Battling the ’Invisible Nets’
Gender in the fields of journalism in sub-Saharan Africa

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Abstract

Battling the ‘invisible nets’ studies journalism as a gendered practice in sub-Saharan Africa. This thesis analyses the gender logic in the field of journalism by examining how structures of gender, class and race interact to create barriers and opportunities for black women journalists and media managers. The empirical focus is on South Africa but also includes Zambia, Nigeria, Ethiopia and Uganda. The theoretical framework is inspired by French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu and the appropriation of his theories by Toril Moi.

Inspired by an ethnographic approach, five empirical studies examine the lived experiences of black women journalists. The thesis also examines how gender logic operates in the field of journalism in South Africa on a detailed level by analysing reporting and editorial discussions concerning a specific gender-sensitive topic during the 2010 FIFA World Cup.

The results of the thesis show the South African context is unique in the way it shapes opportunities and obstacles for women in the field of journalism, and how black women journalists act in order to navigate the ‘invisible nets’ and succeed in the field.

Keywords: South Africa; Zambia; Uganda; Nigeria; Ethiopia; journalism; gender logic; Bourdieu; intersectionality