neoliberal-inflected popular women’s culture as different from before” (2013: 442). This shift has raised questions around whether the increased depictions of women as sexually agentic and self-determined is a real, positive transformation in the representation of female sexuality, or simply a postfeminist appropriation of feminist notions that have been depoliticised and commodified (Harvey and Gill 2011). Within popular culture, female sexuality has been conflated with notions of success, self-confidence and pleasure (Attwood 2011), and the pleasures gained by women from the postfeminist incitement to be sexy and sexually desiring and knowing should not be doubted (Harvey and Gill 2011). Nevertheless, this does not imply that women have absolute freedom in expressing themselves. Within Foucault’s (1988) work on the concept of ‘technologies of self’, individual agency and autonomy are understood to be confined to available discourses. In other words, agency can be viewed as a “self-reflexive adoption of a specific discourse” (Attwood 2011: 211). Hence, while women’s agency and pleasure in being sexual subjects should not be denied, the discourses and resistances available towards more positive representations of female sexuality also need to be interrogated (Harvey and Gill 2011).

Although postfeminist rhetoric represents “the overt presentation of sexuality” as “liberation from repressive societal codes” (Duits and van Zoonen 2006: 112), this so-called freedom can only be achieved through the effective performance of the “appropriately commodified sexual subjectivity” (Harvey and Gill 2011: 60). The postfeminist compulsion to be skilled sexually and to be able to perform confident sexual agency (Harvey and Gill 2011) can be perceived, for example, in instructional features in women’s magazines on how to improve sexual performance and increase sexual desire (Redfern and Aune 2010; Talbot 2010). While the media encourages women to become “the confident actively desiring sexual subject” and to “take back control” in bed, it usually involves ways for improving sexual performance and pleasing men, and the implicit message is that this self-management is needed in order to keep a man (Harvey and Gill 2011: 61). Female sexualisation may be repackaged as a form of empowerment, but in actual fact, women’s sexuality is defined from the perspective of the heterosexual male, for whose attention women should seek and be grateful (Redfern and Aune 2010). This places pressure on women to be ‘up for it’ or at least be ‘willing to try’ as a response to male needs (Harvey and Gill 2011), while limiting their own right to say no to sex since women who do not portray themselves as sexually desiring risk being labelled as frigid (Redfern and Aune 2010). The role of self-

discipline in reinforcing hegemony is highlighted by Gill who argues that the “knowing and deliberate *re-sexualisation* and *re-commodification* of women’s bodies” (2003: 101, emphasis in original) marks a shift from “an *external male judging gaze* to a *self-policing narcissistic gaze*” (2003: 104, emphasis in original), and this is a more pernicious form of objectification.

Lazar found that in some postfeminist advertisements, women’s sexual empowerment “is presented vis-a-vis the disempowerment of men” (2007: 159), where it is the man who is presented as the object of the female gaze or dominated by the woman. This, Lazar argues, is also detrimental to the feminist cause:

Structurally, the gender order remains dualistic and hierarchical, but the players have been switched. There appears to be at work a perverse sense of equality – if women traditionally have been the subordinated group, and in the media sexually objectified, it is a sign of social progress to turn the tables on men along similar lines. This is hardly the kind of gender order restructuring envisaged by feminists of any persuasion. However, repeated circulation of such images (not only in advertising but also in movies, comics, ‘chick lit’, and so on) plays into popular (mis)conceptions about feminism (2007: 159).

Lazar’s concerns are particularly pertinent for countries like Malaysia, where many women eschew self-identification with feminism for various socio-historical reasons, as discussed earlier in this chapter. Such misconstruction of feminist goals as promoting women supremacy over men could further discourage women from supporting and organising feminist actions, including in the workplace, even though “[t]he power reversal – let alone gender parity – depicted in sexual advertising is hardly matched by fundamental shifts in social relationships between women and men outside the world of the advertisements” (Lazar 2007: 159). Furthermore, as this thesis will argue in Chapter 9, postfeminist discourses on female sexual empowerment, when overlaid onto the persistent stereotype of the manipulative woman, can exacerbate workplace issues for women.

2.2.2.4 ‘Backlash’ Against Postfeminism

Mills and Mullany observe that despite the dominance of postfeminist ideas, there is evidence of a ‘backlash’ against postfeminism in popular culture publications. This suggests the possibility of a feminist resurgence in the West and other parts of the world, as women “appear to have started to grow tired of the one-dimensional objectified manner in which they are encouraged to behave to show that they are allegedly ‘empowered’” (2011: 30). Furthermore, the Internet has helped to create a ‘call-out’ culture (Munro n.d.). Persistent patriarchal attitudes

towards women, denied by postfeminism, are brought to light as evidence, shared and recorded online as a collective, such as through *The Everyday Sexism Project*, and conveyed to a larger audience than before, providing those outside of academia with access to the discussion (Hayes 2013) and equipping them with a good grasp of feminist language and concepts (Cochrane 2013). As Hayes (2013) states, the Internet has “helped us realise that we are fighting a different type of sexism, one that is not just bound up in laws, but is entrenched in social attitudes, behaviours and stereotypes, which have been exacerbated and inflated by mass consumerism”. This growing consciousness of gender inequality and sense of solidarity with an international community of feminists have motivated young women to actively take up a range of feminist issues (Cochrane 2013). For example, in the UK, the *No More Page 3* campaign, which had hundreds of thousands of supporters, was successful in stopping *The Sun* from featuring photos of topless ‘glamour models’ in its pages.

2.3 Language and Identity

This study takes a social constructionist perspective of identity, viewing identity not as a set of learned or biologically-based traits, but as fluid, socially constructed and multidimensional, with gender being one dimension of identity alongside other categories such as social class, age and sexuality (Preece 2016). Rather than being fixed and coherent, identity is a social endeavour to convey to one another “what kind of people we are; which geographical, ethnic, social communities we belong to; where we stand in relation to ethical and moral questions; or where our loyalties are in political terms” (De Fina 2006: 263).

Within social constructionist approaches, gender is understood as actively accomplished through linguistic and non-linguistic behaviour, rather than reflecting an *a priori* identity as a ‘woman’ or ‘man’ (Lazar 2007). In order to discuss the accomplishment of gender through language, this study will draw on Ochs’s (1992) model of indexicality, which Jones summarises as follows:

The term [‘indexicality’] comes from the word index, meaning ‘to point to’; indexicality, then, is the process by which particular ways of using language point towards, or indicate, culturally recognisable identities. This means that a speaker may use language that carries a particular ideological meaning associated with their gender, in turn gendering their identity performance (2016: 213-214).

Within this model, the indexicality of gender involves two semiotic processes:

[W]ith respect to *direct indexicality*, linguistic forms 'most immediately' index particular social roles, activities, stances or acts, whereas in the process of *indirect indexicality*, these same linguistic forms become associated with particular social types and personas believed to embody those roles, engage in those activities or perform such stances and acts – types and personas that are culturally coded as gendered (Bucholtz, 2009: 148) (Romaniuk 2016: 543, emphasis in original).

Hence, in order to relate the language used in the media texts to its culturally gendered meaning, this thesis will integrate Ochs's (1992) model of indexicality with the social constructionist approach.

This study also draws on Butler's (1990) model of gender. Butler builds upon Foucault's (1988) notion of 'technologies of the self', in which individuals can creatively transform themselves, but their possible transformations are limited by the availability of circulating discourses. She argues that gender identity is neither completely determined nor completely arbitrary. As an unstable social category that varies by context, gender needs to be constantly reaffirmed through repeated gendered acts. However, individuals are not completely free to choose from a range of gendered linguistic practices, but are impinged upon by a "rigid regulatory frame" (1990: 33) that governs how we assess each other and constrains how gender can be accomplished. Influenced by Foucault, Butler understands the notion of regulation as "a mode of *discipline and surveillance* within late modern forms of power" (2004: 55, emphasis in original), and this perspective is productive for exploring the neoliberal and postfeminist emphasis on self-discipline, self-monitoring, and entrepreneurial self-work (Gill 2007b) discussed in the previous section.

Butler's rigid regulatory frame accords well with Foucauldian notions of gendered discourses, which operate as boundaries through which men and women "are represented or expected to behave *in particular gendered ways*" (Sunderland 2004: 21, emphasis in original). One powerful gendered discourse that heavily influences our expectations and judgement of appropriate gendered behaviour is the dominant 'gender differences' discourse, which strongly emphasises the differences between women and men, including differences in interactional styles (Mullany 2007). Straying beyond the boundaries of these gendered expectations of interactional behaviour can have material effects on individuals. To give an example, gender and language research in the workplace has repeatedly found that women leaders who utilise interactional styles that have come to be indirectly indexed as 'masculine' are often assessed negatively (Holmes 2006; Mullany 2007).

Postfeminist discourses of female empowerment through consumer choice and sexual agency have redefined regulatory boundaries that uphold the distinction between 'desirable' and 'non-desirable' ways of being a woman. Nevertheless, although women are interpellated as autonomous, freely-choosing subjects, their gender performances are still constrained by the discourses that are available to them since it is through discourses that enactments of gender identities are encoded and evaluated (Mullany 2010). Postfeminist discourses constitute the recognisability and meaningfulness of the display of particular types of beauty and sexual knowledge and practices. Women who refuse to engage in these practices may be viewed as stepping outside of the regulatory boundaries and are at risk of being perceived as failures (Walkerdine, Lucey and Melody 2001). Thus, Butler's notion of the rigid regulatory frame is useful for interrogating how neoliberal and postfeminist representations of women in the media can contribute to discursive constraints that regulate the boundaries of ideal womanhood, particularly how femininities are circumscribed in ways that are "classed and relate[d] to appearance and the enforcement of heterosexual conventions" (Riley and Scharff 2013: 210).

Butler argues that "one does not 'do' one's gender alone. One is always 'doing' with or for another" (2004: 1). Therefore, when examining the performance of gender in institutional settings such as the media, we also need to keep in mind that linguistic practices can be shaped by people's understanding of their roles within the institution (Holmes and Meyerhoff 1999) and who they are 'doing' gender with and for. This study will consider "the assumptions and expectations of ... ascribed social roles against which any performance of gender is constructed, accommodated to, or resisted" (Bergvall 1999: 282), and relate the construction of identities to the social context from which the linguistic practices and identities that they index acquire their meaning.

From a social constructionist perspective, identities are pluralised and diverse. Since individuals participate in, and identify with, multiple social groups, individuals orient to different identities at different times (Ivanic 1998; Wodak 2003). Accordingly, gender – being one dimension of identity – can also be viewed as multiple, where different femininities or masculinities are produced according to social context (Sunderland and Litosseliti 2002). Nonetheless, even though individuals are able to move from one identity to another, they may reproduce hegemonic identities more than alternative ones (Holmes 1997). Furthermore, individuals may not be conscious of performing their identities (Talbot 2010). While individuals do have agency in their identity construction,

their linguistic behaviour may arise from “their habitual engagement in certain practices and their membership of the relevant communities” (Cameron 1996: 45).

Social constructionist approaches also view gender as dynamically accomplished in and through discourse (Lazar 2007). When we reproduce discourses, we take up subject positions (or ‘ways of being’) and construct our identities (Talbot 2010). Therefore, our subjectivity – our sense of ourselves – “emerges not from an inner core but out of a complex of historical, cultural, and political processes and practices” (Weatherall and Gallois 2003: 496). Since a person is constituted differently through different discourses, an individual’s subjectivity is diverse and potentially conflicting (Talbot 2010). However, while a person’s sense of self is constituted in discourse, they are actively involved in the performance and construction of their identities (Talbot 2010). This is exemplified in Atanga’s (2012) study where, through emancipatory discourses, Cameroonian women parliamentarians subvert the conservative identity construction of the ‘model Cameroonian woman’ as mother, carer, and wife. Hence, this study will also look out for resistance to conservative discourses, and points of conflict and negotiation as individuals actively construct themselves as subjects through their language choices (Mills 2008).

In conjunction with gender performativity in talk, this study also examines the discursive construction of gendered identities in written institutional texts through the text producers’ social positioning of themselves and other women. Research on language and gender in the media has found that text producers subject position themselves as a sister, confidante, interviewer, advertiser, agony aunt or fashion historian, shifting positions depending on the genre of the text (Talbot 2010) as deemed appropriate based on institutional norms. Media producers also construct their idealised reader or listener in particular ways to fulfil the purpose of the text, for instance as a consumer or a successful working mother. Nevertheless, this textual positioning can be resisted and contested by a critical audience (Sunderland 2004). As Mills and Mullany reminds us:

we need to continue to move away from the assumption that these representations have some direct and unmediated impact on the construction of identities. However, if we are critical of these assumptions, we have to find some way of accounting for the impact that they do have (2011: 164).

In order to gain a better understanding of the ideological effects of the media, attention must be given to the audience’s response and interpretation. While it is

beyond the scope of this thesis to interrogate media effects on the audience, I will return to this issue in the concluding chapter.

As mentioned earlier in this section, in addition to being fluid and dynamic, identity is also multidimensional. Acknowledging that different groups of women materially experience sexism and gender oppression in different ways, feminist linguistics has moved away from a focus on white, middle-class, heterosexual women to more localised studies that examine diversity in gender identities, and the ways gender intersects with other social identity variables and systems of power (Lazar 2007; Mills 2008; Mills and Mullany 2011). For example, Mullany and Yoong's (2016) analysis of Malaysian media representations of a Malay-Muslim politician and her older, ethnically Chinese male opponent during a parliamentary by-election campaign shows that other aspects of her identity such as her race, religion, age, and sexuality intersected powerfully with her gender to constitute her as the less suitable candidate.

2.3.1 Stereotypes in the Media

The promulgation of stereotypes in the media continues to be a significant form of gender discrimination faced by Malaysian women (Malaysian NGO CEDAW Alternative Report Group 2012). The Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Content Code, which provides guidelines against biased portrayals of women and men in the media (Communications and Multimedia Content Forum of Malaysia 2004), has not been successful, which is perhaps unsurprising given that "traditional sexist stereotypes are so resilient and so well entrenched that they may be contested repeatedly without undermining their commonsensical status" (Talbot 2003: 480). A recent study of talk on a Malaysian radio phone-in programme, for example, shows how stereotypic feminine identities are reinforced and naturalised, and summarises the problem as follows:

In the texts analysed, what emerges from the reinforcement as well as ridicule of a range of stereotypical representations of men and women is the ascendancy of hegemonic masculinity over femininities and other masculinities which, as Schippers (2007:94) stated, serves 'the interests of the gender order and male domination' (Yoong 2017: 43).

Unfortunately, as the United Nations Secretary-General reports, the stereotyping of women is not confined to Malaysian media:

Media continues to inadequately reflect women's roles and contributions to society and women are often portrayed in a stereotyped manner – as victims, sex objects, economically and emotionally dependant, and weak, passive and unprofessional. Men predominate in media coverage in most

areas, including, in particular, in politics, the economy and sports. Biased news coverage in both traditional and new media has reinforced gender stereotypes by depicting a world in which women and girls are relatively invisible. Stereotyped portrayals of women in the media ... have remained a serious challenge in many countries (2010: 69).

In the UK, the Leveson Inquiry reported that “younger women are visible but heavily stereotyped and infantilised” and in many newspapers, “women are persistently portrayed as sex objects” (OBJECT 2012). A separate study conducted by women NGOs on eleven British newspapers found that not only are women often featured for ornamental purposes, but their achievements and contributions to society tend to be downplayed, while their attractiveness, romantic life, marital status, and motherhood status are emphasised (EAVES et al. 2012).

Stereotypes sustain gender ideologies as they “reproduce naturalized gender differences. In doing so, they function to sustain hegemonic male dominance and female subordination” (Talbot 2003: 472). Moreover, when perpetuated by institutions such as the media, stereotypes can seem implicitly authorised at an institutional level, and feed social expectations about roles and ‘appropriate’ behaviour, consequently sustaining gender inequality (Mills 2008). However, this is not to imply that people are passively modelling their behaviour after these stereotypes, but rather actively producing their identities from the collective resources available to them, including these media representations, which is why there is little empirical support for many stereotypes (Cameron 2003). Therefore, while it is important to study how discourses reinforce gender stereotypes within the powerful institution of the media, there is also a need to investigate what people *do* with media representations in reality (Cameron 2003). This issue will be revisited in the final chapter of this thesis.

In recent years, feminists in the UK have pointed to the lack of older women as well as women experts in broadcasting as a contributing factor to the disparity between how men and women are portrayed in the British media, and have called for more women voices in the media. One of the key arguments in support of media reform is that representations of women leaders can have significant socio-political effects. The negative depictions of women could impact who are elected into government positions as policy makers, and consequently policies relating to gender equality (Cochrane 2012; EAVES et al. 2012). Nevertheless, the increase in women representation in the public domain has neither led to equality nor necessarily served the interests of other women (Ehrlich 1999; Cameron 2009; Talbot 2010). In finding that a woman politician was portrayed in stereotypical

ways in Bulgarian newspapers regardless of the biological sex of the journalist, Ibroscheva and Raicheva-Stover imputes this to women journalists being “universally socialized in the conventions of the profession (McQuail, 2005). They often accept their roles willingly, without critically examining or questioning the damaging effect of using such gender stereotyping language and portrayals” (2009: 122).

2.3.2 New Femininities in the Media

As we have seen earlier in this chapter, postfeminism has been censured for reinforcing normative femininity. However, postfeminism also constructs ‘new femininities’ that do not fall neatly into the categories of ‘feminist’ or ‘traditional’ (McRobbie 2009). Gill and Arthurs (2006) call for the forms of femininity engendered by postfeminism to be analysed to identify what is new and what is retained from conservative forms.

In her linguistic analysis of beauty advertisements in Singaporean media, Lazar (2009) distinguishes an emerging postfeminist identity which she labels ‘entitled femininity’. Like other postfeminist identities, ‘entitled femininity’ is complex and contradictory, in that its pro-woman stance both celebrates and rejects feminism while promoting gender stereotypes. Lazar identifies three major themes that constitute the ‘entitled femininity’ identity. The first is ‘It’s about me!’. Unlike normative feminine identities which are other-centred, this identity is “discursively represented in terms of self-indulgence and pampering, as well as through related notions of pleasuring the self and enjoying an exclusive space of consumption” (2009: 375). Pampering, which is entirely based on consumption due to the consumerist ideology underlying beauty ads, is portrayed as well-deserved ‘me-time’ and a form of liberation for the modern working woman. This entitlement is also represented as a necessity, such as for general health and well-being, and sometimes indirectly supported through implicit references to the success of feminism (Lazar 2009).

The second theme is ‘Celebrating femininity’. The postfeminist celebratory play of femininity is “powerfully expressed through the perspective of the desiring feminine subject – a position informed by feminism” (Lazar 2009: 388), where the products sold are represented as desired by women rather than externally imposed by a marketing tool. The desiring female subject is constructed as fully entitled to take ownership of their wants (Lazar 2009) due to the social

achievements of women. Indulging in feminine pursuits is not bimbotic, but rather a sign of success and security in one's own gender identity.

Lazar labels the final theme 'Girling woman' where adult women are subject positioned as youthful and fun-seeking, and are invited to celebrate their girlhood through instant self-gratification and pleasure. The postfeminist girl-woman is a combination of girly cuteness and sexual appeal, and this girlishness is constructed through youthful language, cuteness as well as elements of play and playfulness. For instance, beauty practices such as dressing up and trying on makeup are re-framed as fun rather than work. This feminine identity is in direct contrast not only with the "popular (mis)conception of feminists as dour and mannish" (2009: 390) but also with hetero-masculinity, reinforcing a gender dichotomy.

Another new femininity that has emerged in an Asian context is the 'Missy' in South Korea. 'The Missy', or the married woman who looks single, as opposed to frumpy and ageing, was first introduced through the 'Missy' advertising campaign in 1994. While some regard the 'Missy' as a product of consumerism, others argue that such a perception overlooks women's agency in their own transformation and self-realisation, fulfilling desires that old images of married women cannot meet. In addition, 'the Missy' is not a single femininity that is imposed by the media, but a range of identities that are reinvented and reconceptualised by women in accordance with their own social position and context (Kim 2011), illustrating how "individuals make purposeful choices in the face of the limitations imposed on them by social structures" (Bucholtz 1999b: 209). Therefore, women should not be portrayed as victims without agency. Their perspectives should be taken into account when discussing their clothing choices rather than imposing meaning on these decisions (Duits and van Zoonen 2006) since there are multiple meanings behind a particular clothing style (Attwood 2011).

Summary

In this chapter, I explored a range of social considerations related to this study. I began by defining the key concept of discourses. In this thesis, I adopt a dual definition of the term. Discourse is conceptualised in the traditional sense as "language beyond the sentence" (Tannen 1989: 6), and in the Foucauldian sense as practices that represent a particular aspect of the world from a particular

perspective (Fairclough 2003; Lazar 2006) and “systematically form the objects of which they speak” (Foucault 1972: 49). I then discussed the intimate links between discourses, ideology and power, before looking at patriarchal, neoliberal and postfeminist ideologies in the media, with a specific focus on the ideas and values of postfeminism. We have seen how the prevailing ethos of neoliberalism and postfeminism neutralises feminism’s radical potential. Lastly, this chapter brought together the social constructionist and performative approaches to identity with the notions of discourses and indexicality. The thesis will now turn to the various approaches that will be used to analyse the professional discourses and gendered identities in the media texts.

Chapter 3. Approaches to Discourse Analysis

While discourse and gender is an active area of research, there is no single well-defined form of 'feminist discourse analysis' since the studies in this field apply a large range of diverse frameworks and paradigms that often differ in terms of the limits of background knowledge and external context utilised in the analysis, the agency of the subjects, and the role of the analyst in the interpretation of the discourse (Bucholtz 2003). This study will draw on two feminist linguistic approaches to analysing discourse: feminist critical discourse analysis (written and spoken texts) and feminist conversation analysis (spoken texts). Both approaches as well as the issues in integrating them will be discussed in this chapter.

3.1 Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis

Critical Discourse Analysis (henceforth, CDA) has been developed by several linguists, with Norman Fairclough, Teun van Dijk, and Ruth Wodak being the most significant (Bucholtz 2003). The term *critical*, which was borrowed from Marxism, indicates a leftist political stance on the part of the researcher. CDA combines Marxist and post-structuralist theories of language to form "an approach that views language as a primary force for the production and reproduction of ideology" (Bucholtz 2003: 57), and professes a political commitment to social change (Lazar 2005). In the name of emancipation, CDA is concerned with uncovering ideological bias in texts and calling into question commonsensical ideas and assumptions that preserve the status quo.

Power, particularly the social power of institutions, is a significant concept in CDA (van Dijk 2015). CDA draws upon the work of Michel Foucault, for whom power is maintained and exercised by dominant members of institutions through their control over discourses (Talbot 2010). As van Dijk asserts, "groups who control most influential discourse also have more chances to indirectly control the minds and actions of others" (2015: 469). When discourses seem to come from authoritative and credible sources in contexts where there is a lack of alternative discourses and the people do not possess the information to contest these discourses, these discourses may have a stronger influence on the recipients (Downing 1984; Wodak 1987; Nesler et al. 1993). For CDA analysts, power is not a 'possibility' to be discovered within interaction – power is enacted and resisted

in every interaction; it pervades all aspects of society and is operative in every discourse; hence these broader socio-cultural forces and gender ideologies are placed at the forefront of their analysis (Bucholtz 2003; Thornborrow 2014).

Due to the power of institutions to disseminate discourses and their tendency to endorse the interests and privileges of dominant groups, CDA has often been used to examine both written and spoken texts in institutional contexts such as the media, education, and government, where scholars focus on exposing the disparity between what an institutional text claims to do and what it actually does (Bucholtz 2003), for instance, countering the media's assertions that their representations of people and events are reliable and impartial (Webb 2009). As Cameron reminds us, challenging ideological representations can have positive effects:

[It] help[s] to undermine the legitimacy of the present order, the sense that the way things are is desirable, natural, and immutable. If enough people can be induced to doubt that the status quo is natural or legitimate, a climate is created in which demands for change are much harder for their opponents to resist (2003: 452).

Given that the media has the power to "influence knowledge, beliefs, values, social relations, social identities" (Fairclough 1995: 2), critical enquiry of media language can be seen as early as the 1970s, for example in the work of Fowler et al. (1979), which applied Halliday's (1994) functional-systemic grammar to examine how the responsibility and agency of actors in an event may be de-emphasised through syntactic choices such as transitivity, nominalisation and passive constructions. Within the CDA framework, the ideology implicitly conveyed can be revealed by examining the language used at any level of the linguistic rank scale (Fairclough 1989). For example, Lazar (2009) critically analysed the language choices in beauty ads in print media at a semantic level, examining the categorisation of women, labelling practices, and the connotations of the vocabulary used. Fairclough and Wodak's (2010) critical analysis of a television interview with Margaret Thatcher shows how ideology can be implicitly conveyed through innovative collocations that require the audience to share certain assumptions in order to make sense of the text.

Fairclough and Wodak (2010) argue that in order to determine if a discursive event does ideological work, it is necessary to take into account how the text is interpreted as well as its social consequences. Given that dominated groups can "resist, accept, condone, comply with, or legitimate such power, and even find it "natural"" (van Dijk 2015: 465), the present study will be complemented with an

audience response analysis. The aim of this further research is to examine if the possible impact of the discourses discovered in this thesis is truly experienced by the readers and listeners, who could, in reality, resist or subvert the ideologies in the texts (Bucholtz 2003). This will be discussed in Chapter 10.

This study is not only research in CDA, but a feminist CDA one. It shares a broad aim with other feminist critical discourse studies, which is “to show up the complex, subtle, and sometimes not so subtle, ways in which frequently taken-for-granted gendered assumptions and hegemonic power relations are discursively produced, sustained, negotiated, and challenged in different contexts and communities” (Lazar 2007: 142). Although CDA, on the whole, is concerned with ideology and power in discourse, this study shares Lazar’s view that an explicit feminist label is necessary for several reasons, the first and most straightforward being that “many studies in CDA with a gender focus adopt a critical feminist view of gender relations – they are motivated by the need to change substantively the existing conditions of these relations” (2007: 143). Secondly, it is crucial for CDA research on gender to be guided by feminist principles and insights because gender is more ubiquitous and operates differently from other systems of oppression. The pervasiveness of gender has been pointed out earlier by Eckert:

Whereas the power relations between men and women are similar to those between dominated and subordinated classes and ethnic groups, the day to day context in which these power relations are played out is quite different. It is not a cultural norm for each working class individual to be paired up for life with a member of the middle class or for every black person to be so paired up for life with a white person. However, our traditional gender ideology dictates just this kind of relationship between men and women (1989: 253–254).

The following section will discuss key criticisms against CDA and how the present study negotiates these.

3.1.1 Criticisms against CDA

The main criticism against CDA relates to biased interpretation. Widdowson (1995) asserts that critical discourse analysts are prejudiced for having an ideological commitment, and they often select features of texts that confirm their hypotheses. However, Fairclough (2003) rightly maintains that text analysis can never be completely objective and impartial. Not only will observations of what is ‘there’ in a text always be limited by researchers’ own understandings and interpretations, but it is also inevitable that analysts will have their motivations

for asking particular questions about the text and not others (Sunderland and Litosseliti 2002; Fairclough 2003). As Fairclough (1996, 2003) points out, even social research that does not consider political or moral questions is guided by certain interests and perspectives, and may have social import and effects that are not transparent. In contrast, the socio-political aims, positions and principles that inform CDA studies are made explicit. For the sake of transparency, I have explained my feminist position and emancipatory aim as well as the socio-economic reasons behind my specific set of research questions in the earlier chapters of this thesis.

In order to address the issue of circularity in my search for ideologies and limit researcher bias to some degree, evidence for discourses was obtained from a wide range of articles that were collected through a representative sampling method, rather a few exemplar texts. In Chapter 5, I explain in further detail the steps taken in selecting the dataset. This study can be viewed as “a largely inductive project working within a deductive framework” (Jeffries 2007: 195) since, although I had a general hypothesis that the media texts contain ideological constructions of professional women that may not promote equality in the workplace, I did not have strong expectations of which ideologies are being endorsed. All discourses that are dominant in the texts were taken into account, including those that can be perceived as promoting gender equality.

Although absolute objectivity may not be achievable, Jeffries (2007, 2014, 2015a) maintains that it is possible to bring rigour into the qualitative textual analysis process in CDA studies. Due to its multidisciplinary theoretical foundations, CDA has never developed a clear, comprehensive toolkit for uncovering the possible ideological implications of the language choices of text producers (Coffey-Glover 2015). Jeffries argues that “the development of CDA in recent years has been away from textual analysis” (2010: 2–3) and the methods used “are often lacking in the kind of detail that would enable [other researchers] to see how ... conclusions are reached” (2015a: 4). To build rigour and replicability into CDA research, she developed a systematic model of analysis that integrates tools from critical linguistics and stylistics. In my view, much of CDA research attends to both textual detail and socio-political context. Nevertheless, CDA can sometimes produce overconfident conclusions from data investigations. Hence, this study draws on Jeffries’s (2007, 2010) work on the conceptual effects carried by particular language features in order to relate linguistic form and ideological meaning, but does not make it the central approach. In line with Jeffries, it is used to add to, not replace, “the insights into contextual features of

ideological meaning arising from critical discourse analysis" (2014: 411). Previous work of other CDA scholars, particularly Fairclough (2003), is also drawn on for additional context-sensitive analytical tools for identifying the discourses produced and subverted in the media texts.

As Wodak and Meyer point out, CDA is "not interested in investigating a linguistic unit per se but in studying social phenomena which are necessarily complex and thus require a ... multi-methodical approach" (2009: 2). These methods of interpretation sometimes require relying on the inferential resources of the researcher, which is impossible to completely remove from textual analysis, even in applying Jeffries's linguistically grounded analytical tools. For example, some of the textual-conceptual functions that Jeffries's model is based on, such as transitivity and naming, are ubiquitous, but do not always have ideological interest. Hence, the researcher would need to interpret the text and do "some kind of sifting of data to produce the analysis" (Jeffries 2015b: 168). Although Jeffries stresses that being replicable is "the basic test of all good science" (2015a: 2), Fairclough rightly argues the following:

We cannot assume that a text in its full actuality can be made transparent through applying the categories of a pre-existing analytical framework. What we are able to see of the actuality of a text depends upon the perspective from which we approach it, including the particular social issues in focus, and the social theory and discourse theory we draw upon (2003: 16).

Therefore, it is important for any data interpretation in CDA research to explicitly acknowledge that it is provisional and perspectival.

Responding to the Widdowson's (1995) claim that CDA studies rarely suggest that alternative interpretations are possible, Fairclough (1996) makes the crucial point that CDA is theoretically committed to the assumption of interpretative diversity. In Chapter 5, I explicitly acknowledge that the set of discourses identified is not conclusive. I have also attempted to take into account the audience's possible responses in my analysis in Chapters 7 and 8. However, as Chouliaraki and Fairclough (1999) concede, much of CDA has involved examining texts in abstraction from interactions. They recommend integrating discourse analytical research with other social scientific methods, particularly ethnography. This thesis is envisioned as part of a larger project that includes conducting focus groups to examine which meanings readers and listeners activate when interacting with the media texts. Complementing this present study with an audience response analysis is another way of addressing the circularity of CDA, increasing

objectivity, and substantiating some of the current findings. This focus group study will be explicated in the concluding chapter.

While CDA focuses on “the experiences ... of members of [dominated groups] and supports their struggle against inequality” (van Dijk 2001: 96), Baxter warns against this kind of emancipatory approach to discourse analysis because “‘a will to truth’ leads to ‘a will to power’, which will ultimately transmute into its own ‘grand narrative’ (Foucault 1980)” (2016: 46). Baxter (2003) developed a supplementary approach to CDA called Feminist Post-structuralist Discourse Analysis (henceforth, FPDA), which has a ‘transformative quest’, rather than an ideological agenda. It supports “small-scale, bottom-up, localised social transformations, which are ... of central importance in the erosion of grand narratives” (2003: 54), such as gender differentiation or even institutionalised methods of linguistic analysis like CDA (Baxter 2010). This thesis does not adopt an FPDA approach as “the quest of FPDA is primarily *epistemological*” (Weatherall et al. 2010: 228, emphasis in original), whereas, like other CDA research, this study holds “an avowedly ideological agenda committed to focusing on social problems” (Baxter 2008a: 246). Although women are not always powerless or victims (as discussed in the previous chapter), they do continue to experience systematic discrimination. Hence, it is important to critique institutional discourses that serve hegemonic interests on behalf of women. However, FPDA does not allow for the assumption that “women as a category are necessarily powerless, disadvantaged or oppressed by ‘the other’” (Baxter 2008a: 248). For Baxter, “centring the marginal and marginalising the central remains an oppositional strategy and itself creates another hierarchy which in turn requires overturning” (2003: 63).

Baxter also argues that in deconstructing how hegemonic power relations position people, CDA “may produce a single, oppositional reading that may eventually become authoritative” (2016: 47). In line with Bakhtin’s (1981) notion of ‘heteroglossia’, FPDA is concerned with giving space to “female voices that are being silenced or peripheralised by masculinised discourses” (Baxter 2003: 56). This makes it “best suited to small-scale, ethnographic case studies in which subjects have some degree of agency to change their conditions” (Baxter 2008a: 247). The present thesis, on the other hand, focuses on the dominant discourses that are reinforced by women who have a public voice and are not “struggling to be heard” (Baxter 2003: 54). Nonetheless, the focus group study mentioned above will assist “to widen the range of possible meanings[,] offer space for competing voices and diverse accounts of experience and resist a single line of

argument or closure" (Baxter 2008a: 255). It should be noted, however, that CDA "acknowledges the importance not just of polyphony ... but heteroglossia" (Weatherall et al. 2010: 227), but does not place as much emphasis on this as FPDA (Sauntson 2012).

Widdowson criticises CDA as being "the reaffirmation of the familiar Whorfian notion of linguistic determinism, but applied not only to cognition in respect of the language code, but in respect to its use in communication as well" (1998: 139). However, I hold the generally accepted view that language can affect the perceptions of its users (Jeffries 2007). My assumption in this study is that the repetition of discourses in the media texts can influence how the audience perceives professional women and their experiences in the working world, although more empirical work is still needed to fully understand the nature of the relationship between language and thought (Lucy 1997). There is no doubt that media consumers can and sometimes will resist the ideological force of the texts (Jeffries 2007). This should not prevent us from being able to make some conclusions about social attitudes and issues based on what is encoded in discourses (Schulz 1990). Part of the aim of this study is to uncover the contemporary attitudes towards women and work in Malaysia that are, to some extent, reflected in the professional discourses manifested in women's media.

Besides feminist CDA, this study will draw on another branch of critical enquiry of language and discourse: feminist conversation analysis. This will be described in the next section, followed by a discussion of the differences between feminist CDA and feminist conversation analysis in terms of method and theoretical emphasis, and how they can complement each other.

3.2 Feminist Conversation Analysis

Conversation Analysis (henceforth, CA) was developed by Harvey Sacks, Gail Jefferson, and Emanuel Schegloff, and studies "the sequential unfolding of conversation ... to show how interactional structure constructs social organization" (Bucholtz 2003: 51). Over the past five decades, conversation analysts have examined talk in ordinary conversations and institutional contexts using the main structural features of talk-in-interaction such as "how people get to take turns at talk, how actions are organized into sequences, and how speakers and listeners deal with trouble in speaking, hearing or understanding the talk" (Wilkinson and Kitzinger 2011: 23). Weatherall et al. points out the strengths of CA:

CA is notable for its methodological rigour and integrity. CA has been hailed as one of the most powerful and systematic approaches to the study of conversation or talk-in-interaction (e.g. Heritage 2008). Its distinctive theoretical and methodological features and key discoveries are well documented (2010: 218).

CA studies view talk as a form of action, and share the broad aim to uncover “what people do with talk in the course of their everyday lives” (Wilkinson and Kitzinger 2011: 22). This study takes advantage of “CA’s careful and sophisticated description of the methods people use to do things in talk” (Kitzinger 2000: 174) to understand how women in the media “produce the social order we inhabit – in other words, how [they] ‘do’ power and powerlessness, oppression and resistance” (2000: 174) in their interactions on the radio. To be specific, this thesis adopts *feminist* CA as a methodology in analysing the radio interactions. While CA is not implicitly feminist, feminist CA research “clearly focuses on women’s lives and concerns” and seeks to “produce findings that actually improve women’s lives” (Weatherall 2012: 306).

Like CDA, CA is constructionist, and views gender as produced and reproduced through language use and interaction. However, the two approaches differ in the questions of when gender is salient in a conversation, and whether and how it is used (Mills and Mullany 2011). This will be explained briefly here, and discussed in further detail in the next section.

Some scholars adopting critical and constructionist perspectives share this belief:

As a structural, organizing ‘fact’ of social life ... gender informs perceptions and interpretations of behavior such that we are always aware of ourselves and others as gendered beings, even in cases where it is not – or does not appear to be – explicitly at issue (Romaniuk 2016: 535).

However, within the CA approach, context is not pre-defined by a combination of independent variables, but constructed by the talk itself (Weatherall and Gallois 2003). For conversation analysts, the question is not whether a participant can be described in a certain way, “but to show *that* and *how* this identity is made relevant or ascribed to self or others” (Widdicombe 1998: 191, emphasis in original). Schegloff makes this crucial point about categorising participants in a talk exchange:

[They] can be characterized by many sets of category terms – terms of age, ethnicity, nationality, religion, residence, locale, occupation ... One consequence of that is that it does not suffice to ground the use of one of those category terms to refer to people by saying that they are, after all, such a one (1997: 165).

I agree with Schegloff on this, as the idea of a fixed, stable identity that produces linguistic behaviours “slips into the kind of ... essentialism that has been identified as problematic” (Weatherall 2007: 282). In this study, although the spoken texts examined were produced by women for a female audience, it cannot be assumed that gender is always relevant in terms of the discussion’s topic or content, or the participants’ language behaviour. Nonetheless, as I shall argue in this chapter, I do not subscribe CA’s position that the context of the talk “must be shown to be the case empirically from the data at hand” (Thornborrow 2014: 22).

From a CA perspective, researchers should not impose sociological variables such as ‘woman’ or ‘man’ on participants. On the other hand, social categories such as gender are only analytically relevant if the participants orient to these categories, for instance, through self- and other-repairs of gendered nouns and pronouns (Schegloff 1997; Edwards 1998; Hopper and LeBaron 1998; Stringer and Hopper 1998; Stokoe and Smithson 2001; Stokoe 2008). In CA studies, a direct reference to gender by itself is insufficient to understand what people do with these categories (Stokoe 2008) and how these categorisation devices inform the subjects’ production of the world (Schegloff 2007). An analysis can only be conducted if the participants orient to gender by noticing and taking it up after it has been invoked, and gender becomes the topic of the interaction (Stokoe and Smithson 2001; Stokoe 2008). However, as Wilkinson and Kitzinger point out, this does not mean that CA is “relying purely on snippets of decontextualized talk” (2011: 35). In response to this common criticism, they argue that:

CA’s notion of context is extremely broad, spanning sequential, structural, institutional and cultural aspects. The sequential meaning of context is deeply intricated into CA, and refers to prior and subsequent utterances ... CA also examines the ways in which particular institutional contexts – for example, educational, legal, medical – are ‘talked into being’ ... at the broadest level, CA understands the cultural contexts in which we live as constituted by – and constitutive of – our interactions. The words we are able to select and the inferences associated with them (e.g. ‘wife’ and ‘husband’ normatively refer to opposite-sex co-resident partners, Kitzinger 2005), the grammatical, phonetic and other resources we have available to build our talk – all of these rely on, and reproduce, culture (2011: 35).

A key advantage of only focusing on categories that are oriented to as relevant by the subjects is this reduces the risk of reproducing and reinforcing cultural norms and stereotypes about male and female speech behaviour (Stokoe 1998; Stokoe and Smithson 2001). For instance, based her own introspection, Lakoff (1975) interpreted men and women’s use of tag questions differently based on the subject’s biological sex. Although there has since been a shift away from an essentialist view of gender towards a more constructionist stance, analysts may

perpetuate gender dualism even when no feature or element in the text indexes gender, due to their cultural background. Therefore, a conversational analytic approach can ensure that categories such as 'gender' are not imposed on the analysis unless their relevance is interactionally displayed (Stokoe and Smithson 2001).

However, this has led to two interrelated criticisms against CA, namely "the difficulty of reconciling CA's emphasis on 'participants' orientations' with the analyst's own preoccupations with gender, class, sexuality and power when these are not apparently attended to by participants themselves" and "CA's apparent obsession with the minute details of mundane everyday talk, to the exclusion of broader social and political realities" (Kitzinger 2000: 165). These will be discussed below.

3.2.1 Gender Salience in Interactions

Some feminist scholars see gender as an omni-relevant social category, for example Holmes and Schnurr, who argue that gender is "an ever-present influence on how we behave, and how we interpret others' behaviour, even if our level of awareness of this influence varies from one interaction to another, and from moment to moment within an interaction" (2006: 33). On the other hand, following Schegloff (1997, 1998), some CA researchers understand gender as an achievement of discourse that can only be deemed relevant if it is signalled by the participants (Bucholtz 2003; Mills and Mullany 2011). For Schegloff, the assumption that gender is omni-relevant can result in "theoretical imperialism" (1997: 167), with analysts imposing their political concerns and individual notions about what constitutes context onto interactions when they should instead present the participants' verbal rationalisations of their behaviour. He does not reject the possibility of a gender-based analysis, but maintains that for the sake of objectivity, researchers should begin from the micro-level of close inspection of conversational behaviour, before working up to the macro-level inequality of political power if needed, rather than the reverse. This section will discuss the extent to which this study will adhere to the CA principle that gender should only be considered interactionally salient if it is demonstrably relevant for the participants in the talk.

Like previous research in CA, this study will consider "instances in which a participant in interaction makes *explicit* mention of a gender reference or category" (Romaniuk 2016: 534) to identify themselves, another participant, or a

non-present third party (Kitzinger 2007) as orientation to gender. However, some conversation analysts warn that even the use of a categorical person reference term, or 'membership categorisation device', such as 'woman' does not automatically establish the relevance of gender to participants as it has multiple potential indexical meanings and can be used to do other interactional work (Romaniuk 2016). For instance, in examining a conversation on a helpline for women traumatised by the experience of childbirth, Kitzinger argues that "women" and "we women" are "much more directly related to the business of the helpline in delivering its advertised service. Gender is certainly not irrelevant to the interactional business being pursued here, but it is subordinated to, and in the service of it" (2007: 43). This study acknowledges Kitzinger's warning that "gendered terms can sometimes obscure, rather than illuminate, the actions in which participants may be also, or otherwise, engaged in deploying them" (2007: 40), and aims to be critical about "what participants are doing in using sex category terms other than 'doing gender'" (2007: 46-47).

Returning to Ochs's (1992) model of indexicality defined in Chapter 2, Ochs argues that few English words directly index gender. On the other hand, gender is often indirectly indexed via interactional behaviour and speech patterns that are encoded with gendered meaning from regular association with men or women. For example, Holmes (2005) found that a senior woman in a workplace that she studied would speak in a manner that stereotypically indexed masculinity, and then mitigate her behaviour through the use of humour, demonstrating how gender can operate in the background without ever being made explicit. Therefore, relying on the explicit use of gender references is restrictive, and limiting admissible conversational data to only those in which gender is clearly and evidently salient to the participants would significantly reduce research data available to feminist linguists (Lakoff 2003).

Schegloff recognises this and posits that "explicit mention of a category term ... is by no means necessary to establish the relevant orientation by the participants ... orientation to gender can be manifested without being explicitly named or mentioned" (1997: 182). For example, Schegloff (1999) suggests that vocal pitch can index gender. Hopper and LeBaron propose that indirect indices of gender can also include references to gendered activities, such as 'car mechanic', as well as "ambiguous words with possible references to sexuality; references to female appearance or male appearance; or references to female demeanor or male demeanor" (1998: 171).

As we shall see in this study, gender is occasionally made relevant through broader indices of gender beyond explicit gender references. Since such linguistic features and terms may not be intrinsically gendered, and there is a lack of consensus on what constitutes the indirect accomplishment of gender, implicit cultural knowledge needs to be activated in order to make any claims about the talk (Stokoe and Smithson 2001). This raises another issue: while conversation analysts recognise the participants' use of their cultural background and common-sense knowledge, the notion of 'participants' is often limited to the interlocutors in the segment of talk analysed. This study adopts Stokoe and Smithson (2001) and Ten Have's (1999) recommendation that analysts with their own interpretative resources should also be regarded as 'participants'. This is particularly compelling given that common-sense knowledge is not homogenous, and by drawing upon the subjects' knowledge, the analyst would inevitably be importing their own position to some extent (Stokoe and Smithson 2001).

However, this does not address an unresolved dilemma in feminist work. Kitzinger argues that:

CA usually ends with the analysis of the participants' orientations, and as most conversation analysts do not bring their politics into their research, that is all that is seen to be required. Feminists, by contrast, have been quite concerned about the relationship between their (feminist) analysis of their participants' actions and the (generally non-feminist) way in which participants themselves interpret the same behaviours ... it would be unbearably limiting to use CA if it meant that I could only describe as 'sexist' or 'heterosexist' or 'racist' those forms of talk to which actors orient as such. Indeed, it is precisely the fact that sexist, heterosexist and racist assumptions are routinely incorporated into everyday conversations without anyone noticing or responding to them that way which is of interest to me (2000: 171).

Kitzinger points to two studies as examples of how conversations that are constructed as "business as usual" (2000: 189) can be of analytic interest. In Sacks's (1995) analysis of a telephone conversation between two white women about an incident between the police and "a coloured lady", he draws attention to the fact that neither woman "orients in any way to the white privilege and class privilege" (Kitzinger 2000: 172), and analyses this as "an instance of mundane ordinary everyday racism-in-action" (2000: 172). In her own examination of instances of 'coming out', Kitzinger demonstrates the political relevance of "what seemed to be a bewildering absence of response to the 'comings out' on the part of the audience" (2000: 182). Therefore, in this study, gender can also be considered as relevant to the talk if it is perceived by the analyst as having "a material effect on the production and interpretation of the discourse" (Mills 2003:

48) even if “nothing much gets to happen” (Kitzinger 2000: 189). Again, this would require the analyst to draw on their cultural knowledge, but it would be unrealistic to expect feminist scholars not to bring in their own attitudes and values when conducting a study (Weatherall 2000).

3.3 Integrating Feminist CDA and Feminist CA

By expanding the notion of ‘participant’ to include the researcher, this study is consistent with feminist CA, which is less restrictive than pure CA as it “enables a focus on interactional practices that, from a researcher’s perspective, may be implicated in the accomplishment of a gendered social order” (Weatherall 2015: 423). However, like pure CA, it “examines concrete practices in talk – grounding analytic description in what is visible in the talk” (2015: 423). From a theoretical and methodological standpoint, feminist CA’s grounded analytic mentality is “too empirically constrained to be properly critical” (2015: 411) because “[i]nvoking background knowledge and beliefs about gender, as critical researchers often do, necessarily involves ‘going beyond the data’” (Romaniuk 2016: 535). Hence, it is necessary to draw on elements of both CDA and CA in the examination of the spoken data, as other linguists have successfully done in their research (see Wetherell 1998; Thornborrow 2014).

CDA and CA have several theoretical and methodological differences, which mainly relate to the level of analysis that is undertaken, the identification and naming of discourses, the nature and admissibility of context, and power (Weatherall et al. 2010; Thornborrow 2014). CDA takes a more top-down approach, focusing on discourses in the Foucauldian sense, and “moving back and forth between the macro and the micro” (Weatherall et al. 2010: 235). CA, on the other hand, takes a bottom-up approach and uses micro-analytic techniques to analyse discourse in the traditional linguistic sense. It is epistemologically opposed to the countable notion of discourse that is characteristic of CDA because those discourses are not speaker-derived, but provisionally analyst-derived and analyst-named (Weatherall et al. 2010). However, I argue that the media texts examined cannot be fully understood without an appreciation of the underlying professional discourses that supply the taken-for-granted discursive backcloth organising the participants’ orientations and sense-making (Wetherell 1998).

Given that discourses tend to be detected through “a combination of socially informed intuition, critical judgement and supporting textual analysis” (Baxter

2008a: 251), for some conversation analysts, “at times CDA seems to generate random discourses to suit their ideological purposes” (2008a: 250). While practitioners of CDA rightly emphasise “the importance of analysts’ insights as members of society, who self-reflexively acknowledge the constructedness of their categorisations of discourse” (2008a: 251), I would also argue that the process of discourse identification can be made more rigorous through a closer attention to the micro-structures in the talk and the interactional practices that accomplish particular types of conversational actions. In this study, therefore, detailed transcripts are produced, which capture features of speech delivery such as hesitations, overlaps, pauses, and repairs, and the interactions are examined turn by turn to uncover how professional discourses are reinforced or subverted at a very local level in the unfolding talk.

Although a CA-informed discourse analysis “can strengthen empirical work by pointing to micro-structures in the talk ... that dovetail with a macro analysis” (Weatherall et al. 2010: 221), like other CDA researchers, I hold that “the ‘meaning’ of a text cannot be exclusively derived from the text itself” (Benwell 2005: 157). Meanings are “always shaped, produced and otherwise determined according to and within prevailing ideological frameworks and social power relations” (Thornborrow 2014: 16). Hence, in the analysis, the speech features are interpreted in relation not only to the immediate interaction, but also to wider social structures. This approach stands in contrast with CA. For conversation analysts, “contextual features of the talk have to be shown to be oriented to by participants themselves before any claims at all can be made about why people say and do what they do” (Thornborrow 2014: 22). However, I would argue that the common sense assumptions that we bring to talk and which are promulgated by discourses may not be made explicit and, therefore, may not be visible to the analyst. Furthermore, we are usually unaware of the ways in which social structures and relations of power shape our language use (Fairclough 1992). CDA can aid analysts to go beyond “the obviousness of everyday experience, the naturalness of ... ways of representing people” (Talbot 2010: 135) since its emancipatory aim requires the researcher to present other possible interpretations of the interaction and expose the power relations that may have been previously unnoticed (Bucholtz 2003).

As Thornborrow states, CA “has fought shy of bringing issues of context and power into the interactional arena” (2014: 34-35). While this study shares CA’s view that people are not victims of an all-powerful social order but “agents actively engaged in methodical and sanctioned procedures for producing or

resisting, colluding with or transgressing, the taken-for-granted social world" (Kitzinger 2000: 168), it also holds that wider social-structural forces are at work in conversations, alongside the context invoked by the participants, constraining and shaping behaviour. To ignore this, as Mills and Mullany argue, "would be to miss out a crucial step in the analytical process, particularly when attempting to engage in politically active research, which challenges the wider macro processes of social structuration" (2011: 168). Therefore, in order to ensure covert mechanisms of power are not precluded from the interpretation of the data, this study not only closely examines the media texts, but also considers cultural norms, media commodification, the institutional roles of the interactants, and the ideologies that the professional discourses endorse or challenge in Chapter 9.

Returning to criticisms that such explicitly political research lacks objectivity, I agree with Lazar, who argues that "feminist theorization and analysis, like CDA, which include a variety of social considerations (such as group identities and identifications, power relations and ideologies) that typically get precluded from other types of research, make critical/feminist research more objective than most others" (2007: 146). In CA, the analytic decision to focus on aspects of context that can be pointed to in interactions while ignoring broader socio-cultural forces that are at work may not be a neutral position, and could even be *covertly* political. For example, in interrogating Schegloff's well-known examination of a conversation between an estranged couple, Marsha and Tony, Lakoff uncovers covert gender politics in what is intended as an objective analysis:

Schegloff uses syntactically, lexically, interpretively, and punctuationally marked choices to avoid political involvement – a choice that is political in itself ... If Schegloff's arguments seem neutral, it is because they depend upon presupposed beliefs supporting traditional assignments of status, authority, and power. But claims that the discourse Schegloff analyzes is apolitical, or that we can understand why the participants made the choices they made without resorting to a gendered explanation, conveniently ignore the fact that everything we do has some political basis, and that we have to account for why it seems normal ... for Marsha to be beaten down, metaphorically or otherwise, and for Tony to demand full shrift but not for Marsha to, by seeing that gender and power make meaning in conversation (2003: 168).

Despite the risk of misinterpretation, the inferential resources of analysts must be taken into account to produce an analytic study rather than a descriptive one (Stokoe and Smithson 2001). What is crucial here is for researchers to think 'reflexively' about whether their interpretations of their findings could be biased by their experiences, attitudes, and beliefs, and "the need for discourse analysts

to be explicitly self-referential about their *a priori* assumptions, motivations and value systems" (Baxter 2010: 128) is central to CDA.

Summary

This chapter has discussed the key principles of feminist CDA and feminist CA, the academic debate surrounding these approaches as well as the value of applying both in the examination of this study's data. As we have seen, the two analytical approaches have theoretical and methodological differences. However, as Wetherell (1998) maintains, analysts should not have to choose between micro- and macro-analysis since each inform and lend meaning to the other, and therefore, a complete linguistic investigation should involve a combination of technical and critical analysis. In Chapters 7 and 8, the analysis of *Her World* and *Clove* texts is carried out within a feminist CDA perspective to advance our understanding of how gender ideologies are produced, negotiated, and contested in representations of women and work in the written articles. This thesis also draws on the analytical tools of feminist CA to scrutinise the moment-by-moment accomplishment of identities and constitution of women's working life in the radio talk, with feminist CDA providing a complementary analytic frame in order to go beyond the talk-based context and investigate the impact of larger covert systems of institutionalised power on the interactants' linguistic practices. Before we look at the media data in Chapter 5, I will establish the socio-economic context for this thesis in the next chapter.

Chapter 4. Women and Work in Malaysia

This thesis shares the broad feminist goal of the large majority of language and gender studies, which is “to redress the gender disparities in society that are reflected in, and perpetuated by, language use” (Yoong forthcoming). In this chapter, we will explore a crucial aspect of imbalance that has been extensively examined within this field: gender inequality in professional contexts. Specifically, we will discuss women’s participation in the Malaysian workforce, forms of gender discrimination that employed women face in this country, and the gender equality policies and programmes that have been put in place to address these. This chapter will focus on the national socio-economic situation during the data collection period for this study: October 2012 to September 2013.

4.1 Women’s Workforce Participation

4.1.1 Low Female Labour Participation Rate (FLPR)

Over the past two decades, the country has seen an increasing number of Malaysian women attain tertiary qualifications, and the result is a female labour force that is more educated than the male workforce (United Nations Development Programme 2014). However, while women account for 60% of university enrolment and graduates (TalentCorp and ACCA 2013), the Department of Statistics Labour Force Survey found that many leave the workforce in their late 20s and early 30s (Merican and Ghani 2016). In 2012, the World Bank (2012) reported that Malaysia’s level of female participation in the workforce, at 46%, was below most countries at or above Malaysia’s income level, and the lowest in East Asia. For comparison purposes, the average labour force participation rate for women in OECD countries two years earlier was 62% (Mishra and Smyth 2010). It must be noted, however, as we shall see below, many women who are not considered as part of the formal Malaysian workforce are making important socio-economic contributions through their unpaid domestic work and care responsibilities.

The Association of Chartered Certified Accountants (ACCA) and Talent Corporation Malaysia (TalentCorp), an organisation established under the Prime Minister’s Department to ensure Malaysia has a sufficient talent base for economic growth, conducted a survey in mid-2012, and found that the primary reasons why women

leave the workforce are "to raise a family" (65%) and "a lack of work-life balance" (43%) (TalentCorp and ACCA 2013: 10). When asked to identify the most significant measures that could be introduced to retain women employees, 86% cited flexible work arrangements, followed by support facilities, such as child care centres and nurseries, at 69%. Parallel studies by the Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development and United Nations Development Programme (2014) and the World Bank (2012) also cited childcare and housework as the main barriers to working.

In Malaysia, the cultural expectation that women are solely responsible for home and family care persists. This can be perceived, for example, by the fact that the law does not provide for mandatory paid paternity leave (World Economic Forum 2016). Students are also socialised into gender-typed family roles, as illustrated by Watson et al.:

The following sentence is an example taken from a language textbook: "Ali is always allowed to go out to play football with his friends while his sister, Aminah has to stay at home to help her mother cook lunch." The father was reading the newspaper or watching the news on television; sometimes, he joined in his wife's or children's activities, as long as he found the activities interesting. This is a typical example found in Malaysian textbooks (2014: 15).

In the media, a 'good mother' is portrayed as one who will "always be at home to prepare her family's meal and perform other chores to maintain the house's condition" (Watson et al. 2014: 18).

A 2005 survey by the Ministry of Women and Family Development in Malaysia reported that women on average perform 75% of all domestic tasks, including childcare (Elias 2014). The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) argues that the entrenched belief that the responsibility of caring for the family lies solely on women is a reason why although women predominate university enrolment in Malaysia, "this has not been followed by an overall improvement in their access to economic opportunity ... Education may be one strategy towards women's empowerment but gender discrimination affects even those who are educated" (2014: 204).

Alongside these gendered socio-cultural norms is the belief that families should deal with their members' needs privately, leading to a lack of childcare facilities (Jones 2009). TalentCorp and ACCA (2013) report that only 7% of survey respondents in the corporate sector worked in companies with childcare facilities,

while 31% had access to flexible working arrangements. These figures were not markedly better in the public sector, at 26% and 19% respectively.

The shortage of accessible and affordable quality childcare is a significant issue. In 2010, there were an estimated 2.5 million children aged 4 years and below in Malaysia (United Nations Development Programme 2014). In contrast, only 1,962 registered childcare centres existed in 2012, in addition to 1,600 unlicensed ones (Siah and Lee 2015). Additionally, childcare centre charges (MYR380 to MYR2,200 per month) and babysitting fees (an average of MYR750 per month) (Daniele 2014) are unaffordable for many families. Based on the 2012 Household Income Survey, the average monthly household income in Malaysia was MYR5,000 (Siah and Lee 2015), and 39% of Malaysian households earned less than MYR3,000 each month (Economic Planning Unit n.d.). It is unsurprising, then, that working mothers with children below the age of seven are heavily dependent on family members (35.4%) and neighbours (14.8%) for alternative childcare provision (National Family and Population Board 2008).

4.1.2 Institutional Programmes and Support

Since the late 1980s, the role of women has been integrated into national development plans, and various measures have been taken to provide women with job flexibility while they hold the dual role of employee and mother (Siah and Lee 2015). In recent years, the government has adopted crucial initiatives, including offering tax incentives to employers to encourage them to adopt Flexible Work Arrangements (FWA) and establish childcare facilities, providing opportunities for women on career breaks to return to the workforce via TalentCorp's Career Comeback programme, and aiding women to purchase franchise rights worth MYR50,000 or below (Liau 2014; The Star 2016a). The importance of such programmes cannot be denied, but they appear to emanate from an economic perspective, rather than a sense of social justice. Malaysia adopts a neoliberal, market-led growth model, which has perpetuated an informal economy and resulted in serious issues for women:

[T]he vast majority of workers are not covered by the Employment Act 1955, [and] the situation is even less rewarding for women ... There are no sick or maternity benefits, annual leave, EPF, social security or overtime claims ... For women with fewer skills – and these make up the majority of women in the informal economy – employment is unstable and of low quality, wages are suppressed, working hours long and irregular, and no long-term social safety net in place (United Nations Development Programme 2014: 197-98).

The GDP is estimated to increase by 3% if the FLPR exceeds 70% (United Nations Development Programme 2010), and it could be argued that it is such fiscal motivations that lie behind the efforts being made to mobilise women into the economy.

The FLPR grew to 54.1% by 2015, but this is still low when compared to the proportion of men in the workforce, at 80.6% (Department of Statistics Malaysia 2016), demonstrating that much work remains to be done. TalentCorp and PwC (2015) report that the majority of Malaysian public listed companies still do not offer FWA or family-friendly facilities, such as childcare centres or breastfeeding rooms. Almost half do not have any plans to implement or improve either. Only 18% allow employees to telecommute, and merely 11% provide childcare facilities. While 90% offer paternity leave, only one-third offer family care leave or extended maternity leave beyond the standard 60 days – one of the lowest in the region (Siah and Lee 2015) – and the duration for these are not provided in the report.

Even if a family-friendly organisational culture existed in Malaysia, other problems remain. In the Malaysia Human Development Report 2013, the UNDP makes this crucial point:

[T]he idea of offering working women the option of flexible hours, telework or part-time employment is premised on a belief that women need this to effectively juggle both family-nurturing and nation-building responsibilities. The fact that the same “opportunity” is not extended to men is problematic (2014: 204).

Furthermore, workplace-based childcare provision and policies only benefit middle-class women with access to certain jobs. Most single mothers in rural areas, for example, have little education or employable skills (United Nations Development Programme 2012), and therefore such support and opportunities would not be available to them. Single motherhood is increasing in the country, and although a decline in the poverty rate among female-headed households has been reported, “proper data measures ... are not available to imply the significance of the programs in eradicating poverty among the said group” (Zarina and Kamil 2012: 126). According to the United Nations Development Programme (2012, 2014), many single mothers in Malaysia are housebound as they are unable to afford childcare, or have been forced to leave full-time formal employment for informal work, leading to a “growing inequality among women workers, where those with higher qualifications and are better placed to reap the benefits of growth are leaving those less qualified behind” (2014: 206). It is yet

to be seen if the government's call for the establishment of more public childcare centres (World Bank 2012) will have the desired outcome on the employment opportunities of marginalised and unskilled women in lower income groups.

Given that women are only included in Malaysia's development plans for their potential economic contributions, the approaches taken to add women into the economy have not been sufficiently sensitive to women's needs; women joining the labour market may not "enjoy the same rewards as their male counterparts, have the same opportunities to gain skills or work under equal conditions as men" (United Nations Development Programme 2014: 204). The next section will discuss some of the key barriers to gender equality that professional women face in Malaysia.

4.2 Gender Discrimination in the Workplace

4.2.1 Pregnancy Discrimination

We begin this section with a further discussion of the professional challenges women face due to their reproductive roles. The Workplace Discrimination Survey by Malaysian NGO Women's Aid Organisation (2016) reveals that 40% of the respondents had experienced workplace discrimination because of their pregnancy, the main forms of which include "making their positions redundant, denying them promotions, placing them on prolonged probation, demoting them, and terminating their jobs". A similar proportion of the participants had been asked about their pregnancy status or plans during their interviews – and 20% "had their job applications rejected or job offers revoked after they disclosed their pregnancy". However, there are no existing laws against such discriminatory questions. To improve women's working conditions, the Malaysian Federal Constitution was finally amended to prohibit gender discrimination in 2001, and at present, there are no gender specific legislations on discrimination (United Nations Development Programme 2014; Lim 2016).

In the Workplace Discrimination Survey, only 1 in 8 women who had lost their jobs or promotions due to pregnancy had made formal complaints. Currently, a woman whose job is terminated because she is pregnant "could lodge an unfair dismissal complaint with the human resources department at her workplace or the Industrial Relations Office. The latter could culminate in a hearing in the

Industrial Court” (Women’s Aid Organisation 2016). However, the legal protections provided by the Employment Act are minimal:

[It] prohibits employers from terminating employees during the period in which they are entitled to maternity leave [and] after her maternity leave if the employee is unable to return to work “as a result of illness certified by a registered medical practitioner to arise out of her pregnancy and confinement”, unless her absence exceeds 90 days after the end of her maternity leave (Lim 2016).

Employers who violate the law face a MYR10,000 fine (The Star 2017), which is a mere slap on the wrist. Moreover, the Employment Act “stops short of prohibiting employers from using pregnancy as a reason of termination” (Lim 2016).

Nevertheless, in a 2012 landmark case, the High Court, with reference to Malaysia’s obligation under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), which Malaysia ratified in 1995, held that the government’s revocation of Noorfadilla binti Ahmad Saikin’s teaching post upon learning that she was pregnant was “a form of gender discrimination because [it is a] basic biological fact that only women have the capacity to become pregnant” (Joint Action Group for Gender Equality 2012; Lim 2016). However, some courts have also ruled that the equality provision in the Constitution is only applicable to employees in the public sector (Women’s Aid Organisation 2016). Existing labour laws are currently being reviewed to protect pregnant women from workplace discrimination (The Star 2017).

4.2.2 The Gender Wage Gap

In examining the 2008 statistics from the Ministry of Human Resources, the United Nations Development Programme points out that “across all formal jobs, men make more money than women. This is the case whether it is for higher end or lower end occupations: nowhere do men and women receive the same pay for the same category of employment” (2014: 195). Additionally, the disparity is widest for senior officers and managers, where women’s average monthly wage was 58% of their male counterparts’. In 2013, the National Statistics Department reported that not only were men still out-earning women for doing the same job, but the wage gap was also growing (Lee 2015). In the same year, 46% of women respondents in TalentCorp and ACCA’s survey stated that “In the cost-benefit analysis of staying at home versus working, a competitive salary would tilt the balance towards work” (2013: 12). In other words, addressing the persistent gender pay gap in Malaysia could increase the FLPR.

The United Nations Development Programme argues that since the wage gap is larger “among the highest paid professionals who generally hold high qualifications and work in high productivity sectors ... than at the lower occupational levels”, we can infer that “the capacity for upward mobility to narrow the earnings gap is limited and possibly systemically inhibited, most obviously in professional positions” (2014: 196-97). We will discuss this further below.

4.2.3 The ‘Glass Ceiling’

Women are still underrepresented at decision making levels in both the public and private sectors in Malaysia. In 2004, the Malaysian government introduced a target for the civil service and state-affiliated institutions, stating that at least 30% of decision making positions should be filled by women. In June 2011, the Prime Minister announced that this target had been exceeded in the previous year, with women holding 32.3% of decision making roles. However, the Malaysian NGO CEDAW Alternative Report Group (2012) pointed out that this conflicted with 2010 statistics released by the Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development showing that only 20% of such positions were made up of women. Based on recent reports, women now account for 36% of top positions in the public service (The Star 2016a), but this is not verifiable.

In 2011, the government announced that by the end of 2016, 30% of decision makers on Malaysian company boards must be women (Merican and Ghani 2016). At that time, the figure stood at 7.7% (The Star 2016a). By 2015, 31% of public listed companies still had all-male boards (TalentCorp and PwC 2015). In 2016, women only comprised 15% of board directors in the country’s top 100 companies (The Star 2016b) and 11.5% overall, which led to the 30% target being extended to 2020 (The Star 2016a). The Women, Family and Community Development Ministry has also introduced the Women Directors’ Programme (WDP) and Advanced Women Directors Programme (AWDP). While the former “equips women with technical and soft skills required in the boardroom, AWDP, which was introduced [in 2015], focuses on leadership, principles, ethics, new risks and strategy” (The Star 2016a).

In terms of top management, in 2013, during the data collection period, women only accounted for 24% of these positions in public listed companies. This increased slightly to 28% by 2015 (The Star 2016a), though 19% of companies did not have any women senior managers (TalentCorp and PwC 2015). In order to encourage diversity at managerial levels, Bursa Malaysia, a major exchange

holding company, now requires “listed companies to disclose their diversity policy covering management and employees, in addition to collating data on board and top management diversity through annual returns” (Merican and Ghani 2016). TalentCorp and the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales (ICAEW) also jointly run the Women in Leadership programme for senior managers, which integrates workshops and peer-to-peer mentoring, and “equips female professionals with the strategies and skills to navigate, build and lead in a dynamic and ever-changing work environment” (Ooi 2016).

Devoid of gender politics, the WDP, AWDP, and Women in Leadership programme are grounded on the assumption that women are not being promoted to decision making levels because they lack the required skills, which these programmes aim to provide. This ignores the fact that women are not assessed in the same way as men in the workplace due to gender stereotypes and cultural expectations. Research has shown that women leaders often face a ‘double bind’: “if they interact in a stereotypically feminine manner they will be negatively evaluated for being an incompetent professional, whereas if they interact in a stereotypically masculine manner, using “marked” linguistic forms, they will be negatively evaluated for being overly aggressive” (Mullany 2007: 32). This can be seen as an example of Butler’s (1990: 33) “rigid regulatory frame”, defined in Chapter 2.

The ‘glass ceiling’ is also apparent in Malaysian politics. During the data collection period, women held only two ministerial posts (5.7%) and 23 parliamentary seats (10.4%), far short of the 30% requirement put forward in CEDAW (Redfern and Aune 2010; Martin 2013b). The role of the Malaysian mass media in maintaining this political landscape is exemplified in Mullany and Yoong’s (2016) case study, which shows how gender stereotypes and male-as-norm discourses perpetuated in the media contributed to a woman candidate’s failure to win a parliamentary seat.

4.2.4 Sexual Harassment

Feminists have argued that the lack of power and access to political resources due to the shortage of female ministers and MPs poses a serious challenge to bringing about gender equality as men tend to prioritise different issues from women (Redfern and Aune 2010), leading to a dearth of policies addressing women’s needs (EAVES et al. 2012). In Malaysia, women’s rights groups have been calling for a Sexual Harassment Act for years, even submitting a proposed Bill to the government in 2001. Yet, no stand-alone law has been enacted to

address this issue (Yuen 2015). Until 2012, no statutory provisions on sexual harassment in the workplace existed (Cheah 2016). Instead, the Ministry of Human Affairs issued the non-legally binding Code of Practice on the Prevention and Eradication of Sexual Harassment in the Workplace in 1999, which only a small fraction of employers have adopted (Women's Aid Organisation n.d.), while the Public Service Department introduced Guidelines in Handling Sexual Harassment in the Workplace in the Public Services 6 years later (United Nations Development Programme 2014).

In 2012, the Employment Act was amended to provide for sexual harassment, entitling the victim to lodge a complaint and require the employer to conduct an investigation (Mayuri Mei Lin 2016). Employers who fail to inquire into a complaint, notify the complainant of the refusal and their reasons behind this, or present an inquiry report are liable to a fine not exceeding MYR10,000 (Singgam 2016) – an insignificant sum. There are several weaknesses to these laws. They are only applicable to those who are formally employed, and the employer, while held more accountable, still retains the power to decide if an inquiry will be opened. The harasser could be dismissed, demoted, suspended without pay for up to two weeks, or given a lesser punishment, but the victim cannot claim damages. Furthermore, there are no measures to protect the complainant during the inquiry, and it is not uncommon for them to lose their jobs after lodging the complaint (Ong 2015; Yuen 2015; Mayuri Mei Lin 2016). In 2016, the Federal Court found the Employment (Amendment) Act 2012 to be insufficient, and introduced the tort of harassment into the Malaysian judicial system, allowing victims of sexual harassment to seek legal redress (Mayuri Mei Lin 2016).

Summary

This chapter has explored the myriad issues that women in Malaysia face in their occupational lives. Women's workforce participation remains low because they are bound to family obligations, while government measures have had limited impact as many employers still hold a privatised view of family care. Policy-making also fails to adequately address class-related obstacles or challenge traditional notions of gendered domestic roles. Furthermore, women encounter discrimination that restricts their access to growth opportunities and a healthy work environment. It is within this backdrop that the media texts are examined. These texts and the methodology for the present study will be introduced in the next chapter.

Chapter 5. Data and Methodology

This chapter first describes the chosen media outlets and their audience demographics. This is followed by a detailed explanation of the three main stages conducted prior to the data analysis: (1) developing the dataset, (2) identifying and naming dominant professional discourses, and (3) selecting the sample for analysis. The final section discusses the main textual features that are analysed in the data, and the usefulness of examining these in the identification of professional discourses in media texts.

5.1 The Media Sources

The few empirical studies on how discourses in the Malaysian media position professional women (e.g. Zulkifli 2015; Mullany and Yoong 2016) have been typically restricted in terms of media selection. In order to gain a broader picture of the current state of professional discourses in contemporary Malaysian society, this study analyses texts from two English-language print publications, *Clove*, a weekly women's section in a Malaysian mainstream newspaper, and *Her World*, a monthly women's lifestyle magazine, and an English-language radio station directed at a female audience, *Capital FM 88.9*. As stated in Chapter 1, including this third media outlet is one of the strengths of this study, given that radio has been an under-researched media in the field of gender and language.

Clove and *Her World* were mainly selected for their relatively high popularity and reach and, therefore, their possible influence in sustaining the status quo and perpetuating gender ideologies. *Clove* was a Sunday pullout in *The Star*, a tabloid-format newspaper owned by a political party in the ruling Barisan Nasional coalition, and the most widely read English-language news source in the country (Looi 2010). During the data collection period (October 2012 to September 2013), the readership for its Sunday edition, *Sunday Star*, was 1.175 million, which was 7.4% of the population aged 15 years and above (The Star 2012). The demographic of *Clove* readers was not available, but *The Star* mainly circulates in English-speaking urban areas and among higher income households (The Star 2014). A 2014 newspaper readership survey estimated that 42% of *The Star* readers were women (Sukumaran 2015).

Clove was published in the format of the typical women's lifestyle magazine. Each issue of this weekly pullout had a cover page featuring an attractive female celebrity as well as cover lines indicating the main articles. Its initial pages contained the editor's note, a contents page, and letters to the editor, while articles were interspersed with advertisements. It also had a separate editor and team of writers from the main section of the newspaper. The final issue of the *Clove* pullout was published on 13 October 2013, after which *Clove* became a section within the paper's lifestyle pullout, *Star2*. No reasons were provided for this. From January 2014, *The Star* ceased publishing this section, and the various topics that had been previously covered in *Clove* were subsumed into other sections of *Star2*. Although *Clove* no longer exists as a pullout, its articles are still worth examining as it is likely that the professional discourses that it produced continue to be propagated within *Star2*.

Her World debuted in 1960 (BluInc n.d.) and had a readership of 148,000 in 2012, making it the third most widely read English-language women's magazine in the country after two other titles, *Cleo* (readership: 177,000) and *Female Malaysia* (readership: 164,000) (adQrate n.d.). It was chosen over *Cleo* and *Female* due to its higher number of articles by local women writers on a wider range of topics beyond fashion and beauty. In Malaysia, the three share the same publisher, BluInc, a large organisation that publishes a range of lifestyle magazines in English, Malay and Chinese, including the Malaysian editions of international women's magazines, such as *Cosmopolitan*, *Seventeen*, *Shape* and *Harper's Bazaar*. During the data collection period, 42% of *Her World* readers were between 30 to 39-years-old, while 40% were above forty. Additionally, 50% were Malay, 26% were Chinese, and 19% Indian. Seventy six per cent were married, and 64% were PMEBS (Professionals, Managers, Executives and Businesspersons) (BluInc n.d.). Its readers were relatively affluent, as 62% had a monthly household income of above MYR6,000. As stated in Chapter 4, the national monthly household income in 2012 was MYR5,000 (Siah and Lee 2015). The education level of the readers was not publicly available.

With the tagline 'Women – The New Capital', the radio station *Capital FM* had an explicitly feminist agenda: to be "a platform for women's issues" and to empower women (Chan 2011). It was launched in 2011 (Chan 2011) by *Star Media Radio Group*, the radio arm of *Star Media Group*, which also publishes *The Star*. In addition to *Capital FM*, *Star Media Radio Group* operated three other English, Malay and Chinese language radio stations in Malaysia during the data collection period (Marketing Magazine 2012). *Capital FM* ceased broadcasting programmes

in January 2016, and *Astro Malaysia* acquired the station in December 2016 (The Malaysian Reserve 2017) with the intention of rebranding it (The Sun Daily 2016). It has not resumed broadcasting.

Capital FM was originally targeted at urban women aged 25 to 35 in the Kuala Lumpur Metropolitan Area (Chan 2011), and expanded to other states in the country. It had an estimated 121,000 listeners per week in 2012, with a weekly Time Spent Listening (TSL) of 7 hours (Marketing Magazine 2012). It grew to become the third most popular English-language radio station website in 2013, with a 1,341% annual increase in terms of online listenership (The Star 2013). Eighty six per cent of its listeners belonged to the PMEBs or OWC (Other White Collar) categories (Marketing Magazine 2012), and 72% had a personal income of at least MYR3,000 (The Star 2013). Fifty six per cent of its listeners were Chinese, 35% Malay, and 7% Indian (Marketing Magazine 2012).

Although *Her World* and *Capital FM* had an online presence, which *Clove* did not, it was decided that data from their social media sites would not be included in this study for several reasons. Firstly, during the data collection period, not only were the articles on *Her World's* website (www.herworld.com.my) a subset of those in the print publication, but the online versions also did not appear in full. In addition, *Her World* and *Capital FM's* Facebook pages had relatively few *Likes* - approximately 6,700 and 10,600 respectively in 2014, which were low in comparison to the magazine's readership and the radio station's listenership. Furthermore, their Facebook posts received very few *Likes* and comments. Likewise, *Capital FM's* Twitter page (@capitalfm_my) only had 2,700 followers in 2014. These indicated that the Facebook and Twitter pages had a very small audience compared to the print publication and radio station. Finally, the content of *Capital FM's* YouTube channel (www.youtube.com/user/capitalfm889) and Instagram page (http://instagram.com/capitalfm_my) were not included since this is not a multimodal study. For this same reason, Malaysian television programmes targeted at a female audience were also excluded from this study.

5.2 Data Collection and Selection

5.2.1 The *Clove* and *Her World* Data

Forty eight issues of *Clove* and twelve issues of *Her World* were purchased between October 2012 and September 2013. This difference in the number of

issues between the two publications was due to the fact that *Clove* was published every Sunday, while *Her World* is a monthly magazine. Every issue of both titles that had been published during these 12 months was purchased, with the exception of 4 issues of *Clove* (7 and 14 October 2012, 4 November 2012 and 17 February 2013³). The longitudinal data collection is one of the strengths of this study, as it provided a representative sample of the types of articles and professional discourses that readers of the two publications would encounter over a full year.

'Articles' in the context of *Clove* are defined as any text with a title, except advertisements and readers' letters to the editor. With regard to *Her World*, 'articles' are texts listed within the *Contents* section, except the *Stockists* page and letters to the editor. Some articles comprise of multiple 'side pieces' (or short paragraphs) occupying half or quarter a page as well as pictures with captions. These 'side pieces' and captions are considered as part of an article since they are not listed individually in the *Contents* section.

As explained in Chapter 1, one of this study's aims is to gain a deeper understanding of the extent to which women text producers perpetuate, or challenge, discourses that do disservice to women. Consequently, the dataset was narrowed to only include articles written by women listed as editors, writers, or contributors by the publication. Not only were articles by men omitted, but those without a named writer were also disregarded since the sex of the writer was unknown. Likewise, articles purchased from external news agencies and outlets such as *AFP Relaxnews* and *The Daily Telegraph UK* were excluded because the organisations were British, American and French, whereas this research focuses on professional discourses reinforced by Malaysian media text producers. As a result, the proportion of articles included in the final *Clove* and *Her World* datasets are 33% and 75% respectively.

Table 5.1 below presents the total number of articles in each issue of *Clove* and the number and percentage of articles written by women editors, writers or contributors:

³ I was not in the country, and therefore, unable to purchase these issues

Table 5.1: The total number of articles in each issue of *Clove* and the number and percentage of articles written by women editors, writers or contributors

Issue	Total Number of Articles	Number of Articles by Women Editors, Writers or Contributors	Percentage of Articles by Women Editors, Writers or Contributors
October 21 2012	14	4	29
October 28 2012	17	3	18
November 11 2012	20	7	35
November 18 2012	22	6	27
November 25 2012	18	5	28
December 02 2012	17	9	53
December 09 2012	25	5	20
December 16 2012	20	7	35
December 23 2012	22	7	32
December 30 2012	18	6	33
January 06 2013	21	6	29
January 13 2013	22	10	45
January 20 2013	19	7	37
January 27 2013	14	3	21
February 03 2013	14	3	21
February 10 2013	15	4	27
February 24 2013	15	5	33
March 03 2013	18	3	17
March 10 2013	21	8	38
March 17 2013	19	4	21
March 24 2013	18	6	33
March 31 2013	22	6	27
April 07 2013	22	10	45
April 14 2013	22	9	41
April 21 2013	17	8	47
April 28 2013	16	7	44
May 05 2013	19	8	42
May 12 2013	23	9	39
May 19 2013	21	5	24
May 26 2013	20	10	50
June 02 2013	19	7	37
June 09 2013	17	7	41
June 16 2013	19	6	32
June 23 2013	15	5	33
June 30 2013	20	5	25
July 07 2013	19	5	26
July 14 2013	22	13	59
July 21 2013	18	8	44
July 28 2013	23	6	26
August 04 2013	14	6	43
August 11 2013	16	3	19
August 18 2013	14	3	21
August 25 2013	15	3	20
September 01 2013	14	4	29
September 08 2013	16	7	44
September 15 2013	20	3	15
September 22 2013	12	2	17
September 29 2013	22	5	23
TOTAL	886	288	33

The 288 articles written by women editors, writers or contributors discussed beauty and fashion, celebrities, professional women, home products, travel, and cars. Although these constituted only a third of the articles in *Clove*, this does not imply that most of the content was written by men, as male writers provided articles in just 20 of the 48 issues (on the topics of fashion, beauty, celebrities, and home products), making up less than 5% of the total number of articles. The majority of the articles were either from foreign news agencies or did not have a named writer, and these were excluded from the dataset since this study focuses on texts by women in the Malaysian media industry. It has to be noted that while *Clove* was a Malaysian publication, its audience was highly exposed to discourses produced by Western media since many articles had been purchased from British, American and French news agencies, the percentage of which varied widely between approximately 40% to 80% each week. These focused on beauty, fashion, celebrities, and personality quizzes. The implication of this will be discussed in Chapter 9.

Table 5.2 below shows the total number of articles in *Her World* for each month and the number and percentage of articles written by women editors, writers or contributors in that particular issue:

Table 5.2: The total number of articles in each issue of *Her World* and the number and percentage of articles written by women editors, writers or contributors

Issue	Total Number of Articles	Number of Articles by Women Editors, Writers or Contributors	Percentage of Articles by Women Editors, Writers or Contributors
October 2012	51	37	73
November 2012	44	33	75
December 2012	46	34	74
January 2013	37	25	68
February 2013	40	32	80
March 2013	41	32	78
April 2013	41	34	83
May 2013	40	26	65
June 2013	43	27	63
July 2013	46	38	83
August 2013	48	36	75
September 2013	48	41	85
TOTAL	525	395	75

Although the total number of articles in *Her World* (525) was only slightly more than half of that in *Clove* (886), the *Her World* articles were not only generally longer (often at least 2 pages in length compared to the *Clove* articles which were typically less than a page), but also mostly by women editors, writers or

contributors (75%), covering a wider variety of topics such as fashion and beauty, health, family and relationships, money, work, personal safety, events, food, celebrities, charities, travel, home and interior design, and book, movie and music reviews. The remaining articles did not have a named writer, were by women who were not listed as an editor, writer or contributor, or were written by men. These also discussed the topics listed above.

5.2.2 The *Capital FM* Data

The radio dataset consists of recordings from 61 shows aired on *Capital FM*, amounting to 14 hours and 6 minutes of talk time. These recordings, which excluded commercials, were obtained in two ways. Firstly, as I was unable to listen to the radio during office hours, I recorded 37 programmes randomly on weekday mornings and evenings from October 2012 to September 2013. These shows were captured with a voice recorder, and only parts of each programme were recorded. Since the aim of this study is to identify professional discourses produced by women in Malaysian media, only shows with at least one woman presenter or regular guest were recorded for analysis.

The majority of these audio-recordings (36 shows) were made between October 2012 and May 2013. From June 2013, the station began uploading podcasts of some of their programmes on the station's website. Twenty four shows with women radio announcers or regular guests that were posted online between June and September 2013 were randomly downloaded, providing a balanced total talk time for the audio-recordings and podcasts at 6 hours 55 minutes and 7 hours 11 minutes respectively. Unlike those in the audio-recordings, the programmes in the podcasts were complete. The shows covered a range of topics, including health, beauty and fashion, work, violence against women, celebrities, and relationships.

5.3 Discourse Identification and Naming

Due to the large dataset size, I decided to conduct a preliminary analysis of half of the written data in order to introduce systematicity in the coding of the professional discourses that may not have been possible otherwise. The broadcast texts were excluded from this exercise on the basis that they had been obtained through a convenience sampling method, and therefore, did not comprise a representative sample of *Capital FM's* programmes. Adopting Sunderland's (2004) view that a discourse, while unbounded, will be describable and nameable, this

initial analysis involved scanning all *Clove* and *Her World* articles by women editors, writers, or contributors published between November 2012 and April 2013 for linguistic traces of professional discourses, and interpretively identifying and naming them.

A guiding principle in my approach to identifying the discourses was the view that a discourse does not exist in and of itself, but “produces something else (an utterance, a concept, and effect)” (Mills 2004: 15). Discourses have effects on the ways we behave or think about ourselves and others, and can be detected due to “the systematicity of the ideas, opinions, concepts, ways of thinking and behaving” (2004: 15), which may be manifested in language (Sunderland 2004). In order to identify and characterise the discourses within the media texts and distinguish the linguistic features that realise these discourses, I drew on Fairclough’s (2003) and Jeffries’s (2007, 2010) work. By thinking of discourses as “(a) representing some particular part of the world, and (b) representing it from a particular perspective” (Fairclough 2003: 129), the discourses were distinguished based on their ways of representing professional women and their relationship to work. In doing so, I focused on how the discourses structure our sense of who women are and how they relate to the professional world through semantic and grammatical relations, assumptions and implicit meaning, evaluation, and representations of social actors, time and place. Following Fairclough (2003) and Jeffries (2007, 2010), I looked at a wide range of linguistic features including, but not limited to, nominalisation, presupposition, passivisation, lexical choices and absences, connotations, noun phrases, and adjectival modifications of nouns. These will be explored further in the final section of this chapter. In the detailed analyses of sample texts in Chapters 7 and 8, we shall see how these features suggest the presence of particular discourses.

Discourses exist in “constellations, networks or ‘orders’ of related discourses” (Sunderland 2004: 45). Configuration relationships between linked discourses include “dominance/marginality, mutual support, opposition ... and hierarchy, where one discourse ‘overarches’ several others” (2004: 31). To borrow Sunderland’s ‘umbrella’ metaphor, ‘overarching’ or ‘higher-order’ discourses ‘shelter’ a range of ‘subordinate’ discourses. In the preliminary analysis of the data, both ‘overarching’ and ‘subordinate’ discourses emerging from the two publications were identified, and these will be described and differentiated in the next chapter. Two patterns were selected for formally naming the discourses based on Sunderland’s work. A ‘Discourse of + abstract noun’ pattern was used to label the ‘overarching’ discourses, and ‘adjectival phrase + discourse’ for

'subordinate' discourses. A few of these discourses were labelled and explored in earlier research, and their original names were retained. However, many are unique to this study, and I will explain how these were labelled in Chapter 6.

It cannot be assumed that this is the finite set of discourses produced in the texts since discourses "are not simply 'out there' waiting for identification" (Sunderland 2004: 45) and do not have clearly defined boundaries (Wodak 1997). The way in which I have interpretively identified these discourses is both enabled and constrained by how the society that I live in thinks about women and work as well as my feminist perspective. Other researchers and readers may detect a different array of discourses from the same linguistic features. As Sunderland writes, this is contingent upon "what seems self-evident, 'common sense', or simply salient to given readers" (2004: 33). The same discourse could also be identified, but evaluated differently (i.e. positively or negatively) depending on the reader's stance and background. Given that the discourses detected in this study are provisional and interpretive, they will be verified through their linguistic traces in Chapters 7 and 8 so as to make the identification process explicit and transparent, as recommended by Sunderland.

Table 5.3 below compares the total number of *Her World* and *Clove* articles by women editors, writers or contributors published between November 2012 and April 2013 with the number of articles that produce professional discourses. Although each issue of *Clove* contained fewer articles than *Her World*, as we have seen in Tables 5.1 and 5.2, the total number of articles by women for each month was similar across the two periodicals. Hence, the data for this Sunday pullout is grouped by month in Table 5.3 so that both publications are more comparable:

Table 5.3: The total number of *Her World* and *Clove* articles by women editors, writers or contributors, and the number and percentage of articles containing professional discourses, grouped by month (November 2012 – April 2013)

Month of Publication	<i>Her World</i>		<i>Clove</i>	
	Total Number of Articles by Women Editors, Writers or Contributors	Number and Percentage of Articles with Professional Discourses	Total Number of Articles by Women Editors, Writers or Contributors	Number and Percentage of Articles with Professional Discourses
Nov 2012	33	11 (33%)	18	10 (56%)
Dec 2012	34	15 (44%)	34	14 (41%)
Jan 2013	25	15 (60%)	26	9 (35%)
Feb 2013	32	13 (41%)	12	3 (25%)
Mar 2013	32	8 (25%)	27	9 (33%)
Apr 2013	34	10 (29%)	34	17 (50%)
TOTAL	190	72 (38%)	151	62 (41%)

The figures in Table 5.3 indicate that the professional discourses identified are not wholly representative of either periodical's gender ideologies. Firstly, only 38% of the 190 *Her World* articles written by women editors, writers or contributors produced professional discourses. At 41%, the proportion in *Clove* is only slightly higher. Furthermore, for both publications, the percentage of articles deploying professional discourses fluctuated across the six months, and was relatively low at particular points of time.

Since the articles containing professional discourses typically belong to two genres, interviews with role models and advice articles, it was decided that the data analysis would focus on these genres. The advice texts include both those directly related to professional life as well as texts providing advice on domestic issues, but are related to women's careers. As stated in Chapter 1, this is a key contribution of the present study since linguistic research on advice-giving in the media has primarily focused on beauty, sex, relationships, and parenting. The advice texts in the complete dataset are from *Her World* and *Capital FM* since *Clove* did not produce articles from this genre.

Table 6.1 in Chapter 6 maps the professional discourses identified in the interviews and advice articles against the issues of *Her World* and *Clove* published between November 2012 and April 2013. As we shall see in the table, the professional discourses identified in *Her World* constitute a relatively stable set. They are also illustrative of the range of professional discourses deployed in the publication since the majority of *Her World* articles are by women, as highlighted earlier in Table 5.2. With regards to *Clove*, although not all of these discourses were reinforced every week in this Sunday publication, when the issues were grouped by month, it was found that several of the discourses were consistently drawn on across the six months, which meant that regular readers of *Clove* were exposed to a relatively fixed set of professional discourses (see Table 6.1). However, in contrast to *Her World*, the percentage of *Clove* articles written by women editors, writers and contributors was relatively low and fluctuated every week (see Table 5.1). On the other hand, a large proportion of the articles in *Clove* were purchased from British, American and French news agencies, as noted in the previous section. Therefore, in conjunction with the discourses in Table 6.1, professional discourses circulating in Western societies were also available to *Clove* readers. The implications of this will be discussed in Chapter 9.

Since a consistent set of 'overarching' and 'subordinate' discourses were reiterated across the 30 issues of *Clove* and *Her World* published between

November 2012 and April 2013, it was assumed that these would be the ones produced most frequently in the entire dataset, and could therefore form the basis of the data analysis to further address the research questions posed in Chapter 1. Consequently, they were mapped against all the print and broadcast interviews and advice texts collected across the 12 months so that a set of sample texts could be selected for detailed analysis.

5.3.1 Other Methodological Considerations

Before we turn to the sample selection process, this section will briefly discuss the integrated methodological approach that had been considered for identifying the discourses, and the reasons why it was not applied. To avoid over-relying on a qualitative approach, a corpus linguistic approach was considered, where the relative distributions of word usages in the published articles are first determined. Then, a qualitative analysis of the contexts in which high frequency words occur is undertaken in order to identify the functions of these keywords, and from this, the main professional discourses articulated in *Her World* and *Clove*. As this method would be informed by keyword frequencies, the classic problems of anecdotalism and researcher bias that qualitative studies face would be avoided. Furthermore, the patterns revealed through a detailed inspection of how the keywords are being used across text genres and publications could provide insights that might be otherwise missed out.

There were two main concerns that made this method less feasible. Firstly, there is a practical constraint to the adoption of a corpus linguistics approach. Most of the articles published by *Her World* and *Clove* are not available in electronic form online, and converting all articles by women with an optical character recognition software, or manually transcribing them, to construct the corpus would have been time-consuming due to the large volume of data, thus erasing any efficiency gains from the computer-aided analysis. As shown in Tables 5.1 and 5.2 earlier in this chapter, a total of 683 articles in the entire dataset were by women editors, writers or contributors. In addition, while identifying keywords and patterns of co-occurrence and collocation in the texts would be valuable, a fine-grained qualitative analysis of a broad range of linguistic features would still be needed in order to identify the professional discourses, as the analysis will show. For example, discourses can be articulated through evaluations and conversational implicatures, which may not be textually triggered and would rely heavily on contextual information. Due to these two concerns, it was decided that the discourses would be identified through a close and careful reading of articles

published over a period of 6 months, as described previously. This reduced the data to a manageable size, while still being sufficiently representative of the entire dataset. To minimise the possibility of researcher bias, the discourses identified are verified through a fine-grained analysis of a subset of the data in Chapters 7 and 8.

5.4 Sample Selection

While a representative sampling strategy was used to obtain the written dataset and identify the main professional discourses in *Her World* and *Clove*, a purposeful sampling approach was taken in selecting the sample for detailed analysis. This is because, in addition to verifying the linguistic traces of the interpretively identified discourses, the analyses in Chapters 7 and 8 aim to examine the operationalisation of these discourses in order to fully address this study's research questions. Therefore, purposeful sampling was more suitable to provide the information needed. The sample texts were chosen based on several criteria. Firstly, they captured all the main 'overarching' and 'subordinate' professional discourses in Figure 6.1. Additionally, since previous linguistic studies exploring the intersection of gender, media, and the workplace usually focused on a single media source, it was important that a balanced number of texts are examined from each print and broadcast media outlet for the two genres, interviews and advice texts. Table 5.4 below provides the number of interviews and advice texts from each of the three media that were included in the sample:

Table 5.4: The number of texts in the sample by genre and month

Month	Number of Interviews			Number of Advice Texts	
	<i>Her World</i>	<i>Clove</i>	<i>Capital FM</i>	<i>Her World</i>	<i>Capital FM</i>
Oct 2012		1	1	1	1
Nov 2012		1	1		1
Dec 2012	1			2	
Jan 2013					1
Feb 2013	1			1	
Mar 2013					
Apr 2013			1		1
May 2013		1		1	
Jun 2013	3	1		1	
Jul 2013					
Aug 2013		1			1
Sept 2013				1	1
TOTAL	5	5	3	7	6

As we can see in the table above, an equal number of interviews and advice texts were selected for analysis. Additionally, for each of the two genres, a similar number of texts was chosen from each media outlet. Since *Clove* did not provide work-related guidance, only advice texts from *Her World* and *Capital FM* are examined in Chapter 8.

Furthermore, previous studies have typically focused on professional women from one specific field, usually business or politics. Hence, through the sample selection process, the interviews examined were broadened to include women from a spectrum of professions and industries, in addition to the context most typically focused on in gender and language research, the business context. Along with entrepreneurs and senior managers, interviews with entertainers, wildlife conservationists, and scientists were included, as shown in Table 5.5 below:

Table 5.5: The professional fields of women interviewees in *Her World*, *Clove*, and *Capital FM*, grouped by month

Month	Arts and Entertainment	Entrepreneurship	Senior Management	Modelling	Environment/ Wildlife Conservation	Science and Technology	Sport	Farming	Journalism
Oct 2012	•	• ✕					Δ	Δ	
Nov 2012	Δ • ✕	•	Δ	✕					
Dec 2012	Δ •	Δ •	•			Δ			
Jan 2013	Δ		Δ •	•					•
Feb 2013	•	Δ		Δ					
Mar 2013	Δ •	Δ •							
Apr 2013	Δ •	Δ			Δ ✕				
May 2013	Δ •	Δ							
Jun 2013	Δ •		Δ •		Δ	Δ			
Jul 2013	Δ • ✕	Δ •		•					
Aug 2013	Δ •	•							
Sept 2013	Δ • ✕	Δ •		•					
Key: Δ Published in <i>Her World</i> • Published in <i>Clove</i> ✕ Aired on <i>Capital FM</i>									

The shaded cells in the table above indicate that at least one interview for that particular month/field was included in the sample. There is a stronger focus on women in entertainment and business since they comprise the majority of role models in the dataset. Although there are several interviews with fashion models, none were selected because these mainly evoked dominant discourses of beauty, which is not unanticipated given the industry, and therefore, do not provide new insights into the politics of professional women's representations in the media.

Women in sport, farming, and journalism were also excluded as these fields were rarely represented in the three data sources.

Additionally, the sample covers a broad range of work issues addressed in *Her World* and *Capital FM* (Clove did not publish any career advice). As stated earlier, these comprise of topics directly related to professional life as well as discussions on parenting and marriage that also refer to women's careers. Table 5.6 below maps the professional issues in the dataset against the month that the advice text was produced:

Table 5.6: The professional issues addressed in *Her World* and *Capital FM*, grouped by month

Month	Advice on Professional Life							Advice on Parenting and Marital Relationships		
	Succeeding in the Workplace	Addressing Gender Discrimination	Returning to the Workforce	Losing a Job	Switching Careers	Managing Difficult Work Situations	Staying Employable	Maintaining a Healthy Marriage	Choosing Childcare	Making Decisions about an Unplanned Pregnancy
Oct 2012		✕	Δ							
Nov 2012		✕						✕		
Dec 2012				Δ					Δ	Δ
Jan 2013	Δ✕				Δ					
Feb 2013		Δ								
Mar 2013		✕			Δ					
Apr 2013						Δ		✕		
May 2013	Δ						Δ			
Jun 2013	Δ		✕							
Jul 2013						Δ		Δ		
Aug 2013	Δ	Δ✕	Δ					Δ		
Sept 2013	Δ✕									
Key: Δ Published in <i>Her World</i> ✕ Aired on <i>Capital FM</i>										

The shaded cells in Table 5.6 above signify that at least one text for that month/topic was included in the sample. As we can see, recurrent topics encountered by the audience over the year constitute a larger proportion of the sample. However, an article giving advice to women who have lost their jobs was selected as it offers an interesting point of contrast to texts on returning to the labour force. A *Her World* article on childcare was also chosen since the lack of quality childcare is a significant problem in Malaysia, as discussed in Chapter 4.

5.5 Main Analytical Tools

As I stated earlier in this chapter, discourses are interpretively identified in this study through the analysis of linguistic traces. This section provides a detailed account of the main textual features that are examined and the ways in which they are helpful in showing up the representations of professional women and their workplace experiences that evidence the operation of certain discourses. As the analyses in Chapters 7 and 8 will show, these linguistic elements often work in tandem to realise particular discourses, though not all are strongly present in the sample. The key analytical constructs that feature consistently in the data and, therefore, could potentially have a strong ideological influence over the audience's views of working women are discussed in Chapter 9. In the discussion below, the language forms that can be seen as realising a discourse are often related to a particular textual function, or what the text is 'doing'. This does not suggest that we can straightforwardly map meaning onto form. Formal categories are multi-functional and do not have clear boundaries in relation to meaning. Therefore, a careful consideration of context is needed before meaning can be attributed to the linguistic form. Likewise, certain meanings can be delivered through an open-ended range of language forms (Jeffries 2007).

5.5.1 Naming and Describing

Firstly, this study will investigate what professional discourses are realised through the ways in which career women, the various entities in their occupational and domestic lives (people, organisations and so forth), and their relations with these entities are named and described. The inclusion of the domestic sphere is necessary since many of the prevailing problems encountered by working women in Malaysia are related to combining career and motherhood. The discourses that are articulated through the naming habits of Malaysian media could contest or legitimate socio-cultural perceptions about working mothers, their domestic roles and responsibilities as well as the obligations of their family members. Furthermore, examining how professional women are named and described can reveal how career women are seen to be and what "forms of 'in vogue' femaleness and femininity" (Genz 2010: 97) the women are encouraged to adopt. The depictions of women's "old" self, which they are urged to leave behind, as well as the "new woman" that they required to be (2010: 97) have the potential to perpetuate or challenge negative feminine stereotypes and the androcentric view of professionalism, which arguably contribute to the 'glass ceiling' and the gender wage gap in Malaysia.

The part of a sentence that typically 'names' an entity is the noun phrase or nominal group (Jeffries 2007). Thus, the analysis pays close attention to the choice of noun, or head noun in a phrase, as well as the connotative features of these labels that may construct the referent positively or negatively. While not all noun choices have ideological potential (Jeffries 2010), different nouns could draw upon and evoke different ways of structuring our sense of working women and their experiences in the labour market, which are associated with different discourses. Since there may be substantial overlap in the vocabularies associated with various discourses (Fairclough 2003), the analysis examines the nouns within context, rather than in isolation, in order to understand how they are being used.

A text can represent social actors by name or in terms of category (Fairclough 2003), and where social actors are classified, the categories that are referenced are taken into consideration. A restricted identification of women by their domestic roles, for example, could be ideologically significant in the context of the current study. In her critical discourse analysis of the representations of parenthood in an advertising campaign, Lazar (2000) argues that the discourse of 'Egalitarian Gender Relations' is reproduced by the joint classification of men and women as 'parents' instead of 'father' and 'mother', alongside other linguistic and visual structures. Such consideration of multiple linguistic forms and semiotic modes can be valuable as the number of instances of a particular noun may not accurately reflect the main discourse in operation. For example, while Sunderland (2004) also identifies a frequent use of 'parent(s)' in three parenting magazines, this in itself is insufficient to construe egalitarianism between the genders. She points to a 'missing trace' of father, particularly in contrast to the frequent occurrences of 'mum' and its equivalents, which she argues characterises the 'Part-time Father' discourse. This also demonstrates the importance of examining the representation of social actors in terms of 'suppression', where a social actor is excluded from the text, and 'backgrounding', where the social actor is mentioned, but has to be inferred in certain parts of the text (Fairclough 2003). In Wagner and Wodak's (2006) analysis of the biographical narratives of a group of highly successful women, they identify the impersonal 'one' as a linguistic feature that is indicative of the backgrounding of self. Focusing on such backgrounding features can be useful for uncovering the problematic positioning of professional women.

In addition to the choice of noun, the adjective is one of the most typical linguistic means for characterising a referent (Jeffries 2007). Therefore, it makes sense to

examine patterns of adjectival modification of nouns, both as the premodifier within a noun phrase as well as the complement of an intensive verb. In Iyer's critical discourse analysis of representations of women entrepreneurs in Indian print media, she demonstrates how the discourse of femininity is articulated through hyperbolic adjectives and adjectival phrases (e.g. "picture perfect" (2009: 250)). Following Fairclough (2003), the analysis also takes into account the semantic relationships between the adjectives used, including new presupposed semantic relations that represent working women and their experiences in a way that is specific to a particular discourse. A clear example of the value of this approach can be seen in Lazar's (2014) feminist critical discourse study of print jewellery advertisements in Singapore. Through a close examination of the relations of difference set up over pairs of adjectives that are not usually regarded as antonyms (e.g. beautiful/ordinary, poetry/power, etc.), Lazar identifies the construction of a postfeminist femininity that is constituted through a positive acceptance of self-contradiction.

Metaphors are another resource for creating distinct representations of the world. Discourses can be distinguished by lexical metaphors or a combination of metaphors (Fairclough 2003). To illustrate, during the 1997 British General Election campaign, the media presented women MPs as "atypical politicians intruding into implicitly male territory" or as "outsiders within" partly through the inflection of military metaphors (Adcock 2010: 146). In contrast, the professional women in Wagner and Wodak's (2006) narrative interviews used metaphors such as 'nest' and 'family' to describe their colleagues and to present themselves as part of a successful team. This study also demonstrates how metaphors can be a constitutive part of both 'performing success' as well as 'performing gender', which are two aspects that are of particular importance to this thesis. Wagner and Wodak argue that the examples of 'nest' and 'family' mentioned earlier are closely linked to "the stereotypical female capability of caring for others and being involved in interpersonal relationships" (2006: 404). In Koller's (2004) analysis of business magazine features applying a combination of CDA with cognitive metaphor theory, she asserts that the use of a range of 'war metaphors' to describe women managers is indicative of discourses of hegemonic masculinity. Businesswomen are also occasionally metaphorised as caregivers, which is not surprising, but predictable uses of metaphors can be significant. Conventional metaphors can be ideologically manipulative in some cases as they have been naturalised and allow text producers to obscure ideological content that may be more apparent in more literal uses of naming conventions (Jeffries 2007, 2010).

Examining the verbs or verb phrases selected to describe processes can also provide important insights, as demonstrated by Lazar's (2011) CDA research on the construction of a new emancipated femininity, which she perceives as a subject effect of neoliberal postfeminist discourses. She contends that the employment of verbs from the semantic field of choice in a set of beauty advertisements, alongside other linguistic practices, position women as liberated subjects who possess and exercise choice. She also demonstrates how the use of agentive verbs such as 'try', 'reach' and 'achieve' in the texts deploys a motivational, self-help discourse that suggests that "emancipation lies in the hands of women themselves" (2011: 42).

The question of agency, particularly whether the agency of professional women is specified or elided in the representation of actions and in what contexts, is an important aspect of the construction of feminine subjectivities in the media data. In the light of the privatisation of family labour and other structural barriers that professional women in Malaysia continue to face, according significant autonomy and agency to working women with regards to their career progression could mask these gendered structural barriers and reinforce the postfeminist myth that gender equality has been achieved. One popular tool that CDA researchers have used when addressing the question of agency is the analysis of transitivity. This study examines, for example, whether the social actor is represented as an Actor or Beneficiary in processes (Fairclough 2003). In a similar study analysing the German edition of *Cosmopolitan*, the implied reader is rendered the Actor of actions that can promote her progress and well-being. Kauppinen argues that this contributes to a "discourse of postfeminist self-management", which seeks to "guide the reader to form herself into a version of the entrepreneurial self required by the neoliberalized world of work" (2013: 135). By examining aspects of agency (who does what) and action (what gets done) in women's magazines, Machin and Thornborrow (2006) identify several discourses that represent women as having sexual agency. This study is particularly valuable in demonstrating how agency can be expressed not just through transitive actions, but also in mental state process clauses. The choice to downplay the role of the intentional actor could also be ideologically significant and evidence the operation of particular discourses. Thus, the analysis investigates processes without an intentional actor or an agent, such as "passive structures with no specified agent, supervision processes, where the subject of the verb is ... not in control of the process, and event processes, where the Actor is an inanimate object or force" (Jeffries 2007: 180).

In Jeffries's (2007) critical discourse analysis of mainstream women's and girls' magazines, she points out the challenges that arise from placing participants, events, states, and processes into transitivity categories. For example, the creativity of language as well as social changes means that certain verbs that are usually perceived as unintentional actions, or supervision processes, may increasingly appear as intentional actions. She illustrates this point with 'vomit' and 'throw up', which are now more frequently seen as material action intentional verbs due to the increase in levels of bulimia. Jeffries also highlights that in analyses of transitivity in CDA, there tends to be an underlying assumption that the text producer selected a verb with a particular transitivity in order to naturalise an ideology or because that ideology is already naturalised and has become common sense. However, certain processes may be so commonly presented in metaphorical or other ways that the reader may 'read' the meaning as literal, which undermines any sense of an ideological purpose at work.

Agents of processes can also be absent as a consequence of the grammatical process of nominalisation, where "a process is expressed as a noun, as if it were an entity" (Fairclough 1989: 51). By eliding human agency in processes, nominalisation can obfuscate responsibility (Fairclough 2003). The exclusion of an agentive participant could invite a reading in which certain events are given the force of a natural phenomenon that has to be accepted. This is a particularly important aspect to examine within neoliberal and postfeminist culture, which "exculpates social, political, economic, cultural and corporate institutions for their role in maintaining and reproducing inequality and injustice" while apportioning blame to women (Gill and Orgad 2015: 340). Another possible effect of nominalisation is that women's agency is downplayed. In Iyer's (2009) study, discussed earlier in this section, she asserts that the headlines of the articles, as nominalisations, "eliminate the power of [women] entrepreneurs as creators and owners of their ventures" (2009: 248). However, Fairclough (2003) reminds us that before particular effects can be attributed to nominalisations, meaning and context have to be taken into account. We would need to consider how the audience might interpret the texts. In addition, we cannot automatically assume that all instances of nominalisation are ideologically manipulative. In certain cases, the identities of participants may be left unmentioned because they are unknown (Jeffries 2007).

5.5.2 Equating and Contrasting

This section has looked at how social actors can be classified by the ways that they are named. Another aspect of the process of classification is the construction of equivalents and differences between social actors, processes and so forth (Fairclough 2003). While these two forms of analysis are not part of the regular CDA toolset (Jeffries 2007), they can help to distinguish professional discourses that reify or undermine dualisms such as male/female and work/home in a socio-cultural context where the binary distinction between work and domesticity still persists. This can be particularly interesting as the new “postfeminist woman” (Genz 2010: 98) is often represented in contemporary media as wanting to ‘have it all’ and refusing to “dichotomize and choose between her public and private” (2010: 98). Furthermore, as discussed in Chapter 2, earlier studies in Western settings have found that female sexuality has been conflated with success within postfeminist rhetoric (Attwood 2011). Therefore, by examining what notions are subsumed as equivalent aspects of success in the Malaysian context, we can expose what new demands working women are now expected to meet in order to occupy the subject position of successful femininity, and what discourses are operationalised in this process.

Equivalence can be achieved between two or more theoretically different phenomena through various means, such as apposition, combining noun phrases with a conjunction, or positioning them on either side of an intensive verb. In Lazar’s (2009) critical discourse study of postfeminist beauty advertisements, explicit references to women’s physical appearance are linked to health via coordinating conjunctions. She argues that these relationships of equivalence conflate beauty with well-being and construe the entitlement to pamper oneself as a necessity. Fairclough demonstrates how lists can work together “into a relation of equivalence expressions which emanate from and evoke different discourses”, effectively combining these discourses to constitute a new one (2003: 125).

Entities can be placed in opposition to each other through parallel structures as well as antithetical relational structures and expressions that are formally marked by coordinating conjunctions like ‘yet’ and sentence adverbials such as ‘however’. This study is especially interested in the creation of new contrasts that “have no prior existence in our conceptual apparatus” (Jeffries 2007: 103). This can be achieved through the positioning of words and phrases that are not conventional opposites within the types of syntactic frame mentioned above. This thesis also

looks at instances where more gradable or converse relationships are reduced to a relationship of complementarity, given that the “mutually exclusive opposite appeals to ... magazine copy-writers because of its clarity; and to readers for the same reason” (Jeffries 2007: 110). An overreliance on certain either-or relationships could reinforce distinctions that may reflect prevailing gender ideologies.

In Jeffries’s critical analysis of women’s magazines, she notes that the constructed oppositions identified “can be categorized under the superordinate heading of good versus bad”, with the advice given being “very clear about what is or is not desirable, to the extent of indicating that some actions or approaches are right, where others are wrong” (2007: 109). Thus, this study also explores how differences are set up through evaluations. For instance, the work/home binary could be reinforced by representing one as desirable and the other as not. Following Fairclough (2003), the analysis will examine four categories of evaluations: statements with deontic modalities, statements with affective mental process verbs, evaluative statements, and value assumptions. The focus on the use of affective mental processes can be a fruitful way of examining how the chosen media creates divisions by communicating appraisals through the voices of interviewees and role models in their texts. In Lazar’s examination of discourses of personal choice and self-improvement in beauty advertisements, she highlights the ways in which the ads “steer women towards exercising a single preferred choice” (2011: 47). In certain cases, the recommended choice is attributed to celebrities or ‘ordinary’ women, and positively appraised as ‘savvy’ and ‘intelligent’. Through such linguistic practices, women are implicitly divided into responsible subjects who make the ‘right choices’ and those who fail. This present study also examines evaluative statements where something is implied to be desirable or undesirable relative to a particular discourse that is being drawn on as well as those where the evaluations are embedded as presuppositions within phrases.

There is yet another way in which researchers can approach the construction of opposition: by interrogating the representation of space and time. Not only are space, time, and ‘space-times’ routinely constructed in texts, but these constructions also vary by society, reflecting social norms and changes (Fairclough 2003). The discourses that are implicit within these constructions of space and time can have a potential impact upon the audience’s perceptions of whether the space-time of the workplace and the space-time of the home are in opposition to each other. The analysis examines how professional women are

located in space and time in the texts through verbal tenses, the aspect of verbs, adverbials, conjunctions and prepositions that mark spatial and temporal relations, deixis, and vocabulary related to time and space (Fairclough 2003; Jeffries 2007).

5.5.3 Assuming and Implying

Professional discourses can emerge from the implicit meanings that are conveyed through the texts' assumptions and implications. The assumptions and implications that the analysis investigates include those related to the construction of the ideal or supposed professional woman as well as the types of challenges that she faces in relation to having a career and why. These underlying meanings are important matters of ideological interest as they have the potential to normalise or transform the characteristics or perspectives that are assumed time and again:

[T]hese meanings may communicate themselves to the reader at a relatively subconscious level, and if reading texts of a similar nature repeatedly delivers the same ideological assumptions, the reader is vulnerable to the conceptual influences that such repetition could have on world view or perceptions (Jeffries 2007: 129).

The typical way in which texts assume meanings is via the mechanism of presupposition (Jeffries 2007). Presuppositions can be seen as "potentially tied to particular discourses" (Fairclough 2003: 132), and the analysis interrogates the professional discourses that are reinforced by existential presuppositions (i.e. "assumptions about what exists") and propositional presuppositions (i.e. "assumptions about what is or can be or will be the case") (2003: 55). These can be triggered by various linguistic features, such as markers of definite reference, factive verbs, and cleft constructions. Presuppositions can also be embedded in imperatives and questions, both of which are commonly used in women's print media to simulate two-way interaction between the text producers and the audience (Talbot 1992). Lazar's analysis of imperatives in beauty advertisements in a Singapore daily reveals presuppositions belonging to the postfeminist discourse that represents beauty work and resisting ageing as necessary and natural. These are partly "cued in clauses with non-finite verbs, [such as in 'To fight the signs of time',] which do not allow one to argue with the stated propositions" (2006: 511).

As we shall see in Chapters 7 and 8, existential presuppositions are often built into the texts. One of the main ways of doing this is through nominalisation. CDA

practitioners have found that grammatical nominalisations can be used for reifying the process and creating the presupposition that it exists (Jeffries 2007). Such reification can also be achieved through “all definite and some indefinite noun phrases, particularly where there is other modification in the form of adjectives or subordinate clauses” (Jeffries 2007: 62). To illustrate, in a further study on print ads in Singapore, Lazar (2009) argues that the noun phrase “the inner radiance of a woman” presupposes that radiance is an inherent feminine quality, which contributes to the construction of a particular postfeminist identity. Nonetheless, as Jeffries (2007, 2010) warns us, not all existential presuppositions are ideologically significant. Many nominalisations, for example, are used as a way to be more economical with our language.

Implied meanings can also be achieved via the linguistic process of implicature. This study will examine the discourses that are drawn upon by conventional and conversational implicatures. According to Grice (1975), the former are implied meanings that are textually triggered by particular lexical items or features of language, such as conjunctions and verb tense. The latter, on the other hand, cannot be logically inferred from linguistic features. These implicit meanings arise as the consequence of the flouting of Grice’s conversational maxims. Like Jeffries’s critical analysis of women’s magazine articles, the context of this study’s data differs from “the original conversational context envisaged by Grice (1975)” (2007: 131), given the physical distance between the producers and audience as well as a lack of genuine exchange between them that is “analogous to the interaction that takes place in face-to-face conversation” (2007: 131). However, in current scholarship, implicature is viewed as a potential carrier of indirect meaning not only in speech, but also in written language. In her work, Jeffries demonstrates how the notion of implicature can be fruitfully applied to expose how magazines attempt to regulate women’s behaviour, such as by setting up exemplary women. In certain imperatives that reference the idealised reader’s emotional state of mind (e.g. “Stop worrying” (2007: 149)), the implicatures that arise contribute to the negative stereotyping of women as over-anxious. Therefore, investigating the implicatures in the media data can provide insights into the reproduction as well as subversion of ideological norms.

Before closing this section, it must be reiterated that we cannot assign meanings to linguistic structures in a mechanical way, given that texts can have multiple interpretations depending on the context as well as the social experiences and resources of the interpreter (Fairclough 1992). Furthermore, the effects of the linguistic practices discussed in this section also depend on the prevalence of the

representations in the particular text genre and how successfully alternatives have been excluded (Fairclough 2003). Therefore, while it is important to examine the typical linguistic forms that deliver particular functional effects, CDA research must remain committed to the assumption of the diversity of interpretations of texts (Fairclough 1992).

Summary

This chapter introduced the media sources examined in the present study. It also provided a detailed description of how the dataset and sample were developed as well as how the professional discourses were identified. These discourses are defined and differentiated in Chapter 6. The final section explored the primary analytical tools used in the analysis of the sample texts in Chapters 7 and 8, focusing particularly on their use in existing CDA research and how they can be fruitful in uncovering the discourses deployed in the representations of professional women and their occupational lives.

Chapter 6. Professional Discourses

This chapter will begin by describing the networks of professional discourses identified in the advice articles and interviews in the preliminary analysis. As stated in the previous chapter, the range of data examined in this study was narrowed to these two genres since the initial analysis had shown that professional discourses were largely deployed in such texts. The second section of this chapter will then define the professional discourses and their relationships with one another.

6.1 The Discourse Networks

Table 6.1 below maps all the professional discourses identified in *Her World* and *Clove* interviews and advice articles in the preliminary analysis against the two publications. Being a weekly pullout, *Clove* produced fewer articles than *Her World* per issue, but published an almost similar number of articles as *Her World* per month: in *Clove*, a monthly average of 24 articles were written by women editors, writers or contributors, compared of an average of 33 articles in *Her World*. Hence, the issues of *Clove* are grouped by month in the table below to improve the comparability of the two publications:

Table 6.1: The professional discourses identified in *Her World* and *Clove* interviews and advice articles by month (November 2012 – April 2013)

Month of Publication	'Discourse of the Successful Woman'								'Discourse of the Un-professional Woman'		'Discourse of Work'			'Discourse of Integrating Work and Home'							
	'Women Can Succeed in Male-Dominated Fields'	'The Beautiful and Sexual Successful Woman'	'Successful Women as Wives and Mothers'	'Feminisation of Successful Women'	'Women Owe Success to Hard Work'	'Women Owe Success to Family'	'The Unfulfilled Successful Woman'	'Sisters Are Doin' It For Themselves'	'Beware Women'	'The Lacking Woman'	'Work as Passion'	'Work as Self-Actualisation'	'Work as Drudgery'	'Women Can't Have It All'	'Women Can Have It All'	'Mother as Main Parent'	'Shared Parenting'	'Motherhood as Ultimate Fulfilment'	'Maternal Anxiety'	'Home-making as Women's Work'	'Busy Mother Juggling Work and Home'
Nov 2012	Δ	Δ	Δ	Δ	Δ	Δ	Δ	•	Δ		Δ	Δ	Δ	Δ	Δ	Δ				Δ	
Dec 2012	Δ	Δ	Δ	Δ	Δ	Δ		•	Δ		Δ	Δ	Δ	Δ	•	Δ		Δ	Δ	Δ	Δ
Jan 2013	Δ	Δ	Δ	Δ	Δ	Δ		Δ	Δ	Δ	Δ	Δ		Δ							Δ
Feb 2013	Δ	Δ	Δ	Δ	Δ	Δ			Δ	Δ	Δ			Δ	Δ	Δ	Δ	Δ		Δ	Δ
Mar 2013	•	Δ	Δ	Δ	•	Δ	Δ	Δ		Δ	Δ	•		Δ	Δ	Δ				Δ	Δ
Apr 2013		Δ	Δ	Δ	Δ	Δ			Δ	Δ	Δ	•		Δ	Δ						•
Key: Δ Produced in <i>Her World</i> • Produced in <i>Clove</i>																					

As the table above illustrates, the discourse constellations consist of four 'higher-order' discourses – 'Discourse of the Successful Woman', 'Discourse of the Unprofessional Woman', 'Discourse of Work', and 'Discourse of Integrating Work and Home' – which 'overarch' over the other 21 interrelated 'subordinate' discourses. A hierarchical representation of these 'overarching' and 'subordinate' discourses is provided in Figure 6.1 in the next section. Since "[a] discourse takes meaning from its network(s), and readers/listeners use networks to make sense of the discourses in a text" (Sunderland 2004: 45), I decided that it would be helpful to provide a diagram of the discursual hierarchy. However, as discussed in Chapter 5, this does not in any way imply a static or closed set of discourses.

It was also explained in the previous chapter that the discourses were distinguished by their ways of representing professional women and their relationship to work. In determining the name for each 'overarching' and 'subordinate' discourse in Table 6.1 above, I have attempted to be as explicit as possible in indicating the subject position that the discourse makes available (e.g. 'Successful Woman', 'Unprofessional Woman', 'Busy Mother'), the particular perspective from which women are represented in relation to work (e.g. 'Owe Success to Family', 'Doin' It For Themselves'), as well the outlook about work offered to women, including implicitly relative to domestic life (e.g. 'Work as Self-Actualisation', 'Motherhood as Ultimate Fulfilment').

We shall see later in this section that there is considerable overlap across the discourses, which is to be expected since discourses "feed off", 'seep' or 'leak' into each other" (Sunderland 2004: 45). However, they do not necessarily overlap along mutually reinforcing lines. In cases where multiple discourses are articulated together, these discourses may support or contradict each other. The complementary and oppositional relationships between the discourses identified will be discussed in the next section.

Table 6.1 above shows that many of the professional discourses were consistently produced during the six months, both within each of the two print media as well as across them. However, there are several subordinate discourses, or 'members' (Sunderland 2004) of the discourse networks, that were more ephemeral. When selecting sample texts to be further analysed, I decided that it was more important to examine how these discourses function in the construction of gendered professional identities across a spectrum of fields and work-related issues than to construct a sample that precisely reflected the relative density of the 'overarching' and 'subordinate' professional discourses found in the preliminary analysis. As a result, although all the discourses are captured in the sample, the proportion of their linguistic traces does not wholly correspond with that in Table 6.1. Table 6.2 below maps the discourses against the interviews and advice articles in the sample by month:

Table 6.2: The professional discourses articulated in *Her World*, *Clove* and *Capital FM* interviews and advice articles in the sample by month

Month of Publication	'Discourse of the Successful Woman'							'Discourse of the Un-professional Woman		'Discourse of Work'			'Discourse of Integrating Work and Home'								
	'Women Can Succeed in Male-Dominated Fields'	'The Beautiful and Sexual Successful Woman'	'Successful Women as Wives and Mothers'	'Feminisation of Successful Women'	'Women Owe Success to Hard Work'	'Women Owe Success to Family'	'The Unfulfilled Successful Woman'	'Sisters Are Doin' It For Themselves'	'Beware Women'	'The Lacking Woman'	'Work as Passion'	'Work as Self-Actualisation'	'Work as Drudgery'	'Women Can't Have It All'	'Women Can Have It All'	'Mother as Main Parent'	'Shared Parenting'	'Motherhood as Ultimate Fulfilment'	'Maternal Anxiety'	'Home-making as Women's Work'	'Busy Mother Juggling Work and Home'
Oct 2012	✓	✓	✓	✓					✓	✓					✓	✓				✓	
Nov 2012		✓	✓				✓		✓					✓							
Dec 2012	✓		✓			✓			✓				✓	✓		✓		✓	✓		✓
Jan 2013									✓	✓											
Feb 2013	✓									✓				✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓
Mar* 2013																					
Apr 2013		✓	✓	✓							✓							✓			
May 2013								✓	✓	✓											
Jun 2013	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓
Jul* 2013																					
Aug 2013						✓			✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
Sep 2013	✓		✓	✓					✓	✓					✓	✓				✓	

* No texts from March or July 2013 were selected

While a few additional discourses did emerge from the sample, they were rare, and therefore, not considered as dominant in the data.

6.2 Defining and Differentiating the Professional Discourses

This section will describe the professional discourses tabulated earlier in the chapter. For ease of reference, a hierarchical representation of the 'overarching' and 'subordinate' discourses is provided in Figure 6.1 below:

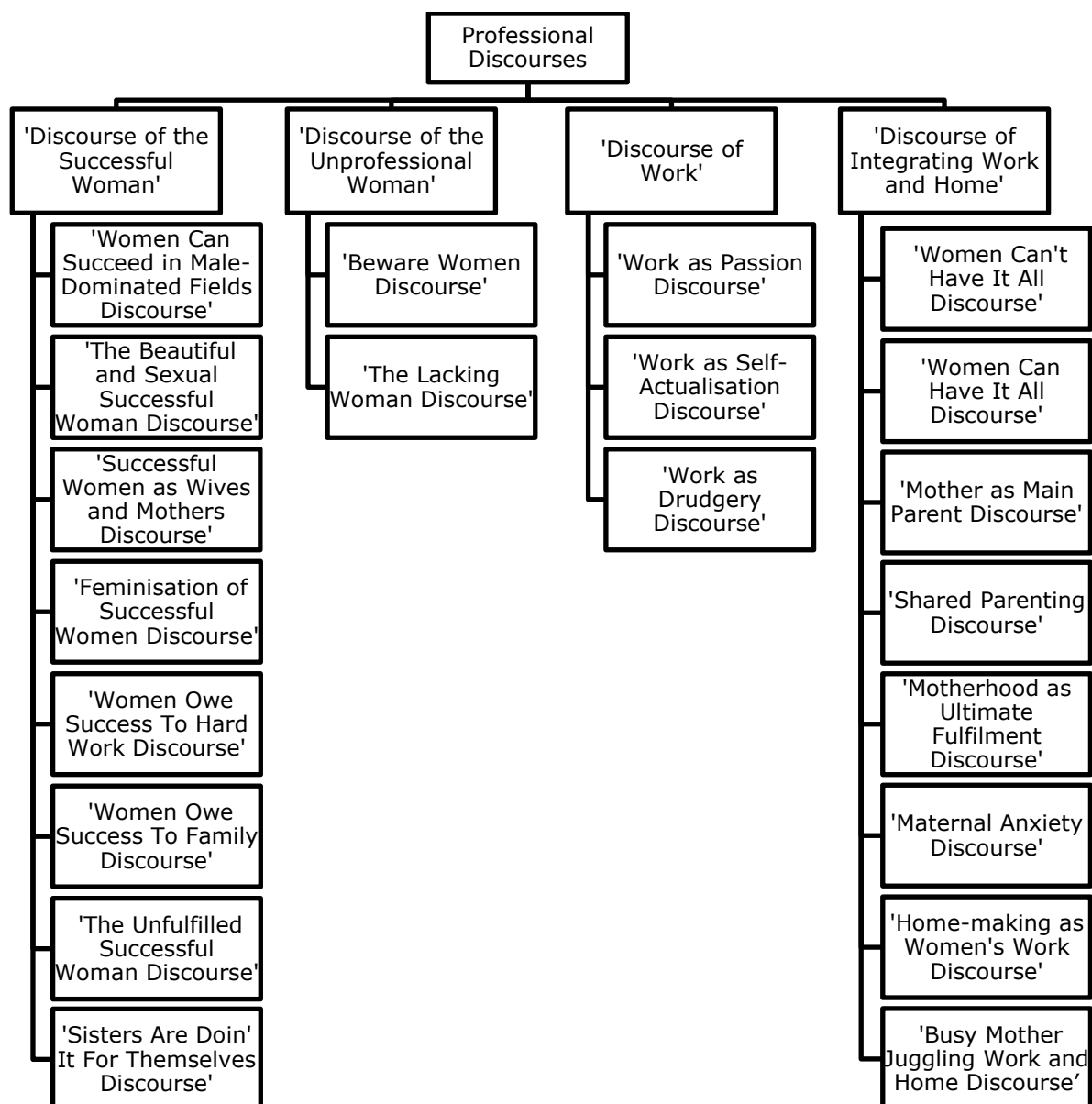


Figure 6.1: The professional discourses in the interviews and advice articles

6.2.1 'Discourse of the Successful Woman'

'Discourses', in this section, refer to socio-historically contingent signification practices that represent a particular aspect of the world from a particular perspective (Fairclough 2003; Lazar 2006), and "systematically form the objects of which they speak" (Foucault 1972: 49). The professional discourses that are described here are culturally constructed representations of working women and their experiences in the labour market, which have the potential to regulate our sense of who professional women may (or may not) be, and how they may (or may not) relate to the world of work.

We shall start with the overarching 'Discourse of the Successful Woman', which is 'supported' by a configuration of subordinate discourses that make available specific subject positions for women who have achieved professional success as well as present various perspectives about how these women reached the top. The first of these subordinate discourses, as depicted in Figure 6.1, is 'Women Can Succeed in Male-Dominated Fields'. It is possible to see it as appropriating the feminist discourse of empowerment as it starts from the position that women have the opportunity and ability to achieve success in domains that have been traditionally controlled by men, such as the corporate world. Nevertheless, it is more than a straightforward endorsement of women's accomplishments, as it also carries echoes of what Sunderland calls the 'Gender Equality Now Achieved discourse', which can be seen as "a combination of triumphalism, self-congratulation and denial" (2004: 44).

Circulating with this are discourses that position accomplished women in conservative ways, such as 'Successful Women as Wives and Mothers' which conceptualises them based on their marital and motherhood status, and 'Feminisation of Successful Women', which genders professional women by indexing traits associated with idealised femininity, such as gentleness. 'The Beautiful and Sexual Successful Woman', on the other hand, construes them in corporeal terms through references to their physical appearance and sexuality. It both draws on and extends the traditional 'Women as Beauty Objects' and 'Women as Sex Objects' discourses, as it also represents women as active and agentive subjects who derive pleasure from looking good and expressing their sexuality. It has intertextual links with consumer femininity, which colonises the texts surrounding the interviews and advice articles, and portrays the consumption of fashion and beauty products as a source of empowerment. Youth, slimness, and having the 'right' appearance are presented as signs of successful

femininity for aspiring women. Overlaps exist between 'The Beautiful and Sexual Successful Woman' and 'Feminisation of Successful Women'. For instance, references to beauty work construct an embodied professional identity for women. At the same time, they are indirect indices of femininity since this practice is socially constructed as feminine.

'The Unfulfilled Successful Woman' is yet another discourse that characterises successful women. It sustains the stereotype of the outwardly high-achieving but inwardly unhappy woman. It has intertextual associations with the notion that the feminist movement, which 'pushed' women out of their homes and into the workplace, has made women less satisfied with their lives. It not only resonates with 'Motherhood as Ultimate Fulfilment', which will be described later in this chapter, but its name is also meant to be read as a direct juxtaposition to 'Motherhood as Ultimate Fulfilment'.

Besides characterising successful women, the subordinate discourses also present different perspectives of how these women achieve professional success, with 'Women Owe Success To Hard Work' focusing on their diligence, and 'Women Owe Success To Family' emphasising their upbringing as well as the childcare assistance they currently receive from female relatives. While the latter applauds women for their accomplishments, it derives its meaning from the 'Mother as Main Parent discourse' and covertly establishes boundaries for working women by suggesting that they can only pursue a career if they are able to pass their domestic responsibilities to another woman. Lastly, 'Sisters Are Doin' It For Themselves' was named after a feminist anthem by Eurythmics and Aretha Franklin. This discourse opposes the myth that women are unable to work together, and celebrates the professional success that women achieve through their collaboration with each other.

6.2.2 'Discourse of the Unprofessional Woman'

While professional women are celebrated in the 'Discourse of the Successful Woman', they are derided by the 'Discourse of the Unprofessional Woman', which constructs them as unsuitable for the workplace. The first subordinate discourse, 'Beware Women', endorses the stance that women cannot be trusted, for example because they are too emotional or use their sexuality to progress in their careers. To a certain extent, it has implied traces of 'The Beautiful and Sexual Successful Woman'. Its name is based on a discourse that Sunderland (2004) labels 'Women Beware Women', which normalises the view that women cannot trust other

women. However, 'Beware Women' extends this further and cautions both men and women to be on guard with women. The second subordinate discourse, 'The Lacking Woman', focuses on characteristics that women supposedly do not possess, such as self-confidence.

6.2.3 'Discourse of Work'

Unlike the previous two 'higher-order' discourses, the 'Discourse of Work' is not 'gendered', that is it is not "*positioning* women and men in different ways" (Sunderland 2004: 21, emphasis in original). On the other hand, it presents a perspective on professional life that could be equally applied to both sexes. One of the 'lower-order' discourses (Sunderland 2004) that it 'shelters', 'Work as Passion', represents work as a source of joy for the role models, who love and enjoy what they do. Likewise 'Work as Self-Actualisation' positively evaluates working life and sees having a career as an avenue for women to grow, realise their potential, and find self-fulfilment. These are in oppositional relationships with 'Work as Drudgery'. This discourse maintains the view that people feel compelled to work and do not derive any pleasure from it.

6.2.4 'Discourse of Integrating Work and Home'

The 'Discourse of Integrating Work and Home' forms a significant 'lens' for the way a society regards the integration of women's professional and domestic lives. It is more than a "hybrid" discourse (Sunderland 2004: 30) articulating a 'Discourse of Work' and 'Discourse of Home', because how the 'members' of the discourse network relate to and inform each other is significant. For example, the competing discourses 'Women Can't Have It All' and 'Women Can Have It All', which maintain opposing views on whether women can effectively combine having a career and family, contain implied traces of several discourses within the same constellation, including 'Mother as Main Parent' and 'Home-making as Women's Work', which represent childcare and housework as women's work. 'Women Can't Have It All' and 'Women Can Have It All' were named based on the trite catchphrase 'having it all' which has been bandied about in the long-standing debate surrounding the question of whether women can combine children with a career.

The other subordinate discourses are likely to be familiar and self-explanatory. As with 'Mother as Main Parent', 'Shared Parenting' is named in Sunderland (2004). However, in contradiction to 'Mother as Main Parent', 'Shared Parenting' contributes to the idea that fathers should participate in raising their children.

Marshall's (1991) ironically named 'Motherhood as Ultimate Fulfilment' enshrines the belief that mothering is women's greatest source of happiness, while 'Busy Mother Juggling Work and Home' portray working mothers as struggling to reconcile those dual aspects of her life. 'Maternal Anxiety' promotes child-centric ideologies of mothering that demand that women devote themselves completely to their children to protect them from negative consequences.

As we can see, the theme of motherhood runs through several subordinate discourses, and when circulating outside of the interviews and advice texts, they do not always pertain to professional life. In this study, they are only identified as professional discourses if they create subject positions for working women. They are interdiscursively linked with 'Successful Women as Wives and Mothers', and 'Women Owe Success to Family' discourses. Although they may not share the same discourse order on the surface, this cluster of motherhood discourses work together to locate professional women in the domestic sphere.

Summary

This chapter provided a description of the 'orders' of professional discourses that emerged from the preliminary analysis, before defining these discourses and their relationships with each other. As we have seen, a few of the discourses have been detected in previous research, but many are unique to the present study. Explanations were also provided on how the names of the discourses were determined. In Chapters 7 and 8, the operation and linguistic traces of these discourses will be examined in the sample texts. As stated in Chapter 3, a feminist CDA approach is applied when analysing written texts, whereas a combination of feminist CDA and feminist CA is used for spoken texts.

Chapter 7. Role Models in the Media

This chapter analyses the professional discourses articulated in the interviews in *Her World*, *Clove*, and *Capital FM*. These interviews are categorised by the role models' career fields: senior management, science, entertainment, wildlife conservation, and entrepreneurship. Selected sections of the interviews are included in this chapter instead of the full texts in order to avoid repetition in the close textual analysis. These rich extracts were chosen as they illustrate the various ways that the main professional discourses are articulated together in the sample, and how working women and their relationship to the professional world are represented through these clusters of discourses.

7.1 Women in Senior Management

This section begins with an interview with Mina Cheah-Foong, the Managing Director of *The Body Shop Malaysia*, and recipient of the *Her World* Woman of the Year 2012 award. This article is significant since by bestowing the award to Cheah-Foong, the magazine is presenting her as an outstanding role model.

7.1.1 Mina Cheah-Foong

'With eyes wide open', Her World June 2013 (pp.150-153)

The recipient of the Her World Woman of the Year 2012 award is Datin Mina Cheah-Foong, who brought the second largest cosmetics franchise in the world to our shores almost 30 years ago. For her, life is more than just business as this interview reveals. By **Tehsin Begum**.

The lead paragraph above highlights Cheah-Foong's success and longevity in Malaysia's male-dominated business environment through the noun phrase "the second largest cosmetics franchise in the world" and the adverbial "almost 30 years ago". The use of the former instead of 'The Body Shop' is an example of how the choice of noun phrase to name an entity can represent professional women in a way that is specific to a particular discourse (see Section 5.5), in this case, 'Women Can Succeed in Male-Dominated Fields'. Nonetheless, textual traces of this discourse are faint in the rest of the article, which is divided into 5 sections: "Her Beginnings", "Giving Back", "Finding Balance", "Inspirational

People”, and “Being Her World Woman of the Year”. These respectively explore her formative years and subsequent marriage, her environmental and social activism, her thoughts on female ambition, her role models, and her feelings on winning the award. Her leadership skills in growing her company are never discussed.

The light touch given to Cheah-Foong’s professional achievements and expertise is reflected in the rapid shift in the paragraph’s second sentence, where the importance of her business success is reduced via the clause “life is more than just business”. This clause summarises one of the key themes that emerges from this interview and is reinforced by the quotation at the top of the opposite page:

“NO EXPECTATIONS, NO AMBITIONS, NO LONGINGS FOR SOMETHING THAT IS NOT THERE. JUST CONTENTMENT”

Here, the juxtaposition between the repeated negative constructions and the final phrase “Just contentment” implies that professional aspirations cannot bring satisfaction. However, this quotation – the only one printed in capital letters in the article – was taken out of context. In the article body, the two sentences are part of Cheah-Foong’s description of her experience at a seminar by Deepak Chopra, a prominent advocate of meditation. This seems to indicate that the text producers had exploited this statement to deploy ‘The Unfulfilled Successful Woman’.

The article opens as follows:

Despite her immense success, The Body Shop’s Datin Mina Cheah-Foong is grounded. She laughs easily, a head-thrown-back, girlie laugh, is full of energy and speaks animatedly. She gives us a glimpse of what remarkable looks like and her take on life, family, work and success.

In the first paragraph, Cheah-Foong’s success is underscored via the adjectives “immense” and “remarkable”. However, she is also directly aligned with stereotypical girlish traits (“laughs easily, a head-thrown-back, girlie laugh” and “is full of energy and speaks animatedly”). Here, ‘Feminisation of Successful Women’ and ‘Girling Women’ discourses can be seen subject positioning her and undermining her professional identity.

This paragraph is immediately followed by the first section, ‘Her Beginnings’, in which there is overwhelming evidence of the ‘Women Owe Success to Family discourse’ as can be observed in the extract below:

While her mother taught her about money smarts, about frugality, the art of negotiation and all that came in handy in the business world, her dad taught her some life lessons. “My dad instilled in us a certain fearlessness which has stayed with me in my business acumen ... he sent me off to Belfast to study, which was known as a war zone then, and nothing happened to me there. So I learnt not to be fearful of life.

In both the summary and direct speech, Cheah-Foong’s mother and father are the Actors in the processes while she is the Beneficiary (“her mother taught her”, “her dad taught her”, “My dad instilled in us”, “he sent me off”). It is only in the final sentence that she is accorded agency (“I learnt”). By backgrounding her own role in her growth, the assertions seem to suggest that the skills and attributes that she needed to succeed in business were gained from her parents rather than through any effort or hard work on her part. This exemplifies how the analysis of transitivity is able to reveal the types of agency that professional women are textually represented as possessing or not possessing (see Section 5.5). Cheah-Foong’s positive qualities are present in the text, but deeply embedded. For example, the verb phrases “instilled in us a certain fearlessness” and “learnt not to be fearful of life” imply that she has courage. A direct quote from this section is printed in larger font at the bottom of this page:

“Watching my dad... taught me that one man can make a difference.”

As stated in Section 5.5, the grammatical process of nominalisation can downplay the power and agency of professional women. In the quote above, the nominalisation portrays Cheah-Foong as passive and obscures her agency in the development of her views and understanding of the world.

This section closes by drawing on the ‘Successful Women as Wives and Mothers discourse’. Half of the final paragraph focuses on Cheah-Foong reconnecting with her husband and their ensuing marriage:

“...That was when I met up with Simon, my husband again. He is someone I have actually known all my life coming from the same hometown in Ipoh. We had also studied together in Ireland, but we were just friends then. When we got together again, I was trying to recruit him to sell Olivetti equipment and we somehow ended up dating and ultimately got married. It was at that point, when I was thinking about starting a family, that I thought about leaving to

start my own business, as I could not expect to get the same benefits and promotions and pay by sacrificing my work for my family.”

In the final sentence, motherhood, lexicalised as “starting a family”, is presented as a key factor that led her to establish her own business. The clause “I could not expect to get the same benefits and promotions and pay by sacrificing my work for my family” acknowledges the wage penalty and ‘glass ceiling’ that many working mothers face. However, these issues are not problematised in this text. On the contrary, the presupposition behind the prepositional phrase “by sacrificing my work for my family” is that women are expected to make sacrifices in their careers once they have children, deploying ‘Women Can’t Have It All’, ‘Mother as Main Parent’ and ‘Home-making as Women’s Work’ discourses. This is an example of how professional discourses can be reinforced by propositional presuppositions (see Section 5.5).

This leads to the next section:

GIVING BACK

Studying in the UK introduced her to The Body Shop products, which she loved so much that she used to get them as gifts for her friends and family. When she came home to Malaysia, she found it hard to get her supply of her favourite items. That led her to the idea of bringing The Body Shop here.

Cheah-Foong’s agency, effort and skill in establishing *The Body Shop* in Malaysia and growing it into a multi-million ringgit business are largely ignored, and merely summarised as “the idea of bringing The Body Shop here”. The article then quickly moves on to discuss the environmental and social activism dimensions of the company, which frames her from a traditionally feminine, nurturing perspective, such as in the paragraph below:

“The Body Shop allows me to pursue my other interests with regard to women, children, HIV/AIDS and wildlife and environmental preservation. It gives me an opportunity to amalgamate my personal interests and my business interests.”

Alongside ‘Feminisation of Successful Women’, there are faint traces of the ‘Work as Passion discourse’ in the direct quotation. The phrase “my other interests” entails that she is enthusiastic about her business. This is made explicit in the

next sentence via "my business interests". However, despite this and her own success, she displays a less than positive outlook of work and professional aspiration in the subsequent section, "Finding Balance", drawing heavily on 'Women Can't Have It All' and 'The Unfulfilled Successful Woman' discourses:

"If there's one thing I want to tell women, it's not to fall into the trap of ambition. Ambition can be good but it can also be a dangerous thing. You must remember that with ambition comes a price. You have to be prepared to sacrifice certain things. To become the CEO of a company, you have to be prepared to sacrifice your time, your family and your personal interests in order to pursue the corporate interest."

If women are prepared to do that, then that's fine, she stresses. Then again, she feels that women must forge their own paths towards achieving their dreams, and not that paved by men. "Men are now finding that they regret working so hard, not spending time with their children and seeing them grow up, not spending time with their wives and families, because they were single-mindedly focused on their ambition. Women, in improving our lot, must be careful not to fall into the same trap and 20 years later find themselves regretting not having been there for their children and such.

The tone of the text shifts to overt advice-giving in this section. Relations of authority are constituted between the text producers and audience through the phrase "If there's one thing I want to tell women", and the directives "You must remember" and "Women ... must be careful". The section begins by cautioning women against ambition, which is conceptualised as harmful via the metaphor "trap" (repeated at the end of the second paragraph) and the noun phrase "a dangerous thing". This negative view of ambition is further emphasised in two ways. Firstly, the condition "If there's one thing I want to tell women" implies that this is Cheah-Foong's most important piece of advice for women. Secondly, "Ambition can be good, but... also a dangerous thing" is printed prominently in larger font at the bottom of the page.

As the text progresses, it becomes evident that ambition is perceived as detrimental specifically to family life. In the first paragraph, the cost of pursuing a career is initially left ambiguous ("with ambition comes a price", "sacrifice certain things"), but eventually lexicalised in the final sentence as "your time, your family and your personal interests". However, the strong focus on family life in the

second paragraph suggests that, rather than personal time and interests, this is the main reason women are being discouraged from climbing the corporate ladder. In Section 5.5, I discussed how examining the construction of equivalents can help us to identify discourses that dichotomise work and family life. One syntactic trigger of equivalence is parallel structures. In the parallel structures “working so hard, not spending time with their children and seeing them grow up, not spending time with their wives and families” and “fall into the same trap and ... find themselves regretting not having been there for their children”, professional ambition is equated with the neglect of the family, and implicitly placed in binary opposition to a healthy family life. This strongly affirms the ‘Women Can’t Have It All discourse’.

Although the rhetoric of choice appears to be invoked at the start of the second paragraph via the conditional “If women are prepared to do that, then that’s fine”, and emphasised through the reporting verb “stresses”, no real choice is actually being offered since the pronoun “that” in the condition refers to “sacrifice your time, your family and your personal interests in order to pursue the corporate interest” which carries echoes of ‘The Selfish Working Mother’. In addition, the option is immediately weakened by the adverb “Then again” in the next sentence. The implicature arising from the assertion that “women must forge their own paths towards achieving their dreams, and not that paved by men” is the pursuit of professional success is a male concept and not part of women’s “dreams”, which deploys ‘The Unfulfilled Successful Woman’. While these feminine desires are not specified, due to the setting up of the false dichotomy of work and family life, it could be inferred that they involve returning to the home. ‘The Unfulfilled Successful Woman’ are also produced through the repeated framing of work with the emotion of regret (“they regret working so hard”, “fall into the same trap and ... find themselves regretting”). At the same time, there are traces of the more progressive ‘Shared Parenting discourse’. Implicit within the clause “Men are now finding that they regret ... not spending time with their children and seeing them grow up” is the notion that men should share childcare with their partners.

In this section, Cheah-Foong seems to posit that women who pursue success in their careers are cultural dupes who lack agency and are unable to make life choices independently. This can be perceived in the “fall into the trap” metaphor that appears twice in the paragraphs above. Here, we can see how a metaphor can be used to represent working women in a particular way (see Section 5.5). This representation might not be questioned by the reader since a repeated conventionalised metaphor such as “fall into the trap” may attract less attention

than the repetition of an innovative metaphor. Nevertheless, some may recognise the assumption being made about professional women and reject it. This assumption is also embedded in the third and final paragraph of the section:

Mina feels strongly about women, especially young women, thinking for themselves. “Do what is right for you. What is right could be different for each person. Do not measure yourself against other women, men, or their expectations. Even your parents. We often take on others’ aspirations [and] subdue our own. “Do not let anyone tell you what to do. Listen to your inner voice!” she urged.

The subjectively marked modality “Mina feels strongly” suggests that she believes women are not sufficiently “thinking for themselves”. Likewise, the presupposition behind the assertives and directives in the paragraph is that women are passively conforming to the expectations of others and not pursuing their personal aspirations. The relations of authority are established again between the text producers and the idealised reader, this time through the use of imperatives, attributed to Cheah-Foong.

In the next section, ‘Inspirational People’, Cheah-Foong names people who have inspired her:

On the local front, she finds that Zainah Anwar liberated her from fears of speaking out and questioning issues due to blind faith. “She uses scholarship and facts to put her point across. I admire her logical and rational perspective on things.

“Ivy Josiah is another source of inspiration for me. She keeps fighting the good fight, never gives up hope, and despite all, she remains resilient and full of hope. And of course, (Datin Paduka) Marina Mahathir, for her leadership qualities, her sensible and articulate thoughts; and most of all, I love the way she just gets things done for her causes, especially in HIV/AIDS. She is a real go-getter.”

In addition to Dame Anita Roddick, the founder of *The Body Shop*, and author and public speaker Deepak Chopra, Cheah-Foong specifies three prominent Malaysian feminists: Zainah Anwar, Ivy Josiah, and Marina Mahathir. By choosing them, it can be argued that Cheah-Foong is indirectly aligning herself with the local

feminist movement. Nevertheless, it is notable that although the three women are well-known for their feminist activism, they are never explicitly identified as feminists in the text, and references to their work are vague ("things", "the good fight", "her causes").

Cheah-Foong also appears to be textually constructing her own identity through her commendation of the women. For example, the verb phrase "liberated her from fears of speaking out and questioning issues due to blind faith" entails that Cheah-Foong is self-confident and analytical. Also, by claiming that she is inspired by Ivy Josiah's resilience and optimism as well as Marina Mahathir's "leadership qualities, her sensible and articulate thoughts" and "go-getter" attitude, she is implying that she identifies with these qualities.

7.1.2 Lam Swee Kim

We will now examine another *Her World* interview with a woman in senior management, this time from the media industry. Lam Swee Kim is the Group General Manager of *Media Prima Digital*, one of Malaysia's largest digital media groups:

'Balancing Act', *Her World* June 2013 (pp.134-138)

From national gymnast to law degree holder to Group General Manager, Lam Swee Kim has many accolades to her name. **Julie Yim** finds out her secret to balancing it all.

Lam Swee Kim's achievements as a "national gymnast", "law degree holder" and "Group General Manager" are foregrounded by being positioned prominently at the beginning of the leading paragraph above, even before her name is mentioned. The noun phrase "Group General Manager", in particular, deploys the 'Women Can Succeed in Male-Dominated Fields discourse'.

However, there seem to be textual traces of the less empowering 'Busy Mother Juggling Work and Home discourse' within the same paragraph. Although there are no explicit manifestations of 'family' or 'children' in the lexis at this point of the article, the verb phrase "balancing it all" is a classic trace of the discourse in media texts. What is more, since Lam is no longer a national gymnast nor a lawyer (as explained later in the article), the intended interpretation of the pronoun "it all" is likely work and home, and the ideal reader who is familiar with this dominant discourse can be depended on to construct this preferred meaning

to achieve propositional coherence. However, since the topic of family has not been raised at this point of article, readers can invoke other discourses based on their own life experiences. To give an example, for single women who are managing the competing demands of career, friends, volunteer work, and hobbies, discourses of work-life balance may be more accessible than 'Busy Mother Juggling Work and Home'. It can be argued that the noun "secret" reproduces the dominant view that women struggle to have both a career and a family life since it implies that the approach to "balancing" work and family is unfamiliar to most women.

A range of opposing discourses endorsing both emancipatory and traditional stances continues to be produced in the article's first paragraph below:

Sharp and poised, Lam Swee Kim greets us with a steady handshake. As she looks so young, people are often surprised to discover that she is actually the Group General Manager of Media Prima Digital. However, Swee Kim proves that age is just a number as she has come a long way to achieve success. If you're wondering why her name rings a bell, it's because Swee Kim has been in the headlines since the earlier 1990's; she was a former national gymnast. We chat with her about her various achievements and how she manages a team, her family and still looks good with minimal sleep.

The 'Women Can Succeed in Male-Dominated Fields discourse' is prominent in this paragraph. Lam is defined by her leadership role as the "Group General Manager of Media Prima Digital", and a positive professional identity seems to be constructed for her via the adjectives "Sharp", "poised" and "steady". As discussed in Section 5.5, particular discourses can be articulated through the adjectival modification of nouns. It can be argued that "poised" is an idealised feminine trait that, in this context, perpetuates 'The Beautiful and Sexual Successful Woman', as does the dependent clause in the second sentence, "As she looks so young", which could be interpreted as an indirect compliment for fulfilling society's expectations of feminine image. Nevertheless, the explicit mention of Lam's youthfulness serves another function, which is as a direct juxtaposition to her achievements in order to highlight them. In the main clause, the noun "people" is used to refer to those who are surprised by her senior position. This lexical choice appears to distance the text producers – and the reader – from such disbelief and scepticism, which are immediately invalidated in the subsequent sentence, thereby reproducing the 'Women Can Succeed in Male-

Dominated Fields discourse'. For example, Lam's competence is projected as a fact through the verb "proves". The paragraph ends on a less empowering note as there is again an evocation of 'Busy Mother Juggling Work and Home' and 'The Beautiful and Sexual Successful Woman' discourses ("how she manages a team, her family and still looks good with minimal sleep").

The rest of the article is presented in a Question-and-Answer format, and the 'Women Can Succeed in Male-Dominated Fields discourse' continues to permeate the text through the extensive coverage given to Lam's achievements in sport, law, and the media industry. However, this discourse is framed with a configuration of repressive and postfeminist discourses, where the net effect is the undermining of the former, as shown in this excerpt:

Do you believe that a glass ceiling still exists for women, especially for those holding top positions?

"In most organisations there will be a glass ceiling but, fortunately, in Media Prima a lot of women hold high positions. The media industry has many women and this is an industry where it's ok to be a woman and it's ok to be young. There are a lot of corporate organisations that don't favour young people. I guess, when it comes to technical stuff or when you deal with engineering teams, it's mostly male-dominated. Things are changing because even if you're too old in the industry, people start to question whether your style and methods are old school. Being a woman doesn't hurt because we use that to our advantage and a smile won't kill anyone. I smile at everyone."

The 'Women Can Succeed in Male-Dominated Fields discourse' is recognisable in Lam's assertion that "in Media Prima a lot of women hold high positions". Having women in senior management roles is also evaluated positively through the adverb "fortunately". However, the significance of such achievements and the challenges faced by women to rise to the top are undermined by the question itself as it hints at the possibility that the 'glass ceiling' may have already been shattered, drawing on the postfeminist 'Gender Equality Has Been Achieved discourse'. Although Lam acknowledges the existence of the 'glass ceiling' and recognises its severity, as demonstrated by her use of the adjective "most" and the modal verb "will", this feminist issue is never really discussed as the frame of reference quickly shifts to the topic of age discrimination and the lack of women

in STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics), neither of which are relevant to the question.

Lam's assertion towards the end of the excerpt that "Being a woman doesn't hurt" seems to contradict her earlier statement that the 'glass ceiling' exists. She explains her view by drawing on dominant discourses of femininity, particularly 'Beware Women' and 'The Beautiful and Sexual Successful Woman'. In order to construct a coherent meaning for the clauses "we use that to our advantage" and "a smile won't kill anyone", the ideal reader can be relied on to draw on the pejorative belief that women, interpellated by the pronoun "we" and "our", employ their femininity and sexuality to get ahead in their careers. By admitting that she "smile[s] at everyone", Lam not only participates in her own self-objectification, but also raises the implication that her success can be partially attributed to her conscious exploitation of her femininity and sexuality, which again weakens the emancipatory effect of the 'Women Can Succeed in Male-Dominated Fields discourse' in the text.

One of the questions posed supports the conclusion drawn earlier that the phrase "balancing it all" in the lead paragraph refers to striking a balance between work and home:

How do you balance your family and career?

"I feed off the team's enthusiasm as they are so excited that you actually become like them. I have two kids – a three-year-old girl and a boy turning four. It's tough; I can barely do it. My day starts at 5.45am and I try to make it home by 9.30pm. During the weekends, I'm the mother, maid and wife. Firstly, you need to have a good support system at home. Mothers and your in-laws are there to help you. If you have kids, you need to find a place you can trust your kids with whether it's day care or school. It's important to have a family who is supportive and will help you to keep an eye on your kids. Once that part is sorted out you can focus on your work and make sure you get things done so that you can go home to your kids. Not forgetting I believe that you still have to look good throughout the day even with three hours of sleep. An understanding spouse is also very important. I work late quite often but my husband is understanding and supportive.

The question positions Lam in the domestic sphere and invokes the 'Successful Women as Wives and Mothers discourse'. Several mutually supporting non-emancipatory discourses feature prominently in Lam's response, including 'Busy Mother Juggling Work and Home'. This discourse is endorsed, for example, through the evaluation "It's tough" and the assertion "I can barely do it". The discourse is also implicit within the constructions of time and space in the paragraph, where family time is represented as a limited commodity ("My day starts at 5.45am", "make it home by 9.30pm"), while movement from the office to the home (and children) is hindered by work ("make sure you get things done so that you can go home to your kids", "work late quite often"). Verb phrases from the semantic field of returning ("make it home" and "go home") seem to imply that the home is a mother's natural sphere, from which work dislocates her.

In addition, she produces other related patriarchal discourses, for instance 'Mother as Main Parent' and 'Home-making as Women's Work'. In her self-representation as "the mother, maid and wife", the use of the definite article implies that she is the main caregiver in the family and the only one who does the housework on weekends. This traditional stance is reinforced in "Mothers and your in-laws are there to help you". Here, the linguistic absence of 'fathers' or 'parents' is salient, and this exclusion leads to the inference that the noun "in-laws" refers to 'mothers-in-law'. While 'Women Owe Success to Family' is deployed, 'Shared Parenting' is missing from this text. It is significant that Lam's partner is interpellated as a "spouse" and "husband", but never as a 'father' or 'parent'. His role within the family is vague and limited to being "understanding" and "supportive".

At the end of the excerpt, the clause "I believe that you still have to look good" contains traces of 'The Beautiful and Sexual Successful Woman', which are strengthened by the subjectively marked modality "I believe" and the modal verb "have to". This discourse can also be perceived in a 'side piece' in the article:

SWEE KIM'S LIVE-BY RULES

- ▶ You should not admit defeat because you are a female. **I think females** can do most of the things that guys can do. We **have a higher pain threshold**, we are more patient, we have a softer heart, though we are more emotional.

- ▶ Never neglect yourself. You **still have to dress up and look good no matter what**. Many women neglect their appearance after they age and get pregnant. It's quite sad because every woman wants to feel good about herself.
- ▶ You **are never too young to do anything**. If you want something, go and get it. Being a woman doesn't mean you should slow down when you get married and have kids. You shouldn't hold back your life. In fact, you live a fuller and richer life.
- ▶ Don't put everything on hold because you always think that there's tomorrow to do it. Set targets and goals and make sure you work towards them.

'The Beautiful and Sexual Successful Woman' is drawn on in the second point above, in which women are urged to "dress up and look good". This is presented as compulsory through the obligational modality "have to" as well as the adverb "no matter what". Refusing to comply with such expectations of feminine image is described as "neglect", which women are instructed "Never" to do, and evaluated negatively as "quite sad". On the other hand, the generalisation "every woman wants to feel good about herself" presents beauty work as a source of pleasure and self-confidence. In addition, it implies that without conforming to social standards of beauty, women would not – or perhaps, should not - have a positive self-image.

Superficially, the other three points appear to empower women; however, a closer examination of the text reveals traces of yet another set of non-emancipatory discourses. The first point above begins by emboldening women through the directive "You should not admit defeat because you are female". However, a closer examination of the choice of verb phrase (see Section 5.5) reveals the operation of a gendered discourse. The verb phrase "admit defeat", which can be perceived as belonging to the lexical field of war, draws on the 'Battle of the Sexes discourse'. This is further emphasised through the direct contrast between women and men in the assertion "females can do most of the things that guys can do". Although this proposition seems to flatter women, the superlative "most" entails that there are some things that men can do but women cannot. Evidence of a biologically essentialist position can also be perceived in the third sentence where, once again, women, interpellated by the inclusive "we", are initially

represented as superior to men – this time for supposedly possessing idealised feminine qualities (“are more patient”, “have a softer heart”) or traits that are irrelevant in the workplace (“have a higher pain threshold”). However, the dependent clause at the end of this sentence (“though we are more emotional”) draws on the ‘Women Are Emotional/Irrational discourse’, which is a subordinate discourse of ‘Beware Women’. Since there is an implicit cause-effect relationship between the first sentence and the subsequent two, the traces of mainstream discourses in the latter weaken the force of the former.

On the surface, the third and fourth points encourage women to pursue their professional ambitions. For example, the assertion “Being a woman doesn’t mean you should slow down when you get married and have kids” invokes the ‘Women Can Have It All discourse’. Nonetheless, the presupposition behind these propositions is that women “hold back” and “put everything on hold” due to a lack of confidence or will, or procrastination, drawing on ‘The Lacking Woman’. On the other hand, structural issues that impede women in their careers, such as sexist stereotypes and social expectations of appropriate feminine behaviour and roles both in the workplace and the home, are not challenged.

7.1.3 Michele Schofield

This interview, from *Clove*, is also with a senior woman leader from the media industry. Michele Schofield is a senior vice president with A+E Networks, a large American media company owned by Disney. Unlike Cheah-Foong and Lam, Schofield is unmarried and childless, and a slightly different range of discourses is articulated in this article:

‘Life in TV’, Clove 23 June 2013 (p.11)

Fifteen years since she bought that ticket to a country she had never even visited, Schofield has lived in four major cities and has worked her way up from a page earning US\$ an hour to the senior vice president of programming and marketing ... for A+E Networks.

In the second paragraph of the article (shown above), the verb phrase “has worked her way up” deploys the ‘Women Owe Success to Hard Work discourse’. By representing her specifically as “the senior vice president of programming and marketing ... for A+E Networks”, the text invokes the ‘Women Can Succeed in Male-Dominated Fields discourse’, which was also perceived in the previous two interviews with Mina Cheah-Foong and Lam Swee Kim.

'Work as Passion' also emerges from this interview:

"I just love TV, I passionately consume TV myself, I get excited about original productions that we get to do, I love looking at content that we get to buy, it's just watching, and being part of the industry because I think that people genuinely do enjoy consuming tv," said Schofield, who has reached a satisfying place in her career and finds fulfilment in going to work every single day.

In the extract above, Schofield's passion for her job and her industry is not merely made explicit, but also emphasised in her direct speech via multiple affective evaluations in the first sentence ("I just love", "I passionately consume", "I get excited about", "I love looking at"). What is more, the run-on sentence applies a linguistic style associated with excitement and enthusiasm. 'Work as Passion' and 'Work as Self-Actualisation' discourses are further reinforced in the summary of Schofield's speech at the end of the excerpt through the use of lexical variants of the theme of gratification ("satisfying", "fulfilment") as well as the adverbial "every single day".

'Women Can't Have It All' can be perceived in the article's discussion of marriage:

Predictably, friends who have settled down have tried to set her up for marriage over the years, but Schofield says eventhough [sic] she would love to have it all, it would be hard to become the perfect woman with everything.

"I get so much fulfilment from my career, I'm on to the next thing so fast, I've had great privileges in my life and I'm really lucky," said Schofield. "I would love to have it all, but I think it's hard, something's gotta give.

In the dependent clause of Schofield's indirect speech ("eventhough [sic] she would love to have it all") the postfeminist demand to "have it all" is evaluated positively via the affective mental process verb "love". However, implicit within the ensuing independent clause is the recognition of the obstacles to achieving the postfeminist 'Superwoman' ideal, lexicalised here as "the perfect woman with everything", though these difficulties are never made explicit.

A significant difference can be observed between the indirect speech in the first paragraph and the point made in Schofield's 'own voice' at the end in the second paragraph. In the latter, Schofield is attributed as claiming that "something's

gotta give". Due to the traces of 'Work as Passion' and 'Work as Self-Actualisation' in the sentence directly preceding this, we can interpret Schofield's claim as an unwillingness to sacrifice her career for marriage. These discourses are realised by lexical choices from the semantic field of gratification ("so much fulfilment", "really lucky") as well as the expressive linguistic style within the run-on sentence. Nonetheless, feminist discourses challenging structural issues that require women to make sacrifices and choose between a career and family life are notably absent.

The interview closes as follows:

"I've reached a satisfying place in my career, hopefully before it's too late I'll figure out the rest of my life quite quickly. My work is a huge part of my life, my life is about my work," she added.

For now, Schofield will continue to do what she does best – watching TV shows and selecting the best programs for Asian audiences.

There is overwhelming evidence of 'Work as Passion' and 'Work as Self-Actualisation' in the first paragraph ("I've reached a satisfying place in my career", "My work is a huge part of my life, my life is about my work"). At the same time, the 'Marriage and Motherhood as Compulsory discourse' is also subtly reproduced, for example through the phrase "hopefully before it's too late", which seems to be a reference to Schofield's 'ticking biological clock', as well as the adverb "For now" in the final paragraph, which implies that marriage is in her future. In fact, it can be argued that the very inclusion of the topic of marriage in an interview with a professional woman invokes these discourses, even though Schofield is quoted choosing her work over marriage.

We have now examined three interviews with senior women leaders published in *Her World* and *Clove*. As we have seen, the articles without exception produce 'Women Can Succeed in Male-Dominated Fields'. The next section analyses one of the few articles in the dataset featuring an accomplished woman in science.

7.2 Women in Science

7.2.1 Teo Soo Hwang

The role model in this article, Dr Teo Soo Hwang, heads the Cancer Research Initiatives Foundation in Malaysia:

'Caring Through Research', Her World December 2012 (pp.138-141)

Meet Dr Teo Soo Hwang, Chief Executive at the Cancer Research Initiatives Foundation (CARIF), whose aim is to find a cure for cancer. We believe she's just what the doctor ordered.

The 'Women Can Succeed in Male-Dominated Fields discourse' permeates this text. In the lead paragraph above, Teo is defined, from the onset, by her professional role as the head of the Cancer Research Initiatives Foundation (CARIF). She is evaluated positively through the idiom "just what the doctor ordered", and this is strengthened by the mental process clause "We believe". The article continues to construct her identity as a bright and skilled researcher, as exemplified in the extract below:

But consistently a top performer in class, Soo Hwang was able to accept a prestigious scholarship to complete a PhD at Cambridge and make the change to cancer research. Why cancer? "I always wanted to work on something that would have an impact on human society," says Soo Hwang. She definitely lived up to it – her PhD research led to the discovery of a new gene that explains why some patients respond to radiation therapy.

Teo's intellect is foregrounded in the thematised clause in the first sentence through the noun phrase "top performer", which is intensified by the frequency adverb "consistently". This is further reinforced in the main clause via the evaluative adjective "prestigious" as well as the explicit reference to the University of Cambridge, which relies on the assumption of shared knowledge of the university's high entry requirements and academic standards. The sequence of events introduced at the start of the paragraph concludes with Teo's notable contribution to medicine. Her internal motivation behind her efforts is emphasised in her direct speech, invoking 'Work as Passion'.

After being framed as a successful scientist in the lead and satellite paragraphs, Teo is eventually returned to the home in the final two paragraphs:

It seems there's no stopping this mother of two, who after a 12-hour work day, loves going home to put on her 'tiger mummy' hat. But Soo Hwang is quick to credit her husband who makes the money (contrary to popular belief there's not much money in research) and extended family (she says there's an army at home), whose continued support allow her to work and raise two children.

The last thing we discuss is not cancer, but Soo Hwang's passion for food and cooking with her children. "I love watching Junior MasterChef and cooking with the kids. We even make our own pasta and ravioli! I guess cooking appeals to me because unlike research, you get to see the end results after a few hours." I don't know anyone who deserves that validation more, and with that, I leave the talented Dr. Teo Soo Hwang and her team at CARIF to fight cancer another day.

Not only is Teo indirectly interpellated as a "mother of two" and "tiger mummy", reinforcing the 'Successful Women as Wives and Mothers discourse', but home-making and motherhood are also repeatedly presented as highly desirable through the affective evaluations "this mother of two ... loves" and "I love" as well as phrases with evaluative elements such as "Soo Hwang's passion for food and cooking with her children" and "cooking appeals". In Section 5.5, I discussed how the work/home dichotomy can be reinforced by presenting one as more desirable than the other. In the first sentence above, the home and motherhood are subtly represented as more desired than the workplace via the juxtaposition of "after a 12-hour work day" (which draws on the 'Work as Drudgery discourse') and "loves going home to put on her 'tiger mummy' hat".

In addition, although Teo's success is initially attributed to her intelligence, the sentence "Soo Hwang is quick to credit her husband who makes the money ... and extended family ... whose continued support allow her to work and raise two children" raises the implication that without her husband's money and extended family's assistance (presumably in caring for her children), she would not have been able to pursue her career, which reproduces 'Women Owe Success to Family' while downplaying the challenges that Teo has faced and her own efforts in her professional journey. This also presupposes that a woman's place is in the home, while paid work is an option only with the right conditions, which recycles 'Mother as Main Parent' and 'Women Can't Have It All'. The latter is bolstered by the metaphor "army" in the indirect speech embedded in the same sentence. This lexical choice leaves a strong impression that help from a large extended family is

needed before a woman is able to participate in the workforce. 'Shared Parenting' is absent, whereas traditional gender roles are reinforced as Teo's husband is credited for financially supporting the family rather than caring of their children.

Teo is once again defined by her professional role in the final sentence. She is represented as "Dr. Teo Soo Hwang", in contrast to "Soo Hwang" in the previous paragraphs, and the possessive "her team" acknowledges her leadership position.

7.3 Women Entertainers

The analysis will now turn to interviews with women in the entertainment industry. As yet, we have only examined articles produced by *Her World* and *Clove*. This section will begin by analysing a broadcast text in which the interactants jointly subvert discourses that are endorsed in the previous texts.

7.3.1 Shazia Mirza

Shazia Mirza is a British stand-up comedian, and was interviewed by *Capital FM* when she was in Kuala Lumpur to perform at an international comedy event. The exchange below is part of Mirza's account of how she came to enter the field:

Capital FM 19 November 2012

- 1 Shazia Mirza: They wanted me to be a docto::r marry a docto::r have a few
2 little docto::rs you kno::w respectable thing (.) so I (.) the
3 nearest thing I could be is a science teacher
4 Joanne Kam: Mmhmm=
5 Shazia Mirza: =I had no interest in (.) science (.) no interest in children
6 [no- ((laugh))]
7 Joanne Kam: [Oh goodness ((laugh)) does your mother] know this
8 Shazia Mirza: No interest in **people** actually

Mirza invokes the social category of gender by making references to marriage and children (lines 1 and 2). Although she evaluates these in positive terms ("respectable thing"), the prolonged syllables give rise to implicatures that indicate irony and the opposite of respect, subverting 'Successful Women as Wives and Mothers' and 'Marriage and Motherhood as Compulsory' discourses.

Her turn is punctuated by Kam's minimal response (line 4) before she proceeds to undermine 'Pro-Nativity' and 'Women as Naturally Maternal' discourses in line 5 ("no interest in children"). Kam's exclamation and question in line 7 exhibit recognition of this subversion, and their joint laughter (lines 6 and 7) seems to function as a means of legitimating Mirza's stance on the issue. Some active listeners, however, may be critical of the speakers' intended meaning and invoke another set of discourses, such as discourses of filial piety and 'The Selfish Non-Mother' (see Kaplan 1992).

Mirza continues to subvert conservative discourses in the interview:

- 1 Joanne Kam: Do you get a lot of people heckling at you (.) in the comedy
- 2 clubs
- 3 Shazia Mirza: No they're scared of me they [would never]
- 4 Joanne Kam: [Seriously]
- 5 Shazia Mirza: They would never heckle [me]
- 6 Joanne Kam: [No] if they heckle it's fun don't you
- 7 think it's fun when they hec[kle]
- 8 Shazia Mirza: [(#)] I mean it has it can be but
- 9 people are just scared to heckle me
- 10 Joanne Kam: Really
- 11 Shazia Mirza: It's a wo[man]
- 12 Joanne Kam: [why]
- 13 Shazia Mirza: It's a woman (.) she looks miserable she looks [like (-)]
- 14 Joanne Kam: [((laugh))]
- 15 Shazia Mirza: She looks like she's going to beat me up or stab me
- 16 [if I heckle her]
- 17 Joanne Kam: [((laugh))]

As the sequence unfolds, Mirza opinion on why she does not get heckled becomes clearer: because she is a woman (lines 11 and 13). At this point, her utterance is vague, and Kam and the audience would need to invoke 'Beware Women' in order to construct her preferred meaning. Through the use of exaggeration in lines 15 and 16, she draws on 'Women Are Emotional/Irrational', a subordinate discourse of 'Beware Women' precisely to mock it. Kam's laughter (line 17) can be interpreted as support.

Prior to the next sequence, Kam had asked Mirza if her parents have seen her perform in comedy clubs:

- 1 Shazia Mirza: I don't I wouldn't want them to be there:: (.) you know when
- 2 I'm doing really:: (.) kind of anal jokes [and stuff]
- 3 Joanne Kam: [((laugh))]
- 4 Shazia Mirza: I- I really w- want my parents to be there while that's
- 5 [happening]
- 6 Joanne Kam: [((laugh))]
- 7 Shazia Mirza: I think that would be really awkward for all of us
- 8 Joanne Kam: Yes
- 9 [it would be like oh what had happened to my daughter]
- 10 Shazia Mirza: [((laugh))]

In more conservative communities, including the one to which Mirza's parents belong as well as many communities in Malaysia, making "anal jokes" (line 2) is culturally coded as masculine behaviour. Therefore, by claiming that she makes "kind of anal jokes and stuff" (line 2), Mirza subverts 'Feminisation of Successful Women'. The prolonged final syllable in "really" and the pause following it seem to indicate that she is aware that she is about to construct her identity in opposition to cultural expectations of femininity. Kam's overlapping laughter (line 3) can be perceived as support.

Kam interpellates Mirza as a "daughter" in line 9. This gendered noun by itself does not necessarily indicate an orientation to gender. However, in this exchange, the audience would need to draw on dominant discourses of femininity in order to arrive at a coherent interpretation of Kam's utterance "what had happened to my daughter" (line 9). Therefore, we can assume that the use of the gender reference in this context does display that gender is a relevant category.

The sequence above is immediately followed by the talk below:

- 1 Joanne Kam: Are they still trying to match you up then
- 2 Shazia Mirza: Oh my god they've spent their **whole** life
- 3 [trying to] get me married off
- 4 Joanne Kam: [((laugh))]

Once again, both Kam and Mirza seem to subvert 'Successful Women as Wives and Mothers' and 'Marriage and Motherhood as Compulsory' discourses. In Kam's question in line 1, the adverb "still" implies a negative attitude towards the idea of Mirza's parents trying to find her a husband. This disdain is shared by Mirza as indicated by the negative connotation of the phrase "get me married off" (line 3). She emphasises this through the expression "Oh my god" (line 2) as well as the use of hyperbolic language in the phrase "their whole life" (line 2), where "whole" is stressed. Kam's laughter (line 4) endorses Mirza's position on the issue.

There are multiple possible interpretations as to why Kam brings the topic of marriage back into play at this stage of the interview. Although Mirza had introduced the subject matter earlier, it does not have a direct bearing on the exchange prior to Kam's question in line 1. Since the talk is constructed for the entertainment of an overhearing audience, one possibility is that Kam is aware of the potential humour that can (and does) arise from the topic. There is another potential reason, which can provide us with an idea of the radio station's idealised listener. It is likely that she believes that marriage and relationships are of interest to the women listening in. However, this is not a straightforward stereotyping of the audience - Kam and Mirza's use of humour to ridicule her parents' traditional view of marriage suggests the belief that their listeners share their outlook and may be able to relate to Mirza's situation. At the same time, it appears to be parental pressure that is being undermined, not the importance of being married since the topic of relationships is one that is constantly being revisited in the interview, as shown in the subsequent exchanges:

- 1 Joanne Kam: Alright we're back (.) and now it is time to (.) get a little bit
- 2 sizzling with Shazia (.) now are men intimidated by you or
- 3 intrigued by you you think because (.) it could be borderline
- 4 intrigue that's why they keep quiet that's what I always feel
- 5 you know they'll look at you and undress you from afar but
- 6 they will **never** come up to you=
- 7 Shazia Mirza: =You're very optimistic [because ((laugh))]
- 8 Joanne Kam: [((laugh))]
- 9 Shazia Mirza: [No one's been undressing me I can tell you that]
- 10 Joanne Kam: [((laugh))]
- 11 Shazia Mirza: With their eyes or otherwise it's just there's been no undressing
- 12 going on

- 13 [which is] a big problem in my life [((laugh))]
 14 Joanne Kam: [((laugh))] [((laugh))]
 15 Shazia Mirza: Umm ((laugh)) because there needs to be at my age but the
 16 thing is (.) there uh I don't know what men want (.) I don't
 17 know because I haven't got that far

In her opening turn, Kam re-establishes relationships as the topical agenda. Although the verbs "intimidated" and "intrigued" (lines 2 and 3) imply that Mirza has power over men, the passivisation of the clauses foregrounds men and their thoughts and feelings. Furthermore, Kam's proposition "they'll look at you and undress you from afar" (line 5) draws on 'The Beautiful and Sexual Successful Woman' and positions Mirza as the object of voyeuristic scrutiny. By using the male gaze to sexualise Mirza, Kam seems to align with postfeminist thinking, conflating sexual objectification with power.

Mirza takes control of the floor in her subsequent turns. She begins developing the topic from a postfeminist perspective: her assertion "You're very optimistic" (line 7) indirectly evaluates the idea of men undressing her with their eyes as positive. However, she claims for herself a more active sexual role as the sequence unfolds. This can be observed, for example, by the contrast between the self-objectifying "No one's been undressing me" (line 9) and her ensuing reformulation "there's been no undressing going on" (lines 11 and 12), as well as in her indirect articulation of her sexual desires ("there needs to be at my age", line 15). She uses humour to construct her sexual subjectivity, as indicated by her laughter in lines 13 and 15, and is encouraged by Kam through her own laughter (line 14), which promotes a spirit of camaraderie between the women. Nevertheless, Mirza eventually turns the attention back to male desires ("I don't know what men want", line 16), drawing on the discourse that heterosexuality should be organised around satisfying male needs.

The exchange above is problematic for another reason. The disproportionate attention given to this "big problem in [Mirza's] life" (line 13) raises the implicature that she cannot be complete without a man in her life, invoking 'Marriage and Motherhood as Compulsory' and 'The Unfulfilled Successful Woman'. This is also clearly demonstrated by the rapid shift in the topic in the sequence below:

- 1 Joanne Kam: Now let's talk about you::r writing I read a couple of your (.)
2 columns especially the ones from The Guardian and I **loved** it
3 one of the article that I rea::lly liked is 'What I Know About
4 Men' where you mentioned that (.) your male comedians get
5 gag hags all the time (.) but men aren't into woman onstage
6 they get scared right don't you think that (.) instead of asking if
7 Shazia **is** good wife material perhaps the question should be (.)
8 what would make good husband material for you
- 9 Shazia Mirza: Well uh George Clooney would be great uh he would be
10 making very good uh [husband material]
- 11 Joanne Kam: [Yes I'm sure] salt and pepper hair
12 and all that=
- 13 Shazia Mirza: =I mean uh there isn't uh obviously he has to be a billionaire
14 [and] um
- 15 Joanne Kam: [Ok]
- 16 Shazia Mirza: No but I- I don't know I don't have a type

In lines 1 and 2, Kam introduces a new topic: the articles that Mirza contributed to *The Guardian* in her professional capacity. However, there is a sense that this was brought up merely as a way to discuss Mirza's views on relationships because immediately after a succinct assessment of the articles ("I loved it", line 2), Kam narrows down on one particular piece about men and marriage, which then leads to her question regarding what Mirza wants in a husband (line 8). While this confers autonomy on Mirza, and unlike in the earlier sequences, reduces the importance given to male desire, it still implies that Mirza needs a husband and reinforces 'Marriage and Motherhood as Compulsory' and 'The Unfulfilled Successful Woman'.

Marked hesitations can be observed in Mirza's turns, which could indicate a problem in coming up with an appropriate response. Mirza seems to use humour and exaggerations to mock 'Marriage and Motherhood as Compulsory' and 'Women Are Gold-diggers' discourses, before admitting that she does not have a specific type.

We have seen how Mirza subverts 'Feminisation of Successful Women' in an earlier sequence. On the contrary, this discourse is salient in the construction of

women's identities in the subsequent interviews produced by *Clove* and *Her World*. The next interview also invokes two discourses that only emerge in the publications: 'Women Owe Success to Hard Work' and 'Women Owe Success to Family'.

7.3.2 Fauziah Latiff

The article below contains an interview with Fauziah Latiff, one of Malaysia's most popular singers. While the voice of the writer not only defines her based on qualities commonly associated with the dominant discourse of femininity, but also credits her success to these traits, the voice attributed to Fauziah Latiff herself draws on the 'Women Owe Success to Hard Work discourse' in what appears to be her self-construction of her identity:

'Just Jee', *Her World* June 2013 (pp.124-129)

Sitting in front of the beautiful Fauziah Latiff, I can't help but feel embarrassed about my appearance. Dressed in a I-mean-business yet feminine striped blazer and black pants, the star doesn't look as if she's aged one bit over the past decade.

In this article, Fauziah Latiff's feminine image and physical appearance are massively foregrounded. 'The Beautiful and Sexual Successful Woman' is evoked in the very first paragraph above via explicit references to her beauty, clothing, and youthfulness. For instance, the adjective "beautiful" is used to label the entertainer in the thematised adverbial in the opening sentence. By negatively appraising her own appearance in the rheme, the writer indirectly compliments Fauziah Latiff on her looks.

In the next sentence, her clothing is described as "I-mean-business yet feminine". If clothing is viewed as an extension of the body, and therefore, of one's identity (Liao 2011), this would then imply that Fauziah Latiff herself comes across as both serious (in this context, about her career) as well as feminine. As stated in Section 5.5, this study examines the construction of contrasts between words and phrases that are not conventional opposites as these may reflect prevailing gender ideologies. In this sentence, the use of the adverb "yet" to contrast the two qualities is significant. First of all, it denotes that the former is not a feminine characteristic. In fact, since femininity has often been conceived as directly opposed to masculinity (Mills 2008), the implication underlying the phrase "I-mean-business yet feminine" is that to be serious about one's career is a

masculine characteristic. My next point is related to the first. The phrase seems to assure the reader that although Fauziah Latiff embodies masculine traits, she still conforms to the idealised image of femininity, invoking the 'Feminisation of Successful Women discourse'. Furthermore, the assertion that she "doesn't look as if she's aged one bit over the past decade" implicitly praises the singer for meeting the expected feminine image of youthfulness. The temporal circumstances ("over the past decade") serve to underscore this supposed achievement.

Hegemonic discourses of femininity continue to construct the interviewee from a traditional gendered perspective in the rest of the article, as demonstrated in the extract below:

Perhaps it is that very determination that Fauziah instilled since the start of her career that has catapulted her to become one of Malaysia's biggest stars. Since the age of 18, she's been in the spotlight, whether through her singing or acting career. No doubt, her elegance and sophistication have stolen the limelight many times, what with her feminine demeanour. During the interview, she's soft spoken but at the same time animated, sharing her stories with everyone present. As a big a star as she is, Fauziah is down to earth and without any air of pretence.

When I asked her about embracing that star status, Fauziah is quick to reply that at the end of the day, it's all just a job and she's lucky that she enjoys what she's doing. "I have my father to thank for instilling this sense of responsibility in me," she claims. "When he found out that I was into music, he encouraged me to give it my all. But at the same time, he reminded me that work is work and I have to take what I've chosen to do very seriously. Being in the entertainment industry is not just about glamour nor is it about being pampered. Sure, it comes with the job and is a bonus but talent has to be present in the first place. And if you have the talent, you can't just rely on it. You have to hone it, polish it, and really work hard at making yourself better."

In both paragraphs above, Fauziah Latiff is conceptualised as a successful entertainer through a range of expressions. For example, she is indirectly interpellated as "one of Malaysia's biggest stars" and "a star" in the first paragraph, while the clause "When I asked her about embracing that star status"

at the start of the second paragraph presupposes that she has "star status". However, different factors are credited for her success in the two paragraphs.

The first paragraph, written in the writer's voice, begins by attributing Fauziah Latiff's success to her "determination". She is also accorded agency in her professional growth via the active clause "Fauziah instilled". Nonetheless, this claim is hedged by the adverb "Perhaps". Another contributing factor to her fame and popularity is then introduced in the third sentence ("No doubt, her elegance and sophistication have stolen the limelight many times, what with her feminine demeanour"). Moon's (2014) analysis of adjectives used to describe women and men in the Bank of English (BoE) corpus demonstrates that 'elegant' and 'sophisticated' tend to co-occur with woman/women rather than man/men. Therefore, they can be perceived as indirect indices of femininity. Through their noun forms as well as "feminine demeanour", which directly indexes femininity, the implicature that arises from the third sentence is Fauziah Latiff's feminine image has also contributed to her success. This indirect claim, in contrast to the one before, is not hedged, but strengthened by the adverb "No doubt", which implies that her femininity has been a more significant factor than her "determination". Traces of the 'Feminisation of Successful Women discourse' can be seen in this paragraph as an idealised feminine identity is constituted for her not only via the possessives "her elegance and sophistication" and "her feminine demeanour", but also through the adjectives "soft spoken" and "down to earth".

On the contrary, the interviewee's direct speech in the second paragraph draws on a different set of discourses, namely 'Women Owe Success to Family', 'Women Owe Success to Hard Work' and 'Work as Passion'. Evidence of 'Women Owe Success to Family' is both explicit ("I have my father to thank") and implicit within the structure of the clauses: the agent is often her father ("he encouraged me", "he reminded me"), whereas Fauziah Latiff herself is mainly passivated. At the same time, she does indirectly acknowledge her own hard work and determination in making things happen. The presupposition embedded in the phrase "this sense of responsibility in me" as well as the implicatures arising from the clauses "he encouraged me to give it my all", "work is work", and "I have to take what I've chosen to do very seriously" construe her as a conscientious, reliable, and industrious professional. Her ensuing argument that "Being in the entertainment industry is not just about glamour nor is it about being pampered" challenges the assumption that she leads a luxurious and undemanding life. On the other hand, in the final two sentences, she stresses on hard work as a prerequisite for success. Although, on the face of it, the generic 'you' references

those in the entertainment industry, the ideal reader can be relied on to interpret this pronoun to allude to Fauziah Latiff herself. The clause "I was into music" and the phrase "what I've chosen to do" both indirectly represent her love for performing as a source of motivation and a factor behind her success, deploying 'Work as Passion'.

7.3.3 Sonia Couling

The following interview is with Sonia Couling, a television producer and host, actor, and model:

'Not Couling down', Clove 21 October 2012 (pp.4-5)

The gorgeous and talented Sonia Couling is still heating it up.

The sentence above is the subheading below the article's title and is significant since the headline and subheading of an article signal what the text producers believe to be the most important information of a text, in this case, Couling's beauty and sexuality. Not only does the adjective "gorgeous" emphasise Couling's looks, invoking 'The Beautiful and Sexual Successful Woman', but its position before the adjective "talented" also indicates that it is Couling's primary characteristic. Moon's (2014) study of adjectives used to describe women from different age groups found that in the BoE corpus, "gorgeous" mainly collocates with younger women. In other words, the adjective indexes femininity, and implicitly articulates the 'Feminisation of Successful Women discourse'. The verb phrase "heating it up" reinforces the semantic effect of the headline "Not Couling down", a wordplay on her surname, constituting her as a 'hot' sex object and producing 'The Beautiful and Sexual Successful Woman'.

'The Beautiful and Sexual Successful Woman' and 'Feminisation of Successful Women' discourses are also deployed in the first body paragraph below:

Sonia Couling strolled into the new Crabtree & Evelyn store right on time for her interview and immediately greeted me. The statuesque and graceful Thai-English beauty is a familiar face in Asia, being a model, TV personality, producer and actor.

The focus on Couling's appearance is both explicit, for example through the adjectives "statuesque" and "graceful", and implicit, where "model", an occupation that is typically associated with good looks, is foregrounded by being the first

item in the noun list before “TV personality, producer and actor”, jobs that require more than physical attractiveness. In addition, she is overtly represented as a “beauty”. Given that being “graceful” is an idealised feminine characteristic, the adjective works to emphasise Couling’s femininity. These ‘positive’ appraisals of Couling’s appearance and manner could be interpreted as a compliment by some women, such as those “who have a strong investment in femininity for their own self-identity” (Mills 2008: 75). At the same time, there may be readers who would intentionally ‘read against the grain’ and choose to focus on Couling’s professional roles.

The indirect interpellation as a “beauty” is reiterated in paragraph 8 below:

Sexy and sophisticated, the beauty with brains has also done some work behind the cameras when she produced and hosted *Thailand’s Next Top Model* in 2005.

Here, “beauty” occupies the central position as head noun whereas “brains” is placed in the prepositional phrase, implying that her intelligence is secondary to her looks. Moreover, the coupling of “sexy” and “sophisticated” not only emphasises her appearance, but, when taken together with the adjectives in the earlier paragraphs (e.g. “gorgeous”, “talented”, “graceful”), demonstrates how performing femininity is often a complex balancing act as women are expected to be many different things at once. As stated earlier in the analysis of the interview with Fauziah Latiff, Moon (2014) found that “sophisticated” strongly collocates with woman/women in the BoE corpus, and therefore, can be viewed as an index of femininity, invoking the ‘Feminisation of Successful Women discourse’.

Discussion of Couling’s beauty is interwoven with the ‘Women Can Succeed in Male-Dominated Fields discourse’. For example, the paragraph above is immediately followed by a short passage relating her achievements as a movie producer and actor:

This year, she was an executive producer for the movie *A Stranger in Paradise* which she worked on closely with her husband, Paul-Dominique Vacharasinthu, a business owner and event promoter whom she married in 2007.

Revealing that she has expanded her work into the international market, Couling joined the big leagues as she now has a contract in Hollywood.

“I played a guest role in an American movie called *Glory Days* as well as in the hugely popular French film *Largo Winch 2*. Apart from that, I also recently starred in a US movie trilogy called *The Mark* alongside Eric Roberts and Craig Sheffer,” she says, adding, “Last December, I played a *femme fatale* in a Hungarian short film called *Blood and High Heels*, which was the official selection at the Cannes Film Festival this year and is doing quite well. It’s a really short but intense film that is for Hungary.”

Since men still dominate the film industry, highlighting Couling’s transition into film production as well as the success of the short film in which she stars articulates the empowering ‘Women Can Succeed in Male-Dominated Fields discourse’. This briefly extends her identity beyond her physical appearance by representing her as someone with power and talent within her field. In fact, the text producers seem to portray her as more successful in Hollywood than she actually is. Even though the cause-effect relation between the clauses “Couling joined the big leagues” and “she now has a contract in Hollywood” is explicitly marked by the conjunction “as”, the latter does not necessarily lead to the former in reality, and none of the American movies named in the final paragraph above were box office hits.

The ‘Women Can Succeed in Male-Dominated Fields discourse’ competes with the mainstream ‘Successful Women as Wives and Mothers discourse’ in the passage, where Couling is subject positioned not only as a professional, but also as a wife. While Couling’s new role as a movie producer is foregrounded in the main clause at the beginning of the first paragraph above, in the relative clause, she shares the spotlight with her husband, who co-produced the film with her. The relative clause, which dominates the paragraph, provides not only her husband’s name, but also his occupation and the year they were married (both irrelevant to the production of the movie), whereas Couling’s successes and challenges as an executive producer are never discussed. Furthermore, although the short film *Blood and High Heels* deals with various themes including sexual harassment in the workplace (IMDb n.d.), Couling’s character is merely described as a *femme fatale*, which seems to redirect the article’s focus on her sexuality.

Immediately after the extract above, the frame of reference is shifted back to the topic of Couling’s beauty in paragraph 12 below:

Though she's got a busy schedule, maintaining a proper skincare regime is important as it's part of her job to look good.

The cause-effect relation between the main clause "maintaining a proper skincare regime is important" and the dependent clause "as it's part of her job to look good" has an ideological function: in order to arrive at a coherent interpretation of the sentence, the reader is required to accept the presupposition that women in the entertainment industry must be beautiful and work towards maintaining their looks. The importance of beauty work is indirectly underscored through the thematised clause "Though she's got a busy schedule".

The analysis of the interviews with women entertainers from the media outlets has shown how gendered professional identities are created for women entertainers through the dominant 'The Beautiful and Sexual Successful Woman' and 'Feminisation of Successful Women' discourses. The next section will illustrate that this is not unique to women in the entertainment industry. However, in contrast to the texts produced by *Her World* and *Clove*, the broadcast interview below shows both discourses being alternately invoked and subverted.

7.4 Women in Wildlife Conservation

7.4.1 Terri Irwin

In the next two sequences from an interview aired on *Capital FM*, Terri Irwin, an American-Australian naturalist, can be seen drawing on 'Feminisation of Successful Women' and constructing a stereotypical feminine identity for herself, particularly one that is in direct contrast to her public image of an outdoorsy and athletic wildlife conservationist:

Capital FM 24 April 2013

- 1 Joanne Kam: Well you've obviously **loved** the wildlife loved the green (.)
2 has there been any part of you that is still (.) kinda like a city
3 girl
4 Terri Irwin: You know I think girls are still (.) girls (.) and every now and
5 then we have the opportunity to do like a red carpet event
6 [or something (.) so Bindi] and I go and try on dresses and=

- 7 Xandria Ooi: [((laugh))]
 8 Joanne Kam: =And actually wear high heels
 9 Terri Irwin: And ye::s and get out of the khaki::

In the conversation above, there is a disjuncture between Kam's question (lines 2 and 3) and Irwin's response (lines 4-6). Although Irwin echoes Kam's directly indexed gendered term "city girl" (lines 2 and 3) by repeating "girls" (line 4), which gives the illusion of coherence, Irwin does not share her feelings toward urban life. Instead, through her reformulation of the term ("girls are still girls"), she reinforces an essentialist view of gender, which functions as a springboard for a new and highly gendered agenda: fashion. By implicitly drawing on the assumption that all women intrinsically enjoy beauty work and describing herself as actively participating in such activities ("Bindi and I go and try on dresses", line 6), Irwin enacts an identity that conforms to stereotypical expectations of feminine behaviour. This normative female identity is collaboratively constructed by both Kam and Irwin in their subsequent turns through references to traditionally gendered items of clothing. In line 8, Kam associates Irwin with "high heels". Irwin accepts this ("ye::s", line 9) and develops this further through the verb phrase "get out of the khaki" (line 9). The khaki uniform, which is part of Irwin's signature look, is conventionally intended for men, and since masculinity "has often been posited as the direct opposite of femininity" (Mills 2008: 130), the verb phrase "get[ting] out of the khaki" implies 'putting on' femininity. Additionally, through the juvenile reference term "girls" (line 4), the version of femininity that Irwin creates for herself is one that is youthful.

Irwin can be perceived negotiating her gendered identity in another sequence:

- 1 Terri Irwin: And when I grew up I helped my dad fixed the ca::r or chop
 2 wo::d or whatever we were [doing] [and-]
 3 Xandria Ooi: [Wow]
 4 Joanne Kam: [You] **are** a typical
 5 tomboy [((laugh))]
 6 Xandria Ooi: [((laugh))]
 7 Terri Irwin: [Yes] but but it is still fun to to have (.) girl time (.)
 8 I was admiring your fingernails
 9 Xandria Ooi: [((laugh))]

- 10 Joanne Kam: [Yes] you [were]
 11 Terri Irwin: [They] (.) are (.) beautiful

Gender is first indirectly indexed through Irwin's references to two gendered activities: fixing cars and chopping wood (lines 1 and 2). Kam notices and makes gender pertinent by representing Irwin as a "tomboy" (line 5), and in attending to this explicit gender reference in her subsequent turn, Irwin promotes the salience of gender in the exchange. While Irwin initially accepts this subject position (line 7), she quickly realigns herself with a stereotypically feminine image by assessing "girl time" as "fun" (line 7) and complimenting Kam's manicure (lines 8 and 11). The latter action suggests that the ambiguous phrase "girl time" refers to time spent doing beauty work. It can be argued that by overtly admiring Kam's fingernails, Irwin both produces 'Feminisation of Successful Women' as well as invokes a female in-group identity.

It eventually becomes clear that Irwin had strategically constructed a feminine identity for herself, particularly one of which beauty work is a central aspect, because she had recently launched a clothing line. In other words, she had used the gender stereotype to her advantage to promote her business:

- 1 Joanne Kam: Now tell me you- you were telling us that you have this new
 2 line-up called the Terri's (.) Cougar Collection is it for women
 3 like us like at this age
 4 [((laugh))]
 5 Terri Irwin: [You know if (.) Terri's Cougar Collection] was **actually** called
 6 that when that was (.) still an animal
 7 Joanne Kam: [I know right]
 8 Terri Irwin: [So it's got] a little paw print and now it's got a whole new
 9 meaning so [it's just (.) it (.) an interesting coincidence]
 10 Xandria Ooi: [((laugh))]
 11 Right=
 12 Terri Irwin: =But we do have a lot of women out there wearing the paw
 13 print
 14 Xandria Ooi: [((laugh))]
 15 Terri Irwin: [So] there's there's everything from cute little short shirts

16 to (.) kind of business attire um (.) more suit-looking outfits to::
 17 uh khaki and and bright purple coats and (.) there's just
 18 [kind of wear]
 19 Xandria Ooi: [Bright purple] coats=
 20 Terri Irwin: =Yeah there's just kind of wear for anywhere in the world (.) so
 21 if you're if you're (.) needing a coat or needing to look (.) cool
 22 (.) it's (.) it's everything

After Kam introduces Terri's Cougar Collection, she brings gender into context by drawing attention to the alternative meaning of 'cougar'⁴ which is implicit within her question "is it for women like us like at this age" (lines 2 and 3). Through the phrase "like us", she claims membership of the gender category for herself and Irwin, who are both middle-aged, thereby invoking 'The Beautiful and Sexual Successful Woman'. It can argued that this sexualised subject position is not offered to Ooi, who was 30 years old at that time, or the listening audience, as the radio station was targeted at women aged 25 to 35 (Chan 2011). Nonetheless, some listeners may appropriate the subject position of the 'cougar' since it indexes youth, sexual agency and desirability, and female empowerment within postfeminist culture (Gwynne 2014).

From line 5 onwards, Irwin can be observed taking strategic control of the floor. She begins by dissociating herself and her clothing label from the slang term 'cougar' (lines 5-6, 8-9), and rejecting 'The Beautiful and Sexual Successful Woman'. This is underscored by the stress laid on the adverb "actually" (line 5). She then shifts attention away from this issue and proceeds to promote her fashion line. For example, the assertion "we do have a lot of women out there wearing the paw print" (lines 12 and 13) presents her designs as sought-after and, indirectly, desirable. In her subsequent turns, she goes on to list the clothing styles available (lines 15-17) and uses hyperbole (lines 20-22) to impress on the audience the wide range available. She also uses various adjectives to visually depict the clothes ("cute little short shirts", "bright purple coats"). Therefore, Irwin's stretch of talk can be interpreted as a sales pitch for her new business, and her earlier self-positioning as a fashion and beauty lover is unlikely to be

⁴ The slang definition of 'cougar' is older women who date significantly younger men

coincidental. The run-on sentences in lines 15 to 18 and 20 to 22 signify enthusiasm for her clothes line, deploying the 'Work as Passion discourse'.

Traces of 'The Beautiful and Sexual Successful Woman' can also be perceived in this extract:

- 1 Xandria Ooi: Okay Terri though I- one one of the thing is that you know
- 2 when we look at photos of you:: uh whether it's print or on TV
- 3 right in- in real life you look extremely fit (.) you know wh-
- 4 what do you eat like we're
- 5 [just] curious like how do you keep this physique=
- 6 Terri Irwin: [Uh] =On this
- 7 trip everything it- it is so funny I've been uh travelling through
- 8 South East Asia and travelling with some great team from
- 9 Discovery Kids (.) and I said I'm starting to feel a bit sumo
- 10 Xandria Ooi: [((laugh)) You're nowhere near sumo]
- 11 Joanne Kam: [((laugh))] And yeah trust me=
- 12 Terri Irwin: =It's **so** funny but um (.) but I do like being fit and strong and
- 13 healthy and I try to teach Bindi that (.) it's not about (.) um how
- 14 tiny you are it's how good you feel (.) so if you feel healthy and
- 15 happy being small (.) or or being (.) bigger because you want
- 16 to be stronger we do crocodile research work every year (.)
- 17 where we're **jumping** crocodiles holding them down putting
- 18 satellite trackers on them and you need to be **strong** to do that
- 19 kind of work

The exchange above begins with a positive assessment of Irwin's physical appearance. In line 3, Ooi compliments Irwin for being "extremely fit". However, when taken in the light of the ensuing question "what do you eat", the adjective "fit" can be interpreted as "slim", revealing an underlying sexist belief that not only should women be thin, but they must also monitor their diet to achieve the expected feminine image. The use of the collective pronoun "we" (line 4) seems to implicate the wider listening audience and suggests that Ooi speaks for the public, projecting her belief as common sense. It also allows her to claim a relationship of solidarity with her listeners. Nevertheless, we must allow for the

possibility of different evaluations, and some listeners may find Ooi's question to be sexist.

By using sumo wrestlers as an analogy in her denial (line 9), Irwin appears to interpret "fit" as "slim" since sumo wrestlers are fit yet overweight. She also seems to implicitly endorse the imperative of slenderness for women. Her utterance "it is so funny" (line 7) suggests that her subsequent stretch of talk can be interpreted as an attempt to appear modest by using self-deprecating humour. Implicit within her response to Ooi's praise is the assumption that being "sumo", i.e. not being slim, is undesirable. This shared presupposition leads the radio announcers to reject Irwin's self-categorisation as "sumo" (lines 10 and 11). By repeating "It's so funny" (line 12) in her response to their refutations, Irwin reinforces the bodily expectation of slenderness through self-deprecating humour.

However, within the same turn, a more progressive perspective of women's bodies begins to emerge from the talk. This shift is marked by the contrastive conjunction "but" (line 12). Irwin subverts 'Feminisation of Successful Women' and refers to her stereotypically masculine attributes to construct her professional identity as a wildlife conservationist. Through her assertion "I do like being fit and strong and healthy" (lines 12 and 13), she not only positively assesses the three traits, but also claims them for herself. Irwin transforms the adjective "fit" to be synonymous with physical well-being rather than slenderness by grouping it with "strong" and "healthy". This more empowering sense of "fit" can also be inferred from the importance given to feeling "good" rather than being "tiny" (lines 13 and 14) as well as her use of the action verbs "jumping" (which is stressed) and "holding ...down" (line 17) to illustrate the physical intensity of her work. The proposition "you need to be strong to do that kind of work" (lines 18 and 19) implies that she possesses the physical strength required for her profession. This is emphasised through the stress laid on "strong" (line 18).

Irwin also resists 'The Beautiful and Sexual Successful Woman'. As mentioned above, she explicitly describes herself as "strong" (line 12), and in lines 15 and 16, she seems to equate "being bigger" with being "stronger". Hence, by implication, she is constructing herself as someone who is "bigger", though, this time, not in a negative way. Although the lexical choices in the sequence above are not intrinsically gendered, by making a reference to her daughter, Bindi (line 13), but not her son, Irwin displays that gender is a relevant category in this discussion about the body.

Another dominant discourse that is produced in this interview is 'Successful Women as Wives and Mothers':

- 1 Xandria Ooi: Okay Terri in every sentence that you say right every time you
2 say something you always mention Steve's name=
3 Terri Irwin: =Yes=
4 Xandria Ooi: =Right (.) [and he is] such a big part of your life
5 Terri Irwin: [Yes I do]
6 Absolutely we were married 14 years and I genuinely got my
7 happily ever after I feel very fortunate
8 Joanne Kam: Well we here want to know **how** did all this started how did you
9 **meet** him

Terri Irwin is the widow of Steve Irwin, who was famous for his television show, *The Crocodile Hunter*. Through Ooi's reference to Irwin's late husband (line 2), she subject positions Irwin as a wife. However, she does more than invoke the gender category – by exaggerating that Irwin "always" mentions his name "in every sentence" she utters and "every time" she speaks (lines 1 and 2), Ooi constitutes this as Irwin's primary identity. Irwin ratifies her claim (lines 3 and 5), providing Kam with a resource to establish a new agenda for the interview, namely the history of Terri and Steve Irwin's relationship, thereby moving the focus away from Irwin's professional life to her personal life. It can be argued that the pronoun "we" (line 8) is inclusive of the overhearing audience, which not only enables Kam to claim solidarity with the listeners, but also invites them to accept the presupposition that they are interested in the topic of romantic relationships. Some members of the audience may align themselves with this stereotypically feminine identity, while others may reject it. There may also be listeners who experience more than one response and find Kam's talk simultaneously gender-stereotypical and entertaining.

7.5 Women Entrepreneurs

A number of texts in the dataset feature women entrepreneurs from a range of industries, including those who work in all-women teams. We will begin this section by exploring how the working relationships between these women are represented.

7.5.1 Ida, Nina, and Dilla Othman

This article, which features sisters who manage a party planning company, promotes the stereotypical assumption that women cannot work together:

'Let's party', Clove 11 November 2012 (p.11)

For Ida, the thought of working with her sisters was scary at first because she wasn't sure what their expectations were. She was worried that they might tear some heads off by the first month! But Nina says they were also comfortable because they were familiar with each other's habits and behaviour. So far, working with each other has been going well.

Lexical variants of the notion of fear in the first two sentences, "scary" and "worried", can be argued as contributing to the 'Beware Women discourse', while the idiom "tear some heads off", intensified by the time indicator in the prepositional phrase "by the first month" and the use of an exclamation mark, evokes 'Women Are Emotional/Irrational', which is a subordinate discourse of 'Beware Women'. Although, on the surface, Nina Othman's indirect speech seems to assuage these fears, the adverb "also" suggests that both feelings of anxiety and ease were present and this indirectly endorses the implicit feminine stereotype rather than resist it. In fact, the adverb "So far" in the final sentence insinuates that apprehension still exists. While some readers may impute a sexist meaning to the text, others may find the sisters' indirect speech amusing or conceptualise it to be about the conduct and attitudes of these three women, and not women in general.

7.5.2 Didi Sullivan, Irda Suriana, Adrina Othman, and Intan Juliana

The excerpts below are from a *Clove* interview featuring Didi Sullivan, Irda Suriana, Adrina Othman, and Intan Juliana, four friends who run an online wedding planning company. This interview is an example of an article that celebrates female entrepreneurial teams:

'One stop wedding shop', Clove 19 May 2013 (p.9)

"This is actually something the four of us are really proud of, which is the fact that we have been close friends for more than a decade and it all began when we studied together in Perth, Australia. Now our friendship has matured and

we have a new adventure to bond us,” said Adrina who is currently the head of client services of the company.

“We never thought this would ever happen as it began as a sisterly hobby but when it grew and we realised we needed more hands (and heads), both Didi and I knew naturally it had to be Adrina and Intan as we are all so in sync,” embellished Irda, the CFO.

One of the major themes in this article is comradeship, which lends itself to the ‘Sisters Are Doin’ It For Themselves discourse’. Several lexical variants from this semantic field are used, such as “close friends”, “together”, “friendship”, “bond”, “sisterly”, and “in sync”. The strength of the women’s bond is indicated by the subjectively marked modality in “both Didi and I knew naturally it had to be Adrina and Intan”. Furthermore, the prepositional phrase “for more than a decade” as well as the movement between different temporalities in Adrina Othman’s direct speech, realised by the shifting tenses from the simple past (“studied”) to the present perfect (“has matured”) to the simple present (“have”), signify that this is a long-standing relationship, while the assertion “we have a new adventure to bond us” entails that this friendship will continue into the future.

Traces of ‘Sisters Are Doin’ It For Themselves’ can also be seen Sullivan’s direct speech below:

Elaborating further, she added, “At the end of the day, everyone helps each other out. We sit in on each others [sic] roles and learn from each other. Right now, Songket Affairs just won’t work without one of us in the team.”

The use of the collective pronouns “everyone” and “We” as well as the verb phrases “helps each other out”, “sit in on each others [sic] roles” and “learn from each other” invokes a sense of solidarity among the women, which is further emphasised through the collective noun “the team”. The importance of each person in the group is entailed in the negative statement “Songket Affairs won’t work without one of us”. The combination of the adverb of degree “just” with the modal verb “won’t” suggests a strong commitment to this claim.

7.5.3 Pam Siow

This radio interview is with Pam Siow, the Singaporean founder of the Internet Biz Owners Club, who claims that she was able to pay her credit card debt after launching an online business, and is now a millionaire:

Capital FM 17 October 2012

- 1 Xandria Ooi: Yeah (.) I mean Pam your story sounds like it came out
2 [of a fairytale]
3 Pam Siow: [((chuckle))]
4 Xandria Ooi: I mean this is what **modern** princesses dream of uh it's no
5 longer about Prince Charming uh Jo=
6 Joanne Kam: =No we just want to make our own [million]
7 Pam Siow: [((laugh))]
8 Xandria Ooi: [Cor]rect

In this sequence, Ooi first indirectly indexes gender through the lexical choice "fairy tale" (line 2). Although this noun is not intrinsically gendered, Ooi's talk in lines 4 and 5 demonstrates that gender is indeed relevant for her as the social category is brought sharply into context through the gendered nouns "modern princesses" and "Prince Charming" (lines 4 and 5). On the surface, the sequence seems to be feminist due to the subversion of 'Successful Women as Wives and Mothers' and 'Marriage as Ultimate Fulfilment' discourses in Ooi's utterance in lines 4 and 5, which Kam endorses in her turn (line 6). Nevertheless, the gender reference "modern princesses" indirectly aligns Siow with a feminine image, invoking 'Feminisation of Successful Women'. In fact, this category of "modern princesses" is open to any woman who is listening, as indicated by the use of the inclusive "we" (line 6). In other words, the status of the audience shifts from 'overhearer' to 'co-addressee'.

The seemingly feminist stance displayed at the beginning of this extract is contradicted later in the interview, as shown in the sequence below. This exchange occurs immediately after Siow provides advice on how to grow an online business to generate passive income:

- 1 Xandria Ooi: 'kay my husband also knows this (.) but all this sounds really
 2 familiar to me (.) I should be [(#)]
 3 Joanne Kam: [But you're] not the one doing this
 4 [right ((laugh))]
 5 Xandria Ooi: [No (.) yes (.) you know 'cos we're] too consumed by our daily
 6 [(#)]
 7 Joanne Kam: [It's] okay darling at least you have a partner so even if **he**
 8 becomes a millionaire (.) you can still
 9 [shake legs⁵ ((laugh))]
 10 Xandria Ooi: [I (#) it right] (.) yeah that's the tai-tai⁶ lifestyle
 11 very good

Through the explicit mention of her husband (line 1), Ooi orients to gender and indirectly claims membership of the category of 'wife'. This orientation is noticed and taken up by Kam, who makes this gender category pertinent in her subsequent turns. Although there is no overt gender reference in Kam's utterance in lines 3 and 4, gender is still salient in her insinuation that it is Ooi's husband who is "doing this", which constructs Ooi as the less proactive partner in a heterosexual relationship. By claiming that "we" are too busy (line 5), Ooi not only defends herself against Kam's implicit assumption, but, more importantly, negotiates her identity as a wife. In addition, it can be argued that the pronoun "we" interpellates all wives listening in who are in a similar situation. In her next turn (lines 7-9), Kam draws on the 'Women Are Gold-diggers discourse' as well as reinforces traditional marital roles, contradicting the position jointly constructed with Ooi in the prior sequence which celebrates women's financial independence. In response, Ooi not only goes along with this, but evaluates this positively via the phrase "very good" (line 11).

7.5.4 Vivy Yusof, Sereni Linggi, Sentel Lee, and Marion Caunter

The motherhood status of the entrepreneurs in the interviews that we have analysed so far was not made explicit in the texts. In this article, four prominent fashion entrepreneurs are interviewed regarding their personal experiences as first-time mothers, which invokes 'Successful Women as Wives and Mothers':

⁵ Direct translation of a Malay idiom which means 'to be idle'

⁶ Chinese slang for a rich married woman who does not work

Juggling roles

These working mums love their jobs and staying put in their careers is definitely on the cards, but it can get a bit tricky with their little ones waiting at home.

The verb "Juggling" in the visually salient subheading links this text intertextually to popular media representations of the 'Busy Mother Juggling Work and Home'. The section opens by evoking 'Work as Passion' and 'Women Can Have it All' discourses – having a career is represented as both highly desired and achievable through the affective mental process verb "love" and the assertion "staying put in their careers is definitely on the cards". However, this certainty, marked by the adverb "definitely", is diminished by the conjunction "but" and the second clause, which reproduces the gendered image of the 'Busy Mother Juggling Work and Home'. Furthermore, this clause can only achieve propositional coherence for a reader within a shared 'Mother is Main Parent discourse'. In fact, by defining the women by their motherhood status in the first clause ("These working mums"), the text producer(s) seem to indirectly indicate that this is the women's main role. While the women are not overtly incited to return to the home, the movement from the workplace to the home is implicit in the construction of space-time in the phrase "with their little ones waiting at home". What is more, this movement seems to be rendered morally necessary by the lexical choices "little ones" and "waiting" which appeal to the implied reader's emotions and draw on maternal guilt, invoking the 'Maternal Anxiety discourse'.

The article continues with direct quotations from each of the interviewees, which develop the tension set up between career and motherhood. The quotation below is attributed to Vivy Yusof:

"I absolutely love my job and there's no way I can see myself quitting. I always thought it'd be easy to just jump back to work after, but now I'm seeing that it may not be so simple," says Vivy. "I'm pretty lucky because both my mother and my mother-in-law are near and willing to help with his daycare. Gotta love our moms!"

Once again, 'Work as Passion' is produced. Vivy Yusof evaluates her job positively via an affective mental process clause ("I absolutely love my job"), where the

modal adverbial “absolutely” signifies a high level of commitment to truth. This proposition is further supported by the subsequent negative clause in which the entrepreneur commits herself strongly to her job via the modality marker “there’s no way”. Due to the foregrounding of this quotation, a reader may be tempted to read this paragraph in terms of the ‘Women Can Have it All discourse’. However, there are traces of ‘Women Can’t Have it All’ in her ensuing statements. In her second sentence, two propositions are juxtaposed to emphasise that having both a career and a family is difficult for women. While both clauses in the sentence are subjectively marked (“I always thought”, “I’m seeing that”), the distinction between the mental processes “thought” and “seeing” shows that a stronger truth claim is made in the second clause. This can also be observed in the use of hypothetical “it’d be easy” in the first clause in contrast to the non-hypothetical “it may not be so simple” in the second.

Furthermore, the implicature that arises from her third sentence is that despite her love for her job, Vivy Yusof may have given it up if she did not receive help from her mother and mother-in-law. This not only draws on ‘Women Can’t Have it All’ and ‘Women Owe Success to Family’ discourses, but also lends itself to the patriarchal notion that a woman’s primary role is to care for her family and, unlike for men, a woman’s career is a possibility only if the woman is “lucky” to have extended family who are “near and willing to help”. It is also notable how only the grandmothers are lexicalised (“my mother”, “my mother-in-law”, “our moms”), reinforcing ‘Mother as Main Parent’ and ‘Home-making as Women’s Work’ discourses.

Vivy Yusof’s direct speech continues below:

“I honestly feel that if we can help it, women should not stop doing what we love to do once children come into the picture. Maybe at a slower pace or on a part-time basis especially when the children are very young, but we shouldn’t give up our careers.”

A similar configuration of discourses can also be perceived in the extract above. In this paragraph, there is a pronoun shift from “I” to the inclusive “we” and “our”, which allows the text producers to claim shared values and attitudes with the reader. The affective mental process in the phrase “what we love to do” evaluates work positively and once again draws on the ‘Work as Passion discourse’. Nevertheless, although Vivy Yusof encourages mothers to continue pursuing their careers, she also reproduces ‘Women Can’t Have It All’ through the

dependent clause “if we can help it”, which implies that without the right conditions, women should stop working. Furthermore, the pronoun “we”, which interpellates women, absolves men from any responsibility to ensure women have an equal opportunity to work. In the final sentence, while she asserts that women “shouldn’t give up [their] careers”, it is her suggestion that women pursue their careers “at a slower pace or on a part-time basis” that is thematised. The presuppositions behind this suggestion are that a mother is the main caregiver and women’s careers are less important than men’s. Although feminist readers may recognise and co-construct the conservative gendered discourses, they can respond with an oppositional set of discourses, such as ‘Shared Parenting’.

Unlike Vivy Yusof, being a stay-at-home mother is Sereni Linggi’s preferred option in her direct quotation below:

“When I have to travel for work I try to make it a day trip or only for one night. The hardest is leaving her every morning to go to work. My ideal is to be a stay-at-home-mum for a year but sadly that is not possible at the moment,” she says.

In the representations of space, verb phrases from the lexical field of leaving (“travel for work”, “leaving her ... to go to work”) construct work as an activity that takes Linggi away from her daughter. This is presented as undesirable via the implicature arising from the limits imposed on her time away (“a day trip”, “only for one night”) as well as the noun phrase “The hardest”. In the final sentence, the desirability of motherhood in contrast to work is made explicit via the evaluative elements “ideal” and “sadly”.

Likewise, Sentel Lee portrays work as a necessary evil:

“Being a working mum is hard. Leaving my son with his nanny when I go to work is the worst feeling in the world and he is getting to the age now where he wants constant interaction and wants to be stimulated with books and music,” says Lee.

She adds, “My husband and I are lucky that we can bring our son to work with us so we can spend every free moment we have with him. We have a nursery set up for him with all the things he needs. He thinks its home which is all that matters”.

Once again, going to work is described as “leaving” the child and evaluated negatively through the noun phrase “the worst feeling in the world”. Lee also makes indirect references to maternal guilt for not being able to provide her son with the “constant interaction” that he wants. It is noteworthy that Lee is the only interviewee who makes a reference to both parents (“My husband and I”, “we”), thereby articulating the ‘Shared Parenting discourse’. There are also linguistic traces of ‘Intensive Parenting’ (“so we can spend every free moment we have with him”).

Marion Caunter, on the other hand, invokes ‘Mother as Main Parent’ and other mutually reinforcing discourses that place the responsibility of caring for the children and family on women:

“As a mum you’re constantly juggling, you’re still the mum, you still have to decide what she eats, and I’m constantly checking on her when I’m out,” she says. “If you have more help the more you’re controlling an entire household. It’s managing everyone else as well.”

‘Mother as Main Parent’ can be seen, for example, in the use of the definite article in the noun phrase “the mum”, which implies that the mother is the main caregiver. Moreover, the father is never lexicalised in the excerpt above. Besides that, the last two sentences induce the implied reader to draw on the ‘Home-making as Women’s Work discourse’.

The ‘Busy Mother Juggling Work and Home discourse’ also run through this paragraph. In the first sentence, the gendered notion of the harried working mother is invoked via the clause “As a mum you’re constantly juggling”, and intensified through the use of the adverb “constantly” as well as the run-on sentence which applies a linguistic style that indexes a busy individual. The final clause in the first sentence, “I’m constantly checking on her when I’m out”, carries echoes of ‘Maternal Anxiety’.

7.5.5 Kartika Wati Mohamed

This interview features Kartika Wati Mohamed, a successful businesswoman and lawyer, who like Vivy Yusof, Sereni Linggi, Sentel Lee, and Marion Caunter, is also a mother. As we shall see in the article below, even when ‘Women Can Have It All’ is articulated together with the ‘Shared Parenting discourse’, the father’s role in the home is vague:

'A Fine Balance', Her World February 2013 (pp.102-104)

Meet Kartika Wati Mohamed, a superwoman who effortlessly balances a health and beauty company, three law firms and, believe it or not, eight children. She shares her tale with **Nadia Halina**.

The article begins by foregrounding Kartika Wati Mohamed's ability to run multiple businesses while having a large family. For instance, in the lead paragraph above, explicit references are made to the number of law firms and children that she has. By not only drawing attention to a woman who has both a thriving career and a large family, but also representing the situation positively through lexical choices such as "Fine", "superwoman" and "effortlessly", the headline and lead paragraph reinforce the 'Women Can Have It All discourse' and 'Successful Women as Wives and Mothers'.

Yet, the text cannot be presumed to be wholly feminist since, within this context, "superwoman" and "effortlessly" articulate postfeminist discourses that have co-opted feminist ideals and characterise empowered women as super heroines who are "feminine, intelligent and career-directed, whilst also successful in love and domestic spheres" (Isbister 2009), placing unrealistic demands on women. There are also traces of 'Busy Mother Juggling Work and Home' - "balance" appears in both the headline as well as the lead paragraph, and this has intertextual links to widespread media representations of the harried working mother. Its pre-modifier in the headline, "Fine", has two possible meanings: good or delicate, and the implication raised by the latter is that achieving a balance between work and home is very difficult. Considering that the entrepreneur has four businesses and eight children, the latter is highly likely to be true. However, within the value system of this article, the preferred meaning of the adjective is probably the former, as we shall see below.

In order to advance Kartika Mohamed's image as an empowered woman, the rest of the text seems to erase the actual work required to run businesses and care for a large family. This can be seen in the following extract, which discusses her children's upbringing:

Spiritual Values

Kartika is blessed with eight children – the eldest is in her early 20s, while the youngest is just five years old. "At times it is difficult to manage but I believe

in two things: a) Teach them to be spiritual, and to follow religious and moral values; and b) teach them how to be disciplined. When my children know what is right and wrong and when they can manage their time and themselves by being disciplined, they will turn out wonderful. Every member of the family has good relationships with the others,” Kartika proudly shares.

All her children also maintain a healthy lifestyle, and the whole family (including the dad) can boast the same smooth, flawless skin as their mother. Kartika also explains how the patience, support and encouragement shared between her and [her husband] Dr. Syid Ayob has done wonders in building up not just the company but in keeping the family intact, with good values to look up to.

As stated in Section 5.5, the backgrounding of social actors in a text could be ideologically significant. In the first paragraph above, although Kartika Mohamed and her children are the main social actors, she is backgrounded in her quoted speech. For example, the clause “At times it is difficult to manage” as well as the series of injunctions that follow (“Teach them to be spiritual”, “teach them how to be disciplined”) are agentless. There are a few possible motivations for this. On the one hand, the text producers may have assumed that naming the actor(s) is redundant since the ideal reader can be relied on to infer that the children are being ‘managed’ and ‘taught’ by the interviewee herself. On the other hand, it is very plausible that not only extended family members (National Family and Population Board 2008), but foreign domestic workers are also involved in the children’s upbringing, which is common in middle-class professional Malaysian homes (Crisis and Bandali 2017). This would be a more realistic account of the work and resources needed to manage multiple companies and raise eight children, but it would not support the article’s postfeminist narrative of self-efficacy, hence the exclusion of any agents.

Superficially, the indirect speech at the end of the extract (“Kartika also explains how the patience, support and encouragement shared between her and [her husband] Dr. Syid Ayob has done wonders ... in keeping the family intact”) draws on the ‘Shared Parenting discourse’, but upon closer examination, it can be seen that the roles played by Kartika Mohamed and her husband are ambiguous. The nouns “support” and “encouragement” obfuscate agency and it is unclear what these entail.

Summary

This chapter has analysed broadcast and print interviews with twenty Malaysian and non-Malaysian women role models from a wide range of professions and industries. The texts oscillate between more progressive and conservative views on women's role in society. On the one hand, 'Women Can Succeed in Male-Dominated Fields' is often deployed in texts celebrating the interviewees' achievements in their professional domains. On the other hand, the frequent invocation of discourses such as 'Women Owe Success to Family', 'Mother as Main Parent' and 'Home-making as Women's Work' further entrenches the belief that women are primarily responsible for childcare duties. We have also seen how gendered professional identities are constructed for the role models through discourses such as 'The Beautiful and Sexual Successful Woman' and 'Feminisation of Successful Women'. However, there are variances in the articulation of discourses across the media outlets. A clear illustration of this is the subversion of conservative gendered discourses on the radio. While this chapter examined representations of high-achieving women, the subsequent chapter interrogates explicit advice directed at the audience in order to attain professional success and manage their work life.

Chapter 8. Advice in the Media

The analysis of professional discourses articulated in the sample data continues in this chapter. The print and broadcast texts examined fall into two main categories: those produced specifically for the purpose of providing work-related advice, and those giving solutions to domestic life issues which are also related to women's careers. The texts are from *Her World*, and *Capital FM* only, as *Clove* did not provide their readers with such guidance.

8.1 Advice on Professional Life

As we have seen earlier in Table 5.6 in Chapter 5, the professional advice in the sample texts cover the following broad themes: succeeding in the workplace, resolving gender equality issues, returning to the workforce, and losing a job. We will now analyse the discourses mobilised by the media text producers when providing guidance on these issues.

8.1.1 Succeeding in the Workplace

We will examine five texts on career advancement. The first two, from *Her World*, offer the reader overtly prescriptive advice on how to thrive in the workplace through female role models from a diverse range of fields. The article below begins by drawing heavily on 'Women Can Succeed in Male-Dominated Fields', as can be seen in the lead paragraph:

'Who runs the world?', *Her World* June 2013 (pp.166-171)

Women are surpassing men and bridging the gender gap at a rate faster than ever. **Julie Yim** discusses [the] world's female leaders and learns how they do it in style.

Through the non-modalised statement in the first sentence, the text producer(s) commits to a strong truth claim that women are advancing further than men in their careers. Furthermore, the absence of a qualifier preceding "Women" generalises this assertion across region, social class, ethnicity, religion, and job level. In the second sentence, by representing the role models as "[the] world's female leaders", the text implies that women are not only making progress in the workplace, but also reaching the top. Although the writer is positioned as the

grammatical subject in the second sentence, which personalises the proposition, the verb phrase “learns how they do it” invites the idealised reader to heed the advice given in this article, purportedly by these “female leaders”, so that she too can make such great strides in her career.

The ‘Women Can Succeed in Male-Dominated Fields discourse’ continues to be reinforced in the first paragraph of the article:

Something amazing is happening. We are seeing more top seats filled by women who now not only have the freedom, credentials and resources, but most importantly, interest to change the world. We are also witnessing that the primary role men have held for so long as we can remember has now, largely, passed on to women. In fact, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics reported that nearly four in 10 working wives out-earn their husbands. Another major trend? Male- dominated fields such as technology and politics now have women leaders who bring innovation to the fore.

The assertions and selectively chosen statistics in the paragraph perpetuate the view that the ‘glass ceiling’ has been broken. The increase in the number of women in senior positions is labelled as “amazing”, which amplifies the celebratory tone in the article. Moreover, the phrases “We are seeing” and “We are ... witnessing” induce the reader to accept the propositions in the paragraph in a few ways. Firstly, the text speaks for the reader by adopting a first person voice with which the reader is meant to identify. In addition, the use of the verbs “seeing” and “witnessing” produces a semantic effect that strongly positions the reader as a joint witness to this positive development in gender equality. This does not guarantee that the reader will interpret the paragraph in the way that the text producers intended. For example, due to the reference to the US as well as her knowledge of the continued gender disparities in Malaysian workplaces (see Chapter 4), the reader may conceptualise the text as being more relevant to the Western world rather than Malaysia, and invoke feminist discourses calling for greater workplace equality in this country.

It is with this constructed context in mind that the advice in the article is analysed. The section, ‘Local Power Players and their Secrets’, contains selected quotes by successful Malaysian women, which offer both explicit and implicit advice on how to succeed professionally. Both representing the women as powerful through the noun phrase “Power Players” and displaying their job titles

clearly in bold font make their advice all the more authoritative. The advice is labelled as "Secrets" in the sub-heading, and this sharing of "secrets" constructs a 'synthetic sisterhood' consisting of the female text producer(s), the woman professionals, and the target audience. Given that this article draws heavily on postfeminist discourses that contend that the gender equality has been achieved in the workplace, there is also a strong implication that women will be able to reach the top once they know these "secrets". Such an outlook promotes the neoliberal notion that women are empowered and only need to self-manage and self-transform in order to succeed, while ignoring the structural issues that hinder women from breaking the 'glass ceiling'.

The first quote, by award-winning film and television producer Lina Tan, was originally published in the October 2010 issue of *Her World*:

"Perseverance and the fact that I really love what I did helped a lot. Women need to be confident about their abilities and less critical of themselves."

This quotation can be interpreted as a response to the unspoken question 'How did you succeed?'. The noun "Perseverance", which is foregrounded, lends itself to the 'Women Owe Success to Hard Work discourse' and constructs Tan's identity as a determined and industrious professional. Work is also represented positively: 'Work as Passion' is invoked via the affective evaluation "I really love what I did". As this quote is intended as advice for the target audience, the first sentence can be read as encouraging women to be persistent, diligent, and passionate about their work in order to be successful.

In contrast, the second sentence reproduces the discourse of 'The Lacking Woman' as the assertion presupposes that women lack confidence and are self-critical. When taken within the context of the article, this seems to insinuate that women are holding themselves back. Readers can respond differently to this. They may accept or reject their positioning by this discourse, or see themselves as 'eavesdropping' on advice presented to 'other women'.

Similarly, the next quote, by Tan Sri Rafidah Aziz, the former Minister of International Trade and Industry, draws on 'The Lacking Woman':

"Women must equip themselves with what it takes to successfully overcome challenges and be pragmatic in life. In today's Malaysia, gender is not an issue."

The presupposition encoded in the first proposition is that women do not have “what it takes to successfully overcome challenges”. In addition, women are also construed as lacking pragmatism, which realises the ‘Women are Emotional/Irrational discourse’. The second sentence unequivocally asserts that gender equality has been achieved in Malaysia; however, the relationship between this and the previous sentence is unmarked. In order for the ideal reader to construct a coherent meaning, she would need to accept the ‘script’ that is being evoked: from the context of this article, the preferred interpretation that she is induced to draw upon is that as empowered and liberated subjects, women should actively work on their selves since any obstacles to success is no longer external, but internal.

This neoliberal trope continues in the next quote by Datuk Farah Khan, chairperson of Melium Group:

“From the Germans, I learnt precision and organisation, from the French, I learnt flair and brand building, from the Italians, style and creativity. You keep growing. As much as I’m soft on the outside, I’m a strong business person. I look like a darling, but I can be tough.”

Through the repeated pattern “From the ... I learnt ...”, the reader is indirectly urged to emulate Khan’s example and acquire a portfolio of skills. The neoliberal imperative to self-transform can also be perceived in the clause “You keep growing”.

Additionally, ‘Feminisation of the Successful Woman’ also emerges from this paragraph. In the penultimate and final sentences, the inclusion of Khan’s feminine physical appearance (“soft on the outside”, “look like a darling”) emphasises the importance for successful women to look feminine. At the same time, her external femininity is directly contrasted against her character and behaviour, which are described using adjectives “strong” and “tough”, which are conventionally indexical of masculinity. These contrastive relational structures incite the reader to adopt stereotypically masculine leadership qualities, as the positioning of “I’m a strong business person” in the independent clause in the penultimate sentence and “I can be tough” in the final independent clause presents these as the recommended traits.

However, a differing view is given in the final quote, by Aireen Omar, CEO of Air Asia Berhad:

“Pick your battles. Be tough only when you need to be so you don’t sweat the small stuff. Perseverance is key and, most importantly, be humble all the time. You’ll be amazed how far you can get from being humble. Whether you’re a man or woman, your work should always speak for itself.”

The reader is instructed to “Be tough only when [she needs] to be”, which implies that women do not always need to display stereotypical masculine behaviour to be successful. It must be noted that even though being “tough” indexes masculinity, the caution against this behaviour is grounded in the ‘Women are Emotional/Irrational discourse’, which is realised through the imperatives “Pick your battles” and “don’t sweat the small stuff”.

Furthermore, the reader is constructed as a neoliberal subject who can achieve success through perseverance. The presupposition built into the proposition “Whether you’re a man or woman, your work should always speak for itself” is that men and women are held to the same standards in the workplace.

The next article from *Her World* also offers suggestions on how women could improve their attitudes and behaviour:

‘Top of the world’, Her World September 2013 (pp.118-121)

Is climbing the corporate ladder really that difficult, or are we just too afraid to go for what we really want? **Averlyn Lim** asks four women at the top of their game to unveil their secrets of success and whether there’s more that we can do to reach for the stars.

The lead paragraph above begins with a rhetorical question that creates the illusion of a social relation of closeness between the text producer(s) and the implied reader not only through the simulation of a two-way interaction, but also by the use of the collective pronoun “we”, which suggests shared experiences and a common identity. The construction of a friendly and helpful persona continues in the second sentence where the writer is the agent of the active verb “asks”, giving the impression that she wants the reader to thrive in the workplace.

‘The Lacking Woman’ is evident in this paragraph. Lexically and structurally, the rhetorical question induces the reader to accept that women are hindered by their personal lack of courage and drive to succeed. The adverbs “really” and “that” in the first clause indicate incredulity that there are structural barriers to women’s

advancement, while the information focus and intonational nucleus of the contrastive structure fall on the latter part of question, invoking the discourse. In this second clause, women's supposed lack of courage is further emphasised and represented as a serious problem by the intensifying adverbs "just" and "too".

In the rhetorical question, the vague pronoun "we" both interpellates women in general as well as sets up the reader as insecure - and hence, in need of the advice prescribed in the article. However, due to the use of the interrogative form as well as claims to solidarity via "synthetic personalisation" (Fairclough 1989: 62) as described earlier, this allegation can appear as innocuous and less objectionable. Nevertheless, all instances of "we" in the lead paragraph exclude high-achieving women, who are implicitly placed on a pedestal for being "at the top of their game" and possessing "secrets of success". In other words, "we" denotes non-membership of this exclusive class of exceptional women. However, it is possible that the reader may 'appropriate' the text for their own ends, for example, by aligning themselves with the role models and construing the text as meant for women who are not as successful as themselves.

Whelehan observes that while postfeminist popular culture portrays the professional world as allowing female success, it also presents challenges that women "have to solve for themselves or in consultation with their close girlfriends" (2010: 156). As this chapter will show, this is certainly reflected in the advice texts analysed. Genres can be understood as diverse ways of acting and interacting linguistically (Chiapello and Fairclough 2002; Fairclough 2003), and the advice-giving genre in the media examined is centred around describing problems and offering solutions to their audience through a friendly older sister persona. A range of potentially problematic discourses, in addition to 'The Lacking Woman', emerge from these texts. However, as they are packaged as sisterly advice from a knowledgeable friend, they are rendered innocuous. Another characteristic of this genre, which this chapter will illustrate, is that despite the use of collective pronouns such as 'we', social issues are presented as consequences of personal choices, and accordingly, the solutions given are reduced to addressing individual needs.

Returning to the extract, 'The Lacking Woman' continues to be invoked in the second sentence. The noun "secrets" implies that women are generally unaware of how to develop their careers and therefore, require guidance. This is reinforced through the implication arising from "whether there's more that we can do to reach for the stars". Given the tone of the preceding rhetorical question and the

fact that the aim of this article is to explicitly offer advice, it can be assumed that the intended answer to this phrase is 'yes'.

Such misgivings about women's professional abilities, which permeate this text, are all the more compelling because they are interspersed with feminist ideas. With the exception of the lead paragraph, 'The Lacking Woman' is produced in direct quotations attributed to the four role models, while seemingly empowering messages are unattributed and produced by the 'voice' of the magazine, as shown in the following paragraph:

A survey jointly conducted by [the] Association of Chartered Certified Accountants (ACCA) and Talent Corp unveils just why there is a lack of women in top positions in this country. One thing's for sure – it's not because we lack the skill, talent or quality. In fact, the main reasons that hinder women from reaching their highest potential are family commitments, maternity benefits, non-existent career flexibility and the lack of practice of equal opportunity in the workforce. However, we shouldn't let it stop us from aspiring to achieve greatness. Take it from these women on how they beat the odds to get to the top

The extract above summarises the results of the TalentCorp and ACCA (2013) study on the underrepresentation of women in senior positions in Malaysia discussed in Chapter 4. Before listing the factors behind this issue, the text producer(s) provides an interpretative formulation of the findings ("it's not because we lack the skill, talent or quality"), which assesses women positively and takes an opposing position to the one in the lead paragraph. This positive evaluation is prefaced and underscored by "One thing's for sure". In the next sentence, the adverb "In fact" stresses that women's progress is impeded by institutional barriers, which are listed explicitly as "family commitments, maternity benefits, non-existent career flexibility and the lack of practice of equal opportunity in the workforce". This, by implication, absolves women from personal culpability. However, these barriers are promptly brushed aside, and in the subsequent sentences, women are called to capitulate to neoliberal edicts of perseverance, self-help, and self-transformation, thereby privatising issues of inequality. The presuppositions built into these final two sentences invoke the 'Women Can Have It All discourse', and the seemingly emancipatory message is delivered through a friendly persona, constructed through the inclusive pronouns

“we” and “us” as well as direct commands (“Take it from these women”) and an informal register (“beat the odds”) that emulate spoken discourse.

Advice from four women who have cracked the ‘glass ceiling’ dominate the article. As we can see in their profiles below, these women are represented as various archetypes, “The Iron Lady”, “The Sensible Leader”, “The Multitasker”, and “The Tough Cookie”:

THE IRON LADY

Chin Suit Fang, mid 50s, has two children and is the Senior Executive Director of Pricewaterhouse Coopers (PWC). She started off as an audit assistant and has been in the industry for 30 years.

THE SENSIBLE LEADER

Datin Maznah Mahbob, mid 50s, has four children and is the CEO & Executive Director Fund Management of AmInvestment Bank Group. She has been in the industry for 30 years.

THE MULTITASKER

Shuba Kumar, 60, has four children and is the principal director of her own company, Wizmark, a management consultation firm. She started off as a group internal auditor at Pricewaterhouse in Australia, and has been in the industry for 38 years.

THE TOUGH COOKIE

Sugunah Verumandy, who is in her early 40s, started off as a public relations executive for Ericsson Telecommunications. She has been in the industry for 20 years and is now the Human Resource Director for General Electric Malaysia.

Apart from “The Sensible Leader”, the archetypes are gendered. “The Iron Lady”, which is an explicit gender reference, contains echoes of the ‘Beware Women discourse’ as “Iron” denotes coldness and inflexibility. “The Multitasker” draws on the familiar feminine stereotype that women are naturally equipped to work on

several tasks at the same time, whereas "The Tough Cookie" is a gendered term for a strong woman, which has juvenile connotations.

These archetypes appear to be randomly assigned to the role models as the women's profiles and advice are highly similar and do not reveal personal traits. All the profiles specify their age, number of children, current role and organisation, starting position, and number of years in the industry, with the exception of Datin Maznah Mahbob, whose initial position is not mentioned, and Sugunah Verumandy, who may not have children. All four women have gained tremendous success in the corporate world, and this information is featured prominently in their profiles above each interview, positioning the women as credible sources of the career advice while invoking the 'Women Can Succeed in Male-Dominated Fields discourse'.

Given the professional achievements of these women, it is notable that their age and number of children are not just included, but always placed immediately after their name, indicating the importance of this information in the construction of the women's identities, even over their professional status. These women's age (mostly mid-50's and above) and its signification of life experience and wisdom give weight to their advice. It can be argued that the foregrounding of their motherhood status is more than a habitual invocation of 'Successful Women as Wives and Mothers'. Firstly, it indirectly conveys the message that working mothers can reach the top of the workplace, lending itself to 'Women Can Have It All'. Secondly, subject positioning the women leaders as mothers can make their opinions on work and motherhood more convincing and true-to-life, especially since the issue of career breaks features prominently in the article.

The first role model presented in the article is Chin Suit Fang, Senior Executive Director of Pricewaterhouse Coopers:

Q: WHY DO YOU THINK THERE ARE SO FEW WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP POSITIONS IN MALAYSIA?

A: "Employers don't recognise the importance of championing women's advancement, viewing it merely as a gender issue instead of a business opportunity. Think about it; female consumers have more spending power these days. It makes good economic sense to put them in decision-making roles as they know what will appeal to their own brethren in the marketplace. Plus, Malaysian women tend to have many self-imposed barriers. This

includes lack of self-confidence in profiling their achievements and being modest about asking for well-deserved promotions; not to mention the ‘guilt’ factor, where they feel they have to be perfect wives, mothers, and career women.”

The question above implies that there should be more women leaders in Malaysia, and the response initially appears to draw on feminist discourses. The assertion “Employers don’t recognise the importance of championing women’s advancement” presupposes that helping women to progress in the workplace is crucial. However, the phrase “championing women’s advancement” raises the implication that the low proportion of women leaders is due to a lack of affirmative action rather than gender discrimination, which is minimised in the adverbial “viewing it merely as a gender issue instead of a business opportunity”. In this antithetical relational structure, formally marked by the contrastive conjunction “instead of”, gender bias is set off against “business opportunit[ies]”. Given that the former is played down via the adverb “merely”, it would seem that in arguing for the increase in women in senior management, capitalist and economic priorities prevail over social justice.

The second part of the response reproduces ‘The Lacking Woman’. Women are blamed for lagging behind their male counterparts (“Malaysian women tend to have many self-imposed barriers”), and criticised for not being sufficiently assertive and self-promoting – qualities that typically index masculinity (Holmes 2006; Baxter 2008b). At the same time, steps are taken so not to offend the audience. The pronoun “they” gives the impression that the advice is not directly addressed to the reader, but to ‘other women’. Additionally, the phrases “their achievements” and “well-deserved promotions” presupposes that women are high achievers who ought to be promoted, which attends to the reader’s positive face. The response ends with an indirect critique of the postfeminist superwoman mystique (Martin 2013a) that was discussed in Chapter 2, while eliding the sources of guilt and pressure as well as the consequences for women if they are unable to live up to social expectations.

The question posed to Chin in the extract below, “What can they do?”, can be read in two ways. It can be interpreted as a call for either collective social action to better women’s working conditions, or individual improvements:

**Q: WOMEN FIND IT DIFFICULT TO RE-ENTER THE WORKFORCE
AFTER A CAREER BREAK. WHAT CAN THEY DO?**

A: “It helps if women take the initiative to kick start their career planning. Female employees should start having conversations early with their superiors before they even plan to start a family, to discuss their career aspirations and map out the areas where the company can help them achieve these goals. During their career break, women should also take a personal interest in staying updated on industry trends, catch-up on reading and maintain ties with their former colleagues.”

Chin’s response preaches individualised female empowerment, construing women as self-responsible and self-determined neoliberal subjects. Women are grammatical agents in the propositions, which implies that their career progression is within their control. The implied reader is prescribed a range of tasks of active self-management (“start having conversations early”, “discuss their career aspirations”, “map out the areas”, “take a personal interest in staying updated on industry trends”, “catch-up on reading”, “maintain ties with their former colleagues”).

The same neoliberal ideas can be observed in another reply to a similar question. This response is attributed Sugunah Verumandy, the Human Resource Director of General Electric Malaysia:

A: “Staying updated and relevant is crucial when women go on a break. With sophisticated technology, information is at the tip of their fingers. In my opinion, the main reason that women face difficulties in returning to work is not because of gender or status, but the lack of continuous learning. It’s important for women who are on a break to keep their knowledge relevant and skill sets upgraded.”

Once again, the reader is urged to self-manage, this time through the nominalisations “Staying updated and relevant” and “continuous learning” as well as the verb phrase “keep their knowledge relevant and skill sets upgraded”. The significance of these is reiterated via the synonyms “crucial” and “important”. Another similarity with Chin’s response is that self-development and self-discipline are required to be maintained even during the women’s career break. However, in this extract, the blame placed on women for their lack of progress is more apparent. There is an explicit denial that gender discrimination plays a significant role in hampering women’s return to the workforce (“the main reason that women face difficulties in returning to work is not because of gender or

status”), and the problem is attributed chiefly to women’s passivity, deploying ‘The Lacking Woman’. This is a particular strong censure in light of the preceding assertion that “With sophisticated technology, information is at the tip of their fingers”.

Such incitement towards active self-management is also clear in the responses of the other role models, including Datin Maznah Mahbob, CEO and Executive Director of an investment bank group:

Q: SHOULD WOMEN CREATE OR BE GIVEN OPPORTUNITIES?

A: “Definitely create opportunities for themselves! Many women make the mistake of waiting for one. Most people are not ingenious enough to give it to you. If a woman can think of ways to add value to the company or business which they work in, suggest them and create that opportunity for yourself. You have to take control and responsibility of your own career.”

In the response, the use of the exclamation, together with the adverb “Definitely”, serves to strongly place the onus for advancement directly on women. Although the phrase “for themselves” could be read as “for all women”, it is clear from the rest of the response that the pronoun “themselves” is singular, encouraging women to work towards personal, rather than collective, goals. As with the previous answers, Datin Maznah prescribes solutions that are individualistic in nature: “think of ways to add value to the company or business”, “suggest them and create that opportunity for yourself” and “take control and responsibility of your own career”. This individualistic attitude is also signalled by the shifts from “for themselves” to “for yourself”, and from “they” to “you” and “your”.

In the extract above, the discourse of ‘The Lacking Woman’ is deployed through the generalisation “Many women make the mistake of waiting for [opportunities]”. The declarative mood of the sentence as well as the absence of a modal verb frames Datin Maznah’s opinion as fact. This disempowering view of professional women features strongly in the following extract:

Q: DESCRIBE THREE PERSONALITY TRAITS WOMEN SHOULD HAVE?

A: “The first one would be confidence that comes from self-knowledge and the understanding of others. When women aren’t confident, they can sometimes react defensively towards others, which is not a good trait to have. I think women by nature are very influential people and that it is one of their strengths they should play-up. Women should also start to accept imperfections in life and work. Women can be quite the perfectionists and because of that, they expect others to be just like them, and that can be very difficult in the workplace.”

The question presupposes that the women lack qualities essential to succeed in the workplace. Datin Maznah’s quote affirms this by accusing women of being insecure, defensive, and hypercritical, which are stereotypically feminine characteristics. This deploys not only the discourse of ‘The Lacking Woman’, but also ‘Beware Women’. This criticism is somewhat mitigated in the third sentence. The assertion that women “are very influential people” seems positive on the surface, but the reader is not informed about what this really means, and the preceding phrase “by nature” embeds this commendation within the biological essentialist view of gender. Overall, the reader is once again urged to self-transform, in accordance with the prevailing ethos of neoliberalism.

The focus on self-discipline and self-reinvention in the responses attributed to the fourth role model, Shuba Kumar, the principal director of a management consulting firm, are also complicit with neoliberalism and postfeminism:

Q: YOU HAVE HELD ON TO MANY SENIOR LEVEL MANAGEMENT POSITIONS OVER THE YEARS WHILE RAISING FOUR CHILDREN. HOW DO YOU MAINTAIN YOUR POSITION IN THE COMPANY?

A: “I have to be committed to my work and family, and find a balance in between. I am vocal and I always make sure that I get my opinion across at work. I am very confident and assertive, and I do not let anyone walk over me. Once you prove that you are competent and knowledgeable, everything else falls into place and people come to you for your opinions and advice. I did not need special privileges as a woman, but I did make it known that I had to go out to attend to my children, and nobody scorned at me as they knew that at

the end of the day, I got my work done. Once you have proven your capabilities, people give you the respect you rightly deserve.”

By drawing attention to Shuba Kumar’s senior positions and motherhood status, the question invokes ‘Women can Succeed in Male-Dominated Fields’ and ‘Women Can Have It All’ discourses. The first three sentences in the answer appear to be a neutral description of her leadership behaviour, but actually perform the speech act of advice-giving, where women are indirectly urged to emulate Shuba Kumar, and be “committed”, “vocal”, “confident”, and “assertive”. This last trait is conventionally indexical of masculinity. In light of the discourses mobilised in the question, the intended inference here seems to be that professional opportunities are present, but women are not being promoted because they do not possess these traits, thus producing ‘The Lacking Woman’.

In the dependent clauses “Once you prove that you are competent and knowledgeable” and “Once you have proven your capabilities”, women are positioned as the agents of the active verb “prove”, thereby constructing women as self-responsible subjects, just as in Chin Suit Fang’s earlier quote. Taken together with their corresponding main clauses “everything else falls into place” and “people give you the respect you rightly deserve”, the existence of gender discrimination and structural barriers to women’s advancement is implicitly denied.

This is reinforced in the penultimate sentence. In this sentence, “special privileges” can be interpreted as a reference to gender equality policies. I argue that representing such policies as “privileges” is political and may leave the reader with the impression that these programmes are not necessary, and perhaps even unmerited and unjust. Shuba Kumar’s assertion that she “did not need” them functions not only to distance the reader from these collectivist policies, but also to position her as the ideal self-reliant neoliberal subject, on whom the reader is indirectly called to model themselves. The proposition “nobody scorned at me as they knew that at the end of the day, I got my work done” not only reinforces ‘Women Owe Success to Hard Work’, but also, taken within the context of the answer, seems to imply that women who do not thrive in their careers are inefficient. Behind this lies the discourse of ‘The Lacking Woman’.

The persistent demand for women to self-transform and work harder can also be seen in the next extract:

Q: DO YOU BELIEVE THAT WE LIVE IN ‘A MAN’S WORLD’; IN ORDER FOR WOMEN TO BE RECOGNISED, WE HAVE TO CHANGE OUR CHARACTER TO FIT IN?

A: “I think we have to change our attitude and not our character. I find that a lot of young women these days lack confidence and get flustered very easily when they are corrected for doing something wrong. They have to learn to accept criticisms, portray a positive image and believe in themselves. With the right attitude and a positive mind set, I assure you that more women will get to the top. Raising children and having a full time career is always a challenge, but think positively, and know that you can do it just like other successful women have. My motto in life is ‘if she can do it, so can I.’”

The question “Do you believe that we live in ‘a man’s world’” is never explicitly answered, but the dominant reading of the question and response, once again, is that gender discrimination is not an issue. Firstly, the scare quotes around the phrase “a man’s world” suggests that the text producers are distancing themselves from the notion that the Malaysian social system is biased towards men. On the contrary, in the second and third sentences of the response, it is implied that women are hindered by internal barriers, such as a lack of self-confidence, hypersensitivity, and negativity, which reinforces ‘The Lacking Woman’ and ‘Beware Women’ discourses. This argument is reinforced by the quantifier “a lot of” and the adverb phrase “very easily”. Subsequently, women are indirectly incited to adopt “the right attitude and a positive mind set”. The reporting verb “assure” and modal verb “will” in the main clause indicate a strong commitment to the truth of their proposition that this will “get [women] to the top”.

The challenges that women face “[r]aising children and having a full time career” are briefly acknowledged towards the end of the response, but instead of proposing real measures to address this issue, women are urged to “think positively” and emulate other successful women, which normalises ‘Mother as Main Parent’ and ‘Home-making as Women’s Work’. Traces of ‘Women Can Have It All’ are evident in the inspirational catchphrases “you can do it” and “if she can do it, so can I”. While empowering on the surface, the advice requires women to improve themselves within the status quo.

We will now examine broadcast texts from *Capital FM*. These discussions also provide advice to women on how to succeed in the workplace. However, one of the main differences in the advice given by the magazine and radio station is that the latter rarely draws on the 'Discourse of Integrating Work and Home'.

The sequence below is from a discussion with Wendy Lee, a professional image consultant and a regular guest on *Capital FM*, on communication challenges that professional women face:

Capital FM 10 January 2013

- 1 Wendy Lee: Yeah I think one of the things we would have to address would
2 be sometimes uh ladies or us right we- we- when we are (.)
3 friendly it can sometimes be misconstrued as (.) you're being
4 too friendly it becomes a little bit too
5 [(.)] flirta[tious right]
6 Xandria Ooi: [Yeah] [eh how do] you deal with that if you're a friendly
7 person tak kan⁷ you [become not friendly]
8 Joanne Kam: [Because maybe sometimes]
9 [you are] just like that you [know]
10 Wendy Lee: [((laugh))]
11 Xandria Ooi: [Yeah]

In her first turn, Lee exhibits awareness of the stereotypical allegation that women flirt their way to the top, but distances herself from it by representing this behaviour as 'friendliness' that "can sometimes be misconstrued" (line 3). The marked hesitation and slight pause preceding the lexical choice "friendly" (lines 2 and 3) as well as the qualifier "a little bit" (line 4) and the pause before "flirtatious" (line 5) indicate a certain reluctance to use the term "flirtatious", possibly due to its sexist connotations. She attempts to mitigate this accusation by using "it" (lines 3 and 4) rather than a personal pronoun, so that it is the woman's conduct that is censured, rather than the woman herself. She also seeks the support of the radio announcers ("right", line 5).

⁷ Malay slang for "It would be odd if"

In making the self-repair from “ladies” to “us” and “we” (line 2), Lee briefly claims solidarity with the radio announcers and the audience, though when reporting how women are viewed, she shifts to the indefinite pronoun “you” (line 3), thereby absolving the speakers and audience from these charges. Likewise, Ooi and Kam adopt this pronoun in their subsequent turns.

Ooi ratifies Lee’s comment (“Yeah”, line 6) even before Lee uses the term “flirtatious”, indicating her familiarity with the stereotype. Nonetheless, like Lee, she represents the behaviour as being “friendly” (lines 6 and 7). The multiple cooperative overlaps and presuppositions underlying Ooi and Kam’s utterances (lines 6-11) demonstrate agreement that women’s friendliness has been misinterpreted, though Kam’s assertion is hedged (“maybe sometimes”, line 8).

However, traces of ‘Beware Women’ can be perceived in their ensuing turns:

- 1 Joanne Kam: You use your (.) [feminine charms to your best]=
- 2 Wendy Lee: [feminine charms right yeah]=
- 3 Xandria Ooi: =Yeah and some people do it to men and women alike

In lines 1 and 2, Kam and Lee simultaneously reformulate friendliness as “feminine charms”, which invokes the sexist stereotype of the manipulative woman. Kam’s utterance characterises women as knowing subjects: not only are they the agents of the active verb “use”, but the prepositional phrase “to their best” also suggests that their supposed employment of their “feminine charms” is deliberate and calculated. Ooi appears to agree with them (line 3), and this agreement is offered enthusiastically without a pause. However, since homosexuality is illegal in Malaysia, by positing that this is how some women engage with both sexes, she plays down the sexual aspect of the women’s behaviour. The discussion continues below:

- 1 Wendy Lee: Well what I would say- what I would suggest would be if
- 2 you’re (.) if you’re if you’re in business right let’s say you’re
- 3 negotiating for something which is (.) uh in finance investment
- 4 or whatever sales or whatever right something that is a bit more
- 5 serious context (.) then tra- don’t don’t do things like giggling
- 6 too much you know tilting your head too much (.) because (.)
- 7 subtle gestures can be seen as too:: (.) flirtatious (.) flir-

8 flirtatious you are trying (.) to get something (.) the easy way
 9 out (.) right
 10 [so you] shouldn't be doing that
 11 Joanne Kam: [Aa::h]
 12 Xandria Ooi: But I guess if you:: (.) if you do that right and that perso::n um
 13 doesn't say or do anything or (.) you know what I mean it's like
 14 sometimes you're not aware when you do stuff like
 15 [that right]
 16 Joanne Kam: [Correct] [most] of the time we are [you know]
 17 Wendy Lee: [(#)] [(((laugh)))]
 18 Xandria Ooi: [yeah yeah]

In the hypothetical interaction that Lee presents in her first turn, there is evidence of the view of male as norm in the business domain. Firstly, the presupposition underlying her utterances is that the business negotiation is conducted with a man. Additionally, by accusing working women of "giggling too much" and "tilting [their] head too much" (lines 5 and 6), Lee's representation of women is predicated on stereotypical femininity. The verb "giggling", in particular, indexes girlishness and a youthful female identity. Lee's disapproval of such behaviour could be partly attributed to the socio-cultural perception of stereotypical masculinity, and not femininity, as the workplace norm. It can be argued that by ascribing behaviour that contradicts expectations of professional conduct to women, Lee indirectly constructs women as 'deviant' and reinforces the view that serious business activities are for men.

Lee avoids accusing women of intentional manipulation – the verb phrase "can be seen" (line 7) presents the pejorative belief that women flirt "to get something the easy way out" (lines 8 and 9) as a perception rather than fact. Neither Kam nor Ooi contest the allegation that women behave in a stereotypically feminine manner in the workplace. Kam's overlapping minimal response (line 11) signals agreement, while Ooi's assertion that such conduct can be unconscious (line 14) presupposes the existence of that behaviour. Kam initially endorses Ooi's proposition via "Correct" (line 16), but once she gains the floor, she accuses women of deliberately behaving in a flirtatious manner, thereby producing the 'Beware Women discourse'. By using "we" (line 16), Kam claims common ground

with the listeners, and imposes particular values on them. The inclusive pronoun also functions as a witnessing device to strengthen her allegation.

In the course of negotiating the appropriate boundaries for women's sexuality in the workplace, the women draw on 'Beware Women' and 'The Lacking Woman':

- 1 Xandria Ooi: And (.) it it get things done so instead of it backfiring in fact a
2 lot of these times it works you know as long as you don't cross
3 a line=
4 Wendy Lee: =Uh that's that's the idea (.) you know
5 [to to strike a balance]
6 Xandria Ooi: [Yeah]
7 Joanne Kam: [You need to] know when to not cross the line I guess

In Ooi's first turn, she implicitly encourages women to use their sexuality in the workplace because it is effective ("it gets things done", line 1; "it works", line 2), which assumes that women are unable to succeed via other means, and mobilises the discourse of 'The Lacking Woman'. However, given that the overt performance of female sexuality has been conflated with success and self-confidence within postfeminist culture (Attwood 2011), some readers may perceive Ooi's advice as empowering. Others, in contrast, might respond more disapprovingly with conservative discourses on female modesty or slut-shaming discourses. Furthermore, the repeated reminders to the listeners "to strike a balance" (line 5) and not to "cross a/the line" (lines 2, 3 and 7) indicate a distrust of women to behave appropriately, deploying 'Beware Women'. The cooperative overlaps in lines 5 to 7 suggest that the radio announcers and their guest share this view about women.

The next set of excerpts below is from a discussion on Sally Helgesen's book 'The Female Advantage: Women's Ways of Leadership' with Lily Cheah, a regular guest on *Capital FM's* 'Success Circuit' segment and an editor with *myStarjob.com*, a pullout in *The Star*, which also published *Clove*:

Capital FM 10 September 2013

- 1 Lily Cheah: And the five things are so the first thing is u::h is the high value
2 that we place on relationships
3 Debs: [Aa::h]
4 Lily Cheah: [The] second thing is our preference for direct communication
5 Debs: Uh do we have a preference for direct commu- communication
6 though I find we beat around the bush
7 [a little bit ((laugh))]
8 Lily Cheah: [((laugh)) But we like] to talk-lah⁸ right
9 Debs: Yeah [this is] true=
10 Lily Cheah: [We like] =we like to talk to somebody:: (.) we like you
11 know air out you know things and explain everything
12 Debs: And it's probably why we [beat around the bush]
13 Lily Cheah: [delve into it] yeah and really
14 delve into it exactly

The discussion about women's leadership behaviour contains strong evidence of essentialism. Drawing on Helgesen's book, Cheah specifies two leadership qualities that supposedly place women at an advantage in the workplace, which produces 'Women Can Succeed in Male-Dominated Fields' and 'The Female Advantage' discourses. While the first characteristic (lines 1 and 2) is relationally-oriented and stereotypically coded as 'feminine', the second (line 4) is more transactional and traditionally seen as 'masculine'. The radio announcer, Debs, indicates her agreement with the first trait via her minimal response (line 3), but questions the second (line 5). Not only does she draw on the stereotype that women are indirect in their speech, but her use of the idiom "beat around the bush" (lines 6 and 12) suggests ineptitude, and this invokes the discourse of 'The Lacking Woman', although they are ostensibly discussing women's positive qualities. Cheah's laughter (line 8) seems to imply that she recognises truth in this feminine stereotype and finds it humorous. She then evokes another stereotype: that women talk a lot (lines 8, 10-11). Debs assents to this (line 9), and uses it to reaffirm her earlier point that women "beat around the bush" (line 12). Cheah's "yeah" (line 13) and "exactly" (line 14) ratify this stereotype.

⁸ Malaysian English particle, which is used here to emphasise a point

There are a few ways the women alleviate the force of their negative assessment of women in this sequence. One is the use of the inclusive “we” and “our”, which represents their opinions as shared experience. Additionally, due to the lack of reporting verbs, Cheah’s views merges with Helgesen’s, and can appear as common sense. Debs also mitigates her accusation through the phrase “a little bit” and by framing it as an act of humour by echoing Cheah’s laughter (lines 7 and 8).

In the next sequence, Cheah presents another feminine leadership quality from Helgesen’s book:

- 1 Lily Cheah: And lastly uh we’re more comfortable leading from the centre (.)
- 2 and building a web of influence (.) as opposed to using like er (.)
- 3 a traditional (.) hierarchy of of authority (.) so instead of
- 4 instructing you (.) uh we’re also quite comfortable being part of
- 5 the tea::m and forming the relationships (.) uh and then
- 6 instructing from from that sort of context
- 7 Debs: I wonder if that’s a little bit maternal (.) you know like you kinda
- 8 wanna be:: your child’s [best friend at the same] time
- 9 Lily Cheah: [Everyone (.) correct]
- 10 Debs: So you try and do that in the workplace so you’re (.) the friend
- 11 but at the same time you’re the boss so you try and blur those
- 12 lines [and get] the impact that you want
- 13 Lily Cheah: [Ye::s]

In her first turn, Cheah invokes the stereotype that women are collaborative and non-hierarchical (lines 1 to 5). This feminine leadership style is assessed positively via its explicit juxtaposition against “traditional” authoritative behaviour (lines 2 and 3), where the adjective “traditional” seems to carry negative connotations in this context. Through the adjective “maternal” (line 7) and by labelling women’s subordinates as their “child” (line 8), Debs associates this behaviour with the ‘Mother’ archetype. Although this appears to be a compliment on the surface, the shift in the use of pronouns suggests otherwise. Cheah had initially employed the inclusive “we” in her commendation of women. However, from line 7 onwards, both women utilise the indefinite pronouns “you” and “your”, which allows Cheah and Debs to distance themselves from the archetype.

Cheah moves on to discuss negative traits that purportedly prevent women from being successful leaders:

- 1 Lily Cheah: U::h there's this tendency to think (.) no-lah⁹ I don't need (#)
2 myself
3 Debs: [Yeah I don't want to be known]
4 Lily Cheah: [(#)] work will s- my good work will
5 speak for itself and that's the first thing women struggle with so
6 we need to (.) learn to put ourselves out there=
7 Debs: =Mmm

By claiming that women "don't want to be known" (line 3) and "need to learn to put [themselves] out there" (line 6), Debs and Cheah jointly represent professional women as not sufficiently assertive and self-promoting, thus articulating 'The Lacking Woman'. As stated earlier in the analysis of 'Top of the world', these two traits are typically indexical of masculinity. Cheah and Debs avoid directly addressing the listener. Through the use of "I", "myself", and "my" (lines 1 to 4), they are able to claim access to the listener's thoughts, yet appear to direct the negative evaluation at themselves. However, when giving advice to the audience, Cheah shifts to the inclusive "we" and "ourselves" (lines 6) to establish common ground and claim solidarity with the audience.

In the sequence above, women are encouraged to adopt the masculinised stereotype of leadership that is self-promoting and competitive (Baxter 2008b). In the next exchange, women are directly compared to men and 'The Lacking Woman' continues to be reinforced:

- 1 Lily Cheah: So this is building relationships with people (#) she actually says
2 that uh men (.) have a (.) they're better at forming a first
3 impression than women (.) [**in general**] right=
4 Debs: [Aa::h] =okay

In contrast to the previous sequences, Cheah uses the reporting phrase "she actually says that" (lines 1 and 2) when presenting Helgesen's opinion that

⁹ Malaysian English particle, which is used here to emphasise a point

women are less effective than men in forming a good first impression, which allows Cheah to distance herself from this criticism of women. She also seems to avoid directly censuring the listener by using the noun "women" (line 3) rather than a personal pronoun. Stressing on "in general" (line 3), she impersonalises the accusation further to allay any risks of offending her audience. By seeking Debs's concurrence ("right", line 3) and receiving it ("okay", line 4), the negative view of women is set up as common sense.

In addition to Debs, there was a male radio announcer present, Non. However, he did not contribute to the discussion until the end:

- 1 Non: There is a fourth thing (.) men
- 2 Debs: [[[laugh]]]
- 3 Lily Cheah: [[[laugh]]]
- 4 Non: More often than not will be the stumbling block
- 5 Lily Cheah: ((laugh))
- 6 Debs: Aww::

It is unclear what "men" (line 1) refers to. Possibilities include a patriarchal social system, the existence of a 'boys' club' in the workplace, or sexist men. It is notable that unlike their discussion of Helgesen's views, the two women do not seem to take this point seriously, as indicated by their laughter (lines 2, 3 and 5) and Debs's minimal response "Aww" (line 6). Beyond these, the women do not orient in any other way to Non's gender reference, and this "fourth" (line 1) issue is brushed aside.

The next text also relates to the characteristics of women leaders. Here, *Her World* readers are presented with a quiz in order to learn how to be a good boss:

'What kind of boss are you?', *Her World* May 2013 (pp.150-152)

Congratulations! After years of slaving, you've finally become the boss! How exactly are you going to manage your team? Do you play nice or take on the 'boss-from-hell' role? Take this quiz to find out!

The lead paragraph above establishes the agenda of the article through the question "Do you play nice or take on the 'boss-from-hell' role", which polarises women leaders into two stereotypical categories and limits women to a restricted

range of roles in the workplace. While the adjective “nice” seems to reinforce ‘Feminisation of Successful Women’, the preceding verb “play” implies that being “nice” is a disingenuous act. This implication, along with the noun “boss-from-hell” realises ‘Beware Women’.

As we shall see below, the quiz referred to in the lead paragraph will force women leaders into three subject positions. The extensive use of the pronoun “you” serves multiple functions: to claim a close social relationship with the reader, and to assume access to the reader’s thought processes in order to constitute her in particular gendered ways. Such strategic use of the pronoun can be observed repeatedly in the article, including in the results of the quiz:

WHAT’S YOUR SCORE?

MOSTLY A’s

THE MICROMANAGER

Your to-do list is overflowing yet you still refuse to pass on projects to your team members. You have a certain style of doing things and you are not confident that anyone will be able to achieve the same results as you. You believe your assistant will forget to place that important phone call or misplace an important document.

The first archetype offered to women leaders by this quiz is the Micromanager, which draws on the gendered stereotype of the difficult woman boss and produces the dominant ‘Beware Women discourse’. ‘The Micromanager’ is chastised for displaying independence and not requiring support from her team members, which are stereotypically masculine traits, marking her out as deviant from the expected gendered norm. In the first sentence, the phrase “yet you still refuse”, when taken within context, insinuates inflexibility and irrationality, especially since the verb “refuse” has a volitional quality.

The use of “you” in the evaluations “you are not confident” and “You believe” not only directly addresses the idealised reader, but also allows the text producers to attribute qualities and beliefs to the reader and subject position her as a weak leader.

The ‘Beware Women discourse’ can also be clearly perceived in the second archetypal role offered:

MOSTLY B's

THE QUEEN BEE

You delegate work well to your team members but refuse to get your hands dirty as you are already well past that stage and are now the boss. You would rather use the time to enjoy a nice lunch and let your team members slave in the office, as it is your job to do so. Because of this, your team members do not respect you.

This female prototype is vilified for failing to take on a supportive and communal role, which is traditionally seen as 'feminine'. In the first two sentences, the verbs "refuse" and "let" as well as the phrase "You would rather" imply a degree of deliberateness and mental culpability. The stereotype of the horrible woman boss is further emphasised through the use of the exaggerated juxtaposition "enjoy a nice lunch and let your team members slave". In addition, the lexical choice "slave" entails that the woman is a slave-driver. There are traces of the 'double bind' as the idealised reader is expected to be hierarchical and authoritative ("delegate work well") and collaborative ("get your hands dirty") at the same time.

The third subject position below is regarded more positively than the previous two. However, there are traces of the discourse of 'The Lacking Woman':

MOSTLY C'S

THE MENTOR

You are the boss that everyone wants to work with. You give your staff praises when they perform, feedback and advice as well as opportunities to develop their skills. You care about their welfare and always put their needs above yours. However, you have to be careful not to let this get in the way of being an effective boss.

There is an implicit cause-effect relation between the first sentence and subsequent two. 'The Mentor' is commended because she displays traits firmly associated with femininity. Through lexical choices such as "give ... praises", "care about their welfare" and "always put their needs above yours", 'The Mentor' is

framed as a nurturing, self-sacrificing 'workplace mother', and the idealised reader is urged to adopt this role.

In the final sentence, the tone of the text shifts to direct advice-giving, and the personal pronoun "you" is used to constitute relations of authority, rather than solidarity, between the text producers and the reader. The reader is cautioned "not to let this get in the way of being an effective boss", which implies that while 'The Mentor' is well-liked among her staff, she too is an ineffective leader, not unlike the 'The Micromanager' and 'The Queen Bee'. This reinforces the discourse of 'The Lacking Woman', where woman professionals are simply never good enough.

The article then proceeds to give guidance on how women within each category could improve themselves:

Stop trying to control everything and learn how to trust your employees.
Listen to your employees' input before making a decision. Empower your employees by giving them more tasks but check in with them.

The advice above, aimed at 'The Micromanager', contains a series of imperatives that advocate a combination of leadership behaviour that indirectly index both femininity (sharing power, promoting mutual trust) and masculinity (enacting authority by delegating tasks) (Schnurr and Mak 2011). In contrast, the advice given to 'The Queen Bee' encourages a less authoritative approach to leadership:

You will earn more respect and loyalty if you are not afraid to get your hands dirty. Work together with your team to meet a deadline. Have more patience with your staff and offer the occasional praise when they achieve success.

Several verbal phrases stress on the relational aspects of leadership ("get your hands dirty", "Work together with your team", "Have more patience", "offer ... praise"). Relationally-oriented behaviours are stereotypically coded as 'feminine' (Schnurr and Mak 2011). The same theme emerges in the advice given to 'The Mentor':

The best mentors start the teaching process by encouraging discussion and listening to their employees. They offer insight and don't only help to resolve specific challenges. Be open-minded even if your employee's style differs from yours.

For example, the phrases “encouraging discussion” and “listening to their employees” urge the reader to utilise more relational strategies. In the second sentence, the contrast set up between “offer insight” and “resolve specific challenges” endorses ‘change-oriented’ rather than ‘goal-oriented’ leadership. Likewise, the imperative to “Be open-minded even if your employee’s style differs from yours” promotes ‘transformational’ leadership based on openness and a respect for diverse work styles. However, this advice to adopt leadership behaviours that are indirectly indexical of femininity ignores the fact that not only do many workplaces associate leadership with stereotypically masculine communication strategies, but women leaders also risk being negatively assessed as incompetent if they behave in a conventionally feminine way (Marra, Schnurr and Holmes 2006; Mullany 2007).

8.1.2 Addressing Gender Discrimination in the Workplace

This section examines three texts that provide advice to women facing gender discrimination and sexual harassment in their workplace. The first article attempts to shed light on the reasons behind the gender pay gap. As with the texts examined earlier, it generally ignores structural and experiential barriers that women face. Women’s lower pay is mainly attributed to their occupational and lifestyle choices:

‘Are You Still Underpaid?’, Her World February 2013 (pp.120-123)

Till today, it is still predominantly a woman’s role to manage her family and household. Our determination to have a better work-life balance is the reason why women are more than willing to accept a lower pay package. Melissa [Norman, Managing Director of headhunting company Kelly Services] says that employers are willing to pay a premium and a higher salary package but they also expect performance and results on a ‘shorter runway’ in return, which is something that it not to [sic] easy to do when you’ve a family waiting at home for you to tend to them. The only way out is to work that runway as hard as the men.

The first sentence could be interpreted as subverting ‘Home-making as Women’s Work’ and ‘Mother as Main Parent’ discourses. The prepositional phrase “Till today” and the adverb “still” seem to imply a negative attitude towards the fact that, even now, the brunt of housework and childcare responsibilities tend to fall on women. However, the text then mobilises the rhetoric of choice in the second

sentence via “Our determination” and “more than willing”, which positions the reader as agentive. This choice to “accept a lower pay package” in exchange for “a better work-life balance” is construed as universal through the inclusive pronoun “Our”. This reinforces not only the ‘Women Can’t Have It All’ discourse, but also the two discourses that had been ostensibly resisted in the first sentence. An active reader, nonetheless, may choose to reject this rhetoric and respond with the feminist equal pay discourse.

Additionally, in the third sentence, the clause “employers are willing to pay a premium and a higher salary package” implies that the gender pay gap is not due to gender discrimination. On the other hand, the implication underlying the subsequent clause in the same sentence (“they also expect performance and results”) is that working mothers are paid less because they do not perform and deliver results. The relative clause “which is something that it not to [sic] easy to do when you’ve a family waiting at home for you to tend to them” once again reproduces ‘Women Can’t Have It All’, ‘Home-making as Women’s Work’ and ‘Mother as Main Parent’ discourses, in addition to ‘The Busy Mother Juggling Work and Home’. Despite this outlook, the reader is still incited to work “as hard as the men”, which assumes that men are more productive employees than women and that they receive higher wages than women solely because of this. These propositions are attributed to an expert, which lends credibility to the claim.

Part of the article focuses on career advice by female C-suite executives, who are indirectly presented as role models. By highlighting individual success stories, the text reinforces the ‘Women Can Succeed in Male-Dominated Fields’ discourse:

TAKE IT FROM THEM

“Don’t leave before you leave. Stay in. Keep your foot on the gas pedal, until the very day you need to leave to take a break for a child and then make your decisions. Don’t make decisions too far in advance, particularly ones you’re not even conscious you’re making.”

Sheryl Sandberg, CEO of Facebook, mother of two

The section heading is in the form of an imperative, which urges the reader to accept the advice offered in this section. Similarly, the first quotation contains a series of commands, which sets up the reader as in need of guidance, invoking the discourse of ‘The Lacking Woman’. In contrast to the idealised reader,

Sandberg is implicitly established as an authority on achieving career success while having a family. Both her high-powered position (which is stated incorrectly – she is the Chief Operating Officer of Facebook) and motherhood status are specified in bold font directly below the quote, which increases the legitimacy of her advice and reproduces the ‘Women Can Have It All discourse’. In fact, through the adverbial “particularly ones you’re not even conscious you’re making”, she assumes access to the women’s subconscious.

Taken within the context of this article, the imperatives in the quotation (“Don’t leave before you leave. Stay in. Keep your foot on the gas pedal”) seem to imply that women do not receive equal pay as men because they are less focused and committed in their jobs, thus reinforcing ‘The Lacking Woman’ further. On the other hand, feminist discourses challenging social expectations that result in some women lowering their career aspirations and taking unpaid caregiving roles are absent from Sandberg’s quote.

The next one, attributed to Alice Korngold, founder of Korngold Consulting, encourages women to adjust their ambitions and explore opportunities outside of the corporate world rather than demand for the dismantling of social barriers:

“There is an abundance of boards with no glass ceilings. Consequently, non-profit boards provide extraordinary opportunities for women to engage at the highest levels of leadership.”

The existence of the ‘glass ceiling’ is presupposed in the first sentence, but the acuteness of the issue is minimised through noun phrases such as “an abundance of boards with no glass ceilings”, “extraordinary opportunities for women”, and “the highest levels of leadership”. Although the status quo is not challenged, the assertions suggest the belief that women can be – and should be – leaders. This belief is also evident in the quotation by Illene Gordon, CEO of Corn Products:

“The biggest myth I’d like to set to rest is that women can’t have a family and a successful career. The skills that make a good business leader – organisation, drive, trust, delegation and compassion – also go a long way to balance the responsibilities of work and family life.”

The notion that women are unable to have both a family and a thriving career is dismissed as the “biggest myth”, thereby deploying ‘Women Can Have It All’. This

discourse is reinforced by a positive construction of identity, where working mothers are bestowed both transactional and relational leadership behaviours.

In contrast to the quotes above, the next one by Alexandra Lebenthal, President and CEO of Lebenthal & Company, is placed in a larger typeface in the final page of the article, making it more distinctive than the others:

Ask and she shall receive! Women often find it hard to ask for things, whether it's a business opportunity or a salary rise. We simply expect others to recognise our value and hard work. Asking for what you want in a gracious thoughtful way often results in getting what you want, so put your fears aside and ask for what you want. You might just get it!

This quotation is quite explicit in its view that women lack assertiveness, which is a stereotypically masculine trait, and encourages the reader to be bolder. The direct accusation that "Women often find it hard to ask for things" and the imperative "put your fears aside" construes women as unconfident and articulates the discourse of 'The Lacking Woman'. Similarly, advising the reader to ask "in a gracious thoughtful way" suggests that professional women do not possess appropriate negotiation skills and may lack tact, which again produces 'The Lacking Woman'.

These views are used to blame women for the inequity that they experience, and to indirectly deny the existence of workplace discrimination. The imperative "Ask and she shall receive!", which paraphrases a Bible verse, infers that the gender wage gap persists because women do not ask for a higher salary. The modal verb "shall" entails that if women were to follow the advice given, they should receive a better pay, though this certainty is mitigated by the choice of modality in the final sentence "You might just get it".

There are interesting shifts in the pronouns employed in this quote. The impersonal "she" is used in the imperative, before the negative evaluation of women in the second sentence. Likewise, the impersonal noun "Women" can be seen in that direct accusation. However, in the subsequent sentence, the inclusive "we" and "our" are applied. This could be because the presupposition embedded in the assertion is that women are valuable and hardworking employees, and using those inclusive pronouns allows the text producers to not only establish common ground with the audience, but to also attend to their positive face. In

the final two sentences, the second person pronouns “you” and “your” are used to give advice, which constitutes relations of authority, rather than solidarity.

The next two excerpts are taken from a regular segment on *Capital FM* called ‘Talking to Mars’, which features male celebrity guests who try to help the female audience navigate relationship and work issues from a male perspective. ‘The Lacking Woman’ as well as the stereotype of the ‘emotional/irrational woman’ is inherent within the premise of the show. In this particular exchange, the radio announcers and their guest, Gavin Yap, discuss an actual case where a woman had been overlooked for a promotion:

Capital FM 13 August 2013

- 1 Gavin Yap: I would imagine that probably the- the guys maybe they just
2 they’re just probably a little bit more **pally** with the bosses
3 [as well] you know like they you know [(#)]
4 Xandria Ooi: [Mmm]
5 Joanne Kam: [They] go out for sirap
6 bandu::ng¹⁰
7 Gavin Yap: Yeah and you know Milo ais¹¹ that sort of thing you know
8 ((laugh))
9 [and ((laugh))]
10 Joanne Kam: [((laugh))] Lots of Milo ais=
11 Gavin Yap: =Lots of Milo ais you know but but you know it’s it’s like the
12 in-thing to do Milo ais in shot glasses=
13 Joanne Kam: =Yes [(#)]
14 Gavin Yap: [Umm] (.) so that’s probably o- (.) that probably factors
15 into maybe why he was er noticed before she was

In Yap’s first turn, he suggests the possibility that the woman’s male colleague, generalised as “the guys” (line 1), was promoted because he is on friendlier terms with their boss (“more pally”, line 2). While he uses the explicit gender reference “guys” (line 1), this does not automatically make gender pertinent to

¹⁰ A local drink made from milk and cordial syrup

¹¹ Iced Milo (a chocolate and malt beverage produced by Nestle, which is popular in Malaysia)

the issue at hand. However, the relevance of gender becomes clearer as the interaction develops. Yap is initially vague about why he thinks the woman's colleague would be closer to their boss, and appeals to a shared understanding with Kam ("you know like they you know", line 3). Kam is slightly more direct in her turn and suggests that the man is the boss's drinking buddy. As Malaysia is a Muslim-majority country, the media avoids making overt references to alcohol. Hence, "sirap bandung" (lines 5 and 6) can be perceived as a metaphor for alcoholic drinks. Since culturally in Malaysia, drinking is still predominantly a masculine activity (among non-Muslims), Kam's response can be considered an orientation to gender. This is an example of how metaphors can index gender (see Section 5.5).

Yap endorses Kam's inference ("Yeah", line 7) and mobilises another metaphor for alcohol: "Milo ais" (line 7). In line 12, the verb phrase "do Milo ais in shot glasses" confirms that both terms "sirap bandung" and "Milo ais" are used as substitutes for alcoholic drinks. The multiple references to "Milo ais" (lines 10-12) are indicative of the interactants' belief that the existence of a 'boys' club' played an important role in why the woman had not advanced in her workplace. However, their laughter (lines 8-10) implies that they do not take the issue seriously. Their belief is made explicit at the end of the sequence ("that probably factors into maybe why he was er noticed before she was", lines 14-15), though Yap alleviates the force of his claim via the adverbs "probably" and "maybe".

Prior to the sequence below, Yap recommends that the woman speaks to her boss:

- 1 Gavin Yap: And she has the advantage as a woman of being able to **do** that
- 2 and so (.) and I don't know why this is but it always feels like
- 3 it's a lot easier for a woman to bring this sort of thing up with
- 4 her boss than it is for a guy (.) a guy would if a guy brings up
- 5 this sort of thing I think he comes across a little bit (.) petulant
- 6 where where where where somehow when a woman brings it up
- 7 that that doesn't register so much=
- 8 Xandria Ooi: =Mmm::

Yap makes gender pertinent to the discussion via the multiple uses of the gendered nouns "woman" and "guy" (lines 1 to 4). By claiming that women have

"the advantage" (line 1) in the given situation and "it's a lot easier for a woman to bring this sort of thing up with her boss than it is for a guy" (lines 3 and 4), Yap invokes 'The Female Advantage'. This underlying discourse is strengthened not only by the adverb "always" (line 2), but also by use of the impersonal "it ... feels like" (line 2) which implies a shared sentiment within society, thereby according Yap's personal belief common sense status.

Although Yap initially states that he "[does not] know why this is" (line 2), presuppositions that draw on the 'Women Are Emotional/Irrational discourse' are embedded in his juxtaposition between how men and women are perceived for confronting their bosses (lines 4 to 7). It could be argued that because Yap expects women to be emotional (or "petulant", line 5), such behaviour is therefore unmarked ("doesn't register so much", line 7) when adopted by women. This indirectly reinforces the dominant 'Beware Women discourse'. While neither announcer explicitly takes up his orientation to gender at this point of the conversation, Ooi's minimal response (line 8), which immediately follows Yap's turn without a pause, can be interpreted as support.

Unlike in the exchange above, Yap does not explicitly orient to gender in the sequence below, which is an issue in itself:

- | | | |
|----|--------------|---|
| 1 | Gavin Yap: | Cos it needs to be addressed because it clearly bugs her you |
| 2 | | know and er (.) and (.) you know if (.) maybe in in while having |
| 3 | | this conversation she might (#) e::r sort of suggest the |
| 4 | | possibility of other places within the company where she might |
| 5 | | (.) where her (.) qualities might er make her more easily noticed |
| 6 | | [so she'll] be (.) more eligible for er promotion in the future |
| 7 | Xandria Ooi: | [Mmm::] |
| 8 | Joanne Kam: | Well er yeah that's that's one way to go about it (.) well (.) as |
| 9 | | you can see you know we've got er (.) good sense from Gavin |
| 10 | | Yap so for those of you who are going through any situation |
| 11 | | whether it's at wo::rk or your personal li::fe and you've always |
| 12 | | wondered how (.) the other side think okay you can give us a |
| 13 | | call a::nd you know chat with us |

In his turn above, Yap downplays the possible gender discrimination that the woman experienced. The dependent clause "because it clearly bugs her" (line 1)

implies that she should speak to her boss only because she is upset and needs to clear the air, rather than because it is a serious problem. Moreover, she is advised to request for a transfer to a different department, which ignores the likelihood that a 'boys' club' exists elsewhere in the organisation. This also contains echoes of neoliberal rhetoric that demands individuals to make personal adjustments and compromises in order to succeed in the workplace, instead of requiring companies to address and eliminate institutionalised discrimination.

In contrast to Ooi's minimal response (line 7), which seems to demonstrate agreement with Yap, Kam begins with marked hesitation ("Well er yeah that's that's", line 8) before offering explicit support by evaluating his advice as "good sense" (line 9). She invites the audience to share this view through the phrase "as you can see" (lines 8 and 9).

In the following extract, the radio announcers discuss the issue of sexual harassment in the workplace with the station's 'resident life coach', Zarina Zainal. Prior to the exchange below, she had introduced a case where her male colleague had been accused of sexual harassment by his secretary, who was her cousin's wife. As part of the investigation, the human resources department had asked for her views about both the man and the woman involved. As we will see in the analysis, she draws on 'Victim-blaming' and 'Beware Women' discourses:

Capital FM 25 October 2012

- 1 Zarina Zainal: Yeah so I told them honestly I said well in my particular (.)
- 2 case I go out with this particular director for lunch (.) you
- 3 know we've uh (.) we've (.) done a lot of projects togethe::r
- 4 I've been alone with him on many occasions (.) and I find him
- 5 to be a very respectable man he's never done (.) anything to
- 6 indicate such a thing but then again I'm a flirt you see (.)
- 7 [so (#) so] maybe=
- 8 Xandria Ooi: [((laugh)) oh] =you're not a dove or an owl
- 9 Zarina Zainal: Yeah [I'm] a peacock=
- 10 Xandria Ooi: [Yeah] =you're a peacock [ok]
- 11 Zarina Zainal: [I'm] a peacock so it
- 12 could also be that he would do just bounced off my face you
- 13 [know]

- 14 Xandria Ooi: [Right]
 15 Zarina Zainal: But then again I found him very respectable and a very good
 16 man (.) in contrast (.) my cousin's wife is a dove (.) she's not at
 17 all exposed she comes from (.) kinda the outskirts of KL (.)
 18 and it was her first big job

In Zarina Zainal's narration of a real-life sexual harassment case, she constitutes the man involved positively through the adjectival phrases "very respectable" (lines 5 and 15) and "very good" (line 15). In addition, the nouns "director" (line 2) and "projects" (line 3) (as opposed to more general lexical choices such as "him" and "work") also position him as a professional.

On the contrary, the woman's identity is constructed in a different manner. Earlier in the show, Zarina Zainal had explained the '4 Bird Personality Test' to Ooi and Kam. According to this test, people fall into one of four 'bird personality types' (Power of Positivity n.d.): dove, owl, peacock or eagle. In line 16, she categorises her cousin's wife as a "dove". Although the dove personality type is associated with a range of traits such as patience, introversion and gullibility, it can be argued that the invoked category of "dove" mainly implies gullibility since the adverbial phrase "not at all exposed" (lines 16 and 17) as well as the noun phrases "the outskirts of KL" and "first big job" (lines 17 and 18) represent the woman as a naïve country bumpkin. Taken together, these raise the possibility that the woman could have misinterpreted the man's behaviour.

Moreover, in lines 5 and 6, Zarina Zainal asserts that in her own interactions with him, "he's never done anything to indicate such a thing" before conceding that she may not have noticed his advances because she is flirtatious. However, the possibility that he may have displayed sexually inappropriate behaviour with her was not stated explicitly, but merely suggested tentatively via the adverb "maybe" (line 7). The likelihood of the man's guilt is further reduced by Ooi's laughter (line 8) and the change in the focus of the talk from the man's behaviour to Zarina Zainal's personality, metaphorised as a "peacock" (lines 9-11). In line 12, she once again mentions the possibility that he could have been inappropriate but she had not noticed. However, Ooi merely responds with a singular non-committal "Right" before Zarina Zainal proceeds to discursively construct the identities of both parties as described in the previous paragraph. Such talk sustains the myth that women frequently make false accusations of sexual

harassment or rape, which seems to be a dangerous message to be conveyed by someone who is referred to as a 'life coach' and is seen as an expert.

8.1.3 Returning to the Workforce

Several texts in the dataset endorse the progressive stance that women can successfully integrate having a family and a career. In the article from *Her World* below, which offers advice to mothers who want to return to the workforce, the emancipatory 'Women Can Have It All discourse' is heavily drawn on and foregrounded. However, this is articulated together with a configuration of discourses that subtly contradicts and undermines the former:

'Suit up to move up!', *Her World* October 2012 (pp.114-116)

World bodies are beginning to recognise the negative impact of mothers exiting the workforce. We work on getting you back in. **Marie Lim** writes.

The extract above is the lead paragraph that immediately follows the article's headline. In the first sentence, "mothers exiting the workforce" is constructed as a problem via the noun phrase "negative impact". The thematisation of "World bodies" serves to indirectly signify this issue as an important topic even prior to its introduction.

The next sentence then promises a solution to this problem, that is, to help the 'ideal reader' – directly interpellated by the personal pronoun "you" – to return to the workplace. From the onset, the text producers claim a social relation of closeness with the implied reader not only through the use of the personal pronouns "We" and "you", but also through the setting up of a shared presupposition that she wants to resume employment.

Since the text producers frequently address the reader directly throughout this article, it is essential to establish the text's ideal reader at this point of the analysis. Given that the phrases "mothers exiting the workforce" and "getting you back in" are semantic opposites, "you" can be reasonably interpreted as mothers who have left their jobs. One inference generated from this problem-solution schema is that it is possible for women to be both a mother and professionally employed, reinforcing the 'Women Can Have It All discourse' which is evident throughout the article.

However, at the same time, the paragraph positions the stay-at-home mother as someone who is dependent on others. For example, in the active construction

"We work on getting you back in", the "work" is performed by the agent "We", i.e. the text producers, thereby setting up the implied reader as the passive recipient of help and guidance while playing down her own role in re-entering the workforce. For this reason, the synthetic personalisation achieved through the use of the personal pronouns "We" and "you" does not simply constitute relations of solidarity between the text producers and the reader, but also relations of authority.

The lead paragraph is followed by the first main body paragraph below:

The idea of launching back into full-time work can be a daunting prospect for any woman who has taken time out to have children. But nations depend on it. "Women today have been described as the main driving force behind decades of growth," says Johan Merican, Chief Executive Officer of TalentCorp Malaysia Berhad ... From an economic point of view, swapping playdates for the boardroom can help increase double-income households and reduce the poverty level. Johan adds, "Talent comes in all shapes and sizes – new mothers and mature women with grown children included. Such diversity can help provide alternative perspectives and positive change to an organisation."

In this paragraph, working women are represented positively, both explicitly and implicitly, for example, through the associative noun phrase "the main driving force behind decades of growth" and the indirect interpellation "Talent". What is more, the adjective "main" in the first example implies that women are more significant contributors to economic growth than men. At the end of the paragraph, the juxtaposition of "new mothers" and "mature women with grown children" leaves a strong impression that women can have a career at any stage of motherhood, thus invoking 'Women Can Have It All'.

For additional emphasis, the text uses direct speech from the CEO of TalentCorp. However, this direct speech is almost identical to part of a newsletter published by the executive search company, GSI, two years earlier:

Women today have been described as the main driving force behind decades of growth ... Talent comes in all shapes and sizes and from various background and lifestyles - mothers and older women included – and such diversity can bring positive change to the organisation. For example, in a traditionally male-dominated industry, women can not only bring a refreshing change to the workplace but also present alternative perspectives (GSI Executive Search 2010).

Irrespective of whether Merican had paraphrased GSI in his interview or the *Her World* text producers had embedded the restatement within Merican's direct speech, it is likely intended to flatter the implied reader and persuade them to return to the workplace. As such, it is positioned prominently in the first body paragraph.

It is problematic to interpret the first body paragraph of this *Her World* article as solely empowering. Firstly, the traditional construction of women's other-centredness can be perceived. Mothers are encouraged to return to the workplace for the benefit of their country, families, and future employers, while 'Work as Self-Actualisation' and 'Work as Passion' discourses are absent from the discussion. Secondly, although "playdates" and "boardroom" are not semantic opposites, the verb "swapping" frames motherhood and career as binary categories, demonstrating how the construction of new contrasts can reify the work/home dichotomy (see Section 5.5). Furthermore, the assertion "swapping playdates for the boardroom" is evidently made from a place of privilege - the lexical choices "playdates" and "boardroom" indirectly interpellate mothers from a much higher social class, whose return to the workplace will likely widen the growing wealth gap in the country rather than empower and lift poor women and their families out of poverty.

In addition, stay-at-home mothers are conceptualised as afraid of life's challenges outside the home, and 'The Lacking Woman' is evident. The paragraph opens with the sweeping statement that "any woman" who has left her job to have children can find the idea of returning to the workplace "daunting". Once more, the text producers claim authority to attribute characteristics to their idealised subjects, in this case, a lack of self-confidence. This ascription is conveyed with a degree of certainty as the negative adjective "daunting" occurs in conjunction with the modal "can". This allegation of low self-confidence can seem like common sense due to the other lexical choices in the sentence: professional life is represented as "full-time work", whereas raising children is "time out", the implication being that home-making is not real work and therefore, undemanding in contrast to working outside the home.

Therefore, in both the lead paragraph and the first main paragraph above, traditional sexist discourses compete with liberating discourses. This continues in the rest of the article, as exemplified in the excerpt below which follows the first body paragraph:

Our task ahead:

Taking a gradual approach to resuming full-time employment can assist mothers to regain lost confidence following an extended period away from the workplace. Jasmin Kaur, Director of Malaysia's division of global recruitment firm, Randstad, shares tips you can use to ease the transition from home-maker to working mum.

KNOW THAT BEING A MUM IS AN ASSET

Having stayed at home to manage your household and raise your family should not dent your confidence. In fact, a mother is likely to be well-versed in dealing with conflicting demands, juggling tasks and managing schedules – skills which are valued in any workplace.

As with the earlier paragraphs, there are linguistic traces of 'Women Can Have It All'. The presupposition encoded in phrases such as "resuming full-time employment" and "the transition from home-maker to working mum" is that women can have both a career and a family. This discourse is strengthened by the representation of working mothers as skilled and valuable employees in the final sentence of the extract.

At the same time, stay-at-home mothers are patronised through frequent allusions of passivity and insecurity. First of all, they are repeatedly denied their agency. For example, the possessive pronoun "Our" in the sub-heading could be interpreted as exclusive or inclusive, but since the implied reader has been represented as dependent and apprehensive in the earlier paragraphs, it is more likely to be the former, strengthening the earlier implication that it is the text producers who are playing the active role in helping mothers return to the workforce. This removal of the implied reader's agency is also achieved in the first sentence through the nominalisation "Taking a gradual approach to resuming full-time employment". The consequence of this nominalisation is that working mothers are not represented as the agent of the process. Rather, they are positioned as the object (of assistance).

Secondly, the assumption that stay-at-home mothers lack self-confidence is strongly reinforced. This is signalled by several lexical choices in the first paragraph: "a gradual approach", "lost confidence" and "ease the transition". In the subsequent paragraph, by directly addressing the idealised reader, the text

producers assume access to her thoughts and position her as someone who is insecure. For instance, the presupposition behind in the imperative "KNOW THAT BEING A MUM IS AN ASSET" as well as the verbal phrase "should not dent your confidence" is that the reader is unaware of her self-worth.

This less-than-empowering subject position weakens the emancipatory effects of 'Women Can Have It All' since it reinforces the discourse of 'The Lacking Woman'. Depicting stay-at-home mothers as passive, dependent, and insecure gives rise to the implicature that the women do not have initiative, resourcefulness, and self-confidence, which are attributes that are valued in the workplace.

There are also traces of the patriarchal 'Mother as Main Parent' and 'Home-making as Women's Work' discourses as the second paragraph presupposes that childcare and housework are the sole responsibility of women. It is noteworthy then that the question of who will do this work after the woman returns to the office is absent from the discussion.

Competing discourses can also be seen in the 'side piece' on the last page of the article, which is provided below:

A HELPING HAND

You are not alone. Listed below are announcements made by the Prime Minister at Invest Malaysia 2012 to further Malaysia's Women Agenda.

1. Listed companies are encouraged to disclose in their Annual Report, policies and best practices to support women in employment, such as flexible work-life arrangements or support facilities available in-house.
2. Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development and TalentCorp to establish platforms for companies to share proven practices on flexible work-life programmes and assist other companies who wish to implement similar programmes, i.e. flexi-hours, telecommuting, coaching and mentoring, etc.
3. Companies with flexible work-life support arrangements or facilities to post jobs and possibly recruit non-working professional women to be listed via a new micro site, which is currently being developed.
4. To support efforts by companies to facilitate women back to work, double tax deduction incentives will be accorded on training

expenditure incurred in re-employing women on a career break (beginning 2013).

On the surface, the measures above reproduce the 'Equal Opportunity discourse', so the dominant reading of the text could be argued as one that is feminist. Nevertheless, the heading "A Helping Hand" and the clause "You are not alone" perform the dual function of not only building solidarity with the idealised reader, but also soothing her assumed fears, which again evokes the image of the insecure stay-at-home mother.

Additionally, underlying these approaches are assumptions specific to 'Mother as Main Parent' and 'Home-making as Women's Work' discourses. The measures listed strongly focus on flexible work policies and crèches as the main solutions to increase the number of women in the workforce, as can be seen by the frequency of lexical variants used to refer to these: "flexible work-life arrangements", "support facilities available in-house", "flexible work-life programmes", "flexi-hours", "telecommuting" and "flexible work-life support arrangements or facilities". While such arrangements are positive as they allow women to spend more time with their children, they do not challenge the status quo, especially when 'Shared Parenting' and 'Shared Housework' discourses are omitted altogether, as in the case of this article. This not only normalises the view that mothers should be the primary caregiver, but also the notion of 'the second shift' (Hochschild 1989), where working mothers are expected to do domestic work when they get home, in addition to paid work. Besides that, these approaches implicitly draw on the dominant discourse of maternity that assumes that all mothers prefer to spend time taking care of their children rather than developing their careers.

8.1.4 Losing a Job

The article below offers advice to women who have been retrenched, and articulates discourses that convey a negative view of work:

'You're fired, now what?', Her World December 2012 (pp.156-157)

For whatever reason, you were let go. Instead of reacting negatively to the news, the first thing you need to do is accept what has happened, as difficult as it may be. Then, focus on understanding that this is possibly the opportunity

you have been waiting for. After all, when something ends, something must begin.

Being fired is never a pleasant experience, so it's natural to feel victimised. Yes, it has its drawbacks – you feel rejected, your resume will be tainted, your sense of security has been shaken ...

The first paragraph in the article begins with contains a series of commands, which constructs relations of authority between the text producers and the reader. Women who have lost their jobs are instructed against "reacting negatively", which carries echoes of the 'Women are Emotional/Irrational discourse'. On the other hand, they are advised to view it as "the opportunity [they] have been waiting for". Through this noun phrase, the text producers assume access to the idealised reader's thoughts and set up the reader as someone who was dissatisfied with her job and perhaps had been considering leaving it, drawing on the 'Work as Drudgery discourse'.

As opposed to the relations of authority constructed in the first paragraph, the text producers constitute relations of solidarity with the reader in the second paragraph, where in their direct address to the reader, they implicitly claim that they understand the reader's feelings and speak for her. In both paragraphs above, the 'Work as Financial Necessity discourse' is absent – rather than a serious loss of one's livelihood, being dismissed is evaluated as merely "difficult" and an "[un]pleasant experience [that] has its drawbacks", including causing one's "sense of security [to be] shaken". It is represented as an emotional event ("feel victimised", "feel rejected") instead of a question of survival.

In the third paragraph below, direct interaction is once more produced via the use of commands:

Go ahead and wallow if you must but don't get stuck in this mindset for too long. Instead, focus on what good could possibly come out of this situation. Begin with the simple fact that you now have time on your hands to discover yourself and perhaps chart a new career path. You may actually look back at this moment one day as a positive transition point in your life.

The imperatives "wallow if you must" and "don't get stuck in this mindset for too long" again evokes 'Women are Emotional/Irrational'. Additionally, the assertion "you now have time on your hands to discover yourself" entails that firstly, the

implied reader did not have personal time when she was working, and secondly, she was not able to achieve self-actualisation through her work. The indirect advice to spend time off work to “discover” oneself presupposes middle-class background and experiences for the reader, while the ‘Work as Financial Necessity discourse’ is still missing. Further, the neoliberal and postfeminist emphasis on self-reinvention is evident in the series of clichés put forward, such as “discover yourself”, “chart a new ... path”, and “a positive transition point in your life”.

It should be noted that at this point of the article, the reader is not extorted to return to the home. However, in the final section of the article, which lists advice for the implied reader, traces of ‘Motherhood as Ultimate Fulfilment’ can be seen:

02 List down the various things you’ve always wanted to do but couldn’t because of your work schedule. Now go do them! If you can afford it, take a long retreat at a spa or travel the world. Sign up for new classes or go back to school. Best of all, you’ll have time to spend with your kids.

This paragraph deploys ‘Work as Drudgery’ implicitly in several ways. Embedded within the first sentence, for instance, is the presupposition that work had held the reader back from doing what she had “always wanted to do”. Moreover, in the third and fourth sentences, by indirectly positioning the notion of work in opposition to a spa retreat, travelling the world, taking new classes or returning to school, the conditional seems to insinuate that work neither affords pleasure nor provides the opportunity for personal growth and learning. In the last sentence, the main clause assumes that the reader was not able to spend sufficient time with her children when she was still employed, drawing on the ‘Busy Mother Juggling Work and Home discourse’, while the phrase “Best of all” affirms ‘Motherhood as Ultimate Fulfilment’. These seem to work together to encourage the reader to return to the home, though a career-oriented reader, while recognising these discourses, may still reject this advice. Also, the text implicitly presumes that the reader has a husband who is able to support the family while she spends more time with their children, or participate in the activities listed in the third and fourth sentences, all of which require financial resources.

8.2 Advice on Parenting and Marital Relationships

In addition to texts produced for the explicit purpose of providing guidance on professional challenges, this thesis also examines print and broadcast texts on childcare and domestic life that touch upon women's occupational lives.

8.2.1 Choosing Childcare

This article warns working mothers on the danger of childcare centres, drawing heavily on the 'Maternal Anxiety discourse':

'The Darker side of day-care', Her World December 2012 (pp.162-163)

Childcare centres are fast becoming a dime a dozen in Malaysia. While a convenient solution for parents who work, **Marie Lim** discovers that some have taken a chilling turn.

Childcare centres are negatively evaluated from the very beginning of the article. In the lead paragraph above, this unfavourable attitude is conveyed via the idiom "a dime a dozen", which ignores the fact that there is insufficient accessible and affordable quality childcare in Malaysia, as discussed in Chapter 4. In the next sentence, although they are conceded to be "a convenient solution", this is placed in the dependent clause in the contrastive structure, whereas their alleged harmful effects, lexicalised as "a chilling turn", are given more weight in the independent clause.

Despite the use of the referent "parents" in the lead paragraph, it soon becomes evident that the article is directed at mothers:

Working mother Tai Loon Eng, 30, thought she had selected the best childcare centre for her child. "I did my research and found this centre to be the best – it had CCTVs on the babies' cots. I thought I could trust the caretakers, although it was not registered," explained Tai. "This was one of the more expensive childcare centres. It charged RM1,000 a month whereas others charged about RM350." No sooner than one month had passed with the unregistered childcare centre in Setia Alam, when Tai received a frantic call from the centre informing her that her baby, three-month-old Tan Yan Xue, was not breathing. Tai rushed to the centre and found that her son was not moving. She then hurried him to the hospital, where the child was pronounced dead. When Tai

demanded to view the CCTV footage to discover the cause of her child's death, the centre claimed that it hadn't been switched on that day.

Tai is represented as a "Working mother", and this classification appears in the informationally prominent position in the first paragraph above. The 'Mother as Main Parent discourse' permeates the rest of the paragraph. In both the summaries and direct quotations, Tai alone is represented as the agent ("she had selected the best childcare centre", "I did the research", "Tai rushed to the centre", "She ... hurried him to the hospital", "Tai demanded to view the CCTV footage"), while her husband is linguistically absent.

It is a matter of note that Tai is not portrayed as a negligent mother. On the contrary, the text uses direct speech to emphasise that she was meticulous when selecting a childcare centre ("I did my research", "found this centre to be the best", "had CCTVs on the babies' cots") and was prepared to pay triple the normal rate for the safety of her child. Demonstrating that cautiousness and money cannot safeguard a child's life strengthens 'Maternal Anxiety'. This is further reinforced by the representation of time in "No sooner than one month had passed", which implies that anything can happen within a short period of time.

While working mothers are being interpellated as the primary caregiver, specifically one who "had selected the best childcare centre for her child", "did [her] research" and "thought [she] could trust the caretakers", readers will not inevitably recognise themselves in the paragraph above or feel more anxious about their children's well-being. Some may be sympathetic towards Tai. However, given their own life trajectories, such as being in an equal partnership or having had positive experiences with their childcare provider, they may position themselves as an 'overhearer' of advice addressed to 'other women'. This also applies to women who are either not mothers or not in the workforce. Nonetheless, the reader would still need to recognise the interpellation of women in order to understand the text. This means that she must also have been successfully interpellated.

'Maternal Anxiety' continues to be produced in the subsequent paragraph:

Baby Yan Xue is not the sole fatality. This year (at time of print), there have already been 14 infant deaths recorded in childcare centres across the country.

The phrase "not the sole fatality" as well as the clause "there have already been 14 infant deaths" remind the reader that such cases are not uncommon. Once the

issue has been clearly established, the article moves on to offer advice to the reader:

With the growing number of mothers in the workforce, the government recognises its need to play a bigger role in providing care centres in the workplace, and to regulate existing ones. And as parents, we too have our role to play.

WHEN PICKING A CHILDCARE CENTRE...

...

2. SURPRISE!

Don't be afraid to perform spot checks on the centre. It's not paranoia when it concerns your child.

...

4. CHECK THE STAFF

Make sure they are aware of emergency procedures and provide them with alternative numbers in case they can't reach you.

The implication raised by the thematised prepositional phrase in the first sentence ("With the growing number of mothers in the workforce") is that the rise in the number of working mothers is a key factor behind this problem. Although it is never explicitly articulated, traces of 'Working Mothers are Bad for Children' can be seen, and this has intertextual links with 'Women Can't Have It All'.

The advice prescribed to the reader includes performing spot checks on the centre and ensuring the staff are trained to handle emergencies. The clause "It's not paranoia" validates the idealised reader's fears, and once again realises the 'Maternal Anxiety discourse'. Likewise, the use of the modal verb "can't" in the fourth piece of advice, as opposed to "may need to", suggests that emergencies are highly probable.

8.2.2 Maintaining a Healthy Marriage

The final two advice texts that we will now examine are discussions between *Capital FM's* radio announcers and the station's 'resident life coach', Zarina Zainal.

In the following sequence, two radio announcers and Zarina Zainal discuss why some husbands cheat. This text draws heavily on 'Women Can't Have It All'. However, while the previous article by *Her World* implies that having a career outside the home can endanger one's children, there is a strong implication in this sequence that even running a business from home can be a threat to marital life:

Capital FM 1 November 2012

- 1 Joanne Kam: Okay well understand that (.) this could be:: one:: of the
- 2 primary reasons as well (.) you know in modern times when
- 3 women (.) are taking on more and more roles
- 4 [be]sides being just a homemaker y'know
- 5 Zarina Zainal: [Yes]
- 6 Joanne Kam: Even being a homemaker (.) like I know some friends (.) who
- 7 have **extended** their home to become er (.) you know bake::rs
- 8 and [they bake cakes in] the hou::se
- 9 Zarina Zainal: [A::::h yes yes]
- 10 Joanne Kam: They bake cookie::s they attend fai::rs you know and uh from
- 11 one of my friends she when we were talking about this recent-
- 12 like eh¹² how you got time is it aiyah¹³ no time-lah¹⁴ where got
- 13 time go see movie all [(#)] you know [so]
- 14 Zarina Zainal: [((laugh))]
- 15 June Low: [(#)] your interest
- 16 [starts] (.) differing
- 17 Joanne Kam: [yeah]
- 18 June Low: And then (.) you just don't want to spend as much time
- 19 because he's not moving the same direction as you=
- 20 Joanne Kam: =Mm[hmm]
- 21 Zarina Zainal: [Yes] that's a possibility

¹² Malaysian English interjection used as a greeting or to attract someone's attention

¹³ Malaysian English interjection used to express surprise or frustration

¹⁴ Malaysian English particle, which is used here to emphasise a point

In her first turn, Kam proposes that women having a profession is not just a cause, but a significant factor ("one of the primary reasons", lines 1 and 2) in cheating behaviour among husbands, and Zarina Zainal affirms this (line 5). In her second and third turns, Kam uses a witnessing device to legitimate her stance, drawing on first-hand knowledge of women friends who have home-based businesses and recounting a conversation with one of them, who shared that she does not have the time to go on dates with her husband. The use of non-standard Malaysian English in Kam's anecdote (lines 12 and 13) serves to make the conversation both authentic and relatable to the overhearing audience.

Low then interrupts Kam (line 15) and takes the floor to extend Kam's story and conjecture how a marriage could break down thereafter, thereby producing 'Women Can't Have It All'. Her use of the indefinite pronouns "your" (line 15) and "you" (lines 18 and 19) implicates the listening audience and functions as a warning that this could happen to any woman's relationship. Kam and Zarina Zainal cooperate with Low and endorse her line of reasoning through affirmatives and minimal answers (lines 17, 20 and 21).

In the next broadcast text that we will examine, the radio announcers and Zarina Zainal discuss how increased economic empowerment among Malaysian women has led to complacency among husbands. Underlying this discussion is the implicit disapproval of the reversal of traditional gender roles in the family that may occur as women make incremental gains in the workplace:

Capital FM 11 April 2013

- | | | |
|----|----------------|--|
| 1 | Joanne Kam: | So I guess like before I mean the m- men usually were the |
| 2 | | breadwinners and all but now we find them on (.) equal |
| 3 | | grounds as women as well (.) [right] |
| 4 | Zarina Zainal: | [Ye-] yeah and (.) just to talk |
| 5 | | about you know not saying that (.) women being strong is a |
| 6 | | problem no my mother was a very very strong character (.) she |
| 7 | | was very independent women she lived in the States on her |
| 8 | | own she worked at the World Bank (.) you know she actually |
| 9 | | supported the family when we were there when my father was |
| 10 | | doing his Masters (.) but (.) no matter what my father was the |
| 11 | | head of the family the role was very clear (-) [yeah] |
| 12 | Joanne Kam: | [It] was very |

13 defined=
 14 Zarina Zainal: =It was very defined when it came to decision making when it
 15 came to uh (.) upbringing (.) you know certain things it was
 16 very very defined=
 17 Xandria Ooi: =So the question is do Malaysian women spoil our men (.) so
 18 now if let's say this young generation of men are spoilt it's
 19 because (.) **we** are making them that way do you think
 20 Zarina Zainal: That's the discussion that I would like to have with you girls
 21 cos I've been trying to figure this out (.) because what I see
 22 from around me is that how (.) men they get married (.) and
 23 then they let go (.) so the women are the ones who have to
 24 worry about you know putting food on the table (.) feeding the
 25 kids

Zarina Zainal begins to broach the subject ("just to talk about", lines 4 and 5), but then stops and prefaces her argument with a disclaimer, which is indicative of an awareness that her upcoming talk is problematic from a feminist perspective. Her unprompted denial that female empowerment is a problem (lines 5 and 6), emphasised though multiple uses of negation ("not saying that", "no"), suggests that she anticipates this to be a possible point of conflict that needs to be managed in order to maintain solidarity with an audience familiar with feminist ideas and beliefs. Her denial is followed by an extended description of her mother (lines 6-9). This witnessing device allows her to discursively construct herself as progressive and liberal. For example, her assertion that her mother "supported the family ... when [her] father was doing his Masters" (lines 9 and 10) subverts 'Husband as Breadwinner'.

Zarina Zainal then attempts to return to the issue raised by Kam in lines 1 to 3 by contrasting her account of her mother against her claim that her "father was the head of the family" (lines 10 and 11). Both the preceding adverb phrase "no matter what" and the subsequent clause "the role was very clear" indicate that she strongly advocates this patriarchal gender role. Although Kam's paraphrase (lines 12 and 13) could signal agreement, there is a noticeable pause between the two turns, which can be interpreted as scepticism. Zarina Zainal stresses the point by repeating "It was very defined" (line 14), before underscoring it further via multiple adverbs in "it was very very defined" (lines 15 and 16).

Ooi collaborates with her to bring the topic into play by implicitly linking women's professional success to the complacency of "this young generation of men" through a pair of questions (lines 17-19). In the first, "Malaysian women" is the agent of the performative "spoil", implying their active role in the problem. This question is not only immediately reiterated, but in the reformulation, the inclusive "we", interpellating Malaysian women, is also stressed, which effectively emphasises women's culpability. These questions are 'non-naïve', in that they are not genuine requests for information, but a preliminary to more information and advice for the listening audience. Since the point of this programme is to offer solutions to women's problems (whether real or invented), the idealised listener who is familiar with the genre can be relied on to construct the preferred meaning behind these questions, which is that women's success negatively affects their domestic life, drawing on the 'Women Can't Have It All discourse' in the process. This seems to ignore the fact that allowing men to be the head of their family on the basis of their biological sex can also be perceived as 'spoiling' them. However, Zarina Zainal refrains from explicitly setting out her position. On the other hand, her noncommittal response ("That's the discussion that I would like to have with you girls", line 20) assumes shared values and experiences with the radio announcers as well as the overhearing audience, constructing a synthetic sisterhood.

After the commercial break, Ooi makes the cause-effect relation between women's financial independence and male passivity explicit through another 'non-naïve' question, which reproduces the 'Women Can't Have It All discourse':

- 1 Xandria Ooi: Now Zarina could our independence (.) deter men (.) from
- 2 stepping up to take responsibility for the family or even from
- 3 wanting to do things for us
- 4 Zarina Zainal: I would believe so because as I mentioned (.) this (.) we're
- 5 talking about the issue being local (.) but I've had (.) foreign
- 6 women and Arab woman in particular who came up to me and
- 7 actually **said** (.) you Malaysian women are so stupid (.) why
- 8 do you want to do everything when you can get the men to do
- 9 it for you=
- 10 Xandria Ooi: =Wah¹⁵=

¹⁵ Wow

- 11 Joanne Kam: =[Wah]
 12 Zarina Zainal: [(#)] and you know that was such an eye-opener it's like oh
 13 my god ((laugh))

Ooi's question (lines 1-3) functions as an invitation to Zarina Zainal to offer advice to the audience, who are implicated by the pronouns "our" and "us". In contrast to her noncommittal answer to a similar question at the end of the previous sequence, Zarina Zainal replies with an affirmative (line 4), and justifies her belief by summarising the negative evaluation of Malaysian women by "foreign women and Arab women" in lines 5 to 9. The rhetorical question in lines 7 to 9 not only reinforces the negative stereotype of the controlling wife, but also encourages dependent femininity in marital relationships. These traditional ideas about gender roles as well as criticism against Malaysian women are attributed to the 'voices' of others. This form of proxy advice-giving enables her to implicitly instruct women against taking a dominant role in the family, while distancing herself from possibly offensive accusations.

Neither radio announcer challenges these opinions. On the contrary, Zarina Zainal appears to orient to Ooi and Kam's expressions of surprise (lines 10 and 11) as agreement, and she demonstrates her own endorsement for the view through cooperative overlap (line 12) as well as her description of these negative evaluations of Malaysian women as "an eye-opener" (line 12). This contradicts her earlier denial in the previous sequence that it is not an issue when women are strong.

Although she endorses patriarchal gender roles, her overt advice can seem empowering on the surface as she draws on feminist discourses:

- 1 Zarina Zainal: The moral of what I've been trying to share this morning is
 2 that (.) it is **wonderful** (.) that we are empowered it is
 3 wonderful that we are focused (.) and we have all these
 4 opportunities to do things that we want to do (.) but I think it's
 5 also important for us to (.) **share** the responsibility and share
 6 the workload [(#)]
 7 Xandria Ooi: [You] see I think part- oh sorry go a[head]
 8 Zarina Zainal: [Yeah] no
 9 you know we don't need to be superwomen

Through the clause “it is wonderful”, repeated in lines 2 and 3, Zarina Zainal explicitly evaluates being empowered and having professional opportunities as positive for Malaysian women, who are implicated by the inclusive “we”. The stress laid on the first instance of “wonderful” reinforces this point. Her recommendation to women to “share” domestic responsibilities (lines 5 and 6) also draws on feminist discourses, in particular ‘Shared Parenting’. However, this piece of advice is problematic in the context of the current interaction, as it implies that women refuse to “share” their household responsibilities with their partners, which not only invokes the image of the stereotypic controlling wife again, but also presupposes that women have a choice in the matter. This disregards socio-cultural norms: in many Malaysian families, the wife is still expected to perform the household chores. There is an implicit cause-effect relation between her implied meaning in lines 5 and 6, and her advice in line 9, that is women refuse to “share” responsibilities because they believe that they need to live up to the postfeminist superwoman mystique (Martin 2013a), discussed in Chapter 2. Underlying this belief is the neoliberal rhetoric of choice, which places blame on women for deeply entrenched socio-cultural expectations.

Summary

This chapter analysed thirteen advice articles and radio programmes from *Her World* and *Capital FM* covering six broad topics, ranging from career advancement to maintaining a healthy marriage. While the text producers draw heavily on ‘Women Can Succeed in Male-Dominated Fields’ and ‘Women Can Have It All’ in their attempts to encourage women to pursue career success, professional women are also undermined through the deployment of ‘Beware Women’ and ‘The Lacking Woman’. Additionally, the advice given naturalises the assumption that family labour is women’s work by invoking discourses such as ‘Women Can’t Have It All’, ‘Mother as Main Parent’, ‘Home-making as Women’s Work’ and ‘Busy Mother Juggling Work and Home’. However, many of these motherhood discourses are only articulated in *Her World*, demonstrating once again that the media sources are not homogenous. I will discuss the social and political significance of the findings in the next chapter.

Review of Analysis

I will conclude this chapter by summarising the main steps performed in this study's analysis as well as the broad patterns observed in the media's representations of high-achieving women from differing fields. The analysis began with the identification of professional discourses articulated in the print media between November 2012 and April 2013. Articles by women editors, writers or contributors were scanned for linguistic traces of discourses. These discourses were interpretively identified and named based on how they represented professional women and their experiences in the working world. The radio data was not examined at this stage since it is not representative of *Capital FM*'s programmes. A consistent set of professional discourses emerged across the 30 issues of *Her World* and *Clove*, largely in interviews with role models and advice articles. Hence, it was assumed that these would be the main discourses reinforced in the two publications over the entire year, and they were mapped against all print and broadcast interviews and advice texts by women media producers. In Chapters 7 and 8, the operation and linguistic traces of these professional discourses were analysed in a sample containing a similar number of interviews and advice texts from each media outlet.

One strength of this study is that it broadens the examination of mediated representations of professional women to include role models beyond the domains that are typically examined, namely business and politics. Overall, the discourses articulated overlapped substantially across the interviewees' five career fields. In terms of the representations of the women, the consistent invocation of 'Successful Women as Wives and Mothers', 'The Beautiful and Sexual Successful Woman' and 'Feminisation of Successful Women' demonstrates that the traditional female identity categories of wife and mother, physical appearance, sexuality, and idealised femininity shape Malaysian media representations of women irrespective of their professional status or industry. There is only one field where the role model is not gendered through references to her body or idealised feminine practices, and this is STEM. However, since Teo Soo Hwang is the sole interviewee from this field in the sample, it cannot be assumed that media representations of women scientists are less restrictive.

As for the representations of the women's experiences in the labour market, they are not differentiated by their career type. 'Work as Passion', for example, emerges in interviews across all five fields, constructing close links between enthusiasm for one's work and being a successful professional. Disparities in the

deployment of the discourses do not seem to be job-specific, but due to other reasons. For instance, the absence of 'Discourse of Integrating Work and Home' in interviews with women in the entertainment industry and wildlife conservation could be attributed to two factors. Firstly, none of the entertainers had any children when the interview took place. However, motherhood status cannot be the sole factor since wildlife conservationist Terri Irwin, who was interviewed by *Capital FM*, was a mother of two in 2013. Given that discourses relating to the integration of motherhood and wage labour are largely missing from the overall radio data, the more possible cause for the absence of this discourse in the interview with Irwin is not her profession, but the media's sensitivity toward the demographic of their implied audience, which will be discussed in further detail in Chapter 9. Traces of 'Women Can Succeed in Male-Dominated Fields' are found in interviews with women in senior management, science and the entertainment industry, but not in the *Capital FM* interview with Irwin. However, the fact that this discourse is never observed in any of the radio interviews strongly suggests that, rather than occupation, media source again appears to be the main factor affecting the production of the particular discourse. A comparison of the discourses manifested by each media source and a discussion of the reasons behind the similarities and differences will be conducted in the next chapter. 'Women Can Succeed in Male-Dominated Fields' is also missing from interviews with entrepreneurs, but this is likely because their fields are not male-dominated in Malaysia.

Likewise, the perspectives presented on how women of different professions achieved success do not appear to be career-dependent. The frequent deployment of 'Women Owe Success To Family' emphasises the role of the interviewees' families in their success regardless of their job type. In contrast, 'Women Owe Success To Hard Work' is less pervasive, emerging in interviews with senior managers and entertainers, but not with the scientist and entrepreneurs. A closer examination of the texts shows that 'Women Owe Success To Family' is produced in interviews with the scientist and entrepreneurs to emphasise the childcare assistance that they received from female relatives. Therefore, I would argue that the difference in the articulation of the two discourses may not mean that diligence is seen as playing a less important role in the success of women scientists and entrepreneurs. Rather, it illustrates the media attention given to the pressures faced by women in their twin pursuit of a family and a career. Neither 'Women Owe Success To Family' nor 'Women Owe Success To Hard Work' are observed in the interview with wildlife conservationist

Terri Irwin. This absence, once again, appears to be specific to *Capital FM* rather than Irwin's professional field since both discourses are never deployed in any of the broadcast texts. The remaining discourses that are not discussed in this section are ephemeral in the interview data, and there is no clear pattern that their presence in the handful of interviews is related to the women's career fields.

Overall, the media paints a fairly monolithic portrait of the role models and their occupational lives regardless of their profession or industry. This homogeneity in the representations of the women and their experiences erases the interviewees' individuality and fails to recognise industry-specific challenges that working women face. Despite their diverse careers and the complexity of each actual person, the women become interchangeable representatives of certain feminine and professional ideals that are offered to the audience. Further discussion of the types of behaviour and attitudes that the representations of the role models conventionalise will be taken up in the next chapter.

Chapter 9. Discussion

This study has analysed professional discourses produced by women between October 2012 and September 2013, across three print and broadcast media in Malaysia, through *Clove*, *Her World* and *Capital FM 88.9*. The professional discourses that were identified in the initial analysis of articles produced over 6 months are presented in Table 6.1 in Chapter 6. As illustrated in the table, some of these discourses were invoked more regularly than others. This discussion will focus on the discourses that are dominant in at least one of the media sources due to the assumption that they are likely to be the preferred discourses in that media and can provide clearer insights into the ideological outlook promoted. These key discourses are visually displayed in Figure 9.1 below. Where relevant, the implications of the lower prevalence of particular discourses are also discussed in this chapter.

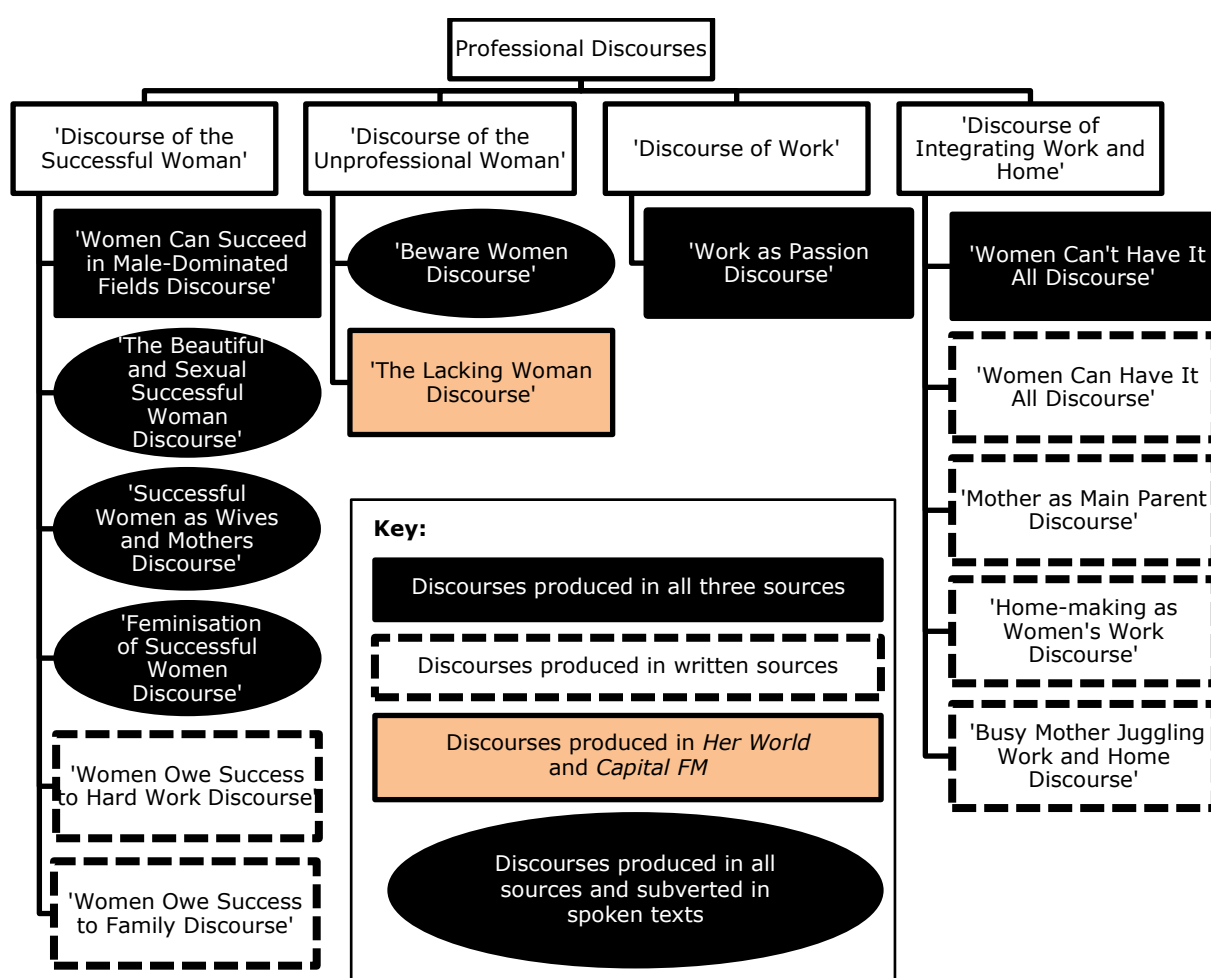


Figure 9.1: A comparison of the dominant professional discourses in the data

A comparison of the dominant discourses identified in *Her World*, *Clove* and *Capital FM* provides important insights. Firstly, as depicted in Figure 9.1, the array of discourses produced over the 12-month data collection period is restricted and relatively consistent across the media sources. Half of the key discourses are shared by all three outlets, while the rest are invoked by at least two media. However, we also find evidence of inconsistencies in the articulation of the discourses. A number of these, particularly those relating to the integration of work and family, are only perceived in the written articles, while one key discourse, 'The Lacking Woman', is not deployed in *Clove*. Additionally, the women in the radio data subverted several discourses. It is necessary to remind ourselves at this point that, as noted in Chapter 5, a relatively low proportion of the articles in *Clove* were written by their women editors, writers or contributors – 33%, in contrast to 75% in *Her World*. Hence, there may have been other professional discourses that were frequently produced in the texts by men or foreign news agencies, including 'The Lacking Woman', but these are not represented in Figure 9.1 as they are beyond the scope of this thesis. The variances in the sets of discourses invoked across *Her World*, *Clove* and *Capital FM* indicate that even though the media content producers may share a common institutional role and activities, namely creating texts to entertain and attract audiences, with the ultimate aim of increasing advertising revenue, this does not mean that they are a homogenous group.

The first section of this chapter will situate the similarities and disparities in the discourses and tropes deployed within the wider structural constraints that impinge on media producers on multiple levels, from genre norms, to local socio-cultural values, to economic concerns in media production. Returning to Figure 9.1, the dominant professional discourses displayed are not evoked in isolation. The second section of this chapter will argue that the articulation of mutually reinforcing as well as oppositional discourses within the same media constructs a dominant postfeminist narrative which both invokes and rejects feminism, with an emphasis on individualism, empowerment, autonomy, and the notion of natural sex differences (Gill and Scharff 2011). As we have already seen in Chapter 4, although there has been a gradual increase in the female labour participation rate in Malaysia in recent years, it is still very low in contrast to the proportion of men in the workforce. Furthermore, the 'glass ceiling' and gender wage gap persist; both female advancement and earnings lag behind that of their male counterparts. Women in Malaysia also continue to face sexual harassment and pregnancy discrimination. I will connect these challenges and exclusions to the

postfeminist ideas and the representations of working women that are implicitly constructed through the key professional discourses in the data. This chapter will close with a discussion of the linguistic strategies applied by the chosen media to reinforce these discourses as well as neoliberal and conservative values, while presenting themselves as female allies.

9.1 Control and Resistance within the Media

This section will relate the shared practices and variations in the discourses produced across the three media outlets to the tensions and relations between cultural norms, media commodification, institutional roles, and women's agency. This will shed some light on why discourses and beliefs that do disservice to women continue to find a voice in the speech and writing of women in the media. Focusing on discourses articulated by women text producers is an important dimension to the study. In Chapters 1 and 2, I commented that feminists in the West are calling for increased female representation in the media, but the advantages of this have been inconclusive. As we can see in this study, women text producers do participate in the marginalisation of their own sex. Earlier researchers (e.g. Roman 2001) have argued that bias in the media coverage of women leaders stem from "a male-dominated concept of the journalistic profession and the socialization of reporters into the predominantly misogynist ideology of the newsroom" (Ibroscheva and Raicheva-Stover 2009: 115). However, the media examined in this study do not have masculine roots, unlike the journalistic practices of the newsroom and the reporting of politics (Bourdieu 1998; Meehan and Riordan 2002). Text producers in women's media are not participating in masculinist media, but rather, in a genre that has been the preserve of women, where female voices have not been marginalised. This section will attend to this issue within an understanding of the industry of women's media.

9.1.1 Media Economics and Editorial Control

In the introduction to this chapter, I provided an overview of the extent to which the media outlets cohere into a larger aggregate in terms of the discourses produced. While there is interesting variation in the discourses invoked, illustrating the value of examining different media types and sources, all the key discourses in Figure 9.1 are shared by at least two of the media sources. Such patterns of intersection can be partly attributed to culture. As Sha and Kirkman

state, magazines “arise from and represent the cultures within which they circulate, influencing normative standards, expectations, and behaviour” (2009: 359), and this can be reasonably expected of other media genres such as the radio and the lifestyle section of a newspaper. After all, for discourses to be recognisable by the researcher, they must be circulating outside the texts (Sunderland 2004). If we accept that the key discourses identified in this study are powerful professional discourses within the wider Malaysian society, the implication is that as members of society, the women text producers’ beliefs reflect those dominant in society.

Yet, if the media were merely reflecting the dominant discourses in their socio-cultural context, their construction of particular kinds of professional women and their assessment of women’s workplace performance would be consistent. The existence of differences in the discourses invoked by the three media, particularly between the written and broadcast media, strongly implicates the exercise of editorial control in print media. Although written articles have an identifiable writer, these texts are produced by multiple parties, including women editors and copy editors who are “constrained by company policy, which is determined by profit-making” (Talbot 2010: 146). This profit is largely made through advertising revenue. Media with dual revenue streams, such as magazines and newspapers, rely on advertisers for at least 50%, and even up to 80%, of their profits (Havens and Lotz 2012). Consequently, the encroachment of the genre of advertising has blurred “the boundary between advertising and editorial material ... The voice of advertising is virtually always present” (Talbot 2010: 145).

This interconnectedness between editorial control and advertising would partly account for the notable overlap in the discourses produced within *Her World* and *Clove*. Firstly, when they reinforce traditional discourses of motherhood and beauty that define and limit women’s social identities, this is not only shaped and influenced by socio-cultural norms, but also by the print media’s implicit goal to persuade their readers to purchase the beauty, fashion, and household products offered by their advertisers. Given that the radio commercials were not recorded, we are unable to make any inferences regarding the effect that advertisements exert on radio talk.

Secondly, the commodification of the media places the women editors under significant pressure to appeal to a large audience to sell to their advertisers. In order to appeal to a ‘willing audience’, the media often conforms to its genre’s conventions (Haven and Lotz 2012). To realise this, text producers for consumer

magazines, for example, deploy discourses that they can be confident that their audience will be able to recognise (Matheson 2005), and the reliance on time-tested formulae as well as the acculturation of these formulaic conventions has led to considerable similarity of media content (Haven and Lotz 2012). In this respect, the direct quotations and reformulations attributed to named interviewees in *Her World* and *Clove* may not be their actual utterances, but put together by a series of people who select, paraphrase, and organise quotes from the interviews to fit in with the periodicals' genre. Therefore, we can argue that in constructing a familiar world for their audience, the women media producers in *Her World* and *Clove* articulate discourses typically circulated by women's publications, and the outcome of this is the production of a largely similar range of discourses across the two media.

Conformity to genre can also explain why 'The Lacking Woman' is not deployed in the *Clove* data. It would be an oversimplification to treat this absence as an indication of a more positive view of professional women. Women's media, in general, constructs women's lives as an array of problems for which it offers solutions. These solutions include not only the products and services it advertises, but also itself, an important commodity (Fiske 2011), such as through the advice it provides. The assistance given differs by genre. Since *Clove* mainly focused on beauty, fashion, and glamour, and did not provide advice on professional life, it is unsurprising that it did not invoke 'The Lacking Woman', which was almost always produced within advice texts in the other two media, with one exception, namely the interview with Lam Swee Kim in *Her World*. As stated earlier in this chapter, the proportion of articles by women writers in *Clove* was low at 33%, and we cannot discount the possibility that 'The Lacking Woman' could have been deployed in the interviews written by men or foreign news agencies, which were not included in the dataset.

Editorial control is an important concern due to the role that the media plays in mediating public perception about women and their roles in society. The tropes and perspectives about social reality that are offered to the audience are shaped not only by the discourses invoked, but also by those that the text producers fail to cover. As pointed out earlier in this chapter, there is a paucity of any subversion of conservative gendered discourses in the print media, compared to the radio. Although media producers may not be given specific instructions about the content surrounding the advertisements, their decisions may be governed by what they think the "constructed advertiser" may or may not like, as the advertisers' "indirect influence is very real and powerful" (Haven and Lotz 2012:

117). By choosing one representation of reality over another, the media assists in the reproduction and naturalisation of the current dominant ideology (Hall 1980, 1982).

As noted above, media content is designed for a specific audience, with the ultimate view of increasing profit. The demographic of *Her World* and *Capital FM*'s readers and listeners has been detailed in Chapter 5, and the aspects that are particularly pertinent to this discussion are their marital status, age, and ethnicity. Seventy six per cent of *Her World*'s readers are married, so this could explain why the predominant image of women promulgated in *Her World* is the married heterosexual woman with children. In contrast, as we saw in Figure 9.1, most of the key discourses relating to motherhood and home-making were absent from the radio data. Being in the 25 to 35 years age group, the station's target listeners would have been above the average age of first marriage among Malaysian women in 2010 (i.e. two years before the data collection period), which was 25.7 years overall (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs 2013), with only a slight increase in urban areas at 25.8 years (Saw 2015: 129). However, it cannot be assumed that they would be mothers. Fifty six per cent of *Capital FM*'s listeners were Chinese, whereas 50% of *Her World*'s readers are Malay. Abdul Rashid et al. report that "[a]fter 2001 the average number of children for Chinese has fallen rapidly to below the replacement level ... Malay's fertility was [sic] declined at a slow pace where the [total fertility rate] is still above the replacement level" (2016: 699). Hence, the fact that the conceptualisation of professional women on *Capital FM* is grounded in motherhood to a lesser degree could be attributed, to a certain extent, to the ethnic composition of its 'constructed audience'.

Sensitivity toward the implied audience can be perceived not only by the presence and absence of discourses, but also by the tropes deployed to reinforce the discourses. This is exemplified in the differences in the parameters and regulatory boundaries set for professional women in the production of the 'Discourse of Integrating Work and Home'. The analysis in Chapter 8 has shown that while the data from the print media tend to attribute motherhood as the main obstacle to combining work and family, *Capital FM* also sees marital life as a challenge.

Although the media outlets seek to reflect their target audience, their role models are not representative of working women, and like the range of discourses produced, are in fact rather homogenous as a result of other multifaceted

pressures. While the subjects of coverage are diverse in terms of ethnicity and age, possibly to correspond with the multicultural composition and age range of their target audience, they are predominantly middle class or upper middle class, and in the photographs accompanying the articles, always physically attractive and never overweight, possibly due to the surrounding beauty and fashion advertisements in the print media, as well as the necessity to present the audience with role models that the editors believe will appeal to them (Matheson 2005). As we shall see in Section 9.2, such portrayals of working women are highly problematic, but equally crucial is the absence of women in same-sex relationships or any mention of non-heteronormative life choices. Such absences are easy to ignore as heteronormativity is assumed in all media sources in Malaysia since homosexuality remains illegal and punishable in this country, but the implication of this is the naturalisation and reinforcement of the existing gender order.

9.1.2 The Radio as a Site for Resistance

The radio can be a valuable space in which women can engage in the construction of resistant subject positions, and in the process, push the boundaries of appropriate and acceptable feminine behaviour. As shown in Figure 9.1, it is in the radio that attempts by women to subvert conservative gendered discourses can be most clearly seen. The lack of such resistance in the interviews in the print media is indicative of a selective editorial process that restricts the expression of ideas that do not conform to the preferred narrative. Crucially, despite *Capital FM*'s explicitly feminist agenda, that is to be "a platform for women's issues" and to empower women (Chan 2011), this subversion mainly emerges from participants outside of the industry, such as Shazia Mirza and Terri Irwin. I will now close this section of the discussion by positing the possible factors behind these differences in the public displays of subversion.

Firstly, although the women radio announcers and guest experts showed some awareness of feminist ideas, they rarely displayed resistance against notions that many feminists would regard as problematic as they may not have internalised feminist views since such beliefs and values are not central to the radio station. It is likely that *Capital FM* aligned their goals with those of feminism for marketing purposes, not unlike what Fairclough (1995) refers to as the elite's struggle for power by drawing on what they think of as the voices of the people. Ng, Mohamad and Tan state that Malaysia has entered an era of "commodity feminism" (2006: 159) in which feminist discourses are appropriated by

businesses for profit. In their view, the launch of *Capital FM*'s predecessor in Malaysian women's radio, the now-defunct WFM 88.1, in 2005 "speaks volumes for the growing importance of women consumers for advertisers. It is of no surprise that the drivers behind this new enterprise were all men, hard-nosed business people who see feasible profit opportunities in this venture" (2006: 161).

Capital FM, as a 'dual product market' with two products and two buyers, sells an audience of listeners to its advertisers, and produces content to draw an audience for the advertising messages. In order to gain a following among its target listeners, namely young urbane women, it cannot solely promote dominant gender ideologies, particularly with the growth of feminism as a socio-political force in Malaysia. Thus, the drive for popularity has almost certainly led to the incorporation of some feminist principles in the station's marketing, programming and content. When the radio announcers and regular guests construct progressive identities for working women alongside conventional sex-stereotyped ones, they are broadening their range of positions so that the listeners are hailed accurately, and are able to recognise themselves as addressees as well as relate to the social experiences being communicated (Fiske 2011). While this does not imply that the women are merely "cogs in corporate machines producing texts full of ideological messages that maintain those in power" (Haven and Lotz 2012: 13), the women's inconsistent positions suggests that we must be cautious of treating their articulation of feminist ideas as a direct reflection of their political views.

Even if the radio announcers personally identify as feminists, their institutional role, which requires them to maintain the guest experts' positive face, may have mitigated their ability to express feminist notions that would directly contradict the latter's views. Matheson stresses that "communication texts construct particularly institutionalised identities and relations which may have little to do with the selves constructed by their participants in other aspects of their lives" (2005: 59). Although the interaction between the radio announcers and their guests may seem like a friendly chat on the surface, the talk is not a conversation, and each participant is filling quite rigid roles as host or expert (Matheson 2005). In this sense, these radio announcers are not free agents. On the other hand, "[h]ow much freedom women have on air is related to institutional constraints ... that surround their space" (Mitchell 1998: 83), though extricating the individuals performing particular roles from the practices attended to within those roles can be difficult (Havens and Lotz 2012).

In spite of the typical planning that takes place prior to the broadcasts, a large proportion of the radio interviews involves unscripted talk, which clears a space for contradictory views to be articulated by the interviewees. It is possible that the non-regular guests are able to subvert dominant constructions of identity that occur through conservative discourses because they are unhindered by institutional constraints and expectations.

Yet, it is too reductive to presume a feminist motivation in the subversive behaviour. The women participated in the interviews with particular goals, such as promoting their shows or products, and it can be expected that they would construct identities for themselves that align to their professional objectives, in addition to providing humorous banter for the radio station to entice an audience (Matheson 2005). This is clearly illustrated in the analysis of the interview with Terri Irwin in Chapter 7. While Irwin displays agency by not fully submitting to the various subject positions offered to her by the radio announcers, the frequent adjustments to her subjectivity appear informed by self-interest and the desire to present herself in a manner best suited to her interactional goals. Nevertheless, the interviewees' ability to reject the media's perception of who they are in favour of their own conceptions of their identity, as well as to combine diverse aspects that are traditionally perceived as contradictory is reflective of women's empowerment.

The talk between professional radio announcers and guests outside of the media industry is "of particular interest because it crosses between key sociological categories such as 'private' and 'public', 'lay' and 'professional', in complex ways [and provides] the broadest and most accessible public spaces in which ordinary members of the populace can express their opinions" (Hutchby 2006: 2, 4). When *Capital FM* was first launched, it marketed itself as "the only radio station that provides women a voice and hub to exchange thoughts and opinions" (Chan 2011). However, radio talk is not straightforwardly democratising because it is ultimately the interviewers who have control over the direction of the talk (Matheson 2005), and as noted in the previous section, industry lore about what appeals to an implied audience can have implications on the discourses invoked in the media. Returning to the interview with Shazia Mirza in Chapter 7, the analysis highlighted how the radio announcer continued to pursue the topic of marriage and relationships, despite indicating understanding and even acceptance of Mirza's subversion of the heteronormative 'Marriage and Motherhood as Compulsory discourse'. In light of *Capital FM's* aim to "deliver what women truly want" (Chan 2011) as well as LeMahieu's view that in broadcast talk, the key

relationship is “often between the “communicator” and the “audience member”, not between the two private individuals ... filling those roles” (1988: 21), we can argue that the interviewer’s behaviour in this example is very possibly shaped by expectations of what appeals to the idealised listener. This has the potential to mitigate the interviewee’s subversion since by repeatedly turning the talk back to the topic of men and marriage, the radio announcer implicitly communicates that women need a man in their lives, and invokes ‘Marriage and Motherhood as Compulsory’ and ‘The Unfulfilled Successful Woman’.

Overall, the resistant subject positions undertaken by the interviewees are not entirely novel or disruptive, and the discourses produced by *Capital FM* do not ultimately conflict with the professional discourses that emerge from *Her World* and *Clove* articles. Additionally, the use of humour and irony to contest conservative discourses may not have lasting effects. Nevertheless, if the interviewees are seen as representative of the general public and implied audience, the small acts of resistance through the agency of the interviewees are potentially valuable as they could ricochet back into the practices of the media by gradually transforming its assumptions about women’s interests and values.

To conclude, this section has compared the range of discourses produced by *Clove*, *Her World* and *Capital FM*. While these discourses are not homogenous across the three media sources, the variations do not seriously undermine or challenge the media’s overall practices since ultimately, the content is motivated by profit-making. As we have seen, women media producers’ autonomy and agency are circumscribed by socio-economic constraints, which would account for why the conservative discourses articulated are unmitigated by the biological sex of the text producer.

Media academics have sought to distinguish a women’s media from a feminist one. Despite the interventions challenging regressive representations of women, *Capital FM* is not a feminist radio station. Ng, Mohamad and Tan believe that “commercialized radio stations may not be a total loss for feminist activists as they may be given opportunities to broadcast issues on domestic violence, sexual crimes and relationships in a more politicized way” (2006: 161). However, in the case of *Capital FM*, although they may incorporate feminist ideas, there is a lack of the politicisation of cultural factors affecting gender inequality, which Bredin (1991) stresses is an important aspect of feminist media. This is, likewise, the case for *Her World* and *Clove*. On the whole, the three media communicate a

relatively stable and consistent array of messages that are devoid of feminist politics, and this shall be discussed in the next section.

9.2 The (Dis)Empowerment of Professional Women

The configuration of professional discourses observed in the sample draws heavily on several interrelated postfeminist themes, including:

- the notion that femininity is a bodily property;
- the shift from objectification to subjectification;
- an emphasis upon self-surveillance, monitoring and self-discipline;
- a focus on individualism, choice and empowerment;
- the dominance of a makeover paradigm; and
- a resurgence of ideas about natural sexual difference

(Gill 2007b: 149).

Although critics of postfeminist culture have highlighted the extent to which these themes dominate contemporary media culture and have transformed depictions of working women, what marks out this study as distinctive is it brings a linguistic lens to the examination of postfeminist media as a site for the construction of female professional identities. Furthermore, as yet, postfeminism in the Malaysian socio-cultural context has been largely overlooked as an area of academic enquiry. This thesis thereby makes a unique contribution to understanding the influence of postfeminist values on discourses surrounding women and employment in this country. What this reveals about Malaysian media and the society in which the professional discourses are produced, in particular how this strengthens inherent obstacles for gender equality in the Malaysian labour market, will form a central part of the current chapter.

It is important to point out that a critique of postfeminist discourses is also a critique of the individualistic and capitalist values promoted by neoliberalism, given their strong association with each other (Gill and Scharff 2011) as discussed in Chapter 2. This section will first argue that the resignification of freedom and agency due to the proliferation of neoliberalism and postfeminism has led to the depoliticisation of women's work issues in the media. The discussion will then narrow down to how this has affected media portrayals of working women in relation to two crucial barriers to gender equality in the

workplace: the integration of work and family responsibilities, and the 'double bind'.

9.2.1 The Depoliticising Effects of Neoliberal Postfeminism

Researchers have argued that postfeminist narratives "largely serve to undercut feminism's progress and seek to instil a sense that women have already made it, and thus further activism is unnecessary" (Mendes 2012: 557). This can be clearly observed in the analysis in the previous chapters, where institutionalised gender bias is not only played down, but often implicitly or explicitly denied. Furthermore, narratives and images of high-achieving professional women "have become hallmarks of contemporary postfeminist media culture" (Kauppinen 2013: 133), and in this study, successful women are frequently exhibited in the texts to underscore the substantive progress made in the professional domain, reinforcing the 'Women Can Succeed in Male-Dominated Fields discourse'. However, in the frequent realisations of this discourse, the details of how these women achieved their success are often glossed over, giving an impression of empowerment without acknowledging any class privileges that may have improved their opportunities to succeed or gendered barriers that had to be overcome. Strumska-Cylwik and Ibrahim's (2014) survey of Malaysian print media found that other periodicals such as *Female* and *Tatler* also often evoke images of inspiring, financially independent, and successful women, which suggests a uniform trend across Malaysian publications.

Nevertheless, this feel-good narrative that professional success is no longer hampered by gender cannot, by itself, explain the disjuncture between the rhetoric and the stark gender disparities across professional fields. In the media examined, women's 'internal barriers', such as an ambition or confidence gap, as well as the assumption that women undercut their own potential provide a convenient rationale for this. Although the factors behind these 'internal barriers' are not explicitly discussed, the frequent injunctions to work on the self and to emulate the role models imply that these hurdles are products of socialisation or the internalisation of gender biases, and therefore, surmountable. Nonetheless, because this is never made explicit, the reader could interpret these 'internal barriers' as inherent to the female condition.

The articulation of various combinations of 'Women Can Succeed in Male-Dominated Fields', 'Women Can Have It All', 'Women Owe Success to Hard Work', and 'The Lacking Woman' discourses strongly suggests that obstacles to success

should be responded through self-surveillance, self-discipline and self-transformation, which carries echoes of the 'Lean In' imperative, popularised by Sheryl Sandberg (2013). This corresponds with previous research highlighting that neoliberalism has transformed from "a political/economic rationality to a mode of governmentality that operates across a range of social spheres" (Gill 2008: 442-443). Inoue's (2007) ethnographic research in a Tokyo corporate office, for example, reveals how women employees' communication skills are targeted for change, in place of the company's sexist practices. In Kauppinen's (2013) analysis of career advice in the German edition of *Cosmopolitan*, which was discussed in Section 5.5, she illustrates how a "discourse of postfeminist self-management" encourages readers to become entrepreneurs of their selves, as required by the neoliberal workplace.

Not only has this neoliberal form of government through entrepreneurial self-work encroached into the professional domain, but as Gill (2007b) points out, the intensity of the self-monitoring and discipline required of women has also increased significantly. This is apparent, for example, in 'Top of the World', analysed in Chapter 8, which imposes pressure on women to actively upgrade their knowledge and skills during their career break. At the same time, the salience of 'The Lacking Woman' in the texts maintains the illusion that women do not invest sufficient effort into their careers. Through the frequent deployment of 'The Lacking Woman', *Her World* and *Capital FM* evoke the makeover paradigm that Gill (2008) argues constitutes postfeminist media culture. Just as the 'makeover' shows that dominate contemporary television shame the (predominantly female) participants into believing that they are flawed and need to reinvent themselves with the guidance of experts (Gill 2008), the texts in these media attempt to produce "new ethical selves" (Wood and Skeggs 2004: 206) as solutions to women's disenfranchisement.

Even when institutional barriers are acknowledged, the discrimination is minimised, and the recommended response is active self-regulation, self-transformation, and enterprise, bolstered by outwardly empowering can-do discourses, such as 'Women Can Have It All'. Like Baker's Australian subjects, the women in this research "interpret disadvantaging circumstances as providing opportunities for educational development and strength-building. Volition [is] demonstrated through the claims that anything could be overcome with the right drive and attitude. In this way, difficulties [are] incorporated into projects of self-improvement" (2010: 194). They seem to subscribe to market values: by holding women responsible for their own progress and urging them towards ceaseless

self-improvement and self-reinvention, they conceptualise women in mainly entrepreneurial terms.

The media examined not only preaches individual development, but emphasises this over collective gains, reflecting the “grammar of individualism” that Gill (2007b: 153) argues underpins the postfeminist rhetoric permeating contemporary Western media culture. This is not an isolated case within Malaysian media. In examining four popular Malay language women’s magazines, Wang (2006) observes that emphasis is placed on self-transformation rather than on social transformation. In the sample texts, while feminist discourses of emancipation are appropriated, for example to suggest that the ‘glass ceiling’ has been broken, overt references to the feminist movement are rare.

Such exclusions have been highlighted in Western media studies. In contrasting UK and US news articles published at the peak of the Second Feminist Wave with those from 2008, Mendes found that “not only has there been an erasure of feminist activism from these newspapers over time, but that feminist discourses have become both de-politicized and de-radicalized since the 1960s, and can now largely be considered neoliberal in nature” (2012: 554). van Zoonen (1992) noted that even in the late 1960s and early 1970s, although equal opportunity discourses were deemed acceptable in the Dutch media, political feminism was not. Chen posits that “feminism is distanced not because it champions women’s rights and freedom, but because it does so on a collectivist basis and predicates individual freedom on social change as a whole” (2013: 445). The commodification of the media could also be a relevant factor. As argued in the previous section, the media producers may have remained silent on feminist views that are more political as these may not be acceptable to their advertisers.

It has been shown in this section that the patterned articulation of ideas in the Malaysian media examined constitutes the neoliberal and postfeminist views previously observed within the Western media. By endowing women liberally with agency, the active female subject is constructed in the texts, and this, coupled with the myth of egalitarianism and meritocracy, is problematic. The neoliberal subject is expected to realise her potential and achieve economic success through her own efforts, and is blamed for lagging behind their male counterparts, regardless of the bias in the system or the circumstances she has been dealt. Concerns have been raised that such neoliberal ethos, which endows women with agency and fetishises personal responsibility, has reduced both the expression of compassion for the disadvantaged as well as the recognition of discrimination,

obstacles, and oppression within social structures (McCarthy and Dimitriadis 2000; Baker 2010). These concerns will now be explored by focusing on the media's treatment of two significant issues for working women: the tension between work and family responsibilities, as well as the effects on gender stereotypes on women's professional identities.

9.2.2 Integrating Work and Family Responsibilities

As highlighted in Chapter 4, work-life balance complications have been cited as the primary factor behind Malaysian women's decision to leave the workforce (World Bank 2012; Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development and United Nations Development Programme 2014). Given the serious impediment that integrating personal and professional commitments presents to female labour participation in this country, as well as the strong focus on working mothers and career-family conflict in the media accounts, the issue of combining work and family responsibilities will be interrogated in this chapter. This section will discuss the main patterns that emerged in the texts and locate them within the national context by reference to the unequal gender participation in the workforce and local cultural norms, as well as within current theories concerning neoliberalism and postfeminism. The findings of this study will also be discussed in relation to related and parallel research conducted in this region and beyond.

9.2.2.1 Working Mothers Doing It All

As discussed in Chapter 4, the unequal division of household labour is a significant gender equality issue that restricts Malaysian women to the domestic sphere. However, rather than challenge the status quo, the media normalises it. Pre-feminist discourses such as 'Mother as Main Parent', 'Home-making as Women's Work', and 'Busy Mother Juggling Work and Home' feature strongly in the articles, whereas 'Shared Parenting' is sporadically hinted at, but ultimately skirted. This discursal asymmetry is not an issue specific to Malaysian media. Sunderland (2004) discovered that 'Mother as Main Parent' remained the dominant discourse in American parenting magazines, while the 'Shared Parenting discourse' was virtually absent. Considering Malaysia and Singapore's shared history and culture, it is perhaps unsurprising that this study shares similarities with Lazar's (2000) critical analysis of discourses in a government pro-natalist advertising campaign in Singapore television and print media. In Lazar's work, childcare is also discursively organised along gendered lines rather than shared equally between women and men, and "most routine, practical care-giving

tasks are reserved for women" (2000: 387). It is noteworthy that the media scrutinised in this thesis construes motherhood in similar ways as the depictions in studies conducted almost two decades earlier, indicating how patterns of gender inequality can be stubborn and persistent.

The findings of this study share further similarities with Lazar's work. Just like Lazar's 'New Woman', the mothers portrayed in the Malaysian texts want a career, which accurately reflects the desires of the majority of women in this country (Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development and United Nations Development Programme 2014). Although 'Work as Drudgery' and 'The Unfulfilled Successful Woman' can be perceived in the data, they do not seriously undermine the 'Work as Passion discourse' as they are less salient in the texts, as highlighted in Table 6.1.

Another common observation is that having a career is represented as a source of tension, and women are advised to "strike a balance between a career and their families" (Lazar 2000: 395). However, in contrast to the pattern perceived not only in the Singapore media, but also in the US media (Douglas and Michaels 2004; Kuperberg and Stone 2008), the data analysis shows that this balance is not always "construed unequally, in favour of prioritizing women's family role" (Lazar 2000: 395). Unlike more traditional Western magazines that construct women as passive and locate them "either in the domestic sphere or in close proximity to it" (Caldas-Coulthard 1996: 253), the women in the media examined are expected to play an active role in the promotion of their careers and businesses. One possible reason for this is that unlike Singapore or Western nations, Malaysia is still developing and sees female labour participation as a crucial resource for growth in its attempts to "transition to a knowledge economy in order to maintain economic competitiveness" (Elias 2014: 6). There is some evidence of what Lazar terms as "other-centredness", that is "women's acute consciousness (or consideration) of their husbands and their children in the enactment of the motherhood identity" (2000: 388), and this will be discussed later in this section. Nevertheless, despite the archaic notions about domestic roles in the media accounts and Malaysian society in general, women are not compelled to opt out of the workforce and return to the home, and there is no unequivocal evidence that motherhood is prioritised over work.

One key characteristic of neoliberal postfeminism is "the requirement to transform oneself and remodel one's interior life" (Gill 2007b: 155), and the analyses in Chapters 7 and 8 show that the ability to combine a career with being

a mother is yet another aspect in which women are encouraged to be responsible for their own adaptation. Employed mothers are urged to work harder, cultivate a positive attitude, and emulate rich, successful women such as Kartika Wati Mohamed (see Chapter 7), whose ability to fulfil both her professional and family responsibilities is a neoliberal indicator of her competence. On the one hand, the pervasiveness of 'Women Can Have It All', 'Successful Women as Wives and Mothers' and 'Women Can Succeed in Male-Dominated Fields' discourses disrupts the traditional association of motherhood with the private sphere, which was observed in earlier Western studies of women's magazine content (Kaplan 1990, 1992; Johnston and Swanson 2003). On the other hand, it maintains neoliberal postfeminism's hegemony by minimising the difficulties Malaysian women face due to family labour conditions, and suggesting that success is within reach. Lazar has criticised the 'Superwoman' assumption that it is easy for women to balance a career and motherhood, as it "loads a further burden on to women" (2000: 397). Furthermore, without redistributing unequal care obligations and responsibilities from women to men, women will continue to be perceived as a 'risk' by their employers and subjected to pregnancy discrimination, which is a significant issue in Malaysia, as discussed in Chapter 4. However, the entanglement of pre-feminist and feminist ideas makes the conservative beliefs about gendered domestic roles that persist in Malaysia, as well as the neoliberal solutions offered, more pernicious and difficult to contest.

9.2.2.2 The Work-Home Binary and the Privatisation of Family Labour

Alongside the proliferation of 'Women Can Have It All', 'Women Can Succeed in Male-Dominated Fields' and 'Successful Women as Wives and Mothers' discourses in the media accounts, there is a constellation of mutually-reinforcing discourses running through the texts, consisting of 'Women Can't Have It All', 'Mother as Main Parent', 'Home-making as Women's Work', 'Busy Mother Juggling Work and Home', and 'Women Owe Success to Family' discourses. These undermine the former discourses, and the net effect is that women are expected to have a career, but just not a fully integrated work and family life. Motherhood is often represented as a counterpoint to careers, further entrenching the work-home binary. Feminist scholars have argued against the dichotomisation of the public and the private as it "obscures interpenetrations and relationships between home and work, home and state" (McElhinny 1997: 128) and "[if] they continue to be viewed as separate worlds, then the manner in which they are inextricably interlinked will continue to be overlooked" (Mullany 2007: 209).

The problems arising from the separation of home, work and state is evident in the discussion of childcare in the media accounts. Given the reality that parenting is still perceived as 'women's work' in Malaysia, access to childcare is a crucial factor in allowing women to work outside the home. Crittenden (2001) and Burggraf (1997) argue that the caring of children should not be viewed as private choices as it has long-term public consequences, and it will benefit the greater society if children are raised by responsible and caring people. However, like the media stories in Vavrus's (2007) US study, the representations of childcare in the texts fall back on privatising rhetoric about family labour, namely using private childcare services or seeking help from extended family to care for the children, which lends itself to 'Women Owe Success To Family'. This reflects the reality of many Malaysian women, as less than 30% of public listed companies in Malaysia provide flexible working arrangements, while only 11% have childcare support facilities (TalentCorp and PwC 2015). Nevertheless, without raising questions surrounding the lack of systemic solutions, including public daycare centres and childcare support in the workplace, this legitimatises a private, rather than public, remedy.

The representations of childcare also ignore the class element, as an increasing number of families in Malaysia are headed by mothers, including those with low income (Zarina and Kamil 2012) who are unable to afford private childcare. While some middle-class urban women are able to employ foreign domestic workers to care for their children, poorer women would need to rely on less stable sources of childcare, such as neighbours and friends (Elias 2014). Therefore, the conversation about women, choices, and the possibility of 'having it all' must be expanded to include challenges faced by women from all strata of society. This discussion must also be made part of the public agenda so that long-term systemic solutions can be developed.

One thing is clear from the discussion so far: the structural issues that make it difficult for some Malaysian women to combine work and motherhood, such as the unjust system of family care and workplace constraints, remain largely unexamined. A key aspect of neoliberalism and postfeminism is the reprivatisation of socio-political issues, and the media examined rarely moves away from its adherence to neoliberal principles. One exception is the *Her World* article 'Suit up to move up!' analysed in Chapter 8, which discusses government policies encouraging companies to provide flexible forms of work and crèches in order to increase women's labour market participation. These policies indicate that the state explicitly recognises how motherhood and family life limit women's

engagement in the workforce. However, the exclusion of any suggestions of state-run daycare centres is a good example of neoliberal hegemony in the media.

Furthermore, as the analysis of the article shows, it is still presupposed that housework and childcare are the responsibility of women, reinforcing dominant discourses such as 'Mother as Main Parent' and 'Home-making as Women's Work'. The issue of the second shift and how this affects women's ability to progress in a competitive work environment and cope with increasingly onerous professional responsibilities are largely ignored. This intersects with a pattern that emerged in US news stories about opting out mothers: the "refusal to take up a discussion of larger and even urgent issues associated with child care and family labor" (Vavrus 2007: 48). Vavrus criticises this as a failure of corporate media that encourages "public understanding of family labor using the terms of neoliberalism" (2007: 48).

Additionally, the text employs strictly utilitarian arguments as to why at-home mothers should return to the workplace, specifically as a means to increase the income of their country, employers, and families. As Elias observes, the emphasis on increasing the female labour force participation rate in the country emanates from "wider neoliberal global policy discourses that have served to position 'competitiveness' as states' primary economic objective" (2014: 1).

A discussion of neoliberal and capitalist work ethics is briefly taken up in the *Her World* interview with Mina Cheah-Foong. The analysis in Chapter 7 highlights the emphasis placed on family time as she warns working mothers about the cost of ambition, drawing on 'Women Can't Have It All' and 'The Unfulfilled Successful Woman' discourses. This presents both promise and problems. On the one hand, it draws attention to unhealthy corporate workplace practices that have been taken for granted. Voices critical of neoliberal and capitalist assumptions that undergird professional life are rare within the media examined. On the other hand, the critique is restrained, leaving the issue largely unexplored. The overall message is child-centric, and it is women who are called to curb their professional ambitions, as husbands are mentioned only to serve as a cautionary tale. This is problematic since gender imbalances still exist in Malaysian workplaces, but the politics and effects of such advice are left unattended to.

9.2.2.3 The Other-Centredness of Women

This returns us to the issue of "other-centredness" (Lazar 2000: 388). It was highlighted earlier that women's professional careers are a significant priority in

the texts. However, in light of the factors behind the low female participation rate in the Malaysian workforce, it is not an unexpected finding that their careers are regulated, to a certain extent, by their maternal and spousal roles. The other-centredness of women found in a few texts subordinates women's desires to their children's and husbands', and subtly discourages women from pursuing a career. For example, the demands placed upon women to be the primary caregiver are occasionally amplified by a discourse that promotes maternal anxiety, reflecting the child-centric ideologies of parenting in the US media that Hays refers to as "intensive mothering" (1996: 21) and Douglas and Michaels terms the "new momism" (2004: 4), which stipulates that "women remain the best primary caretakers of children, and that to be a remotely decent mother, a woman has to devote her entire physical, psychological, emotional, and intellectual being, 24/7 to her children" (2004: 4). As Tables 6.1 and 6.2 show, the overall data saw relatively little of the 'Maternal Anxiety discourse'. However, it is present in the parenting articles in *Her World*, and has intertextual links within the magazine. Therefore, its effects on the reader cannot be entirely discounted. The normalisation of parenting as 'women's work' alongside concerns surrounding the effects of women's employment on their children provide a compelling rationale for women to forsake their careers for the pleasures of domesticity.

In line with prior research conducted in the US (see Douglas and Michaels 2004; Kuperberg and Stone 2008), motherhood is emphasised over other home roles, including wifedom, in the print media. Husbands are not completely omitted, but they are not central to women's lives, and when they are mentioned, they are usually presented as business partners and breadwinners or, on rare occasions, as co-parents. Nevertheless, although the women's other-centredness is largely predicated on their parenting responsibilities, two texts from the radio data legitimate the notion that women's employment can jeopardise marital and family relationships, which echoes Johnston and Swanson's (2003) findings in their analysis of US women's magazines.

While the issue of work-life balance is important to both women and men, the question of whether to forsake one's career to care for their children or to preserve their marriage is only relevant to women of a certain social class who have the privilege to choose because they live with partners with well-paying full-time jobs. In the texts examined, women's financial needs are not considered as part of the equation. This concurs with earlier US research which reports that representations of mothers in magazines are dominated by women of higher socio-economic status (e.g. Smith 2001; Johnston and Swanson 2003). However,

the reality is that it is not an option for many mothers to only work if they have support from extended family members or childcare centres that they fully trust, or a secure husband who will not feel emasculated by their financial independence.

To conclude this section, the main patterns emerging from the texts through the configuration of discourses evoked reflect the fundamental structural issues that hinder the equal participation of women in the Malaysian workforce, namely the heteronormative order that expects mothers to be the primary caregiver, and the privatisation of family labour. Despite the rhetorical commitment to help mothers succeed in their careers, the media normalises rather than challenges these views, which accords with the findings of prior studies conducted in Singapore, the US, and the UK. The advice offered is to self-regulate, in line with the notion of self-transformation that is central to postfeminist values permeating contemporary Western media culture (Gill 2007b). In contrast to the rhetoric surrounding motherhood in the US media (Crittenden 2001; Douglas and Michaels 2004; Kuperberg and Stone 2008), the desires of women are neither completely subordinated to their children's nor is devoting time to the family invariably packaged as what women really want. However, despite the emphasis on women's professional success and self-determination, no real solution is being offered, which is an illustration of how the rhetoric of autonomy and choice fails. The media's adherence to neoliberal principles mitigates the formation of effectual solutions, and given the current realities and the lack of a public remedy, such egalitarianism can be easily displaced by the heteronormative order that has contributed to many Malaysian women's decision to opt out of the workforce.

9.2.3 The 'Double Bind'

Global and Malaysian studies into the key factors that contribute to the 'glass ceiling' and gender wage gap show that the stubborn perception that women are less capable than men in the workplace continues to negatively influence promotion and compensation decisions (e.g. Schafgans 2000; Jolliffe 2002; Dimovski, Skerlavaj and Man 2010). Clearly, the media has an important role in challenging and transforming such views. However, the texts examined reinforce deeply rooted gender stereotypes that place pressure on women to walk, as Holmes famously puts it, a "tightrope of impression management" (2006: 35). This chapter will now explore how women are subjected to a 'double bind' through the media's rigid prescription and proscription of codes of behaviour as well as the construction of an embodied professional identity for women. The

gendered workplace realities that are overlooked, and the problems that this both conceals and raises will be discussed. As with the previous section, these issues will be situated within the local context, neoliberal postfeminism, and the findings of related studies.

9.2.3.1 Gendered Professional Behaviour

The data analysis demonstrates that the media examined does not permit genderless professional identities. While this accords with Holmes and Schnurr's view that gender is "an ever-present influence on how we behave" (2006: 33), the gender frames invoked restrict the range of acceptable professional identities available to working women to predictable and idealised notions of femininity characterised by socio-emotional qualities. The stereotype that women are supportive, collaborative, communicative, and egalitarian is represented as a female advantage, in line with the transition towards the adoption of 'feminine' speech styles observed in multinational and Malaysian workplaces (Appelbaum, Audet and Miller 2003; Mills 2003; Baxter 2008b; Arham, Boucher and Muenjohn 2013). However, the postfeminist emphasis on female empowerment obscures important issues. Firstly, the promotion of 'feminine' interactional styles in workplaces reinforces gender dichotomies (Cameron 2003) and treats women as a monolith, contradicting empirical evidence from Asian and Western contexts indicating that women leaders are able to use a wide stylistic range and shift skilfully between normative masculine and feminine speech strategies according to the purpose and context (e.g. Holmes 2006; Baxter 2008b; Schnurr and Mak 2011). Moreover, as this section will now demonstrate, the promulgation of gender binaries and stereotypes places women in a 'double bind'.

The analyses in the previous chapters found that women's workplace behaviours risk being criticised and delegitimised through 'Beware Women' and 'The Lacking Woman' discourses, regardless of whether they adopt a 'feminine' or 'masculine' position. These findings share similarities with those from linguistic research in workplaces in the UK, New Zealand, and elsewhere (e.g. Marra, Schnurr and Holmes 2006; Mullany 2007), albeit from a media communication perspective. For example, in the quiz in 'What kind of boss are you?' examined in Chapter 8, the 'Mentor' is initially commended for displaying 'maternal' qualities, such as being nurturing and self-sacrificing. This subject position is similar to Kanter's (1993) 'Mother', where their display of authority is aligned with domestic servicing roles and idealised feminine characteristics, rather than professional expertise. However, 'The Lacking Woman' is later invoked, and the 'Mentor' is

ultimately assessed as ineffective, possibly for 'caring too much', though this is implied rather than explicitly stated. This would reflect the observations made in earlier research that women who express feelings in the workplace can be perceived as too emotional, subjecting them to a 'double bind' (Brewis 2001; Cameron 2003; Lakoff 2003). In the texts examined, the stereotype of the emotional woman appears to be a useful means to maintain the postfeminist and neoliberal fiction that gender equality has been achieved. It is occasionally drawn on as a form of 'gaslighting', undermining women's concerns of gender discrimination by portraying them as overly emotional and unprofessional instead. It is deployed to justify why women lag behind their male counterparts, and to discourage women from asserting themselves or demanding their rights in the workplace.

Women are only recommended to perform their professional roles based on a masculine pattern in a handful of texts. These behaviours are not explicitly labelled as 'masculine'; rather, they are indirectly indexical of masculinity. One repetitive motif revealed in the analysis in Chapter 8 is women are encouraged to be assertive. However, this ignores the possibility that by using assertive language, women may be perceived as going against their gender (Holmes 2006), causing them to seem threatening and unfeminine to their colleagues (Mullany 2007). The strong expectation for women to behave in an 'acceptably' feminine way can be perceived in the same quiz mentioned above. The 'Beware Women discourse' is frequently articulated in the article's criticism of the 'Micromanager' and the 'Queen Bee' for their stereotypical masculine traits: the former is censured for being autonomous, while the latter is negatively assessed for being hierarchical and failing to take on a supportive and communal role. These subject positions share similarities with Kanter's (1993) 'Iron Maiden', who "is routinely represented by colleagues as 'scary', 'tough', 'mean', 'hard', 'bullying' and perhaps 'bitchy' [and] appears to encapsulate the most explicit power" (Baxter 2012: 85). Perhaps due to the threat that female authority and independence present, or the expectation for women leaders to uphold the ideals of womanhood (Baxter 2008b), the 'Micromanager' and the 'Queen Bee' are advised to adopt relational practices that downplay their institutional power and demonstrate emotional thoughtfulness, placing women in a Catch-22 position, since in doing so, they risk being evaluated as lacking authority (Talbot 2010).

A further problem of the media's prescription and proscription of appropriate professional behaviour for women is its validation of postfeminism through the "evacuation of notions of politics or cultural influence" and the ways that

professional life is “refracted through the idea of personal choice and self-determination” (Gill 2007b: 153). Underlying the advice given in the media texts and its neoliberal emphasis on self-surveillance is the assumption that women are autonomous agents, whose behaviour and professional image are within their control and freely chosen. This is not fully supported by empirical evidence. Previous studies have pointed out that women take numerous steps “to observe, regulate, police, review and repair the way they appear and sound to their colleagues” to prevent being assessed negatively (Baxter 2008b: 217) or stereotyped as “irrational females” (Litosseliti 2006: 49). In Baxter’s examination of how British businesswomen discursively construct their leadership identities, she argues that the self-regulatory strategies utilised can “dilute the force or impact of words spoken” (2008b: 217), thereby weakening the women’s authority. In a Spanish study, women in charge “perform juggling acts to minimize and conceal their authority at the same time as exercising it”, but are regarded as manipulative or lacking self-confidence (Martin Rojo and Esteban 2005: 74). Therefore, the advice given in the media puts added pressure on women to perform institutional “interactional shit-work” (Fishman 1978: 405), which in fact, may be counterproductive.

Compelling women to monitor and modify their behaviour, through ‘Beware Women’ and ‘The Lacking Woman’, also wrongly assumes that the workplace is a monolithic context. Holmes and Schnurr (2006), for example, found that while discourse strategies indexing femininity may be treated as ‘unmarked behaviours’ in relatively feminine communities of practice, they may be negatively evaluated in more masculine communities of practice due to sexism in such workplaces. It is evident that the rhetoric of choice in the media is more often than not directed towards deflecting sex discrimination and reinforcing the status quo rather than critiquing institutionalised aspects of gender inequality that limit women’s options on how to perform their professional identities.

In Coffey-Glover’s analysis of UK women’s magazines, she argues that:

Developments in poststructuralism mean that traditional dichotomies such as male/female and masculinity/femininity are increasingly seen as gradable scales rather than binary categories, and the distinction between ‘sex’ as a biological construct and ‘gender’ as a social one is now taken for granted by most disciplines in the arts, humanities and social sciences. [However] a performative conception of gender in the academic domain often does not translate to ‘real world’ contexts, like that of women’s magazines (2015: 337-338).

On the contrary, in the media examined, the persistent exhortation to women to better themselves suggests a performative understanding of gender, though this still has negative implications for women as they are portrayed in a manner that discredits their professionalism.

This section has thus far demonstrated how the media creates a 'double bind' for women by assessing their professional conduct through a gendered lens, whereby women run the risk of being judged as ineffective if they adopt female gender-typed behaviour, or unlikeable if they discursively index conventional masculinity. It will now be argued that women are also caught in a 'double bind' due to the unstable and sex-stereotyped meanings that the media inscribes on women's professional bodies.

9.2.3.2 Embodied Professional Identities

The postfeminist view of femininity as a physical property has strongly influenced the construction of women's professional identities in the media texts examined. The role models' femininity is discursively constructed through what Wearing terms the "girling" of older women (2007: 294) and the discursive rejuvenation of older female bodies, or affirmed by drawing attention to their good looks, since one means of enacting a feminine identity is through the consumption of gendered commodities, such as fashion and beauty products (Benwell and Stokoe 2006). Given the dualistic relation between masculinity and femininity (Paechter 2006), this thesis posits that the role models' femininity is emphasised, through their bodies, partly to mitigate the feared masculinisation of women that comes along with their success in the workplace and performance of leadership. This can be perceived in the way the women's feminine physical appearance is sometimes juxtaposed against indices of masculinity, such as their professional achievement and drive. However, since many organisations take the male body as the norm (Bailey 2001), the feminisation of women's bodies can work to present them as 'outsiders' or 'intruders' in traditionally male-dominated spheres. For women, obeying the dictates of gendered bodily norms also means risking losing professional credibility, not least because professional identity is often conceptualised in cerebral terms (Bailey 2001). While the performance of normative femininity in the workplace brings risks for women, it will be argued here that non-conformity can also work against women, resulting in a 'double bind'.

Physical beauty and femininity are conflated with professional accomplishment through 'The Beautiful and Sexual Successful Woman' and 'Feminisation of Successful Women' discourses, which are not only frequently drawn on in these texts, but often foregrounded in the articles' headings, sub-headings, or opening paragraphs. This concurs with previous reports that the deregulation of mass media in Asian societies, brought about by economic liberalisation, has led to the promulgation of the feminine ideal that equates success with youth, slenderness, and glamorous clothing (Lee and Lee 2000). However, this view of women's power is too simplistic. In addition to indexing femininity, physical beauty and youthfulness embody neoliberal discipline, agency, and self-improvement. As Gill asserts, "the female body in postfeminist media culture is constructed as a window to the individual's interior life ... A sleek, toned, controlled figure is today normatively essential for portraying success" (2007b: 150). A woman who resists the process of ageing is deemed to be morally and mentally strong (Caldas-Coulthard 2010). Therefore, rejecting these feminine bodily requirements could be construed as the absence of the self-regulation needed to meet the conflicting demands on their time, and an internal state of disorder.

Through 'The Beautiful and Sexual Successful Woman' and 'Feminisation of Successful Women' discourses produced by the role models' example and overt advice, these texts participate in a neoliberal regime by both explicitly and implicitly urging the reader to be disciplined and to transform their bodies, even though they may belong to an industry where beauty has little to do with their actual job. It is clear that the neoliberal imperative to 'have it all' (Dean 2009) has expanded to include physical beauty, in addition to a career and family: professional women are not only positioned by the media as responsible for the second shift of childcare and household labour (Hochschild 1989), but also defined as responsible for a third shift of beauty work. This has close intertextual links with the surrounding texts in the media sources, particularly the print media, that create anxieties about bodily lack and place pressure on women to participate in consumerist bodily practices. Through the intensification of women's bodily self-policing, the media and its advertisers are able to capitalise on women's apprehensions about their appearance and push their products and services.

The analysis of Lam Swee Kim's interview in Chapter 7 shows how the conflicting demands on women to strive for professional success while maintaining their beauty (Malson 1998) are framed as a source of pleasure and confidence, which corresponds with the postfeminist theme that Lazar (2009) identified in

Singaporean beauty advertisements and labelled 'It's about me!', discussed earlier in Chapter 2. However, the rhetoric of choice fails because if women are completely free agents who beautify themselves for their own satisfaction, pressing them to meet socially constructed ideals of beauty is at odds with this autonomous postfeminist subjectivity. Gill points out further problems with the notion that women just 'please themselves':

It presents women as entirely free agents, and cannot account for why, if women are just pleasing themselves, and following their own autonomously generated desires, the resulting valued 'look' is so similar -- hairless body, slim waist, firm buttocks, etc. Moreover, it simply avoids all the interesting and important questions about the relationship between representations and subjectivity, the difficult but crucial questions about how socially constructed, mass mediated ideals of beauty are internalised and made our own (2007b: 154).

It is never categorically stated that professional women should do beauty work in order to please men. However, even though the role models may not be straightforwardly objectified for the male gaze, it can be argued that they are still set up as objects for the readers' consumption. Furthermore, the shift "from an external, male judging gaze to a self-policing narcissistic gaze ... represents a higher or deeper form of exploitation than objectification – one in which the objectifying male gaze is internalised to form a new disciplinary regime" (Gill 2007b: 151-152).

The 'double bind' is also constructed through "compulsory (sexual) agency [which is] a required feature of contemporary postfeminist, neoliberal subjectivity" (Gill 2008: 440). It has been widely reported in both gender and language as well as media and communication scholarship that the media in numerous countries worldwide continues to sexualise professional women and evaluate them primarily on their physical appearance rather than on their actual job performance (Ross and Sreberny 2000; Walsh 2001; Hammers 2005; Shaw 2006; Ibroscheva and Raicheva 2009; Adcock 2010; Mullany and Yoong 2016). In these studies, the focus on the female body is symbolic of women's socio-cultural inequality. A new area of analysis opens up when this is taken in light of the postfeminist rhetoric that presents female sexualisation as "liberation from repressive societal codes" (Duits and van Zoonen 2006: 112). While the female body is traditionally associated with characteristics such as "nurturance, dependence, passivity, and incompetence" (Trethewey 1999: 425), Butler (1990) and Bordo (1993) have challenged the attribution of passivity to the female body. The media representations of working women as active, desiring sexual subjects, invoked

through 'The Beautiful and Sexual Successful Woman', demonstrate how postfeminism stretches physical ideals beyond docility.

Nevertheless, this shift from objectification to sexual subjectification cannot be viewed straightforwardly as empowering. This is clearly exemplified in the interview with Terri Irwin, analysed in Chapter 7. In contrast to earlier criticisms that postfeminism only accords sexual subjecthood to beautiful, slim, and young women (Macdonald 1995; Gill 2008), Irwin, who was 49 at the time of her interview, is subject positioned as a 'cougar' by the radio announcer, who does not display awareness that the term marginalises older women's sexual desires (Schreiber 2013). On the other hand, the label is used positively. This could be due to the fact that it is bound up in postfeminist discourses. As Gwynne (2014) argues, the 'cougar' is a subject position that adheres to the dictates of postfeminist sexual desirability and subjectivity, youth, agency, and individual empowerment. However, as the analysis shows, Irwin distances herself from this sexualised subject position, possibly because it undermines her as a professional.

Additionally, the media texts demonstrate that there are rules around what are appropriate and inappropriate sexual subjectivities in the workplace, and these boundaries are regulated by gender stereotypes through the articulation of the 'Beware Women discourse'. The tension between the established mistrust of women and a postfeminist femininity that is "powerful, playful and narcissistic – less desiring of a sexual partner than empowered by the knowledge of her own sexual attractiveness" (Gill 2008: 438) – can be observed, for example, in the analysis of the radio show recorded on 10 January in Chapter 8, where women are encouraged to use their sexuality as long as they 'don't cross the line'. Therefore, the female body is simultaneously a source of power and in need of surveillance and discipline.

The media ignores the professional dangers that can emerge from the sexualisation of women. Casting women's sexuality as inherently powerful while reinforcing traditional notions of the manipulative woman could make it more difficult for women to be believed and taken seriously when reporting sexual harassment in the workplace, a serious issue in Malaysia that we discussed in Chapter 4. The eroticisation of power relations between men and women, though presented as pleasurable, is another way the gendered body can be an obstacle for women. In Chapter 7, we saw Lam Swee Kim indirectly encouraging women to employ their femininity and sexuality to get ahead in their careers, which carries echoes of the role trap Kanter (1993) identified as the 'Seductress'. However,

Baxter warns that while the role trap may provide women in senior positions “with a voice if used in mock-flirtatious fashion with male or indeed female colleagues to achieve good, working relationships ... it could be self-defeating if the gendered nature of the resource undermines the sense of a woman’s professional competence (Schnurr, 2009)” (2012: 95). However, because sexual subjectification in the media is framed as playful and freely chosen, it is difficult to critique (Gill 2008).

It cannot be assumed that the media examined does not support the sexual version of emphasised femininity suggested by Connell (1987), which represents women as sexual objects that are subservient to male needs. There are many texts in the media that both directly and indirectly encourage women to monitor and control their bodies as well as consume goods and services in order to be desirable to men. However, these texts are not related to professional women, and therefore, not included in the dataset.

It has been argued in this section that the media offers women leaders a restricted range of subject positions that are circumscribed by gender. The ‘double bind’ has been observed in workplaces in numerous countries around the world, and the discourses and stereotypes in the media texts seem to indicate that this poses a problem for professional women in the Malaysian context as well. If so, then there are gaps in the Malaysian government’s gender equality policies and programmes, described in Chapter 4, which must be addressed in order to crack the ‘glass ceiling’. Steps must be taken in the right direction to ensure professional women are unencumbered by sex-based stereotypes and prejudices, and not focalised through their gender. Likewise, the earlier discussion on the integration of work and motherhood has painted a more complicated picture of the challenges faced by working women in Malaysia, one that requires more comprehensive solutions that go beyond ‘family-friendly’ workplace policies.

9.3 Linguistic Strategies of Persuasion

In the previous section, we discussed how the discourses articulated in the media texts construct postfeminist and neoliberal subjectivities, and ultimately contribute to the maintenance of conservative gender roles and stereotypes. We will now turn to the linguistic strategies commonly used to convey these perspectives, as identified in the analyses in Chapters 7 and 8, focusing specifically on language practices that allow women’s media in Malaysia to

obscure the gender ideologies at work. This is a crucial issue, because as van Dijk maintains, “ideological communication may be most effective when recipients do *not* or hardly expect ideological implications” (1998: 265, emphasis in original).

9.3.1 Synthetic Sisterhood

Due to the fact that the text producers and their target audience are sharply divided from one another, the producers attempt to minimise this social distance by discursively constructing a ‘synthetic sisterhood’ (Talbot 1992), where they address an ideal subject, ascribing attitudes, values and preoccupations to their implied reader, while constructing a ‘big sister’ persona for themselves. This section will demonstrate that this synthetic friendship between the text producers and their ideal subjects can obscure the texts’ ideologies. I will build upon Talbot’s (1992) model on how a synthesised friendly relationship is established through (1) the simulation of friendship and (2) the simulation of reciprocal discourse with the audience.

9.3.1.1 The Simulation of Friendship

In order to simulate friendship with their audience, the text producers in this study frequently use the types of linguistic features identified by Talbot (1992), such as the pronouns *we* and *you*, and shared presuppositions. For example, in Chapter 7, we saw how the text producers use the inclusive *we* in their interview with Terri Irwin not only to claim solidarity with the audience, but also, by speaking on their behalf, to invite the audience to accept the presuppositions that constitute them in stereotypical gendered ways.

The linguistic process of presupposition has tremendous potential “for constructing ideologies of gender in media texts, because [it involves] implicitly drawing on the reader’s background assumptions about gender” to make these ideas seem to be common sense (Coffey-Glover 2015: 341). Implicitness and assumptions in texts perform both social and ideological functions:

Implicitness is ... a property of considerable social importance. All forms of fellowship, community and solidarity depend upon meanings that are shared and can be taken as given, and no form of social communication or interaction is conceivable without some such ‘common ground’. On the other hand, the capacity to exercise social power, domination and hegemony includes the capacity to shape to some significant degree the nature and content of this ‘common ground’, which makes implicitness and assumptions an important issue with respect to ideology (Fairclough 2003: 55).

Many of the presuppositions shared within the synthetic sisterhood are propositional assumptions: "assumptions about what is or can be or will be the case" (Fairclough 2003: 55). The analysis of 'Suit up to move up!' in Chapter 8, for example, identified propositional assumptions that are specific to the 'Mother as Main Parent discourse'. By assuming that childcare is mothers' work and taking it as an unavoidable reality, while claiming common ground with the reader at the same time, the texts perform ideological work.

While Talbot's (1992) work on synthetic sisterhood was originally based on women's magazines, this study demonstrates that her model is applicable to media talk. The deputy chief broadcasting officer of *Star Media Radio Group* was reported stating that *Capital FM* has been tailored to "be a friend and confidante" (Chan 2011). In the radio shows, a synthetic friendship is constructed through language practices and conversational strategies that build solidarity and intimacy. In addition to positive minimal responses, cooperative overlaps, and laughter (Coates 1996, 1998), the analysis also found evidence of the use of humour to subvert conservative gendered discourses, as illustrated in the interview with Shazia Mirza in Chapter 7. As we saw extensively across the spoken data, the radio talk resembles friendly conversations in informal contexts as participants often initiate an agreement or disagreement at the point of occurrence, which it departs from the turn-taking pattern in more formal interviews where interviewees wait for the interviewer to introduce a question before proceeding with their response (Clayman and Heritage 2002). The effect for the listener may be more than an impression of overhearing gossip since she is often directly addressed through the pronouns *we*, *us*, and *you*, which places her in an imaginary conversation with this imagined feminine community. Through the 'conversationalisation' of talk on air, the interviewers attempt to position themselves with the listeners (Fairclough 1995), since it is by representing itself as the talk of citizens that media talk gains more social power (Matheson 2005).

In the written texts, in addition to adopting an informal register, the text producers set up a synthesised friendship with the audience through the structure of the articles. It was pointed out in Chapter 7 that the lead paragraphs in four of the five *Her World* interviews draw on female empowerment discourses, namely 'Women Can Succeed in Male-Dominated Fields' and 'Women Can Have It All'. Traces of these discourses tend to be faint in the body of the articles, but since the generally understood function of the lead paragraph in mass media texts is to

establish the main theme of the article, this gives the illusion that the text and its producers are pro-women, without actually being explicitly feminist.

This synthetic sisterhood achieved through the simulation of friendship is pernicious as it can conceal the less than empowering positioning of the audience. The analysis of 'Top of the world' in Chapter 8, for example, demonstrates that the use of the collective pronoun *we* allows the text producers to set up the reader as inadequate, while claiming solidarity with the audience, making the subject position seem innocuous. An asymmetry in the relationship is also sometimes achieved when the writer shifts subject positions from sister to adviser while addressing the reader with the same pronoun. As illustrated in several articles, such as 'What kind of boss are you?', the extensive use of *you* constructs close relations with the reader by speaking to her as if she were an individual addressee and assuming access to her thought processes. However, there are particular points in the same text where *you* is used to construct the role of a novice for the reader, thereby constituting relations of authority, rather than solidarity, between the text producers and the reader. The analysis also pointed out the frequent use of the term 'secrets' in the articles, for instance 'Who runs the world?'. This sharing of 'secrets' implies close social relations with the reader while setting her up as in need of help.

9.3.1.2 The Simulation of Reciprocal Discourse

In addition to the simulation of friendship, a synthetic sisterhood is also constructed through the impression of a two-way interaction. In accordance with Talbot's (1992) findings, this is mostly achieved through imperatives, two-part question-answer exchanges with the interviewees, and reconstructed interviewee responses that require the reader to postulate questions by an interviewer. These linguistic features were identified, for example, in the *Her World* interviews with Mina Cheah-Foong and Lam Swee Kim. Caldas-Coulthard argues that these "give the tone of intimacy which is pervasive in all women's magazines. The idea of the magazine as friend, giving advice or solution to common problems, implicitly addresses the question of femininity as one shared by all women" (1996: 259). However, this effect obscures the reality that the questions posed to the interviewees in the articles are often disingenuous and meant to lead the reader toward a particular viewpoint.

9.3.1.3 Preserving the Imaginary Friendship

The text producers seem sensitive to the fragility of this bogus sisterhood, which is achieved moment-by-moment and has to be carefully preserved. The shifts between the usage of personal pronouns and impersonal pronouns or gendered nouns are examples of how the participants on *Capital FM* avoid jeopardising their friendly relations with the audience when expressing negative opinions about women. For example, we saw in Chapter 8 how the radio announcer and guest on the *Capital FM* show recorded on 10 September repeatedly use the inclusive *we* when discussing women's strengths, but this is reduced drastically and replaced with first person pronouns and the general noun 'women' when describing women's weaknesses. Likewise, on the 10 January show, the guest self-repairs from the more universal 'ladies' to the collective pronouns *we* and *us* to claim solidarity with the audience, but then shifts to the indefinite pronoun *you* within the same turn to mitigate her critique of a stereotypical feminine behaviour.

Another strategy identified in the radio data is to express criticisms of Malaysian women not as personal views, but as those belonging to 'others' or as objective observations of experiences of 'real women', as can be seen in the analysis of the 1 November and 11 April *Capital FM* shows in Chapter 8. This creation of third-party narrators not only makes pretensions to factuality, but also suggests that, to some extent, the interactants are conscious of the synthetic personalisation practices they are adopting, and hence, feel the need to transfer the responsibility of what is being uttered to 'others'. Although the radio announcer is often the addressee of the interviewee's responses and they may converse like friends, they are aware that they are producing talk for an overhearing audience, and are interacting on the basis of their institutional identities.

A parallel approach can be perceived in the written data, where the text producers take advantage of the fact that the articles are often multivoiced in order to detach themselves from the responsibility of any reproaches made against women. This is exemplified in 'Top of the world'. As the analysis in Chapter 8 demonstrates, unflattering claims about women are mostly attributed to the interviewees via direct quotations, in contrast to empowering discourses which are produced by the voice of the writer.

The producers of the written texts also communicate negative assessments of women implicitly to maintain their imaginary friendship with the reader. van Dijk states that "people tend to leave information implicit that is inconsistent with

their positive self-image" (2000: 47). It can be argued that certain claims, such as that professional women are inadequate, are left implicit because they are inconsistent with the periodical's presentation as a female ally. This strongly suggests that forging friendly relations and maintaining their sisterly persona are of central importance to the text producers, who work at using positive politeness and find ways around potentially offensive situations.

9.3.2 Other Linguistic Strategies

This chapter will now turn to other key linguistic strategies that text producers adopt to reinforce postfeminist values or reaffirm conservative notions of the role of women in society. This section will draw on the analytical constructs identified in Jeffries's (2007, 2010) and Fairclough's (2003) work.

Jeffries argues that "one of the potentially most influential choices any writer makes is the names s/he uses to make reference" (2007: 63). Naming an entity can shape worldviews, and what has emerged from the data analysis is a consistent and narrow range of labels for professional women. The women in the interviews are largely identified by their professional roles, or interpellated as stars (e.g. 'top performer'), mothers (e.g. 'mother of two'), or beauty objects (e.g. 'beauty'). Given the topics that are covered in the texts, it is not surprising that the women are referred to by their professional achievements. While this contributes to the deployment of 'Women Can Succeed in Male-Dominated Fields' and 'Women Can Have It All' discourses, this cannot be interpreted as simply empowering, as argued in Section 9.2.

The other naming habits are no less ideologically significant as they construct the women's professional identities based on their relationships to their children and bodies, which is predicated on compulsory motherhood and heterosexual femininity. The workplace issues relating to the production of the gendered professional body through the dominant 'The Beautiful and Sexual Successful Woman' and 'Feminisation of Successful Women' have been explored in the previous section. These repeated and imbalanced categorisations of women as mothers and beauty objects in the absence of other classifications based on additional aspects of their 'self', such as personal interests outside of the workplace and home, may have potential ideological implications on how the audience perceives the centrality of these categories and social roles in women's lives, though further research will need to be conducted in order to fully understand the impact of this restricted identification of women on the audience.

Fairclough argues that when examining texts from a representational perspective, it is not only the elements that are included and which of these are given the most salience that merit discussion, but also what have been excluded, since “[t]here are many motivations for exclusions, such as redundancy or irrelevance, but exclusion may be politically or socially significant” (2003: 149). One can appreciate the ideological significance of the repetitive representations of women as mothers in view of the fact that fathers are largely linguistically absent. This occlusion was pointed out earlier in the analysis, for example in the interviews with Lam Swee Kim and Marion Caunter in Chapter 7. It is symptomatic of the belief that childcare is women’s work, and reinforces the ‘Mother as Main Parent discourse’.

Fairclough (2003) maintains that creating distinctions between entities is another aspect of the social process of classification, and this can shape thought. This thesis will now discuss how the dichotomisation of work and home, which was examined in Section 9.2, is achieved linguistically. Although work and motherhood are not antithetical, they are often juxtaposed in such a way that they seem to be almost directly opposed. In analysing the interviews with Vivvy Yusof and Mina Cheah-Foong in Chapter 7, we have seen how contrastive relations are set up between work and motherhood through coordinating conjunctions as well as parallel structures. Contrast can also be embedded in the language used. For instance, it was pointed out in the analysis of ‘Suit up to move up!’ in Chapter 8 that the verb “swapping” in “swapping playdates for the boardroom” creates an either-or relationship between motherhood and work.

In several interviews in Chapter 7, this division between work and motherhood is constructed alongside the other-centredness of women through the constructions of space-time. As the analysis illustrated, there are several references to women’s movements between the space-time of the workplace and the space-time of the home, and they are usually in the form of verb phrases from the semantic field of *leaving* and *returning*, which create a strong effect that the workplace cuts off women from their children. Detailed time references also place emphasis on the important moment in the day when the woman is finally able to return to her family after being taken away, which taps into the ideological idea that mothers should always be present for their children. What is more, it is only work that is delimited by time in the texts, and therefore, it could be argued that in these texts, motherhood is conceived as a ‘global’ space-time that is an all-encompassing reality in women’s lives, whereas their professional life is a temporary ‘local’ space-time that they move in and out of.

This division between professional and domestic life is also accomplished through how work is assessed implicitly against motherhood. Evaluation, that is, what the text producers explicitly or implicitly commit themselves to “with respect to what is desirable or undesirable, good or bad” (Fairclough 2003: 164), is a common device used to influence the audience. For example, it was highlighted in Chapter 7 that Mina Cheah-Foong’s use of the metaphor ‘trap’ and the adjective ‘dangerous’ in her evaluative statements clearly signals a cautious attitude toward professional ambition due to its alleged detrimental effects on family life. However, work is not always assessed negatively. For instance, in the interview with Vivvy Yusof, the multiple affective evaluations indicate a positive value judgement towards building a career alongside raising children. Nonetheless, it still sets up work and motherhood as an over-simplistic binary. It is clear that from the discussion here that the constructed opposition between career and motherhood is realised through multiple linguistic means across the data. This not only reflects prevailing beliefs about gender roles, but also reinforces them, which can hamper efforts to increase the female labour force participation rate as well as seek progressive solutions that will allow women to play economic and domestic roles simultaneously.

Returning to the linguistic device of evaluation, Caldas-Coulthard, in her study on women’s magazines, points out that it is “through evaluation that ideological values are conveyed” (1996: 267). In addition to evaluative statements and statements with affective mental process verbs, which were discussed in the previous paragraph, the text producers also implicitly communicate their attitudes through statements with obligational modalities. One example of this, identified in the analysis in Chapter 7, is Lam Swee Kim’s quote in which she maintains that women “have to dress up and look good no matter what”.

The previous section discussed the social or relational function that conveying meaning implicitly serves in maintaining an imaginary friendship between the text producers and audience, but implying can also communicate meaning to the reader at a subconscious level and naturalise ideologies. The analysis has shown that in the articles, such as ‘Top of the world’ and ‘Who runs the world?’, the postfeminist myth that gender barriers no longer exist in today’s workplace and women’s career advancement is within their control is often delivered via implicature. Since several texts build on this implicature, the repetition could influence the reader’s perception on gender equality.

Summary

This chapter discussed how broader structural constraints, including media commodification, editorial control, socio-cultural values, and institutional roles, shape the practices of the three media outlets. It also argued that the mutually reinforcing and oppositional discourses in the texts work symbiotically to convey neoliberal and postfeminist ideas, which can exacerbate gender discrimination and inequality in the Malaysian labour market, particularly with respect to the crucial issues of integrating work and family responsibilities, and the 'double bind'. This chapter also explored the array of linguistic strategies used to construct and maintain a synthetic sisterhood with the audience, and reinforce traditional and postfeminist ideas about women. In the next chapter, which will conclude this thesis, we will review the key findings of this study, and explore how they can be used not only as a springboard for further research in the field of gender and language, but also to affect positive changes to government and workplace policies.

Chapter 10. Conclusion

This thesis examines the professional discourses and gendered identities of working women in three Malaysian print and broadcast media – *Her World*, *Clove* and *Capital FM* – as well as the gender ideologies that are reflected, reinforced, and contested through these discourses and representations. It addresses a significant empirical gap by analysing the interplay between gender, language, work, and the media in an under-researched geographical area. In addition, it places a spotlight on radio talk, which has received relatively little attention in gender and language studies, in comparison to print media.

Although media and cultural studies research has greatly contributed to our understanding of the extent to which postfeminist themes of self-regulation, individualism, and empowerment dominate media culture, this work brings a linguistic lens to the interrogation of the construction of female professional subjectivities in postfeminist media, which is another academic area of enquiry that has been largely overlooked in the field of gender and language. As neoliberal and postfeminist influence in the media continues to grow, both in Malaysia and elsewhere, this thesis makes a timely contribution to understanding their effects on discourses surrounding women and work in an Asian socio-cultural context.

Interviews with women role models from multiple fields as well as advice texts on a range of topics collected over a 12-month period were scrutinised through feminist critical discourse analysis and feminist conversation analysis. The examination of advice in the domain of work is another important contribution of this thesis, as previous linguistic research on popular media advice aimed at a female audience has mostly attended to the topics of beauty, sex, and parenting.

10.1 Key Findings

The findings of this study are mapped to the research questions set out in the introductory chapter:

- 1. What are the main professional discourses produced in the chosen Malaysian media outlets, and how do these discourses affect the construction of women's professional identities?**

The analysis identified four 'higher-order' discourses pertaining to professional life: 'Discourse of the Successful Woman', 'Discourse of the Unprofessional Woman', 'Discourse of Work', and 'Discourse of Integrating Work and Home'. A hierarchical representation of the key 'overarching' and 'subordinate' discourses is provided in Figure 9.1, and for ease of reference, presented below:

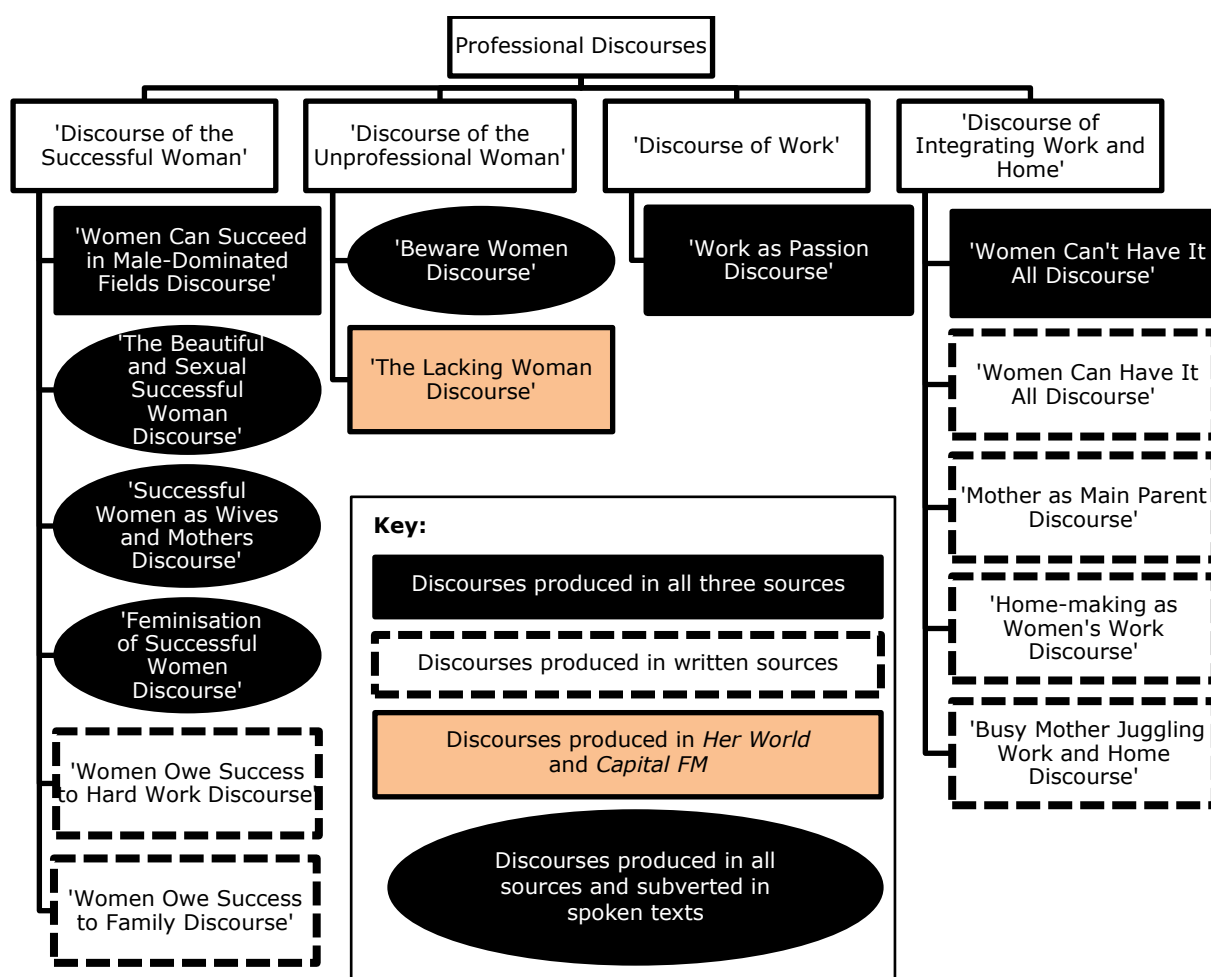


Figure 10.1: The dominant professional discourses in the media texts

These mutually reinforcing and oppositional discourses work together to conceptualise paradoxical female subjectivities that are, on the one hand, empowered, accomplished, and successful, and on the other hand, negatively stereotyped as lacking in professional skills and held back by 'internal barriers'. As this study shows, having women text producers does not necessarily mean that the media will be feminist. Disempowering views of women have found their voice in the media texts, and this is not mitigated by the fact that they are produced by women.

The discourses also emphasise professional women's femininity through stereotypical socio-emotional qualities, and construct an embodied professional identity that celebrates women's beauty and resexualises them, but from a position of sexual subjectification. This ultimately creates a 'double bind' for women.

Working women are also strongly associated with their motherhood status through the discourses, which demand women to reconcile their professional and domestic identities. While the assumption that parenting is a female responsibility is set up as a source of tension for women, the idealised subject is able to successfully straddle the divide between a career and domestic life.

2. What ideologies are implicitly endorsed through these professional discourses and gendered identities, and how do these relate to issues that women face in the Malaysian labour market?

As discussed in Chapter 4, the proportion of women in the wage economy and senior positions, and advances in equal pay, family-friendly policies, gender equality legislation and the division of family responsibilities have not kept pace with women's success in higher education. It is unfortunate then that the configuration of professional discourses in Figure 10.1, and the subjectivities that they articulate, mobilise postfeminist and neoliberal ideas that maintain the status quo.

Firstly, they reinforce postfeminist narratives that "seek to instil a sense that women have already made it, and thus further activism is unnecessary" (Mendes 2012: 557). The existence of gender discrimination is often ignored, minimised or denied in the texts, while professional difficulties are construed as manifestations of personal inadequacies that should be responded to through extensive self-surveillance and reflexive entrepreneurship. The discussion on the 'glass ceiling', gender pay gap and pregnancy discrimination in Chapter 4 shows that women can be legitimately regarded as disadvantaged in Malaysian workplaces, but by drawing on the postfeminist "grammar of individualism" (Gill 2007b: 153), which emphasises self-interest and individual achievements over collective gains, the media obscures and neutralises women's work issues, and displaces blame on to women themselves, thus allowing current practices to stand unthreatened.

Additionally, the discourses and representations of women reconstruct the necessity for working mothers to adapt to the double-shift work in the workplace and at home as an indicator of her competence. In contrast, the texts are largely silent about shared parenting or public childcare support, which reflects the neoliberal insistence on self-sufficiency and legitimates the idea that childcare is both 'women's work' and a private endeavour. Without counter discourses challenging the unjust system of family care and privatising rhetoric about family labour, we will not see equal numbers of women and men participating in the labour force. As long as mothers are expected to bear full responsibility of childcare, they will continue to be perceived as 'a risk' or less committed employees, and issues such as pregnancy discrimination will persist. Above all, ascribing mothers with neoliberal agency and self-determination measures all women by the same (middle-class) yardstick, and renders the class element invisible in a society where publicly funded childcare is vital for women in low income households to gain access to paid employment.

Furthermore, through the discourses, beauty and femininity are cast as signifiers of professional success. Physical beauty and youthfulness act as indices of neoliberal discipline and self-improvement as well as femininity, reflecting the postfeminist notion of femininity as a physical property. The discourses also celebrate professional women's sexual agency, which is "a required feature of contemporary postfeminist, neoliberal subjectivity" (Gill 2008: 440). This assumes that women are completely emancipated, while disregarding the reality that the feminisation and sexualisation of women's bodies can lead to punitive consequences for women, including the loss of professional credibility, the demonising of 'manipulative women', as well as the justification of sexual harassment.

3. To what extent do the media outlets cohere into a larger aggregate in terms of their discourses and conceptualisation of professional women?

Figure 10.1, presented earlier in this chapter, illustrates the similarities and differences in the discourses invoked across the three media. The range of key discourses deployed over the 12 months across the three different media outlets is restricted, which could be an indication that these are powerful discourses circulating within the wider Malaysian society.

In comparing and contrasting the practices of media from different genres within the same socio-cultural context, I have argued that women produce discourses and gendered identities informed by cultural norms, media commodification, their understanding of their roles within the institution, and their own agency. There is a notable amount of intersection in the discourses invoked by the three media, and this can be partly attributed to the common socio-cultural context from which they arise. Nevertheless, culture cannot account for the variations in the discourses that emerge from the print and broadcast media, or the fact that it is on the radio that the subversion of hegemonic discourses is most evident, as shown in Figure 10.1. These are potentially due to media commodification and the exercise of editorial control. The production of a similar set of discourses in *Her World* and *Clove* may be due to the pressure to attract a large audience to sell to their advertisers. In order to appeal to a 'willing audience', the editors and text producers conform to the conventions of their media genre and deploy familiar discourses typically circulated by women's lifestyle publications. The pressure to persuade the audience to purchase the stereotypical women's products offered by their advertisers may have also resulted in the articulation of traditional discourses of motherhood and beauty in these publications. In contrast, motherhood discourses are largely absent in the *Capital FM* data as they may not fit in with the demographic of their listeners.

While 'commodity feminism' underlines and structures the talk produced by *Capital FM*, the study shows that the radio seems to hold the strongest potential to disrupt hegemonic discourses, and this is significant for women's empowerment in a media culture where there is an obvious exclusion of critical and political feminist perspectives that may run counter to the business interests of advertisers.

10.2 Methodological Reflections

The longitudinal data collection is a key strength of this study, as this provided a representative sample of the types of articles and professional discourses that the audience would encounter over a full year. However, there are a few limitations to the data. Firstly, unlike the written articles which were collected in a systematic and orderly manner, the radio segments were recorded through a convenience sampling method, and therefore, without replication, we cannot be completely confident that the professional discourses in Figure 10.1 are representative of

those in *Capital FM's* programmes. Neither is the configuration of discourses in Figure 10.1 representative of professional discourses in Malaysian media as the scope of this study did not include social media or television, texts in other major languages used in Malaysian media, or texts by men and international media agencies. This is related to the third limitation: as stated in Chapter 5, the proportion of articles by women writers in *Clove* was low, at 33%. Therefore, *Clove* readers are exposed to other professional discourses beyond those in Figure 10.1.

Returning to the discussion in Chapter 3 on the analytical approaches taken in the examination of spoken texts, there are two methodological decisions that are worth further comment. The first pertains to combining feminist conversation analysis with feminist critical discourse analysis. This has been useful in the analysis as it was sometimes necessary to draw on implicit cultural knowledge and go beyond what was visible in the data in order to demonstrate how the gender order is maintained or challenged in talk. Secondly, adopting Stokoe and Smithson (2001) and Ten Have's (1999) recommendation to regard the researcher and their interpretative resources as 'participants' has also proved valuable. In pure CA, empirical phenomena are restricted to the interactants' orientations. However, as I have argued throughout Chapter 9, a deeper discussion of gender discrimination is almost absent in the chosen media, leaving ideological beliefs unchallenged. Glossing over gender issues after they surface in talk codes the text producers' ideological position, but in order to make any claims about the political relevance of such instances, I needed to move beyond the interactants' displayed concerns, and take into account "interactional practices that, from a researcher's perspective, may be implicated in the accomplishment of a gendered social order" (Weatherall 2015: 423). Taking this feminist conversation analytic approach also allowed me to relate the interactants' behaviour to the institutional context, even when it was not "talked into being" (Wilkinson and Kitzinger 2011: 35).

While the blend of CA and CDA was appropriate for interrogating the *Capital FM* data since the audience only had access to the talk, in the case of the *Her World* and *Clove* articles, the readers also interact with the illustrations and images to construct meaning. Therefore, this study could be extended to take into account multimodality. For example, Kress and van Leeuwen's (1996) social semiotic framework could be used to examine the meta-semiotic tasks performed by the graphics and photographs of the interviewees, and how they interplay with the content of the article to produce particular identities and professional discourses.

10.3 Future Directions

We will first discuss current plans to extend this study into under-researched areas relating to postfeminist media in the field of gender and language, before exploring the possible ways that the findings summarised earlier in this chapter can be leveraged to inform media practices and the decision making of Malaysian employers.

10.3.1 Exploring Audience Response

While media producers are in a position of power due to the control they exercise over what is included in the content and how it is presented (Talbot 1992), media influence is not absolute, as the meaning that a text gains from its interpretation is dependent on who the reader or listener is, and the resources available to them for interpreting the text (Talbot 2010). The multiplicity of positions that the audience can take up in relation to the information they read or hear are particularly interesting with postfeminist texts. As we have seen in this study, postfeminist 'empowerment' narratives can appear to be a "well-intended response to feminism" (McRobbie 2004: 255), which makes them more pernicious. The resonances between postfeminism and third wave feminist ideas that "celebrate (some) women's individual choices, agency, and sexual autonomy (Wolf, 1993) make for a plurality of reading positions, depending on audiences' social and ideological positionings, and could invoke such diverse responses as hostility, pleasure, or apathy" (Lazar 2007: 160).

Hence, I plan to pick up the threads of this study and conduct focus groups to investigate which meanings the participants might activate or imbue when interacting with this study's data. The purpose of examining audience response is neither to patronise women consumers as passive dupes nor to find "authentic, uncoopted forms of resistance – as if a pure, uncommodified and unmediated form of feminism could replace neoliberal popular culture from the *outside*" (Chen 2013: 448, emphasis in original). Instead, from the discourses and subjectivities produced by the participants, it seeks to understand the attraction of neoliberal postfeminism and how it achieves its effective governance. While it is crucial to interrogate the resignified meanings of agency, empowerment and liberation, and how this resignification takes place in the institution of the media, as this study has done, the global spread of neoliberalism and postfeminism demonstrates the importance of going beyond the articulation of discourses, and attending to what Gill calls the "*affective dimensions of ideology* [and addressing] questions of

investment and desire in order to grasp the power of some constructions, some new subjects – to understand why some disappear without a trace while others take hold in public imagination” (2008: 439, emphasis in original).

This study will be conducted through the University of Nottingham’s Nottingham Advantage Award (NAA) programme on the Malaysia campus, where I teach. The NAA is an accredited cross-campus employability award that offers undergraduate students the opportunity to acquire a portfolio of personal and professional skills outside of their core academic studies through over 300 modules (University of Nottingham n.d., University of Nottingham Malaysia Campus n.d.). This includes a course on language and feminine identities in the media, which I will convene in the Spring 2018 semester. This NAA module was developed from the belief that recognising the contradictions between women’s workplace realities and the neoliberal and postfeminist fantasy of empowerment and liberation, and the complex tension that working women face due to this disconnect, is an essential aspect of a student’s professional development.

The module will be conducted via seminars providing students with a set of linguistic tools and terminology to critically examine how women’s professional identities are constructed through language and, in so doing, uncover the ideologies underlying these media representations. The module is not conceptualised to rescue students from self-deception. It is hoped that through the critique of neoliberal and postfeminist claims of progress and freedom in media texts, and how these articulate with the wider society, the seminars can be a productive means for the students “to move toward self-reflection and a deeper understanding of their own subjectivities, which are both conditioned and constrained as ‘free’” (Chen 2013: 450).

During the first and final seminars, the students will be placed into small groups, and tutors will circulate written articles and play audio recordings from this study’s sample to prompt discussion. The diachronic approach will allow us to examine if the acquisition of critical linguistic tools and terminology hold the positive potential to broaden the range of meanings, alternative discourses, and subjectivities accessible to the students, and bring about discernible changes in their responses to the texts.

At the same time, we have to be careful of the assumptions we make about the participants. The reinvigoration of feminism via the Internet, which was briefly discussed in Chapter 2, has led to an increased awareness of persistent sexism

and misogyny in society (Cochrane 2013) and given young women the opportunity to conduct political discussions with each other (Schuster 2013). Therefore, some participants may be politically-aware subjects who align with feminist ideals and bring with them critical perspectives of capitalism and postfeminist female subjectivities. In order to relate the students' displayed orientations in the discussions to their existing politics, the focus group discussions could be supplemented by one-to-one interviews.

Discussions are currently underway on how the university's international presence could be exploited to conduct collaborative research in the Malaysia and UK campuses and examine the complicated process of women's media consumption across students from a wider range of backgrounds and political stances. By doing so, this proposed study will contribute to the relatively little research in language, gender, work, and postfeminist media.

10.3.2 Engaging with Media Practitioners and Policy-makers

The women and men in the University of Nottingham Malaysia Campus student community are not only media consumers and potential employees, but also future media producers and organisation leaders. Therefore, raising their awareness of the ways in which dominant discourses reinforce neoliberal postfeminism, stereotypical gendered identities, and structural barriers for working women is one way of getting the findings of this study into the public domain. This will be carried out through my academic teaching as well as a research talk on this thesis, which I will present to the campus community in the Autumn 2017 semester. This talk will be a good opportunity to introduce concepts and terminology from the research field to students beyond the School of English, which could empower them to critically reflect on their own attitudes and prejudices, and, hopefully, inspire action and produce more equitable forms of media and workplace practices in the future.

It is of utmost importance to look beyond the 'ivory tower', and engage with current media practitioners and policy-makers. *The Conversation*, an online news and commentary site publishing critical analyses and empirical findings from the international academic and research community, is a potential platform to share not only the findings from this thesis, but also the results of the audience response study proposed above, particularly if there is evidence that the discourses and imagery of women in the media texts do not resonate with the audience. Although this cannot by itself transform the industry, it will be a small

step towards persuading the media that their current practices are not sustainable and that they need to consider new ways of engaging the public, including producing more critical representations of women and their concerns.

Concluding Remarks

Little has been written on media representations of working women in Malaysia from a linguistic perspective, and this study has attempted to address this gap by analysing the gendered professional identities and narratives of women's occupational lives that are contained and cultivated through the production of professional discourses. We have clearly seen how professional women are refracted through the prism of gender stereotypes. By comparing discourses across multiple media genres, this study was able to attend to the larger social structures affecting the conceptualisation of women in Malaysian media. The patterns of intersection suggest deeply entrenched cultural beliefs about women, which can be a complicating factor in women's ongoing struggle toward attaining equal opportunities and access to the Malaysian labour market. Gender stereotyping is an overlooked area in current institutional policies aimed at promoting gender parity in employment, and this thesis firmly indicates that the issue must be confronted to ensure that it does not drive decision making in Malaysian workplaces.

What is also clear is that the audience is co-opted to endorse neoliberal and postfeminist requirements. Through a critical analysis of media constructions of postfeminist narratives and neoliberal identities, this study has attempted to 're-politicise' what has been depoliticised, and expose the disjuncture between rhetoric and women's realities in Malaysia. If we wish to build a more equitable future in which women have actual freedom to pursue real choices in terms of how they wish to live their lives and achieve their full potential, more attention must be paid to the ways language promulgates neoliberalism and postfeminism.

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