

Redefining 'Chick-Lit' and Women's Publishing within Trade Publishing in South Africa

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Abstract

There is a clear imbalance between female- and male-penned fiction and non-fiction within local and international publishing, as shown by high-profile statistics like the VIDA and Stella counts. The aim of this research is to investigate the representation of female authors (often grouped together under the term ‘chick-lit’) within a South African publishing context, using sales history from Nielsen’s Bookscan, *Sunday Times* reviews and participant interviews. Findings show that the split in South Africa is not as obvious in certain Western countries, but two trends are clear: non-fiction sells more than fiction; and non-fiction is more likely to be written by male authors.

South African trade publishing is still very much feminised and representation within the workforce is more balanced than the international case, but white male decision-makers still sit in senior positions. However, there is still an imbalance in what gets published and how it is promoted: in particular, publishers use cover design tropes to genrefy female authors. The term “chick-lit” is used here as a form of shorthand for the main techniques used to position women’s writing: the term is often employed to market, sell and promote a title aimed at a specific audience, although findings show that few authors or publishers are comfortable using the term. Moreover, this is a genre that is changing due to societal issues and time period trends. Positioning in the book review pages is also gendered, and reviewers remain trusted watchdogs that play a role in determining what gets published. While local reviewers are more often women than men, in contrast to international trends, more social esteem is attached to male authors and to those who have won literary prizes. These remain male-dominated.

This study makes a number of recommendations for ways to improve the representation of women in published works as well as in the publishing workforce.

This research aimed to define the situation of women's publishing in South African trade publishing with a specific focus on what tools publishers use to position female authors in a specific genre. Further, it aimed to define the term 'chick-lit', describe it and perhaps even modernise the term from its current definition for the genre. This research came to a consensus on the various issues authors face within the publishing industry, with a specific focus on female authors. And, finally, this research considered how feminist presses and traditional publishers differ when it comes to publishing women's writing.

List of Abbreviations

AF	African Fiction
AN	African Non-Fiction
AP	Author Participant
BB	Bargain Books
CF	Children's Fiction
CN	Children's Non-Fiction
EB	Exclusive Books
ISBN	International Standard Book Number
NLSA	National Library of South Africa
PASA	Publishers Association of South Africa
PP	Publisher Participant
QTY	Quantity
RPG	Representative Publisher Group
SA	South Africa
ST	<i>Sunday Times</i>
UK	United Kingdom
US	United States

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Gender Bias

The issue of gender bias in publishing is not new. As far back as 1920, novelist Virginia Woolf penned a letter to *The New Statesman*, in reply to a favourable review given to novelist Arnold Bennett. Bennett, who had published a collection of essays entitled *Our Women*, had argued that men were cognitively and creatively superior to women. Woolf challenged the editors, saying (*The American Reader*, n.d.):

'Then I compare the Duchess of Newcastle with Jane Austen, the matchless Orinda with Emily Brontë, Jane Grey with Jane Harrison, [and] the advance in intellectual power seems to me not only sensible but immense.'

Woolf's point needed to be made because, women were not usually considered intellectuals or taken as seriously as males at the time – regardless of education or social standing. This form of belittling happens throughout literature and publishing, even to the present day. Susan Coultrap-McQuin has highlighted the uphill struggle of women authors within the confines of publishing during the 1800s. She stresses the importance of their contribution to the economics of the literary marketplace (2000:6). Coultrap-McQuin unpacks the historical background of publishers and authors within the United States of America and defines the concept of 'gentlemen's publishers' that ripples through the industry even today. This concept raises the question: what kind of impact do male-run publishers have on women's participation in the publishing industry and marketplace? In addition, what kind of legacy does this leave for women authors still to come?

The process of being published is acknowledged to be hugely difficult, especially for female authors. For some, the process is made easier by taking on a male pen name (George Eliot, for example). Twohey has noted in this regard, in the case of Margaret Atwood: '[She] tried to disguise her femininity as much as possible in order to break into the publishing world and get her works produced' (2014). Mirosław Miernick points out that J.K. Rowling was asked by her publisher to adopt a penname rather than use her given name because he believed that 'young boys might be wary of a book written by a woman' (2015: 91). Rowling later went on to pen a series of adult crime novels using the pen-name 'Robert Galbraith' to explore her 'inner bloke' (Bury, 2013). According to Miernick (2015: 91), this only emphasises the idea that male writing is seen as more universal than women's writing.

Women's writing is often grouped together under an umbrella term to distinguish it from 'serious' writing, particularly using the term 'chick-lit'. The popularity of chick-lit or women's fiction – a genre which has morphed from its 1970s genealogy to a consumerist 21st century – can be defined by the maturation of its protagonist; an individual that is identifiable to the reader, who acts as a comfort and/or escape. So when Rosalind Gill and Elena Herdiekerhof say that *Bridget Jones's Diary* (1996) by Helen Fielding gave the chick-lit genre prominence in the market that appealed to the thirty-something singletons across various cultural forms, they weren't wrong: 'The reverberations of the success of *Bridget Jones's Diary* were felt most powerfully in the publishing industry, sections which had been concerned by dwindling sales of romance novels amongst 20 to 30 year-olds in the 1990s and were looking for new formulas to attract younger readers' (2006: 2). This title is what gave rise to a host of spin-offs and 'copycat' novels of thirty-something single females who were 'neurotic', 'preoccupied with shape and finding a man' (2006: 2). So began a type of publishing

aimed specifically at the female reader and that is designed (covers, plot, etc....) specifically for them. But not everything marketed as chick-lit deserves the label, revealing an inherent prejudice.

Gender bias and discrimination against female authors is visible in all aspects of publishing which makes feminist presses that much more important. From their inception during the 1960s and 1970s feminist presses have actively shaped a new type of publishing. 'Feminist presses share an awareness of women's traditional exclusion from the privileged arena of high culture, and a concomitant awareness that in order to write women into the cultural record, their achievements must be taught and discussed by the academy – the self-appointed arbiter of cultural value' (Murray, 2004: 69). Virago – a feminist press publisher – started as a reaction to the women's movement in the 1970s. Feminist presses began as a type of protest against the 'gentlemen's club' that was publishing at the time. Locally we can see the growth of Modjaji Books, and independent feminist publishing house started in 2007 by Colleen Higgs within the South African context. They have successfully lived up to giving voices to female writers, and house titles that have won some of South Africa's prestigious literary awards (Modjaji Books, 2019).

However, in spite of such advances in publishing, women still face a variety of challenges and discrimination in the processes of publication and the aftermath.

1.2 The Phenomenon

There are a variety of studies that have specifically sought to highlight this bias against women in publishing. For example, we can point to recent popular examples detailed in Amanda Marcotte's article 'Women Read More Books, but Men Get to Write More Book Reviews' and more recently in an article in *The Bookseller* magazine's 'The

Books of the Year 2016'. These both show that there is a clear imbalance between published female reviewers and female authors being reviewed. The Australian Stella Count and the American VIDA count add yearly to the statistics by counting the number of women featuring in publications – both reviewing and being reviewed (see e.g. Harvey & Lamond, 2016). In 2012, Marc Verboord added to the comparative research on counting male authors versus female authors by studying trends (specifically bestseller lists) in fiction books between the years 1960 and 2009 in France, Germany, and the United States of America. The study was designed to establish if gender inequality took place in the larger publishing sphere or within specific genres only. The findings were that 'over time female authors have become increasingly successful in bestseller lists, albeit they remain underrepresented in all three countries' (2012: 404).

In addition, women authors are often positioned as writing only a few genres, and only for female readers. The phenomenal success of the chick-lit genre has meant that publishers have begun packaging books in a certain way, as Natalie Rende points out: 'stereotypical cover conventions include: the colour pink (maybe a turquoise or bright purple) somewhere, a martini glass, stiletto heel and a shopping bag' (2008: 21). Can this be the only way to identify a genre?

If we look to the South African context, the positioning of female authors to target a specific market follows the same formula of designing the cover to appeal to female readers. One such example is the writer Zukiswa Wanner whose covers between 2006 and 2015 have changed and thus the target market appears to have similarly changed: 'The cover image of *The Madams* is very fashion-focused, and intensely feminine, with no indication that the book deals with cross-class, cross-race, domestic power relations between women. A decision was clearly taken at

management level to market the book as chick-lit' (Snyckers, 2016). When Fiona Snyckers makes a comparison between Wanner's first book cover and her most recent, *London, Cape Town, Joburg*, it is clear that a change of genre has been indicated by the publisher. 'The cover is devoid of colour and of any feminine aesthetic whatsoever. This is a novel about personal relationships, romance, and motherhood, but also about politics and public life. It was received with more seriousness than any of Wanner's previous books, and won the K Sello Duiker Award in 2015' (Snyckers, 2016). However, Basil van Rooyen points out that if you spend a few hours in Exclusive Books you are likely to see that book buyers are 'mainly women, as they are all over the world' (2005:16). Perhaps it is only natural for publishers to target a book written by a woman to a female-centric readership.

Whilst the South African context appears not to stray from the international genrefication of the female author, we currently only have such anecdotal evidence to back up perceptions of gender bias: we lack the relevant data to investigate the broader gender gap within trade publishing and whether or not publishers and reviewers place female authors into certain categories and genres within the South African trade publishing context.

1.3 Problem Statement

There is a clear imbalance between female- and male-penned fiction and non-fiction within local and international publishing. There is a problem of misunderstanding and misrepresenting female authors which is dominated by publishers, reviewers and readers. The aim of this research study is to investigate the actual gender representation of South African authors, through the use of sales history, review

analysis and interviews. This helps us to situate the phenomenon of 'chick-lit' within a South African publishing context.

1.3.1 Research Questions

The central research question of this study will be as follows:

- What is the situation of women's publishing in South African trade publishing?

1.3.1.1 Subsidiary Research Questions

The below research sub-questions were formulated to assist in answering the main research question as mentioned above:

- What is the gender representation of authors in South African trade publishing, as compared to the international publishing sphere?
- When women are published, how are their genres defined? What approaches (i.e. book covers, marketing) are publishers using when it comes to the genrefication of female authors?
- How is the chick-lit genre defined?
- What difficulties are female authors facing in the publishing process?
- How do feminist presses and traditional publishing houses differ in their definition and approach to women's writing?

1.4 Clarification of Key Concepts

In this study, the following key concepts will be used.

Chick-lit: A colloquial term short for 'chick-literature' that defines a genre of fiction geared towards female readers, which deals with issues in women's lives. Suzanne Ferris and Mallory Young state that 'from the perspective of the literary criticism, we can define [chick-lit] as a form of women's fiction on the basis of subject matter, character, audience and narrative style' (Ferris & Young, 2006: 3). Heather Cabot points out, 'the characters typically mirror the authors themselves. [Jennifer Weiner] said chick-literature captures a much more realistic side of women's lives. She believes it has an authenticity frequently missing from women's fiction of the past' (Cabot, 2003). In this research, the term chick-lit will be referred to as: a genre of fiction epitomising the lives of women, written by both male or female authors which takes into consideration the protagonist's gender, age, and story trajectory.

Genrefication: This term is mainly used to describe the system for classifying music into various categories. In recent years a debate has emerged of how well the Dewey Decimal System works for classifying books into sections: 'While Dewey arranges non-fiction in a logical, classified order according to subject and content, fiction arrangement is a bit less structured. Dewey simply arranges all fiction books by the letters of the author's last name. This system simply places books on the shelves, with no regard to the content of the book' (Potter, 2016: 9). Thus, librarians have taken to dividing up sections into various genres (i.e. Crime Fiction, Children's Picture Books: Dinosaurs, etc). Publishers similarly divide their lists by genre. Within the context of this dissertation, I will use genrefication with the meaning of dividing larger genres into smaller genres, as well as to specify that women are often confined to a certain genre.

Feminist Presses: 'Feminist publishing successfully engineered the cultural percolation of its politico cultural programme into mainstream public consciousness' (Murray, 2004: 10). Within the context of this study, 'feminist press' will be seen as a publisher, imprint, or department within a larger publishing house, that publishes female authors and female issues (both fiction and non-fiction) with the purpose to enlighten men and women on social and political issues surrounding feminism.

Trade Books: General books sold to the public through mostly mainstream and independent booksellers.

Women's Writing: Judith Kegan Gardiner describes in great detail the idea of a woman finding identity and then expressing it through literature: 'Contemporary women's literature promises that a sense of full, valued and congruent female identity may form in the continuing process of give and take that re-creates both self and other in a supportive community of women' (1981:361). Women's writing can be understood as female authors writing within any genre. I will not confine the definition of women's writing to only focus on female issues and ideals, but merely to show a new genre of writing penned by female authors. However, I will attempt to delineate and explore the ideas and various definitions of women's writing and how it overlaps with chick-lit.

1.5 Significance of the Study

This study provides an analysis of the representation of female authors in trade publishing in South Africa and internationally.

While other studies and bodies of research cover the progress of female authors in comparison to male authors, they are largely historically focused (dated

between 1800 and 2000) rather than contemporary, and they thus paint a picture of a different time in publishing. These studies also tend to focus on individual case studies rather than broader trends, and the writers sampled all have well-established careers. Another important aspect is that of the location where research occurred, focusing on bestseller lists and authors published in Europe, Australia, the United Kingdom, and the United States of America. This research also tends to focus more on opinion-based than data-driven research or a singular method of research. Lastly, previous research appears to take on a historical storytelling of a once-lived, once-published, and different publishing world.

This research, however, provides data on books published in South Africa that will serve to update previous research done in this area as well as add another geographical region to the overall comparative body of research.

Utilising a mixed method form of research using book reviews from a prominent newspaper, title sales data, and interviews with both publishers and authors, it is hoped that this research will create a holistic picture of the current state of the industry.

This study will also provide publishers, authors, and researchers with a starting point for considering how the South African publishing industry publishes, sells, and assigns genre to female authors in contemporary South Africa.

1.6 Literature Overview

The literature found on this topic, as mentioned above, tends to focus more on a historical overview of female authors in a 'man's world' of publishing, and the social idea of women writing for women and about the home. With many studies coming from a literary criticism background, there is a heavy focus on fiction writing and hardly any on non-fiction writing by female authors, as well as limited data on the numbers of

women published versus men. The aims of the literature found are focused on the works of five or fewer authors (mainly a single female author), and a small selection of works. There have also been studies of the historical development of feminist presses (e.g. Murray, 2004).

In Hitomi Yoshio's thesis, *Envisioning women writers: Female authorship and the cultures of publishing and translation in early 20th century Japan* (2012), he defines and questions the gender dynamics of the publishing world during a specific time, while at the same time questioning the social constraints placed on popular female authors in Japan during the early 20th century. Yoshio examines the points of culture assimilation and gender equality within the bounds of literature by questioning and navigating the socio-economic and societal behaviours of the time through the work of key female Japanese authors within a philosophical study. At the core of this dissertation lies the idea of *what it means to label an author by his/her gender*. Delving into larger issues around this idea of a male genre and a female genre, Yoshio looks at the marketing model and the production of books aimed at females and how they differ from those of their counterparts. This study is exemplary for its focus on both the writers and the publishers.

In the Australian context, some research has explored the 'Stella count', or the representation of women writers in the review pages of Australian media platforms. Melinda Harvey and Julieanne Lamond (2016) examine the gender breakdown of the book review pages in some detail. While they find the publishing landscape is shifting towards greater equality, there is still a significant split between men and women, especially when it comes to the longer and more in-depth reviews. The VIDA Count in the United States is very similar, but has not yet been subjected to much academic

analysis and placed in a broader publishing context (O'Connor, 2017, is a recent exception).

Other studies of this phenomenon are based in the United States of America (USA), Canada or Europe. These studies are mainly literature studies, although some examine the historical development of women authorship over a specific time period.

Few such studies could be found that specifically relate to South Africa. One of the few South African articles on women's writing is Fiona Snyckers' keynote address, *Trivialising the Feminine: The Genre-fication of Women's Fiction in Post-Apartheid South Africa* (2016). This article, which is more popular than academic, begins by arguing that the literary world 'looks down' on traditional tropes of femininity, and that this convinces reading audiences that a book is not serious unless it deals with masculine themes. She goes on to explain that specific mentions of the 'domestic sphere' are almost seen as boring to the reading public, and that 'child-bearing and child-rearing cease to be epic or iconic moments in the human condition, but rather small and trivial things fit only for consumption by women' (Snyckers, 2016). Snyckers indicates that post-Apartheid South African fiction is changing, saying that the post-colonial fiction that has been so celebrated and individualised as South African fiction is now no longer what new writers are writing about. Further, she believes that writers, especially females, are beginning to diversify into different genres. Snyckers brandishes the sword for 'chick-lit' as a form of strength and ownership of one's craft. This article is based on exploratory research, and as such it lacks comparative data, in terms of sales figures or numbers of female authors to male authors to provide evidence for her statements. Snyckers does, however, compare the cover and successes of Zukiswa Wanner's body of work by looking at the various feminine tropes used (and in some cases abused) to publicise her books to a female readership. This article

explores the either obvious or obtuse nature of the masculine tropes used to position male or female authors as women's fiction or general fiction. No further studies of the gender gap in publishing in South Africa could be located.

1.7 Methodology

The study uses a mixed method approach. 'A mixed methods paradigm rests on the ontology that recognises that phenomena are complex' and aims to fully comprehend and describe the 'phenomena' and to represent and research all its facets (Cohen & Manion, 2011: 116). By using a mix of quantitative and qualitative methods, numerical and opinion-based data to answer the research questions were gathered.

The study begins with a comprehensive literature review, which helps contextualise this research within the larger research arena as well as to identify gaps in existing research and to clarify concepts in the broader research body.

1.7.1 Quantitative Methods

The first method applied is bibliometrics. According to the Online Dictionary of Library Sciences bibliometrics is 'the use of mathematical and statistical methods to study and identify patterns in the usage of materials and services within a library or to analyse the historical development of a specific body of literature, especially its authorship, publication, and use' (Reitz, 2014). Alan Pritchard defines the term as 'the application of mathematics and statistical methods to books and other media of communication' (Pritchard & Glen, 1981: 3). This term will be used to describe the type of quantitative methods taken to expand this research. In this case, the term library will refer to a collection of books digitally, rather than physically, presented in the form of an Excel document.

Data were sourced from Nielsen Bookscan, and used to track the total number of locally published trade titles over a five-year period (2012-2016) to determine the number of female and male authors published locally; the sales of said authors; and genres published within a given year. The following categories are used to structure the data collection:

- (1) how many books were penned by male authors versus female authors;
- (2) the total sales figures for the years 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, and 2016;
- (3) the language the trade book is published in;
- (4) the publishing house (referred to as Representative Publisher Group and shortened to RPG by Nielsen Bookscan).

Each year amounts to approximately 3 000 titles but for the purpose of this research various strata (applied through Excel's filter function) were set in place to determine various 'themes' within the data (i.e. top selling genres, how many female authors and male authors wrote fiction versus non-fiction, etc.). A filter for the top 10 publishers was set in place, known as the RPG. This is a ranking of leading publishers by value according to Nielsen Bookscan (see appendix A).

In addition to the bibliometric data, some additional data are sourced from reviews. Reviews were tracked in *The Sunday Times* (ST) Lifestyle section for the years 2016 and 2017. Authors were counted based on their gender, genre and the gender of the reviewer. This data was collated from the *Sunday Times*' archive in Johannesburg and recorded in Excel. This tabulation can be found in appendix B.

1.7.2 Qualitative Methods

A collection of interviews and content analysis took place to gather more in-depth, opinion-based data. This was used to enrich the numerical data, by providing further information on the experiences of publishers and authors within the South African context. Semi-structured interviews were set up, taking the form of either face-to-face or email correspondence. Semi-structured interviews allow for 'richness' in the interviewees' answers (Cohen & Manion, 2011) and for follow-up questions that might come up during the interviews.

Interviews were conducted with a small number of publishers (a representative was interviewed). These enabled me to look more deeply into innovative female-driven publishing houses and, feminist presses, whilst contextualising and localising independent publishing in South Africa. Interviews were also conducted with a variety of authors who will remain anonymous for ethical reasons.

1.7.3 Ethical Issues, Reliability and Validity

To adhere to a body of regulatory code for this research and ensure that it stays within the ethical code of the University of Pretoria, approval and clearance were obtained from the University's Ethics Committee. Intrusive and personal questions were avoided and interviewees were fully briefed and informed on the research body so that they could give informed consent to participate. In addition, permission from Nielsen Bookscan and the ST Archive was obtained to use the data supplied and collated.

In terms of reliability, the quantitative aspect of the study is limited by the data itself. The margin of error in various parts of the research methodology needs to be noted as follows:

- (1) Nielsen Bookscan represents approximately 95% of sales through sales points at booksellers in South Africa (SA);
- (2) The chain store Bargain Books only fully integrated their sales through Nielsen in 2014. Therefore, sales might appear higher for certain mainstream locally-published trade books after 2014 and lower in the years before.

Moreover, the data does not represent the entire publishing industry, but does cover the majority. It can thus not be generalised to the whole population, but provides indicative patterns for the industry.

For qualitative interviews the potential for researcher bias can be noted. In cases of interviewee sensitivity to such bias, email correspondence was suggested to all the interviewees allowing them full control over the wording of their responses. Participants were kept anonymous and the transcribed interviews were stored on a password-protected computer. The lack of standardization is also a risk in semi-structured interviews but a set duration was arranged with interviewees ahead of interviews to combat this. Furthermore, the questions sent via email do allow for consultation of documents. Interview participants signed an approved consent form and participants were encouraged to keep a duplicate which they were given for their own records. Interviews were held in public places rather than private homes and, in instances where a face-to-face meeting wasn't viable, done via email. Participants were also given the option to end the interview at any time if they ever felt uncomfortable.

The use of mixed methods, and both qualitative and quantitative methods, enabled the researcher to triangulate the findings and place them in a more detailed context. This triangulation adds the validity of the research.

1.8 Limitations of the Study

While the methods of the study have attempted to cover all bases, there are limitations that could impact the outcome of the conclusion and methods.

The study focuses on trade publishing titles captured through SAPnet figures, which represented locally published ISBNs within the years of 2012-2016. Both English and Afrikaans titles were looked at, and the specific limitations of the Nielsen figures are mentioned above.

This study only focused on the proposed gender bias within South African trade publishing and not racial bias. This is not to say such a bias does not exist, merely that it could potentially be another avenue of research in the area of black female authorship versus black male authorship, or the intersectionality between gender and race.

As mentioned above, the triangulation of research methods was used to avoid bias. These limitations will be taken into consideration and overcome with slight adaptations in each case. These will all be noted and discussed in the larger research body.

1.9 Outline of Chapters

Chapter 1 is the introduction and covers a brief summary of the research. This chapter describes the research problem and specifies the research questions covered in this

paper. This chapter also looks at the argument of the study and justifies the study, the methods used, and the limitations of the study

Chapter 2 is the literature review and summarises the research and data collated on this research topic. Chapter 2 also looks at the gaps in the research already published on this subject.

Chapter 3 is the methodology chapter, and it gives details about the methodology used. This chapter outlines the research strategy, research design, the sample, the data collection, data analysis, ethical considerations and the limitations of this study.

Chapter 4 is the findings chapter and discusses the qualitative and quantitative analytics of the data collated in the methodology.

Chapter 5 is the concluding discussion and critically discusses the findings of this research. This chapter also outlines the recommendations for further study.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter, is to provide an overview of the author's knowledge about the study, vocabulary, variables and phenomena (including the methods and history), and that it should also provide a framework for new findings while establishing the state of previous research (Randolph, 2009).

John Biggam defines the function of a literature review as follows (2008: 51):

'It lays out what research has been done by others relevant to your research aim/objectives (why waste your time discussing irrelevant stuff?); it presents the work of others in a clear, interesting and progressive manner (to build up a coherent/logical picture); it provides evidence of in-depth critical evaluation (i.e. to show that [the researcher] can give an opinion and support it with argument/evidence).'

Meanwhile, Boote and Beile point out that a good literature review looks at the theoretical and methodological approach of previous research, ultimately improving its quality and relevance (2005).

This literature review aims to set out issues within and around the topic of women's publishing and hopes to discover new gaps, issues or problems that can be addressed within the methodology. There is a notable amount of research on gender bias within the creative industries, and a handful of these focus on the publishing industry. Therefore, in addition to academic literature and research, this literature review includes industry reports and discussions of the topic in media sources. This chapter will examine studies of the gender gap within the publishing sector and how authors and publishing factors contribute to the imbalance.

While there is no shortage of female representation in the publishing industry – there is, in fact, usually a higher female representation in the publishing workforce – men tend to still hold the decision-making positions in publishing. There is a notable imbalance in gender of reviewers and authors reviewed recorded by the VIDA (The VIDA Count, 2017) and Stella counts (The Stella Prize, 2017), and it is also worth noting that the numbers of published female reviewers and reviews of female authored works have grown in favour of female representation over the last five years.

The literature review will also seek to define the chick-lit genre and consider how it may be used to limit female authors. Questions include: Why is the term ‘chick-lit’ used to define female-authored works? Where and when was the term coined? Why is it often seen as derogatory in its packaging and marketing? Are female authors more likely to be packaged and marketed to female readers when they are not ‘chick-lit’? Are female authors being limited by this genre?

Finally, the chapter will look at studies that suggest how to overcome the gender gap and whether feminist presses and feminist bookshops are relevant in doing this. Taking a look at various literatures around feminist publishing will assist in determining whether feminist publishing can help overcome the gender gap.

2.2 The Gender Gap

Numerous studies show that female authors remain on the back foot in gaining a literary reputation. Novels by women are less likely to win prestigious literary awards, or to be reviewed in major literary magazines (Koolen & van Cranenburgh, 2017). This is in spite of the fact that, world-wide, women tend to read more and buy more books than men: According to a National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) report in 2008, male

readers increased their reading rate by 11% in 6 years, and female readers increased by 3% (2008). This makes women the majority of readers at 50.2% (NEA, 2008).

2.2.1 Measuring the Gap

Two major means of assessing the state of women's publishing have emerged. The Stella count 'assesses the extent of gender biases in the field of book reviewing in Australia. In order to do this, it records the authors, book titles and book genres reviewed, as well as the gender of reviewers, and number and size of reviews published' (The Stella Prize, 2017). The VIDA count covers similar ground in the US: 'we manually, painstakingly tally the gender disparity in major literary publications and book reviews' (The VIDA Count, 2017). Initiatives and research such as the Stella and VIDA count assist in showing how large the gap between male and female authors (and reviewers) is. The question that remains is: why the gap, and what puts women behind their male counterparts? Here we will look at some of the research that focuses on gender and literature and how various factors impact how authors are represented to a reading audience.

Verboord, in 2012, expanded research on counting male authors versus female authors, by studying trends (specifically bestseller lists) in fiction books between the years 1960 and 2009 in France, Germany and the United States of America. The study was designed to establish whether gender inequality occurred in the larger publishing sphere or within specific genres only. The findings were that, 'over time female authors have become increasingly successful in bestseller lists, albeit they remain underrepresented in all three countries' (Verboord, 2012: 404). The main findings were as follows, according to Verboord (2012: 401):

‘Overall, France has the lowest percentage of women in its bestseller lists: in the late 1960s about 17% of all titles are written by a female author and this increases to a percentage slightly over 30% in the 2000s. In the German bestseller lists the share of titles by female authors grows from 24% in the late 1960s to 40% in the 2000s. The American bestseller lists contain the most women: already in the 1960s about a quarter of all listed authors are female, and in the 2000s their share has risen to 47% of all titles.’

What was interesting was that during the 1980s, both the US and France bestseller lists showed more charted female authors (2012: 401). Verboord’s study on the trends of gender inequality of fiction titles between 1960-2009 in France, Germany and the United States looked at bestseller lists and literary award winners. Later, the study was also expanded to include the Netherlands (Berkers, Verboord & Weij, 2016). But the under-representation in Verboord’s findings is not linked to the reasons for the lack of female presence.

In 2013, the Riddle of Literary Quality project conducted an online reader survey in the Netherlands, where readers were given a list of 400 bestselling, Dutch-language novels (and translated novels). These novels were divided into three genres: General Fiction, Suspense and Romance. Approximately 1 400 people filled out the survey. The purpose of this study was to determine whether ‘author gender play[s] a role in judgements of literary quality?’ (Koolen, 2013). What Koolen found was that female authors were judged significantly worse than male authors. While male authors were judged on ‘literary concepts related to penmanship’, female authors were judged more on content (Koolen, 2013). The findings were that ‘gender plays a (subconscious) role in literary judgements’ (Koolen, 2013). Koolen’s study focused on three genres over a

large sample of readers. This was one way to look at how research within this field measured the gender gap. This research only covers Dutch language novels, over a selected set of bestsellers.

Thelwall used an interesting methodology in his research using Goodreads, a book-based social website that allows users to rate, track and share the books they are reading. Thelwall employed a software analysis programme to extract: author name, book title, the number of times it was rated, and the average user rating (the average number of stars given by a user) (2016). His findings were that female authors dominate all the romance categories (ibid.). Interestingly, Thelwall's findings is the percentage of female users represented as much as 76% of users on Goodreads (ibid.). This is likely to bias the ratings and genre choices made by users.

However, few studies have gone further than these, to examine the factors leading to the gender imbalances in publishing.

2.2.2 Women and Literary Prizes

It is fair to conclude that there is a significant gender gap between male and female authors, but does this gap filter down into bestseller lists and prizes? Koolen found that (2013: 2):

'Female authors are judged more by content and male authors by literary concepts related to penmanship. A random selection of specific comments shows that the differences are quite subtle. Work by female authors is also described in terms of penmanship, but then in different wordings; work by male authors is also typified according to content, but more room is taken for description of penmanship.'

Zangen says, 'there is no such thing as a sexless ideal reader and that if this hypothetical ideal reader of most literary criticism is attended to closely, you can very often prove that *he* does indeed have a sex and that it is male' (2003: 288). Zangen expands on her statement (2003: 290):

'In light fiction, women enjoy romantic novels; but they have a clear tendency toward male authors where ambitious fiction is concerned, and they read more ambitious fiction than men on the whole. In Germany, from the 1970s onward, the differences between women's and men's preferences became smaller in historical, detective, science fiction, and war novels, meaning that women began reading the types of fiction typically preferred by men. At the same time, no reverse approximation of men to women's preferences took place.'

According to this research, female readers who prefer 'ambitious literature' choose male authors the majority of the time (Zangen, 2003). The perception is that female-authored texts focus more on emotions and male-authored texts focus on numbers (Newman, et al., 2008). Zangen also said that adults pass down the gender bias of reading to children (new readers), as well as the idea that books written by men contain more important themes, subjects, and hold a greater significance (2003). Ultimately, readers (male and female) have been trained to 'value men's novels more than women's' (Zangen, 2003: 293). This learned bias must be considered when judging literary prizes and can be seen in the 39% of female judges for the Booker Prize, the 40% short-listed female authors, and the 38% female winners (ibid.). An equal gender representation (50/50 split) would be ideal for unbiased judging.

One can assume that this biased approach from readers (i.e. judges) impacts how a book is judged. Zangen pointed out that the 1991 Booker Prize short-list

consisted of only male authors, and in 1992 it short-listed five male authors and one female author. If we look locally to South Africa's Alan Paton¹ award for non-fiction and the Barry Ronge Prize for fiction, female authors have won the Alan Paton non-fiction award in the past five years, and two female authors have won the Barry Ronge fiction award in the same time frame (BooksLive, 2012-2016). With 60% of English novels being written by women, 70% of novels being read by women, and 90% of novels being bought and borrowed by women (Zangen, 2003), female authors are still not being selected as often as male authors for prestigious awards.

In the top literary prizes (top 25 according to *The Telegraph*) just one of these is women-only (The Telegraph, 2013). The 'ghettoising' of female authors caused huge debate and outcry for The Orange Prize when it launched in 1996. The aim of this prize was to promote female authors to a range of male and female readers (Zangen, 2013). The shortlistees and winner of The Orange Prize almost quadrupled sales of their title (ibid.).

That is why any bias in literary prizes is significant: because it is linked to significant sales spikes. Overall, Kovács and Sharkey found that prize-winning books tended to attract more readers following the winner announcement (Kovács & Sharkey, 2014). Further, 'the receipt of a prestigious literary prize can be thought of as a significant status shock that leads to a dramatic uptick in attention and, consequently, readership for prizewinning books' (2014: 3), and this creates an advantage of 'high-status actors' (ibid.). Kovács and Sharkey apply their theory to the literary world (2014: 6):

¹ Note: the results for the 1991 and 1992 winners were not available online. The years 2012-2016 were looked at instead.

'Prior to a book winning an award, people who have decided to read a book must have done so because they had some indication that it would fit their tastes. After a book wins a prestigious award, however, readers might choose to read a book either because it seems to be a good fit or because status creates the presumption that the book is of superior quality. Thus a prizewinning book needs to have only some minimal level of fit to reach the threshold at which a person will deem a book worthy of reading, whereas a book that has not won a prize must distinguish itself as worthy in other ways, such as having underlying attributes that signal attractiveness to the reader.'

We could look at one such example in South Africa: the sales of Pumla Dineo Gqola's title, *Rape*, winner of the *Sunday Times* non-fiction award – the Alan Paton Award – in 2016. Prior to receiving the award, the title had sold only 543 units (according to Nielsen figures) from 2015 to 2016, but in the following seven months, this nearly doubled, to 955. This trend mimics all the winners' sales (male and female) for the *Sunday Times* prize (fiction and non-fiction).

Literary prizes are pivotal in pushing shortlistees and winners to the forefront of a reader's mind because they utilise media announcements and enhance literary prestige. The gender gap in terms of prizes thus has a concrete effect on the sales of books; ultimately, this reflects negatively for female authors.

2.2.3 Women and Reviews

As Zangen mentioned above, we as readers are taught how to value male- and female-authored works – and the same can be argued for reviewers: 'books written by women received less critical attention' (Zangen, 2013: 287). Das also highlighted the

gender gap with regards to writers, stating that authors [and readers] begin to develop a bias towards an author's gender (knowingly or unknowingly) (Anderson, 2017a):

'If I sit with men-friends who are writers, if I take a vote and go around asking each one, "So are you reading a woman writer right now?" the answer is probably going to be "no." And if I ask, "Who are your five favorite writers?" there will be many who won't even mention one woman writer. And these are enlightened, well-read, wonderful, published authors I'm talking about.'

This same bias emerges in the reports of professional readers, in the form of book reviews in the media. When Simons interviewed Callil, founder of Virago, in *Writing: A Woman's Business*, Callil referred to the results of a survey on book reviews (1998: 188):

'It is a fact that more women than men read books. Yet the results of the survey proved that overall only 24% of books reviewed were by women, leaving the proportion of those by men at 76%. An average of 23% of reviews were written by women, while only half the newspapers carry less than 20% of these reviews. Women tend to review female authors; men tend to review male authors.'

These findings have not changed much over the years. The *London Review of Books* 2014 featured an author split of 527 to 151, favouring males (Marcotte, 2015); demonstrating a slight increase of 14 female-penned reviews from the 2013 edition. *The London Review of Books* isn't the only literary magazine to show an imbalance, however. *The New York Review of Books* featured 677 men versus 242 women; and

The New York Times book review section went on to publish 909 male contributors and authors, while only publishing 792 females (Marcotte, 2015).

The VIDA Count tallies these figures annually, to demonstrate the gender review gap graphically. Below is a breakdown comparison of the VIDA Count from 2013-2016, examining the review pages of four publications that represent some of the most significant literary publications in the industry (The VIDA Count, 2017). According to their website, the VIDA count breaks down 39 literary journals and periodicals by tallying genre, reviewers, books reviewed and journalistic by-lines to give an accurate assessment of the US publishing industry (ibid.).

	2013 ²		2014		2015		2016		2017	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
<i>Granta</i>	36	30	**3		35	33	37	38	45	53
<i>New York Review of Books</i>	636	164	677	242	702	185	726	238	639	194
<i>The New Yorker</i>	555	253	563	280	551	323	549	357	534	353
<i>Paris Review of Books</i>	47	48	60	40	63	33	64	34	51	38

Table 1: VIDA Count 2013-2017

Over the years in this comparison, *Granta* is the only literary magazine that has closed the gap between male and female contributors; ultimately tipping the gender scale in

² Here, I use the 'overall' numbers to get an idea of the overall look at the industry. These numbers represent the overall pieces by male and female writers for each publication. I picked this category because it was accounted for in each year. The presentation of the VIDA count has changed from pie charts to infographics, and so the figures are not directly comparable, year on year.

³ *Granta's* numbers were not placed on the site but they did specify that '*Granta* is steadily closing the gap. Since 2012, it has moved at a pace of a 3 percentage points increase per year. If this trend continues, in 2015 women will represent 51 percent of *Granta's* overall contributors!' (The VIDA Count, 2017).

2016 favouring female reviewers. It is worth noting that all the literary magazines have increased their female contribution.

We can also look at a similar count based in Australia, the Stella Count. Below I have tabulated the Books+Publishing category looking at what percentage of male and female authors were reviewed as reported by the Stella Count over the years 2013-2017.

	2013		2014		2015		2016		2017	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
Authors Reviewed	61%	39%	64%	36%	65%	35%	52%	48%	54%	46%

Table 2: Stella Count Authors Reviewed 2013-2017

The table clearly shows that female authors are under-represented in terms of publication reviews in Australia prior to 2016. While there is still a gender imbalance on review pages of major literary journals, the shift to the ultimate 50/50 split is slow but noteworthy in both the above tables.

The Stella Count reports that ‘across all publications in 2016, books by men were more likely to be reviewed by men, and books by women more likely to be reviewed by women’ (The Stella Prize, 2017). The below bar chart taken from their website backs this up. This trend doesn’t change drastically from 2013 (when they added this category to the research).



Figure 2.1: Reviews by Gender (compiled by Stella Count)

The graph clearly shows that the number of men reviewing books by women is significantly lower than the rest. The female gender representation has grown significantly since 2015, although not in a steady upward trend. The Stella Count attributed a decline in 2017 to the following (The Stella Prize, 2017):

'There has been a drop in the representation of books by women reviewed in eight of the twelve publications surveyed in 2017. Four publications increased their representation of books by women in their reviews pages. The Courier-Mail and Sydney Review of Books saw modest increases from 50% to 51% and 47% to 48%, respectively. Books + Publishing increased its already significant scrutiny of women's books from 65% to 68%. Finally, the West Australian saw a major increase from 49% to 57%, which sees it almost back to its high point of women's representation, which was 58% in 2013.'

Similarly, the *Bookseller Magazine* did a round-up of the Books of the Year for 2016 in their issue of 9 December that said: 'This year, there [were] a grand total of 1020 titles (compared to 831 last year and 910 in 2014). Of those, just over a third (35.6%) [were] written by women, not far off the figure for the reviewers: 38% of contributors to 'Books of the Year' lists were female.' Later figures could not be readily found to see if this trend has continued (Bookseller, 2016).

Twohey notes that 'the opinion of a well-respected critic can shape views of many who are unable or unwilling to make their own judgements' (2014: 3). Natalie Rende expands on this, arguing that 'the history of literature has always been defined and categorised by splits between writers and women writers, between fiction and women's fiction, between what is considered important, and what is important to women' (2008: 2). Readers are more likely to rely on an external source or judgement (i.e. critical literary reviews or prestigious awards) to help them filter, or determine what is worthy of their reading time and money (Kovács & Sharkey, 2014).

Can the gender gap between male and female authors in prominent literary magazines and journals, perhaps an explanation for this can be found within publishing houses?

2.3 Factors Influencing the Gender Gap

According to a census produced by the UK government's skills training body, Skillset, about 36% of the UK 'creative media industries' workforce is female, compared with 57% in UK industry as a whole (Skillset, 2012). The highest representation of women is in 'make-up and hairdressing (81%) and costume and wardrobe (73%)'. Women also make up over half (56%) of the legal workforce, distribution, sales and marketing

(55%), business management (52%) and broadcast management (51%) but less than half in every other occupational group' (Skillset, 2012).

Society has the tendency to associate specific occupations and jobs to associate with women and some with men (Hesmondhalgh & Baker, 2015). These are referred to as feminised jobs and occupations. According to Hesmondhalgh and Baker, feminised jobs '[tend] to denote an increase in the concentration of women within that occupation' (2015: 24). The idea persists that women are placed in specific occupations due to their 'innate' abilities in co-ordination (i.e. multitasking) and communication which are stereotypically female in nature (Hesmondhalgh & Baker, 2015). These occupations often tend to be in marketing or press departments, while writing itself is sometimes seen as feminised: writing provided a change for women in society, despite the social norm of women in the home, which allowed women to seek out careers, and it was feared that this would stop or prevent the employment of men in the marketplace (Coultrap-McQuin, 2000).

Colgan and Tomlinson explore the idea that work in itself is a gendering process and it is a learned process from an early age, making all behaviour gendered (1991). If we move our focus to the publishing industry, the industry has always been predominantly female, with it being a popular choice among art and literature students (1991). However, Colgan and Tomlinson found that women were under-represented in the top tiers of publishing as far back as 1991. An article from the *Guardian* in 2017 reported that 'a 2016 survey of the gender divide in US publishing found 78% of the industry is female and the same survey found that 40% of respondents were men' (Kean, 2017). From 1991 to 2016 (and beyond), the under-representation of females in the higher management roles in publishing continues.

Publishing isn't just stratified by gender but racially. According to Sophie de Closets, white women publish for white women, and we could therefore expect white female writers to write for white female readers; the same would be true for male authors and readers (Anderson, 2017c).

The gender gap relates to the female representation, in this case, in the publishing workforce and the presence of female authors in the bestseller charts. These factors will be explored separately below.

2.3.1 Representation in the Publishing Workforce

According to Wood and Shaffi, 'none of the big corporate publishers is run by a female chief executive' and that 'four women were on HarperCollins UK's executive board; five core divisions at Penguin Random House UK were run by women; six female division heads were in place at Hachette UK; and 80 percent of Pan Macmillan's staff were female.' (Anderson, 2017b). Danuta Kean wrote in an article published in *The Guardian* (ibid.):

'Women such as Random House's Gail Rebeck, Penguin's Helen Fraser, Macmillan's Annette Thomas and Little, Brown's Ursula Mackenzie – who had all embodied the ideal that women publishers faced no glass ceiling – have in the last five years all been replaced by men...Look at the magical 'C-circle' of group chief executive, group chief operating officer, and group chief finance officer – where the real power lies – and women are notably absent.'

Williams noted that even though women are the dominant gender in the publishing industry, they tend to hold lower earning positions (Anderson, 2017d). Colgan and Tomlinson's research breaks this down into more detail (1991: 18): 'it was found that

women comprised of 60 per cent of publishing employees, 40 percent of publishing managers, and only 20 per cent of company board directors'. They also pointed out that male employees were more than twice as likely to be managers and more than five times more likely to become a company board director (ibid.).

Arpita Das, CEO of Yoda Press points out that in India the publishing industry reflects other industries and senior management positions are held mainly by males (Anderson, 2017a). While, De Closets states that, 'all the executives of finance, distribution, education, illustrated books, and general literature are women in the Hachette Group in France. Arnaud Nourry is one of the few guys left on the executive committee' (Anderson, 2017c). In Portugal, however, Gomes et al. point out that 'women hold a significantly lower proportion of management and department-head positions' (2005: 19). These opinions by de Closets, Das and Gomes, et al., account for the differences of the gender gap in different countries.

In an African context, Ofori-Menash points out that 'even though there is no covert or overt discrimination against women in the trade in Africa, there are very few women who head or own African publishing houses. But, there are quite a number of women working in African publishing houses as editors, sales personnel, etc.' (2002: 19). The gender gap doesn't seem to follow the same trend across countries.

There are numerous factors that contribute to the gender segregation, feminization of occupations, and gender politics of the publishing industry. Colgan and Tomlison point out that positions held by males in publishing were usually particularly labour-intensive and decision-making jobs: warehouse and distribution, sales and editorial (1991). In contrast, females were more evenly distributed across the functional areas, the majority being in clerical positions in various divisions of publishing. They, however, did note that where females had risen to managerial

positions 'it was more likely to supervise other women in a "female" environment' (1991).

In South Africa, during the apartheid era, 'white women working in publishing and bookselling, small marginal industries, were not considered a threat to the white men who dominated as owners and board members' (Anderson, 2002: 97). Managing directors were automatically men, and women were encouraged to take on roles of editors with the option of freelancing to accommodate families (Anderson, 2002). Anderson goes on to say that this gender imbalance makes women feel intimidated by bigger male-run publishers (2002). She also noted that, at the large trade publisher NB Publishers, 10 out of 14 publishers were female, and that Oxford University Press (OUP) also had a gender friendly publisher with a ratio of 65:35 (women to men) (2002). Moreover, the impact of Apartheid can still be seen in the current representation of black females in publishing house and as writers.

Sophie de Closets points out that the overbalance with females in the publishing industry, naturally creates material more likely to appeal to females (Anderson, 2017c):

'You're very good at publishing books that you would like to read. And when you publish books [for which] you aren't the target reader, then you're not so good. Young, white women publish books that young, white women would read. And that's not a good thing. I mean it's a good thing, but it's not a good thing if it's the only thing.'

Looking more deeply into their research, Colgan and Tomlison conclude that their research 'is a complex picture of gender politics within organisations, which reflect traditional ideologies and beliefs concerning the "appropriate" roles of men and women in the "private" sphere of domestic life and the "public" sphere of employment' (1991:

24). This study will not delve into the gender politics that are concerned with the domestic and employment spheres of men and women, but they do contribute to the why and how women are represented in the publishing industry workforce and authors.

2.3.2 Stereotyping Authors and Writing

After looking at the gender breakdown in the publishing workforce, this section will highlight various stereotypes assigned to female authors and their writing. Coultrap-McQuin studied 19th century female authors who, she argues, were forced to conform to the domesticity of their social standing. Female attributes such as emotion and sentimentalism were not seen as acceptable business practice in publishing. Women had a place in the literary world, but were mostly ignored. Coultrap-McQuin describes the situation women found themselves in the 19th century (2000: 7):

'While the ideology of woman's sphere in the 19th century could restrict women's participation in society, other messages about ideal Americans and about authorship sometimes did accommodate women. The changing social circumstances of women, particularly middle-class ones, also provided opportunities for fuller public participation, despite messages that woman's place was in the home.'

The lack of participation in society for women had a considerable impact on the expectations of both men and women; women were seen as sentimental, emotional, and less competitive than men. It was the view of conservatives that produced works 'on etiquette, sermons, literary gift books, and annuals; those who supported this view insisted that "true women" were naturally domestic, submissive, and morally pure' (Coultrap-McQuin, 2000: 9). Koolen and van Cranenburgh point out in their research

that 'gender stereotypes can relate to several attributes: physical characteristics, preferences and interest, social roles and occupations' (2017: 16). We established earlier in this literature review that female authors are prone to harsher judgement than their male counterparts (Koolen, 2013). If we look at the study by Argamon et al. on the differences between male and female writing in a large selection of fiction and non-fiction, they found that a female-authored text was more likely to be seen as 'involved' and a male-authored text was more 'informational' (2006).

Female authors fashioned their female characters on what was perceived to be the true woman. Coultrap-McQuin argues that 'women ought to write not as individuals, but as exemplars of their sex' (2000: 12). The idea of the true woman encouraged expectations of a woman's femininity (or how she wrote femininity) as a testament to her art.

Coultrap-McQuin's research interestingly points out that 'many thought men should imitate women's piety, purity, and gentleness; conversely, women in their sphere or beyond it should be as intelligent, self-reliant, and courageous as men' (2000: 12). As the world changed and adapted women writers became vital in the economics of the literary marketplace, but if women pursued their writing careers it left their territory of the home empty, i.e. who would look after the children, make dinner, etc.

An author's femininity made its way into their protagonists, defining what was socially acceptable behaviour for a female and their body. In *The Business of A 'New Art': Woolf, Potter and Postmodernism*, Maggie Humm argues that the 'feminine' in art form and physical form determine the way in which culture is read and understood. Humm notes that Virginia Woolf's biographical novel, *Orlando*, 'was written and published at a time of crisis in the legitimising [sic] categories of gender' (1998: 112).

Authors have the ability to transfer genders onto their characters and protagonists by creating socially acceptable plots and outcomes that carry their novels. 'The engendering of gender is in the surface ecology of dress' (ibid.: 122) and this positions 'the feminine body as medium of its own self-expression' (ibid.: 132). Clothing and the body are associated with femininity, they create gender within a character and in short set up the gender impositions of the author. A deeper look into the stereotypes of fictional female characters can be found further on in the literature review.

Janssen and Murachver point out that 'although female-preferential features are often prominent in female-authored fiction, it may be that the additional, underlying characteristics of such fiction (e.g. topic, plot, character construction) make the gender of its authorship even more distinct' (2005: 215). Janssen and Murachver also point out that readers are more likely to view fiction as being written by a female author when it has domestic, relationship, or appearance issues as its focus (2005). Ultimately, as readers and authors are gendered, there are social cues, behaviours and groupings that set these stereotypes and expectations (Janssen & Murachvar, 2005).

Hanson explains that the rise of the female writer can be linked to social and demographic changes, market growth and social factors which have added to the female writer's exclusion from the literary world, rejecting serious literary works, forcing many potentially 'serious' writers to turn to popular forms (1998). Hanson quotes Hilary Radner numerous times throughout her essay, saying that "'the women writer" is defined as an educated middle-class woman writing for women like herself' (1998:67) and again that 'female-authored novels cannot be read either as 'canonical or as popular texts"' (1998: 69). The idea that writers write what they know would mean women write about women. Before the Second World War, during the 1930s to 1940s,

women weren't the majority of the working population, instead they were running a home (those that hadn't found a job, or preferred to stay at home); and ultimately middle-class women had more time to read (Hanson, 1998).

Hanson also states, 'male writers in a similar position would be less likely to [transfer to the popular market], as the mass markets were so strongly associated with a devalued femininity' (1998: 68). Female authors, however, are creating/writing for the 'obsessional' and 'hysterical' reader (ibid.). Writing the feminine takes away the seriousness of a writer's work, almost devaluing it. Hanson references Rosalind Coward saying: "women centred" novels have no necessary relationship to feminism', and also that, 'feminism can never be the relationship to feminism', and also that 'feminism can never be the product of the identity of women's experiences and interests'" (ibid.: 74). Female-authored writing is expected, in a way, to avoid being labelled 'kitsch' or mass-market, and either has to focus on the female form or a stereotypical plotline and, ultimately, its author's gender.

Hanson's essay discusses Nicola Beaman's assertion that 'we would be enchanted to find a novel written in the 1920s or 1930s which actually told us how a woman organised contraception. How did Mrs Dalloway hold up her stockings? What did the breast-feeding mother do about milk leaking on to her dress?' (1998: 69). This takes the reader into what Elizabeth Taylor identified as the "'feminine" sphere, and it seems to have been this identification with femininity which annoyed early critics [of female authored works]' (ibid.: 71).

More complex is the social labelling and expectations of women as authors and as readers. For example, the social order of women in Japan as enforced by men allowed them only to read *realistic* fiction which the men themselves cherry-picked (Yoshio, 2012). All of these works centred on the stereotypical view of women in the

home and how they should behave. It begs the question of how feminine authors are allowed to make their characters.

Fullbrook and Simmons assert that writing continues to generate important and diverse conversations about women as writers, literature as art and its cultural value (1998). The idea that 'women authors write exclusively for women readers while male authors continue to have "universal" appeal, and that certain subjects offer inadequate means for dealing with the general human condition' (ibid.: 2) only adds to the struggle to acknowledge female authors who are producing literature about women in the industry.

Yoshio noted that female authors may be stereotyped as 'bluestockings' and 'strong minded' as a disadvantage, yet labelling them with masculine traits such as 'tough, aggressive, pedantic, vain, and ugly' can be an advantage (2012: 16). They are also criticised for having feminine traits as a disadvantage (ibid.). Yoshio references Ann Stephens who argued that feminine traits were an advantage and qualified them as 'greater literary geniuses', saying: 'deep and sensitive feelings alone give that delicacy and pathos which will ever distinguish the creations of a truly feminine author from those of men. The very word genius comprehends all that makes the loveliness of woman' (referenced in Yoshio; 2012: 17). Yoshio also writes: 'by the predominant cultural view, women were not only different, they were less' (2012: 20). Female authors have been given the role of 'feminine ideal', an ideal that was rejected by certain writers (Pykett, 1998). Pykett illustrates this in the works of the Brontës and Mary Elizabeth Braddon: 'it is not simply a particular female character, dissatisfied with or failing to conform to the proper duties of a woman's life, who provided the central narrative impulse of the typical sensation plot, but also the disputed category of femininity itself' (1998: 20); their 'sensation novels' were thus a protest against the

conventional female protagonist ideal (ibid.). Pykett uses her essay to define the sensation novel as (ibid.: 22):

'A formulaic, mechanicalistic, commercial article which was mass-produced for a mass distribution to feed the craven appetites of its audience.'

As Pykett puts it, 'making a spectacle of the middle-class home, sensation novels also made a spectacle of femininity' (1998: 23). We already know this from the readings above, but Pykett refers to more than just books, acknowledging magazines too, which created a demand for romantic fiction, the advice about the dress, duties of the woman in the household and the 'daydreaming' of females (Pykett, 1998). Thus, women writers and their works are stereotyped in certain distinct ways – both by readers and by the publishers themselves. This forces female writers to conform to a specific style of writing and genre of writing; and female readers to expect a stereotypical and clichéd novel when a novel is written by a female author.

2.3.3 Publisher Packaging and Marketing

Marketing can position a text for a specific type of readership, and the 'marketing of books is an important element in the "making" of a literary text and one which no modern-day critic can afford to ignore' (Horner & Zlosnick, 1998: 63). Van Rooyen says, 'for a book to work, it needs a peg to hang on, a unique selling proposition, and a different approach – a special angle' (2010: 20). A reader's expectation(s) of an ideal book is complex. We know that publishers work to produce the 'perfect' package for the ideal reader to pick up and read. According to Caroline Smith (2008), readers are consumers of cultural mediums such as books and magazines – especially female readers. Publishers have mimicked strategies of pitching women's fiction to a female

readership by making books look and feel like glossy magazines (ibid.). Radway states that publishers have the ability to predict a genre trend and align a genre-specific novel to an audience, usually middle-class women, and package it accordingly (1994). Radway also points out that, for instance, the romance reader profile is stay-at-home women between 30-50 years of age, who are higher earners (or in a higher earning household) and are seeking out an escape from their day-to-day lives (1994). Readers are profiled and aimed at in specific ways by publishers and marketing departments.

According to Matthews and Moody, 'the cover or jacket of a book conveys a message about the contents of the volume, influencing both the retailer who stocks the books and the potential purchaser in the shop' (2007: 19). While Matthews and Moody focus purely on the outer jacket of a book, Radway points out that plot matters just as much to readers, and that experiences that the protagonist deals with need to be aligned with the readers' own life – where readers become emotionally invested (1994). The publisher plays a major part in the reception of the novel or non-fiction book, but they are also products of culture and cultural meaning (Matthews & Moody, 2007). Matthews and Moody's research found that a female read could be identified based on the colour, general look of the cover, blurb and title (ibid.).

The emotional impact books have on people can be tapped into by certain devices of cover design or plotline. According to Matthews and Moody, covers of books shouldn't be ignored, because they have been specifically chosen to sell and market that book (2017). The design creates an expectation of what a potential reader can expect, and as a result, the design is usually driven by stereotypes (ibid.). The covers of women's fiction titles often display images associated with consumption or eating (such as a red apple); shopping (using the image of shoes – mainly high heels); and feminine bodies or sexuality (lips, legs, swimsuits) (Smith, 2008). Smith discusses

that publishers construct and imagine an ideal type of reader for a certain novel – in this case for women (ibid.). This formula and concept was also used to revamp *Cosmopolitan* magazine, a women's magazine (ibid.). Leah Bailey argues that 'the representation of female literary characters on book covers may influence how women are viewed as well as how women view themselves' (2017).

For example, Horner and Zlosnik (1998) look at the positioning of Daphne Du Maurier's novel, *Rebecca*, and the impact publishers and designers had in dictating the genre and sales pitch of the book. *Rebecca* was a gothic, murder-suspense novel with a romantic trope to tie it together. 'Collins placed *Rebecca* firmly within the modes of suspense/sensation writing and melodrama' and 'films and books which had, as a central character, a wilful and "depraved" woman' (ibid.: 48-49). The move and repositioning by publisher of this novel throughout the years seems intentional, relocating the novel into a 'safer' realm of female writing so that it could be universally accepted as 'chick-lit' and be aimed at a new and modern audience. Horner and Zlosnik note that the title 'became more narrowly specialised between the wars, coming to signify only those love-stories, aimed ostensibly at a wholly female readership, which deal primarily with the trials and tribulations of heterosexual desire, and end happily in marriage' (ibid.: 60). The shift was thus made from the gothic elements to the romance elements. Romance is considered a timeless and generic category to contain female authors – a safer option than other genres. *Rebecca* was not an archetypal romantic novel, so this example 'illustrates how far publishing and marketing strategies influence reader response and critical reception' (ibid.: 63).

Similarly, Fiona Snyckers compares the covers of author Zukisa Wanner's books, revealing a shift in how the publishers positioned the writer: 'the cover image of *The Madams* is very fashion-focused, and intensely feminine, with no indication that

the book deals with cross-class, cross-race, and domestic power relations between women. A decision was clearly taken at management level to market the book as chick-lit' (Snyckers, 2016). Wanner's next title, *London, Cape Town, Joburg*, was packaged as a more serious novel: 'The cover is devoid of colour and of any feminine aesthetic whatsoever' (ibid.). Making Wanner's latest book look more masculine, Snyckers suggests, helped position it for a wider gender readership, though we can't be sure that this is ultimately what won it critical acclaim. However, we can be reasonably sure that a typographical cover would be more acceptable for a male readership – as well as her existing female readership.

In other words, publishers have capitalised on targeting female readers (Verboord, 2011). Smith points out those publishers acquiring 'chick-lit' titles for 20-something to 30-something readers, were 30-somethings themselves (2008) – a case of publishers publishing for people like themselves. Verboord stated that there is a larger focus on female authors and popular genres on sites like Goodreads and Amazon, that cannot attributed to media attention or commercial success (2011). His study concluded that publishers need to focus on segmenting their publication strategies, i.e. differentiating between genres like thriller and action, and that these need to be supplemented with publicity that targets that niche media (ibid.). Ultimately, publishers (and authors) want their books to travel, and marketing plays a huge part in getting the right book to the ideal reader (Smith, 2008). Authors and publishers have begun to involve readers more, so for instance the back pages of novels include references for websites, book club questions, and sample chapters for the author's previous or next novel. This begins to blur the lines of traditional marketing techniques and breaks down boundaries, ultimately putting the reader closer to the author.

Earlier, Zangen was cited as saying that adults pass down their bias of reading (2003); if this is the case then what a publisher presents on the cover will align with this reader expectation and bias. The feminization of covers allows the publisher to reach the exact reader the novel is intended for, meaning judging a book by its cover is truth.

2.4. Chick-lit as a Genre

Chick-lit is a growing genre set off by the novel *Bridget Jones's Diary* by Helen Fielding (1996). The genre has spawned movies, publishing imprints and a cultural force (Davis-Khal, 2008). It has also become a convenient catch-all genre for female authors. According to author Jodi Picoult, 'you are more likely to be called a chick-lit author/[woman] fiction author, even if that's not what you write' (2016). This section will focus on the definition of 'chick-lit' and its formulaic outlines, and will consider if female authors are being limited by this label, as Picoult suggests.

2.4.1 Definitions of Chick-lit

A term that comes with exceptional controversy, one of its first uses was in an anthology titled *Chick-lit: Postfeminist Fiction* by Cris Mazza and Jeffrey DeShell, published in 1995, and again by male journalist James Walcott in 1996 in *The New Yorker* in a review, in which he 'characterises journalistic writing in the nineties as "sheer girlishness"' and 'where the concerns of the female characters seem fairly divided by getting laid and not getting laid' (Walcott, 1996). Mazza explained the use of the term chick-lit in the title of the anthology stating, 'the ironic intention of our title: not to embrace an old frivolous or coquettish image of women but to take responsibility for our part in the damaging stereotype' (Ferris & Young, 2006a).

Smith loosely defines chick-lit as '[consisting] of heroine-centred narratives that focused on the trials and tribulations of their individual protagonists' (2008: 2). Smith goes on to narrow this definition (ibid.: 2): 'the protagonists in these texts are young, single, white, heterosexual, British and American women in their late twenties and early thirties living in metropolitan areas'. Cabot points out the link between the authors and their work (2003): 'The characters typically mirror the authors themselves.' However, 'due to the popularity of the chick-lit genre the demographic has expanded' and it now 'chronicles the lives of women varying in ages, races and nationalities' (ibid.). Ferris and Young also raise the following elements for a definition (2006: 3):

'From the perspective of the literary criticism, we can define [chick-lit] as a form of women's fiction on the basis of subject matter, character, audience and narrative style.'

Thus, Butler and Desai's definition is (2008: 1):

'Chick-lit novels tell clever, fast-paced stories about young, pre-dominantly white women's messy journeys of personal and professional growth – heroines gain self-knowledge and self-acceptance, and are thus empowered to take control of their intimate relationships and professional lives.'

Campbell makes this more specific (2006: 487):

'These [are] stories of newly independent young women trying to cope with office jobs and the demands of urban pop culture.'

Finally, Smith concludes (2008: 137):

'Chick-lit seems to have become a catch-all term for any text written by a female author about a female protagonist.'

The above definitions all contain common elements: the plot centres on a female protagonist or heroine, between the ages of 20 and 30, moving through her complicated and often turbulent romance and sex life. These characters have evolved sexually as can be seen in the shift from *Bridget Jones's Diary* to *Sex in the City*. Most of the research on this subject dwells on the literary aspect of chick-lit rather than the publishing aspect – examining the plot and other literary elements – although the publishing context is not completely neglected.

2.4.2 Formulaic or not?

As chick-lit or women's fiction is defined, books in this genre tend to follow a theme, fulfilling the definition to reach the required readership as well as hold true to expectations. Reading provides a distraction and can emulate how people behave in their day to day lives (Bal & Veltkamp, 2013). Men and women have different tastes in books – fiction and non-fiction – yet women read more than men (Tepper, 2000).

Linguistically, female authors differ from male authors, according to Argamon et al., 'females are more attentive to the affective function of conversation and more prone to use linguistic devices that solidify relationships' (2005: 2). Eschner states that language plays a significant part in identifying gender in novels (2018):

'In the 1800s the verb "felt" was more associated with women, while the verb "got" was more often associated with men. These trends declined over time, until by the 1900s, other words were more prominently associated with men and women. In the 1900s, words related to mirth became more associated with

women and there was a corresponding decline in the use of those words in relation to men. “Women smile and laugh,” the authors write, “but mid-century men, apparently, can only grin and chuckle.” Similarly, in the 19th century, there’s much more discussion of feelings, at first mostly in regards to women characters. In the 20th century, there’s a lot more about bodies and clothes—for example, mid-century men are constantly putting things in pockets or taking them out.’

It was such gendered devices relating to linguistics that helped Ted Underwood and David Bamman create an algorithm that could decipher the gender of the author. This big data concept found that women were better represented in Victorian novels than modern ones (Eschner, 2018). Ultimately, the study found: ‘as the rigid gender roles seemed to dissipate, indicating more equality between the sexes, the number of women characters – and proportion of women authors – decreased’ (Eschner, 2018).

Smith put forth the argument that women’s fiction falls more into the ‘easy beach reads’, the ‘man-crazed’ and ‘domestic goddess’ (2008). Ferris and Young say that readers identify with the heroines in chick-lit novels, that these novels are not popular because they are an escape but because they deal with modern female issues and fears (2006). Smith expands on this saying that authors directly relate to their protagonists by making them mirror real-life experiences which readers would understand (2008). Protagonists usually aspire to be women on a magazine cover (i.e. Bridget Jones) by focusing on female issues like body image, eating, shopping, grooming and lack of money, but there is also the idea that women’s fiction can connect with a reader, to present comfort to readers, and create alternative heroines for readers to experience and relate to (Smith, 2008). These tropes and stereotypical

plot lines and character principals create a trend that protagonists and readers become concerned with 'being anything but themselves' (ibid.: 41). According to Radway, romance reading allows tension relief and fantasy indulging (1994). Readers who come back to romance need a thread of optimism, the ultimate happy ending (ibid.).

Chick-lit novels are written for the same 'ideal' reader – in content and style – thus creating a cookie-cutter outline of topic, plot and ideals to make the protagonist more identifiable for its reader. These novels are seen as lacking in the intellectual substance and emotional progress female authors can bring to the writing art. Protagonists serve as models for female readers who are 'suffering' through heartbreak/financial issues/relationship issues/fashion, etc., with the result that these novels then replace, or mimic the self-help manual (Smith, 2008).

Gill and Herdiekerhof say that *Bridget Jones's Diary* by Helen Fielding (1996) gave the chick-lit genre prominence in the market by appealing to the thirty-something singleton across various cultural forms: 'The reverberations of the success of *Bridget Jones's Diary* were felt most powerfully in the publishing industry, sections of which has been concerned by dwindling sales of romance novels amongst 20- to 30-year-olds in the 1990s and were looking for new formulas to attract younger readers' (2006: 2). This led to a host of spin-offs and 'copycat' novels about thirty-something single females who were 'neurotic' and 'preoccupied with shape and finding a man' (ibid.). Gill and Herdieckerhoff argue that '[Bridget Jones] became an icon, a recognisable emblem of a particular kind of femininity, a constructed point of identification for women' (2007: 1). This quote kicks off Louise Chambers' unpublished thesis, *Bridget Jones and the Postfeminist Condition* (2004), as she argued that Helen Fielding's *Bridget Jones Diary* began defining features on book covers in formulaic slogans 'if you liked x, you'll love y' and so the chick-lit genre became identifiable to the extent that reading

groups were formed for chick-lit readers only. Even supermarkets began implementing purchasing and positioning strategies – giving consideration to chick-lit readers – something they had never done before. Helen Fielding's *Bridget Jones's Diary* founded a new style of chick-lit and 'articulated a distinctly post-feminist sensibility' (Gill & Herdieckerhoff, 2007: 2). Gill and Herdieckerhoff conclude that chick-lit has shifted from the 'objectification of women's bodies evident in previous popular romances to sexual subjectivication: women are presented as active desiring sexual subjects' (2007: 20).

The genre is showing signs of changing. Caroline Smith argues that chick-lit is evolving to include the 'new woman', as some fiction exploits the 'good girl' and 'bad girl' ideal: the virgin versus the whore (2008). Sexual transgressions are punished and the battles of love versus sex versus romance duke it out in women's fiction (ibid.). In Candice Bushnell's *Sex and the City*, Carrie Bradshaw says (2010: 2):

'Welcome to the Age of Un-Innocence. The glittering lights of Manhattan that served as backdrops for Edith Wharton's bodice-heaving trysts are still glowing – but the stage is empty. No one has breakfast at Tiffany's, and no one has affairs to remember – instead, we have breakfast at seven A.M. and affairs we try to forget as quickly as possible. How did we get into this mess?'

This literature review discussed earlier the perception that female-authored texts focus more on emotions and male-authored texts focus on numbers (Newman, et al., 2008). Zangen believes that adults pass down the gender bias of reading onto children (new readers), and thus regard books written by men as containing more important themes and subjects, and holding a greater significance (2003). The themes of the ideal home,

the ideal woman, and the domestic goddess are being challenged in more modern chick-lit novels (Smith, 2008).

2.4.3 Are Women Being Limited by this Label?

Chick-lit, or women's fiction, tends to be classed as the 'less serious' genre – focussing more on the home, relationships and females that fit within a certain mould.

Coultrap-McQuin referred to Lawrence Beull's antebellum woman, a defiant woman, stating, 'she was more likely to write fiction than her male counterparts and more likely to devote herself to writing than to any other pursuit as a way to earn a living' (2000: 21). Coultrap-McQuin explains that the market began to change; new publishers and editors were more interested in audience than moral guardianship. She goes on to say (ibid.: 48):

'They encouraged hard work, rather than style, as the route to literary success, and frequently associated their views of writing with masculinity. Although the connection between literary work and masculinity was not entirely new in the Progressive Era, the increased emphasis on vigour and marketing made authorship seem more than ever to be a male activity.'

This would have made it extremely frustrating for female authors to adapt and conform to new expectations in a changing publishing era.

To further discuss the limitations of this label, Ferris and Young consider the derogatory composition of the word chick-lit: 'the word chick was considered an insult, a demeaning diminutive, and casting independent young women as delicate, fluffy creatures. Girl was perhaps worse, infantilizing grown women' (2006b: 87). There are

more derogatory implications of the term 'chick-lit' that Patty Campbell points out (2006: 487):

'Chick is a derogatory term for the presumably empty-headed girls or young women who are both the characters and the readers; lit is an ironic reference to the assumed lack of quality writing in the form.'

The use of the word 'chick' leans towards a derogatory slight against female writers writing female protagonists. In an article published on the *Telegraph* website, Marian Keyes calls 'chick-lit' a device to keep women 'shut up' (Singh, 2015).

Shaw talks about the 'middle-brow' novel after having asked a group of students to define the concept. The answer was that it would be relaxing but not too popular and ultimately, 'the kind of book their mothers read' (1998: 31). The other characteristics the questionnaire determined were: homely, familiar, sensible, moral and unthreatening (Shaw, 1998). It's not a new concept and, as times move forward, modernising, so too would the creation of art and literature. What Shaw points out is that the middle-brow novel is *for* women (1998: 34):

'Middle-brow reading is women's territory. Men, it seems, and fathers in particular, read technical books, books about hobbies, sci-fi, newspapers, or nothing at all. But mothers, with their presumed greater leisure [time] and relative indifference to journalism, are the ones who borrow novels from the library and but the occasional paperback.'

Shaw also adds (1998: 35):

'Characteristically, the middle-brow novel was thus written for and by middle-class women, and could be stigmatised, to use Adorno's term, as a middle-class, bourgeois activity.'

Snyckers pointed out that: 'Women writers constantly have to renegotiate their position in the literary world, jockeying to be taken seriously' (2016). Drabble states that while the act of writing is beyond gender and the act of reading, women writers are still seen as 'lesser writers' and 'male topics receive far more attention and literary respect than those which deal with families or children or love or sex' (1998: 173). Drabble notes that 'if there is a love interest in the foreground of a work by a woman, reviewers cannot see what else is there; immediately the book is categorised as a women's romance' (ibid.: 173). This is repeated by Lisa Appignanesi who ends off her essay by saying '[the] gender hierarchy [...] puts supposedly male concerns at the top of the cultural ladder and female concerns close to the bottom' (Appignanesi & Gee, 1998: 181). The issues of women are not seen as important and any fiction demonstrating that moves further down the reading piles of men.

In South Africa, we find a similar situation. Snyckers argues that the literary world 'looks down' on traditional tropes of femininity and that this convinces reading audiences that a book is not serious unless it deals with masculine themes (2016). Snyckers says that writers, especially female writers, are beginning to diversify into many genres, but that the 'domestic sphere' is seen as boring to the [male] reading public and that 'child-bearing and child-rearing cease to be epic or iconic moments in the human condition, but rather small and trivial things fit only for consumption by women' (ibid.). It is this 'domestic sphere' that has been sectioned off into 'women's fiction', but fiction written by male authors lacks the same sectioning as 'men's fiction'.

Yoshio delves into larger issues around this question, by looking simply at the marketing model, and the production of books aimed at females and how they differ to that of their male counterparts. By unpacking the style of the author, the 'assumed' characteristics of female characters (applying make-up, walking in heels and doing hair), how the female characters react/interact with men, and purposeful editing, the overall story is changed significantly and either personalises or distances the reader. This occurs in both fiction and non-fiction writing. Take for example the editing process of Tamura Toshiko's *A Doll's House*: 'she significantly deleted passages where the two women interact in a revealing way, leaving out the scenes where they voice their dreams for their future careers and desires for independence' (Yoshio, 2012: 69). What we don't know from Yoshio is if the editor was female or male and whether this would have made a significant difference.

Drabble points out that (1998: 166):

'My male editor's comment was 'What's that in there for? Do we need so much of it?' Yet it's a wonderful portrait of fetishism [sic], which is what Viva was (she also collected royal underwear). It is also a wonderful description of an ideal wedding dress. I said that I wanted to leave it in. This is just one example of the way in which a writer does get interference or support depending on the sex of the editor.'

This takes the control away from a female writer from her own work. This area is one where research is lacking in the South African publishing arena. There is nothing available that showcases or explains whether the ideas and challenges of the publishing process, from covers to awards, sales to gender, are in fact issues in the local context.

Picoult sums this up nicely by saying that female authors have a greater chance of being classed as chick-lit, regardless of what they are writing (2016).

2.4.4 Subversion of the Genre

Butler and Desai point out that ‘critics often identify the genre’s origins in Jane Austen’s work and/or the feminist awakening of the 1970s, thus tracing chick-lit’s genealogy generally parallel to, and part of, the female *bildungsroman*’ (2008: 5); and then later: ‘[the] consumption in dominant white chick-lit signals the ways in which middle-class women’s economic gains in the public sphere have enabled them to become consumers of luxury items and services independent of their birth or marital status’ (ibid.:13).

Freedom for female authors from the chick-lit stigma can be achieved by transitioning into the masculine arena as opposed to reclaiming the label ‘as a term of strength for a particular kind of popular fiction’ (Snyckers, 2016). Ultimately, Fiona Snyckers believes that ‘as decolonisation flexes its muscles, the literary establishment may start to regard books by women differently’ (2016).

What has been pointed out as flaws, or the limitations of the chick-lit/women’s fiction genre can also be seen as the subversion of the genre. Delap opens her article with a quote from Beatrix Campbell that is an apt description of the relationship of reading and writing between women (2016: 171):

‘We ate the literature that was pouring out of the Women’s Liberation Movement, we ate it [...] it was an extraordinary relationship to the written word, [...] all of these tracts and texts and books, we consumed as soon as they came out. And, whether you were an intellectual or not, you just read everything, and it impacted massively on your life.’

Studies show that females are more socialised to reading and writing as young children (Tepper, 2000). While this is due to women needing a hobby while they stayed at home, this notion has evolved into things like book clubs for women and ultimately made them the majority readers around the world and in South Africa (Rooyen, 2010). Women's fiction and chick-lit novels are usually seen as less serious than a novel penned by a male author (Smith, 2008), but as the genre begins to evolve it has broadened too, appealing to a new type of women – a sexually active and domestically free woman (ibid.). Radway points out that 'the ideal heroine is differentiated from her more ordinary counterparts in other romance novels by unusual intelligence or by an extraordinarily fiery disposition' (1994: 123) that goes against the trope of a weak female protagonist. Radway also discusses how romance heroines refuse the restrictions of their assigned gender roles (1994).

Kovacs and Sharkey pointed out that prize-winning books tend to increase sales (2014). This in turn gives more prestige to female-only literary prizes like The Orange Prize for Fiction and even promotes novels of known and unknown authors to new readers (Zangen, 2003). These elements only work in favour of improving the prestige and prominence of women's fiction.

Chick-lit and women's fiction has morphed into a source of empowerment for female authors and readers, exploring avenues of femininity male authors can't explore in a way female authors can.

2.5 Strategies to Overcome the Gender Gap

Overcoming the gender gap is an entire research subject on its own. This section will review various strategies that have been suggested to shift the gap between the

genders within publishing. While there are a few organisational strategies publishing houses could put into place such as support for mothers (holiday day cares), childcare allowances, maternity and paternity leave, equal opportunity training and the retaining of clerical staff, according to Colgan and Tomlinson, only two companies in their study illustrated the above support (1991). There also need to be more women on executive boards (Anderson, 2017b) as well as women supporting women as authors and publishers (Anderson, 2017d). The ultimate form of reformation in bringing female authors out of the chick-lit cupboard and into the literary world is feminist presses and bookclubs.

2.5.1 Feminist presses and book clubs

Feminist publishing engineered a cultural exposure of feminist works to a mainstream readership (Murray, 2004). Numerous feminist or 'womanist' publishing imprints emerged during 1972 and 1992 in Britain. Presses like Virago Press, The Women's Press, Onlywomen Press, Sheba Feminist Publishers, Stramullion, Feminist Books, Black Woman Talk, Pandora Press, Honno, Aurora Leigh, Urban Fox Press, Silver Moon Books and Scarlet Press, were the pioneers in the era of the women's movement. Simone Murray points out the importance of these imprints (2004: 10):

'While varying enormously in their political priorities, internal organisation, profitability and longevity, all of these imprints were united in their perception that the act of publishing is, because of its role in determining the parameters of public debate, an inherently political act and that women, recognising this fact, must intervene in the processes of literary production to ensure that women's voices are made audible.'

Murray delves more deeply into the emergence of feminist presses in her book *Mixed Media: Feminist Presses and Publishing Politics in Twentieth-Century Britain*, by looking beyond the definition of feminist presses. She grapples with the competition between the presses as businesses and balancing the policies and profit. This literature review merely scratches the surface of what a feminist press is, and why it is important.

The aim of a feminist press is mission-driven. In an interview Catherine Riley stated that, 'Callil's decision to establish Virago was founded on a belief that a publishing house could act as a vital tool in the fight for change' (2014: 238). Similarly, Elizabeth Young defines feminist presses as 'publishing initiatives, staffed by women, producing books on feminist issues' (1989: 1). Literature on this topic discusses a number of feminist presses but the aim of this literature review focused on whether they play a role in advocating and advancing female literature. Young highlights that there are two branches of institutional feminist presses: academics and mainstream publishing (1989). Young points out that women's studies, in Britain, is largely marginalised by academia which forces women writers into freelance jobs or part-time work within institutions as opposed to full-time positions and that university presses have historically ignored feminist books (1989). This leaves a gap for mainstream publishing to fill. Young notes that 'the feminist publishing world has come to serve as a vital source of intellectual activity' (1989: 2) and that feminist presses have proven the marketability of feminist books, allowing trade and academic publishers to jump on the 'feminist bandwagon' (ibid.).

The cases of Pandora and Virago proved that though less independent (after Virago had been bought by Little, Brown Book Group; and Pandora being an imprint of RKP) they did have more reach and marketability with their list of books (Young,

1989). What Young stresses most in her research is that 'whatever [the presses'] demographic identification, feminist presses do, undeniably, have a strong, loyal readership' (1989: 3). Young also points out the virtues of the presses she worked for, saying that 'speed, efficiency, publicity and distribution' were key characteristics at Pandora (1989). Further, duties were shared and salaries identical; there was a feeling that everyone worked on a project as a team; authors weren't as powerless as they may have been at bigger trade publishers; and feminist presses could recover the forgotten works, bringing them to a new readership (1989).

Poland discusses how feminist presses in Australia adopted different processes from traditional-multinational publishers by becoming more innovative in marketing, publishing and commissioning – she suggests that they became publishing-focused rather than sales-focused (2003). Poland points out that 'once multinational publishing companies recognised that feminism provided a lucrative market, they quickly began to commission feminist books, develop and acquire feminist lists, and distribute other publishers' feminist lists' (ibid.: 128). For this reason, Poland concludes that 'it is imperative that feminist presses survive' (ibid.: 137).

Frank found that feminist presses in Germany (identified by looking at the titles they published) were more self-sustaining due to one successful title; they published alternatives to bestselling titles and titles like *The Feminist Handbook* (an exhaustive non-fiction book that contained information on birth, sexuality, abortion, venereal diseases, breast problems, etc.), and also offered a wider representation and expression for women in a male-dominated arena (1978). Frank concludes by saying that (ibid.: 193):

'The formal and political variety of the German feminist press and the growth in the readership of almost all the publications reviewed here is an indication of how the movement which reads and makes this literature is growing.'

Riley argues that Virago is still relevant because not only was it financially successful, but because Virago owned a large part of the market share – which means their books reach a wide audience (2014). Riley attributes this to their 'corporate clout' (after being bought by Little, Brown Book Group) and the 'ability to incorporate changing attitudes to gender and feminism within an ever more consumer-driven culture' (ibid.: 253). Feminist presses had to produce or commission works that reflected trends in feminism (ibid.), which meant Virago had to engage with 'the new cultural and literary shift towards expression of politics through the individual' (ibid.: 246) – something which they did well.

In addition to the publishers, the centre of books within feminism is shaped by where books can be found, the ultimate place where books are first encountered: the bookshop. 'The proliferating radical bookshops in Britain from the 1960s provided distinctive material sites, often undercapitalised but politically important, which helped to focus radical political commitments within their communities' (Delap, 2006: 172). Bookshops became the drivers of the wave of feminism, the club house for feminists to confront the misogyny of both the book trade and bookshop customers. Delap points out that 'bookshops played a crucial role in publicizing and spatially locating the women's movement, making available its texts, and facilitating its social networks and intellectual exchanges' (ibid.: 173). Bookshops identified as feminist would rally together, creating a community hub of information and feminist texts. Delap's term 'radical bookshop' was employed to describe bookshops between the 1970s and

1980s that were used by feminists and activists; these bookshops were crucial and were funded by public sources (Delap, 2006).

Delap unpacks an interesting dynamic for the feminist or radical bookshop by looking at three models of feminist bookselling: (1) autonomous trading; (2) women-only management; and (3) mixed-sex community bookselling. Autonomous trading was a bookshop/coffee shop hybrid that promoted 'distinctive social spaces' (2006: 178) and provided news, events, and social networking – this provided a community of people or customers with a social scene within the political movement. Women-only management meant the bookshop was purely women-run and this expanded minority hiring. Finally, mixed-sex community bookselling was more 'rooted in community activism' (Delap, 2006: 180). Female booksellers saw their jobs as an act of activism during the movement, a retail environment that stressed social justice.

However, as Margaret Thatcher became Prime Minister in the UK, funding and bookshops were forced to close, but communities and feminist relationships remained constant and solid. Lucy Delap concludes that bookshops were 'crucial for a feminist movement' (ibid: 191) and they 'provided stable, recognizable nodal points, as sites of exchange and recruitment' (ibid.).

What the research shows, across multiple geographical locations, is that feminist presses have continually had to adapt as imprints and publishing houses. Moreover, they have followed a more mission-driven than commercial business model. While the literature on this topic focuses on international presses and issues and is mostly situated between the 80s and the 2000s, it is possible that future research will reflect a difference with women writers having dominated 2017 bestseller charts in the UK (Flood, 2018).

It is clear in all the literature on this topic that feminist publishing imprints and publishing house weren't on their own in the fight against creating content for women, as they formed part of a significant eco-system with bookshops and book clubs bookshops and book clubs.

2.6 Conclusion

Research shows that there is not a shortage of female representation – both in female writers and females working in the publishing industry. The gender gap can rather be found in the lack of female representation in decision-making roles. This has led to little awareness around issues relating to domestic and child-rearing pressures from male counterparts in publishing houses. Furthermore, female writers are being outshone by male authors on literary bestseller lists as male authors' work tends to be selected and revered by literary prize judging panels and reviewers. At the same time, female writers are stereotyped by genre and packaged for a readership that has been taught a reading gender bias.

While there is no overt gender gap, there is a presumption that female authors write solely for female readers (especially when a fiction novel centres on romance and domesticity of a protagonist who is female) whilst men write for the 'universal' or every reader. This research has a heavy focus on fiction, with little attention given to non-fiction. This is especially interesting when taking note that the SA industry trends show non-fiction to be the bigger selling titles.

Chick-lit as a genre is viewed as derogatory; the value of writing in this genre is discredited as frivolous and unimportant. Regardless, chick-lit has been a genre-changing phenomenon because of the innovative marketing and word-of-mouth that surrounds it. Chick-lit writers create protagonists around social norms and rebellions

to reach a readership and allow the reader to relate. The literature shows that female authors are finding ways to subvert the genre, using it as a means of empowerment. The term chick-lit is now often used interchangeably with women's fiction. This is a term that encapsulates a genre of writing that plots and characterises contemporary social issues for females. It will be important for this research to find out how authors and publishers in the South African context define the genre and concept of chick-lit.

Feminist presses and bookshops have been a key way to overcome the gender gap, and were nodes of empowerment for women and communities during the 1970s and 1980s – they provided a hub of information and networking which also served as a safe place for feminists, gays, the LGBT community, and minority ethnicities.

As this literature review shows, there is no research that is (1) updated and relevant for the South African trade publishing industry; or that, (2) covers an extended period of time for a comparative analysis. It is notable that Marc Verboord's research was the only quantitative research, outside of yearly Stella and VIDA counts, that tracked female and male authors on the bestseller lists over an extended period of time. The literature surrounding gender and publishing is this broad, but slim in terms of centring on South African trade publishing. The direction of opinion and statistics are aimed towards a historical overview that describes the female author in a 'man's world' of publishing and writing. Research around African and Southern African publishers and authors exists, though none encompassed and discussed the relevance or covered the topic of this research.

Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This study began with a comprehensive literature review (in chapter 2), that provided background and information on international studies around the gender gap and the factors influencing the gender gap in publishing. This also included a definition of chick-lit and how the industry can overcome influences of the gender gap with feminist presses and bookshops. Chapter 2 was geared towards finding out what studies existed and how they were conducted, to determine the gender representation of female authors and male authors and the various aspects that play a part in the author gender gap.

This chapter aims to provide a comprehensive description of the qualitative and quantitative methodologies used within this research strategy; the research design; its methodologies and sampling methods; data collection and analysis; as well as the ethical considerations and limitations that apply to this study. The aim of the research is to determine and investigate the gender gap in South African publishing by using sales history, content analysis and author interviews.

3.1.1 Research Strategy

Walliman defines 'research method' as 'the techniques you use to do research' (2011: 7), while Leedy and Ormrod state that 'research methodology is the general approach the researcher takes in carrying out the research project; to some extent, this approach dictates the particular tools the researcher selects' (2005: 12). Therefore, research methodology is the procedure behind the collection and collation of data (numerical

and social) that defines the step-by-step processes that are, or will be, followed throughout the empirical research.

The research approach for this study mixed both quantitative and qualitative methods. This is also known as triangulation or mixed method research. Denzin first defined the term triangulation in *The Research Act* as 'the combination of methodologies in the study of the same phenomenon' (1978: 291). Walliman explains that triangulation can be used for checking the 'reliability and completeness of qualitative data' (2011). Jick references Campbell and Fiske's (1959) definition of mixing quantitative and qualitative methods, saying, 'this form of research strategy is usually described as one of convergent methodology, multimethod/multitrait' (1979: 602). Jick goes on to point out the strengths and weaknesses of triangulation or the mixed method approach (1979: 610):

'Triangulation is a strategy that may not be suitable for all research purposes. Various constraints (e.g., time costs) may prevent its effective use. Nevertheless, triangulation has vital strengths and encourages productive research. It heightens qualitative methods to their deserved prominence and, at the same time, demonstrates that quantitative methods can and should be utilized [sic] in complementary fashion. Above all, triangulation demands creativity from its user – ingenuity in collecting data and insightful interpretation of data.'

A mixed method approach was used to gather numerical and opinion-based data in various forms to increase the validity and reliability of this research.

3.2 Research Design

The research design in this study was thus both quantitative and qualitative. Walliman describes quantitative data as numbers that are used to record information that can be analysed using statistical techniques (2011). Biggam says that quantitative methodology 'refers to research that is concerned with quantities and measurements' (2008:86). Walliman goes on to say that (2011:72):

'Quantitative data can be measured, more or less accurately because it contains some form of magnitude, usually expressed in numbers. You can use mathematical procedures to analyse the numerical data. These can be extremely simple, such as counts or percentages, or more sophisticated, such as statistical tests or mathematical models.'

In turn, Cohen et al. (2011: 219) define qualitative research as follows:

'Qualitative research provides an in-depth, intricate and detailed understanding of meanings, actions, non-observable as well as observable phenomena, attitudes, intentions and behaviours, and are well served by naturalistic enquiry.'

The qualitative method, in addition to the quantitative method, was used to assist the numerical data of this research body to either verify and/or explain it.

3.2.1 Quantitative approach

The quantitative approach employed for this research is based on bibliometrics and it was used to collate and extrapolate data from a collection of published works (a library of books, for example) to determine a set of phenomena. This research does not

require an in-depth algorithm, but rather straightforward data collection. For the sake of this research, bibliometrics was employed to extract data from a digital collection or digital library of South African published works within a range of years. This library of works came from Nielsen Bookscan (SAPnet), a company that describes itself as the leading provider in search, discovery, commerce and consumer research and retail sales analyses in the publishing, book and library sectors in South Africa (SAPnet, 2017). Freda van Wyk, CEO at SAPnet, describes their data collection methods as follows: '[Nielsen's] collect[s] total transaction data at the point of sale directly from the tills and dispatch systems of all the major book retailers. This ensures that very detailed and highly accurate sales information on which books are selling, and at what price, is available to the book trade' (2017:1).

Pritchard defines bibliometrics as: 'the application of mathematics and statistical methods to books and other media of communication' (1981: 3). Schrader adds that bibliometrics is a theoretical knowledge that brings forth a set of true ideas and phenomena (Schrader, 1981). Schrader also points out that these quantitative ideas pinpoint 'patterns, tendencies and regularities' (1981: 151). According to the Online Dictionary of Library Sciences (Reitz, 2014), bibliometrics is defined as:

'The use of mathematical and statistical methods to study and identify patterns in the usage of materials and services within a library or to analyze [sic] the historical development of a specific body of literature, especially its authorship, publication, and use.'

Hérubel (1999: 380) explains the following about the study of bibliometrics:

'Bibliometrics is essentially a quantitative analysis of publications for the purpose of ascertaining specific kinds of phenomena. Among the various data

found, characteristics of materials used and intellectual content analysis of published material are generally explored through bibliometrics.'

By using bibliometrics to extract data from the Nielsen Bookscan figures, one can filter (add strata), collate, highlight, calculate and differentiate the bibliographic details of book titles and their sales history to determine the most accurate and in-depth trends and data for this research. Using data from Nielsen allows the sales data and bibliography of the titles to be the most accurate and complete collation of sales history in South Africa over a specific time period. Gender can then be assigned to each author, and specific patterns in authorship and sales can be tracked.

In addition to the sales data, the book reviews in the country's largest Sunday Newspaper, the *Sunday Times*, in the Lifestyle section of the newspaper, were tracked for the years 2016 and 2017. With this data, it was hoped to address the following questions: What was the gender of authors and reviewers over these two years, and how many fiction books were reviewed versus non-fiction books in a large South African publication? This secondary data helped explain (1) the gender breakdown of reviewers and authors; and (2) the genre breakdown reviewed in South Africa.

The use of bibliometrics helped to answer the following research questions:

- (1) What is the gender representation of authors in South African trade publishing as compared to the international publishing sphere?
- (2) How many female authors are placed within a certain genre?

3.2.2 Qualitative

To complement the quantitative data and place it in context, qualitative data was also collected. Since the numerical data was mainly collated by a single company, this opinion-based data is important to unpack the various underlying aspects such as

publishers' strategy, stereotyping, and reviewer impact that all play a significant role in the sales of a trade published book.

Cohen and Manion define a non-probability sample as (2011: 155):

'The selectivity which is built into a non-probability sample derives from the researcher targeting a particular group, in the full knowledge that it does not represent the wider population; it simply represents itself.'

The sample consisted of experts in the publishing field, both publishers and authors, selected for their experience and insight. Structured interviews with expert subjects were conducted in person, over the telephone and by email to explore opinion-based data to explain and describe the bibliometrics. Cohen et al. believe that the interview is 'a flexible tool for data collection, enabling multi-sensory channels to be used; verbal, non-verbal, spoken and heard' (2011: 412). They then go on to quote Lincoln and Gube (1985:269):

'[The] structured interview is useful when the researcher is aware of what she does not know and therefore is in a position to frame questions that will supply the knowledge required, whereas the unstructured interview is useful when the researcher is not aware of what she does not know, and therefore relies on the respondents to tell her.'

The unstructured interview was appealing as it allowed the researcher to find out new information and allowed the interviewees to answer freely. Cohen et al. define unstructured questionnaires as 'a completely open questionnaire that is akin to an open invitation to 'write what one wants' (2011: 382); while in contrast, 'the semi-structured questionnaire sets the agenda but does not presuppose the nature of the

response' (2011: 382). In the end, this study used semi-structured interviews, with the addition of probing questions and follow-ups.

Semi-structured interviews were used to (1) allow for the freedom of the interviewee to explain and express their ideas in the forms of answers and the interviewer to ask for any details to be expanded on; and (2) to present a set of questions to all the interviewees that was standardised, so that they could see what questions are going to be asked in advance, and if by chance any interviews were done via email.

The types of questions this research used were mainly open-ended questions. Cohen et al. defines open questions as (2011: 382):

'Open questions enable the participants to write a free account in their own terms, to explain and qualify their responses and avoid limitations of pre-set categories of response.'

A potential shortcoming of open questions, as posited by Cohen and Manion, is that they 'can lead to irrelevant and redundant information; they may be too open ended for the respondent to enter a response' (2011: 382). This also poses the problem that the data collected would not be comparable across the interviewees, making it difficult to code and classify (Cohen & Manion, 2011). The advantage that Cohen et al. present is that 'the open-ended question is a very attractive device for smaller scale research for those sections of a questionnaire that invite an honest, personal comment from respondents' (2011: 382).

The nine interviews ranged from 32 minutes to just over 60 minutes. All participants gave informed consent and all data was kept and collated confidentially and anonymously. Each interview was conducted face-to-face; with the exception of

five interviews that were done via email. The following challenges emerged during the interview process: some participants did not understand certain questions and thus answered them from their own interpretation (in the cases of email-based interviews) or, in face-to-face situations, needed the interviewer to clarify. These questions were noted as too broad or general. Another issue encountered with the interviews was that, due to the timing of the interviews, not all participants were available – August is a busy time as publishers and authors gear up for the festive season. This was noted in the limitations. Each participant was allowed to inform the interviewer what could be and could not be included in the transcripts.

These interviews were vital to this research as they enabled the researcher to delve more deeply into the research questions and gave the numerical data more substance. While there were a few issues that were encountered in terms of both time and question structure, the data collated was valuable.

The qualitative research provides insight into and opinion on the numerical data supplied by Nielsen's and the review data. The above interviews determined:

- (1) The difficulties female authors are facing in the publishing process, if any;
- (2) With regards to feminist presses and tradition publishing houses: the differences in approach to promoting women's writing/female authors, if any;
- (3) With regards to published female authors: the manner in which their genre is defined;
- (4) What approaches (e.g. book covers) are publishers using when it comes to the genrefication of female authors?

3.3 Sample

Onwuegbuzie and Leech define sampling designs as 'representing the framework within which the sampling occurs, comprising the number and types of sampling schemes and the sample size' (2007: 239). They go on to emphasise that sampling is essential in the qualitative research process and the choice of sample eradicates the generalisation of subjects and data in qualitative research (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007). Ideally the goal of the sample design, according to Onwuegbuzie and Leech, is 'not to generalize [sic] to a population [sample] but to obtain insights into a phenomenon, individuals, or events, as is most often the case in [interpretive] studies, then the qualitative researcher purposefully selects individuals, groups, and settings for this phase that increases understanding of phenomena' (2007: 242). This prevents the researcher from trivialising the data. Onwuegbuzie and Leech go on to say that each sample should be chosen based on the value they add to the research body (2007). Finally, they state that in 'qualitative studies involving multiple cases, qualitative researchers must strike a fine balance between obtaining thick description from each case and obtaining comparative description from each comparison' (2007: 249).

Collins, et al. note that 'sampling is an important step in the research process because it helps to determine the quality of inferences made by the researcher that stem from the underlying findings. In both quantitative and qualitative studies researchers must decide the number of participants to select (i.e. sample size), and how to select these sample members (i.e. sampling scheme)' (2006: 83). Kathleen Collins et al. focus mainly on mixed-method sample designs and they assert that there are two types of sampling schemes: random and non-random. While these schemes

are normal for any type of research, they go on to define a form of custom sampling to a mixed method approach (2006:86):

'As part of this framework, they developed a two-dimensional mixed-methods sampling model. Specifically, this model provides a typology in which mixed-methods sampling designs can be categorised according to (1) the time orientation of the components (i.e. whether the qualitative and quantitative components occur simultaneously or sequentially) and (2) the relationship of the qualitative and quantitative samples (i.e. identical versus parallel versus nested versus multilevel).'

Further to the above, Collins et al. explain that 'the time orientation refers to whether the quantitative and qualitative phases of the study occur at approximately the same point in time (i.e. concurrent) or whether these two components occur one after the other (i.e. sequential). Therefore, in order to select a mixed-methods design, the researcher should decide whether one wants to conduct the phases concurrently or sequentially' (2006: 88).

For the purposes of this research, the sample design is sequential, as the bibliometrics (quantitative data collection) occurred before the interviews and review collation (qualitative). The section below outlines the sampling methods in terms of quantitative and qualitative data collection, expanding on the details of selection and how data was extrapolated.

3.3.1 Quantitative Sample

Bibliometrics was used for the quantitative research to determine the sales of female and male authors within the South African book trade. This design used a stratified

sampling technique. John Biggam defines stratified sampling as ‘where you break down your target population into identifiable groups (strata) and then take samples from each of your groups’ (2008: 89). Collins et al. define stratified sampling as being ‘divided into subsections comprising groups that are relatively homogeneous with respect to one or more characteristics and a random sample from each stratum is selected’ (2006: 84). The bibliometrics were filtered within an Excel document, using the filter tool on column headers. These filters represented each of the strata employed.

Van Wyk says that Nielsen’s ‘core focus is meta data [sic] aggregation and we hold the only meta database [sic] on titles published and represented here in South Africa’ (2017: 1). It is worth noting that Nielsen can account for approximately 95% of the trade retail market sales through tills; the excluded smaller independent bookshops are assumed to make up the missing 5% (SAPnet, 2017). The Nielsen panel represents around 1 500 retail outlets (including the large chains like Exclusive Books and CNA, independent booksellers, distributors and supermarket outlets) and monitors over 49 000 different titles selling every week. This data is delivered to subscribed publishers and retailers on a weekly, four weekly, bi-annual, and annual basis (SAPnet, 2017). Retailers are the contributors to sales reporting and publishers are the subscribers; retailers may also be subscribers. Van Wyk expands saying, ‘the sales database is now building into a very valuable data source for historical comparisons and the tracking of individual titles, genre, authors and more’ (2017: 1).

The sample was drawn from Nielsen Bookscan to create the most accurate sample possible. Locally published trade titles were requested over a five-year period (2012–2016) so that there would be a time-based sample – this allowed me to collate and measure the data over a longer period that could determine a significant trend.

Filters within an Excel document (as described below) were set and applied to each of the documents. The ISBNs extracted from the Nielsen database were also set for trade-only publications, published and registered in South Africa within the specified years.

Due to the filters which were applied to the bibliometrics, stratification in the Nielsen Bookscan data was achieved. As each filter was added to the data further strata were created. The following filters were applied to the raw Excel document compiled from Nielsen Bookscan:

(1) **Filtered by publishers:** The top 10 major publishers were used (as determined by Nielsen). This report was run according to market share – Nielsen Bookscan calls this the Top 10 RPG). The publishers represented were: Penguin Random House; Jonathan Ball Publishers; Christian Art Distributors; Pan Macmillan South Africa; NB Uitgewers/Publishers; Struik Christian Media; LAPA Publishers; Ingram Book Company; and Jacana Media. [An edit was made to remove Phambili Agencies, who did not feature in the last year of 2016. According to Nielsen the market share percentage of the Top 10, after Phambili Agencies were removed, added up to 77.55% of the trade market].

(2) **Filtered by genre:** The categories used were adult fiction and non-fiction. All genres pertaining to children's books were filtered out and removed from this study because the research is focusing on adult fiction and non-fiction data. The following codes were applied to the data:

- **AN:** African Non-Fiction (local titles only)
- **AF:** African Fiction (local titles only)
- **CF:** Children's Fiction

- **CN:** Children's Non-Fiction

- (3) **Filtered by author name:** The researcher went through the authors' names to determine the number of female and male authors. Titles listed without authors were removed from the data as the gender of the authors could evidently not be determined. Names where the gender was not immediately ascertainable were scrutinised through online author biographies. These were then colour coded in Excel; male authors = blue and female authors = purple; children's books = yellow; and titles not considered = black
- (4) **Filtered by language:** It is worth noting that, although the main focus of the research is titles in English, Afrikaans titles were included in the data collection. Translated works significantly added to the bestsellers within the selected years. This detail helps to define the type of books South African readers are buying. There were no other vernacular languages present in the top 100.
- (5) **Filtered by quantity:** All sales quantities were recorded but special attention was paid to titles that sold 5 000 or more units. These were highlighted in red and categorised as bestsellers.

This filtering process was done to extract the most accurate and informative data for this research. The data extracted from Nielsen Bookscan covers 95% of all sales made through bookselling outlets (as stated above), which makes this sample highly representative of the trade publishing industry for the respective years.

3.3.2 Qualitative Sample

The qualitative sample was done using non-probability sampling. Biggam defines quota sampling as (2008: 89):

'Quota sampling does not involve random sampling and is therefore vulnerable to the criticism that there is no way of telling if the results are representative of a larger population. Sampling that does not involve random sampling is sometimes referred to as non-probability sampling. In quota sampling, you decide beforehand the type and number of members (i.e. your selection quota) that you intend sampling.'

Similarly, Collins et al. explain that '[the] researcher identifies desired characteristics and quotas of sample members to be included in the study' (2006: 85). Quota sampling and judgement sampling methods were selected to describe and explain the why and how of participant selection. In addition to quota sampling, judgement sampling, also known as 'purposeful sampling' was included. According to Marshall (1996: 523):

'This can involve developing a framework of the variables that might influence an individual's contribution and will be based on the researcher's practical knowledge of the research area, the available literature and evidence from the study itself. This is a more intellectual strategy than the simple demographic stratification of epidemiological studies, though age, gender and social class might be important variables. If the subjects are known to the researcher, they may be stratified according to known public attitudes or beliefs.'

These sampling methods allowed for a non-random selection of participants (authors and publishers), based on their characteristics such as years of experience and career

history. At the end of the interviews details or suggestions for other possible interview candidates that could contribute to this research were requested. Biernacki and Waldorf call this snowball sampling or the referral sampling method (1981). This type of sampling was used to decide if anyone was missed in the initial quota sampling.

The use of judgement and snowball sampling creates a focused sample that is appropriate for this study and is best positioned to provide accurate and insightful insights into women's publishing. It was decided that the parameters of who should be interviewed for opinion-based data (that would give the most influential data) were: role-players in the South African trade publishing sector, publishers (both male and female), and authors. This created a sample of five female authors; four of whom were South African and one American. Four publisher participants were female, and all held significant roles in South African trade publishing.

3.4 Data Collection

A combination of quantitative data and qualitative data was collected. Using Nielsen Bookscan this allowed for a more accurate sample and data collection process.

3.4.1 Quantitative Data Collection

3.4.1.1 Nielsens BookData

After requesting the reports from Nielsen Bookscan with the abovementioned strata, the main aim was to determine how many books were penned by male authors versus female authors and which genre they were published in.

3.4.1.2 *Reviews*

The *Sunday Times* newspaper was chosen due to the size and scale of their book review pages that feature in the Lifestyle section, as well as their circulation figures. This data collection technique helped to determine how many female versus male authors were reviewed within the years of 2016 and 2017 as well as the gender of the reviewer. Articles in the *Sunday Times* archive were obtained, and reviews were then manually collated by searching through physical copies of the Lifestyle section at the Times Media archive (now TSO Blackstar) in Johannesburg for the 2016 data. The data for 2017 was available at the National Library of South Africa, although incomplete.

This process involved scanning the lifestyle section of the ST book review page, calculating the number of female and male reviewers (and verifying these by cross-checking them with online data such as Twitter handles); and then counting how many female authors and male authors were reviewed. Finally, a tally of how many fiction and non-fiction books were reviewed was created. These numbers were tabulated in an Excel document (see appendix B) to allow the implementation of filters, graphs and formulas if necessary.

3.4.2 Qualitative Data Collection

3.4.2.1 *Interviews*

The selection of specific role players within the South African trade publishing sector (and to some degree the international trade publishing sector) was intended to gather the most accurate and in-depth insights to provide more context the quantitative data. There were two groups of interview candidates: (1) Publishers; and (2) Authors. All candidates from both groups received the same set of questions but unstructured

questions were also noted in each case. (See appendix C for list of questions used in the interviews).

3.4.2.1.1 Group 1: Publishers

Interviews were conducted with key players employed at three South African trade publishers to attempt to get a balanced view from a trade publisher perspective. Publishers were selected from the top ranking Nielsen Bookscan RPG (as mentioned in the quantitative sample – see appendix A) or based on their involvement in feminist publishing. The size of the publishing houses does vary, yet two of these charted on the RPG in the last three years meaning that regardless of size, each published books that sold significantly well (in terms of value and quantity) through the tills. There are aspects that each candidate could contribute an opinion to – depending on background, career position and publisher – though all were asked the same questions.

The total number of interviews that took place was four; one took place via telephone; one took place via email and two were face-to-face interviews. There were two referrals from one participant and although these referrals were contacted there was no response.

3.4.2.1.2 Group 2: Authors

There were candidates that were convenient choices as they were already directly in contact, or the researcher has worked with them in the past. As above with the interviews with publishers, there are aspects that each interviewee could contribute an opinion to, depending on background and publishing history, though all were asked the same questions.

The number of interviews that took place was five. Of these five, two were conducted face-to-face; three were done via email. There was one referral from participants; incidentally the same referral came from more than one participant, and this referral was contacted but there was no response.

The interviews provided a deep and well-rounded view into female-driven writing, publishing and specific experiences which authors and publishers have dealt with during their author/publisher careers, was gained. These interviews drive feedback towards definitive research and purposeful subjective feelings whilst avoiding biased opinion.

3.5 Data Analysis

3.5.1 Quantitative Analysis

The raw numerical data (Nielsen Bookscan 2012-2016) was sent by Nielsen in an Excel document. The documents were stratified by the researcher as mentioned above. After this process took place the following graphs were plotted using Excel to avoid any errors:

- (1) Gender breakdown by year (percentage of total)
- (2) Genre breakdown by year (percentage of total)
- (3) Overall gender breakdown of male and female authors between 2012-2016;
- (4) Breakdown of fiction and non-fiction of female authors between 2012-2016;
- (5) Breakdown of fiction and non-fiction of male authors between 2012-2016;
- (6) Female authors who sold more than 5 000 units and the genre between 2012-2016;
- (7) Male authors who sold more than 5 000 units and the genre between 2012-2016.

When looking at the ST review data, the following data was manually collated:

- (1) The gender breakdown of the authors reviewed during 2016-2017;
- (2) The gender breakdown of the reviewers published during 2016-2017;
- (3) The genre breakdown of the titles reviewed during 2016-2017.

3.5.2 Qualitative Analysis

Cohen et al. say that the method of organising the data by research question is the best way to draw all the relevant data together in a consistent and structured manner for both reader and researcher (2011). This method will allow for both quantitative and qualitative data to be presented and to answer a specific research question. Cohen et al. state that this 'enables patterns, relationships, comparisons and qualifications across data types to be explored conveniently and clearly' (2011: 552). Coding was implemented to present the data that allowed for similar phrases to be aligned and supported across the various interview candidates (Cohen et al., 2011).

Thematic coding was used to decipher and analyse the interview responses. According to Jennifer Attride-Stirling thematic analyses consists of connected pictures that summarise themes of a piece of text (2001). Attride-Stirling also points out that this technique 'is robust and highly sensitive' (2001). This coding technique was collated in an Excel document and each response from each participant was combed through to assess the frequency of certain themes. This process allowed for a more accurate analysis of the interview data and content. Using the Excel document, one could search the rate at which a phrase, word or theme was used; it also allows for neat and collated data to be presented in an easy to read manner.

The coding and tabulation of phrases from interview candidates can be found in appendix D.

3.6 Ethical considerations

According to Cohen et al., questionnaires and interviews always pose an ethical threat by intruding into a respondent's privacy (2001). Cohen et al. point out that one can 'identify three main areas of ethical issues: informed consent, confidentiality and the consequences of the interviews' (2011: 442). If these areas are explained and understood by both the interviewer and the interviewee there can be a balance.

According to Edwards and Mauthner 'ethics concerns the morality of human conduct. In relation to social research, it refers to the moral deliberation, choice and accountability on the part of researchers throughout the research process' (2005: 14).

Guillemin and Gillam discuss two branches of ethics in research (2004: 263):

'There are at least two major dimensions of ethics in qualitative research (indeed in all research, but we will not pursue that issue here). These are (a) procedural ethics, which usually involves seeking approval from a relevant ethics committee to undertake research involving humans; and (b) "ethics in practice" or the everyday ethical issues that arise in the doing of research.'

What Cohen et al., (2011) and Guillemin and Gillam (2004) note is that qualitative data deals with humans and Guillemin and Gillam point out that research involving humans 'is a process of asking people to take part in, or undergo, procedures that they have not actively sought out or requested, and that are not intended solely or even primarily for their direct benefit, although in some cases participants may indirectly benefit from the process' (2004: 271). After obtaining approval from the ethics board (procedural

ethics) according to Guillemin and Gillam, the researcher then moves to dealing with ethics in practice (2004). This research aimed to be ethical and was conducted in accordance with how the interviewees felt.

The following steps were taken to ensure this research was conducted according to ethical standards:

- (1) The research design and interview questions were pre-approved by the Ethics Committee of the EBIT Faculty at the University of Pretoria;
- (2) No personal information was collected other than the name of interviewee as a form of reference for the researcher;
- (3) Before each interview candidates signed (digitally or physically) an informed consent form as stipulated and supplied by the University of Pretoria;
- (4) Interviewees were given the choice to withhold an opinion on a specific subject if they felt uncomfortable;
- (5) All personal contact information was kept confidential and not used in this body of research;
- (6) All data collected was kept on a password-protected computer within password-protected documents;
- (7) The final copy of the research paper was shared with candidates.

All data was handled with truthful and ethical care for both numerical and opinion based data.

3.7 Limitations

The methodology and design of this research was structured to avoid limitations, but like any study involving humans, it is hard if not impossible to avoid completely. As

Biggam points out, ‘the student dissertation that is problem-free or not limited in some way does not exist’ (2008: 121). There are limitations and issues that relate to this research methodology, the sample design, and outside factors that may have changed the outcome of this study.

The choice of sample design – non-random (non-probable) – in participant selection for the interviews was driven by quota sampling. In spite of the researcher’s best efforts to maintain ethical considerations around interviews there were participants who took part in the interviews who did not understand the questions clearly; a few declined to participate due to time constraints; and others opted out of certain questions. Also, timing of the interviews coincided with festive season preparation for publishers and authors, which meant that higher ranking managers (in publishing houses) were too busy to take part. There is also a risk of generalising the population with a non-probable sample; it’s impossible to know the representation of the population with this design choice.

Another limitation facing this research is that data from the Nielsen Bookscan from 2014 only represented a portion of the South African trade retail market (SAPnet, 2017). This could skew some of the bestseller numbers as it does not represent the book retail industry fully prior to 2014.

There were also some limitations regarding accessibility of data, although these were overcome. Deciding to look at the *Sunday Times* archive began fairly easily by visiting the State Library where the 2017 newspapers were kept in a readable condition and were accessible. However, as soon as the researcher started requesting papers older than 2017 the quality was difficult to read and decipher. This issue was compounded by (1) the microfilm machines at the library were not well maintained and did not work properly; (2) the scans were too dark and unreadable for some of the

papers. This caused a delay and a wasted trip to the library. The *Sunday Times* was contacted and a visit was arranged to their offices in Johannesburg; it took a few weeks to set up a specific appointment and added a cost as well. This part of the research thus took longer than it should have. If all the papers had been in good condition, it would have been easier to break down and add and check the data.

Moreover, the literature on South African female authors is lacking – so finding papers on this topic was extremely difficult and time consuming. There are some popular articles that explain the female dilemma of selling fewer copies than male authors. Further, there is very little information regarding sales history, royalty history, or female authors in the industry as a whole. My hope is that this research will add to the body of research on the gender gap in publishing, but also add to the minimal literature on the South African publishing industry.

Lastly, during the interview stage male participants were busy due to the lead-up in South African trade publishing for the festive season. The months of August to October are not ideal for free time. This meant that the participant sample is entirely female and could use a male perspective.

The implementation of triangulation in the research methods was intended to avoid bias. Using comparison and various methods I hoped to achieve a sound research outcome.

3.8 Conclusion

The above steps were taken to collect the most accurate and ethically sound research data. With the use of a mixed method of data collection, this research could be accurate, robust and well-rounded in both numerical and opinion-based data. While there were limitations that influenced the research, it is hoped that these did not impact

the outcome of this research, or the data collated. The findings of this research are discussed in the next chapter.

Chapter 4: Findings

4.1 Introduction

This chapter sets out the results of the empirical data collected from interviews, the *Sunday Times* reviews, and Nielsen Bookscan. This chapter will first summarise and discuss the quantitative data and, following that, the qualitative data. First, this chapter will explore the quantitative data under the headings: (a) Nielsen Bookscan bibliometrics, and (b) *Sunday Times* review statistics. Following this, the qualitative data found during the interview process will be presented under the headings: (a) South African publishing industry and gender breakdown; (b) feminist presses and female-headed publishers; (c) authors and publishing; (d) defining chick-lit; (e) the impact of reviews; (f) prizes and sales; and finally (g) how to overcome the gender bias in publishing.

This chapter will conclude with a critical discussion of the findings and their links to existing literature and research.

4.2 Quantitative Analytics

This section outlines the quantitative data set out under the following headings (a) Nielsen bibliometrics; and (b) *Sunday Times* review data. The bibliometrics were analysed using Excel to provide descriptive parameters that allowed the creation of visual aids (graphs and tables) to decipher and create relationships between the variables of this research.

To ensure that each parameter of this study was analysed as accurately as possible, the researcher only filtered the document with the specific parameters where

a relationship between variables was examined to ensure that there was at least one dependent variable in the analysis.

4.2.1 Nielsen Bibliometrics

Looking at the below bibliometrics, one hoped to gather information that could answer the following research questions:

- (1) What is the current situation of women’s publishing in South African trade publishing?
- (2) What is the gender representation of authors in South African trade publishing, as compared to the international publishing sphere?
- (3) How many female authors are placed within a certain genre?

The below table represents the collated figures of the gender breakdown by year (table 3).

Year	Male Author	Male Author (% of total)	Female Author	Female Author (% of total)
2012	447	55%	371	45.0%
2013	397	51.1%	380	48.9%
2014	414	51%	398	49%
2015	397	50.2%	394	49.8%
2016	292	47.8%	320	52.2%

Table 3: Gender Breakdown by year

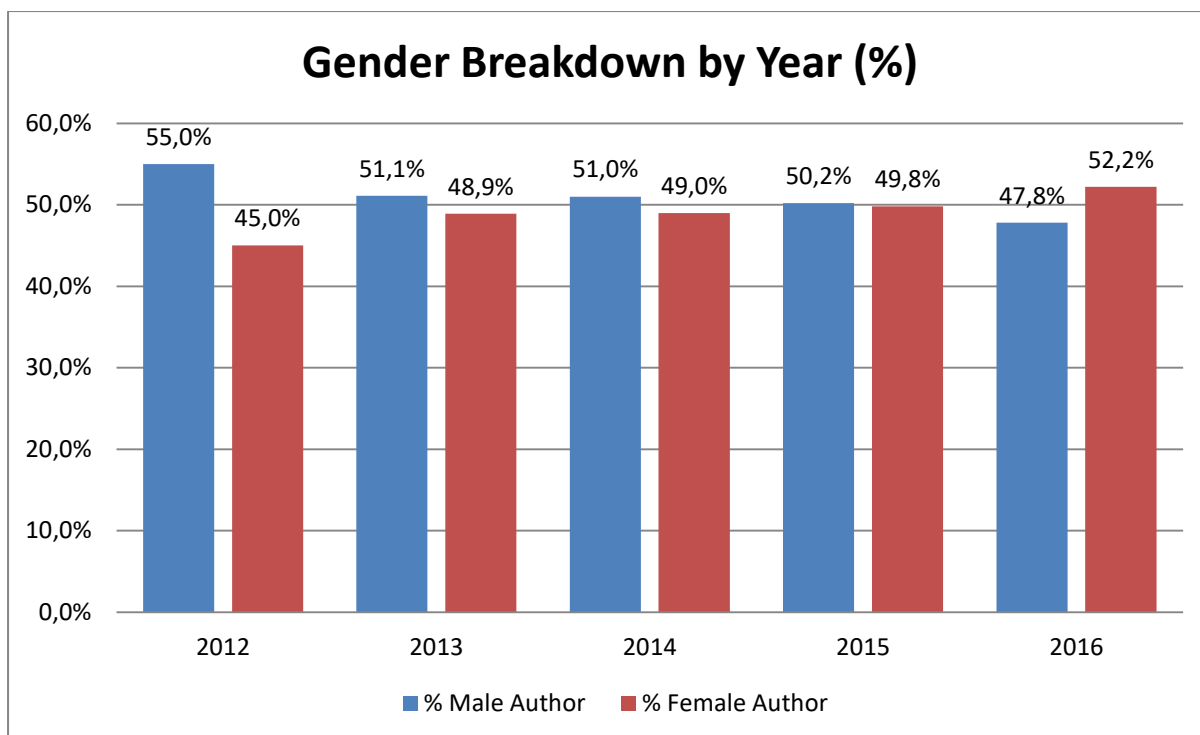


Figure 4.1: Gender Breakdown by Year (%)

These figures (figure 4.1) represent the total number of South African male and female authors per year across (bestselling) adult fiction and adult non-fiction. These figures were extracted from Nielsen data and analysed according to bibliometric criteria. They show us that male authors tend to sell more than female authors, but that this trend has in fact been shifting in favour of women authors. In 2016, in fact, more female authors were listed on the Nielsen charts than male authors. As mentioned in chapter 2, the *Bookseller* found that just 35.6% of books considered 'Books of the Year' were penned by female authors in 2016 in the UK (Bookseller, 2016). The gap in South Africa is not so pronounced, and in fact the numbers are approximately 50-50.

If we go on to examine the genre breakdown by year, we see a pronounced preference for non-fiction (table 4):

Year	Fiction	Fiction (% of total)	Non-Fiction	Non-Fiction (% of total)
2012	216	36.1%	382	63.9%
2013	250	39.9%	377	60.1%
2014	221	31.8%	473	68.2%
2015	237	34.1%	458	65.9%
2016	196	37.1%	333	62.9%

Table 4: Genre Breakdown by year

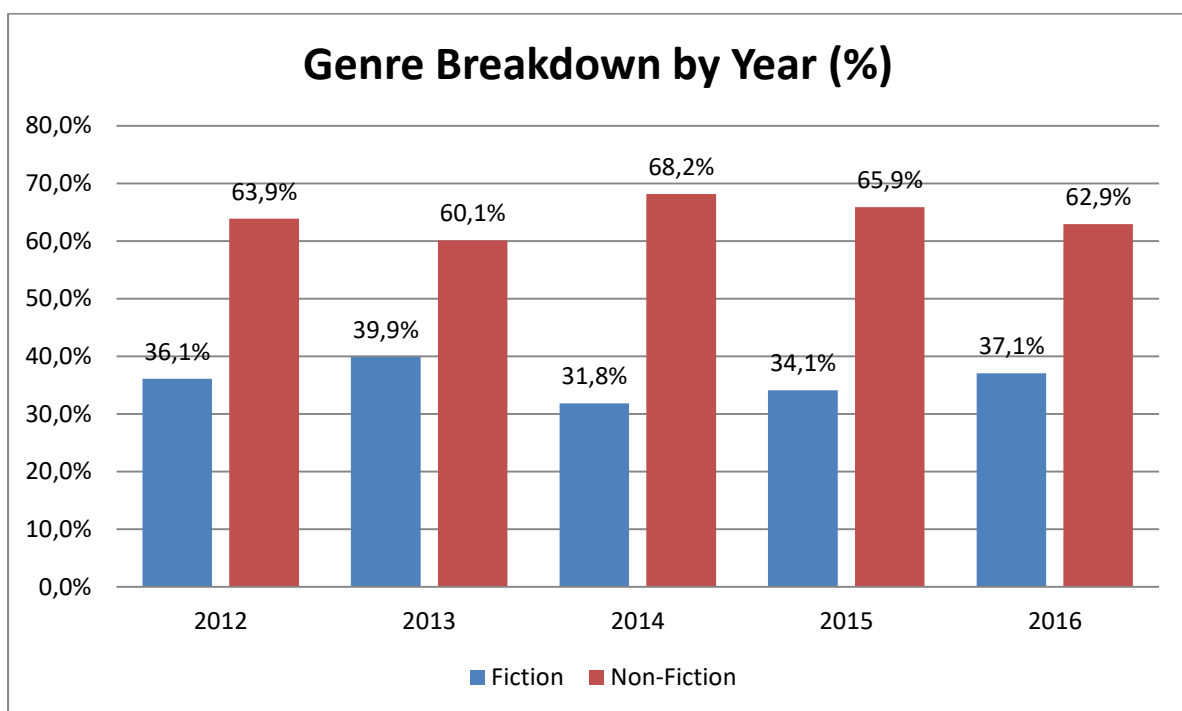


Figure 4.2: Genre Breakdown by Year (%)

It can be seen that non-fiction titles sell more according to the Nielsen data, almost doubling the number of fiction titles in 2016 (figure 4.2). An article published in 2016 by the Good Book Appreciation Society (a Facebook book club with almost 6 000 members) analysed similar figures from Nielsen: ‘adult fiction only makes up 2.5 million of the 10.5 million (20%), and only a fraction of those sales come from South African fiction [...] Sales mostly go to the likes of international authors including J.K.

Rowling, Lee Childs, John Grisham, and Gillian Flynn’ (Business Tech, 2016). Non-fiction is the top selling genre in South Africa, even in the trade sector (Van Rooyen, 2005).

The genre breakdown can be further examined in terms of the numbers of bestselling titles. Below is the genre breakdown of titles that sold 5 000 copies or more (table 5):

Year	Fiction	Non-Fiction
2012	6	16
2013	2	8
2014	5	22
2015	2	14
2016	0	6

Table 5: Titles selling more than 5 000 copies by genre

This table shows us that not only are non-fiction titles generally more popular, they are also more likely to sell over 5 000 units than a fiction title. This corroborates what we know to be one of the bookselling and publishing trends in South Africa.

4.2.1.1 Male authors versus female authors

After parameters that were stipulated in the previous chapter were set in place, the breakdown of male authors in comparison to female authors between the years 2012 to 2016 were graphed according to the following categories:

- 1) Genre Breakdown by Gender
- 2) Genre Breakdown by Gender in bestselling authors

Below is the genre breakdown by gender over the years (figure 4.3). The same parameters were set as stipulated in the previous chapter by using the Nielsen

Bookscan category section after filtering female authors, then male authors; the category selection was AF and AN.

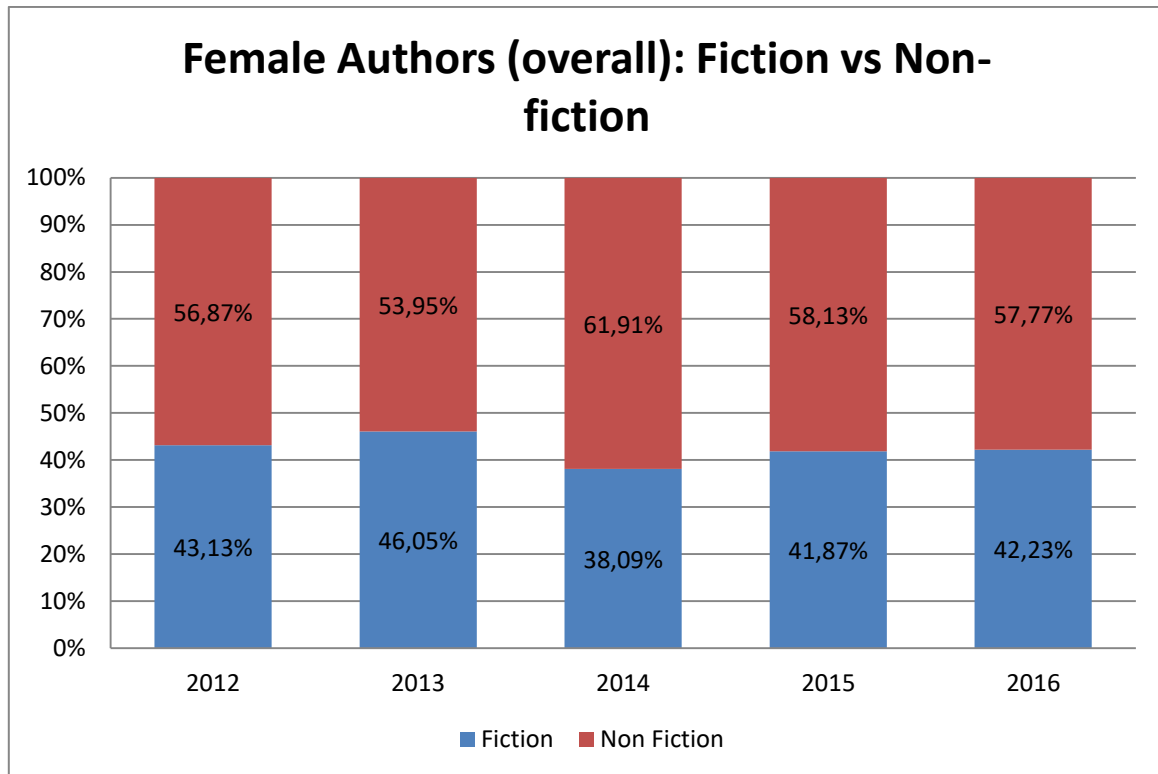


Figure 4.3: Female Authors: Fiction vs. Non-Fiction

Figure 4.3 shows us that non-fiction has shown a steady, if not huge, domination of the genre female authors are writing (as concluded above). The 2014 charts show a female author – Zelda le Grange, who wrote a memoir about her experiences with Nelson Mandela – was the top grossing author of the year at 20 408 copies. This graph shows the impact of that bestselling title in 2014 as the figures then slowly dip in female non-fiction by 3.78% in 2015, and then drop by 0.36% from 2015 to 2016. This graph thus shows us a more even split of fiction and non-fiction titles selling for female authors. It seems women are successful in both genres, regardless of industry trends leaning towards non-fiction titles.

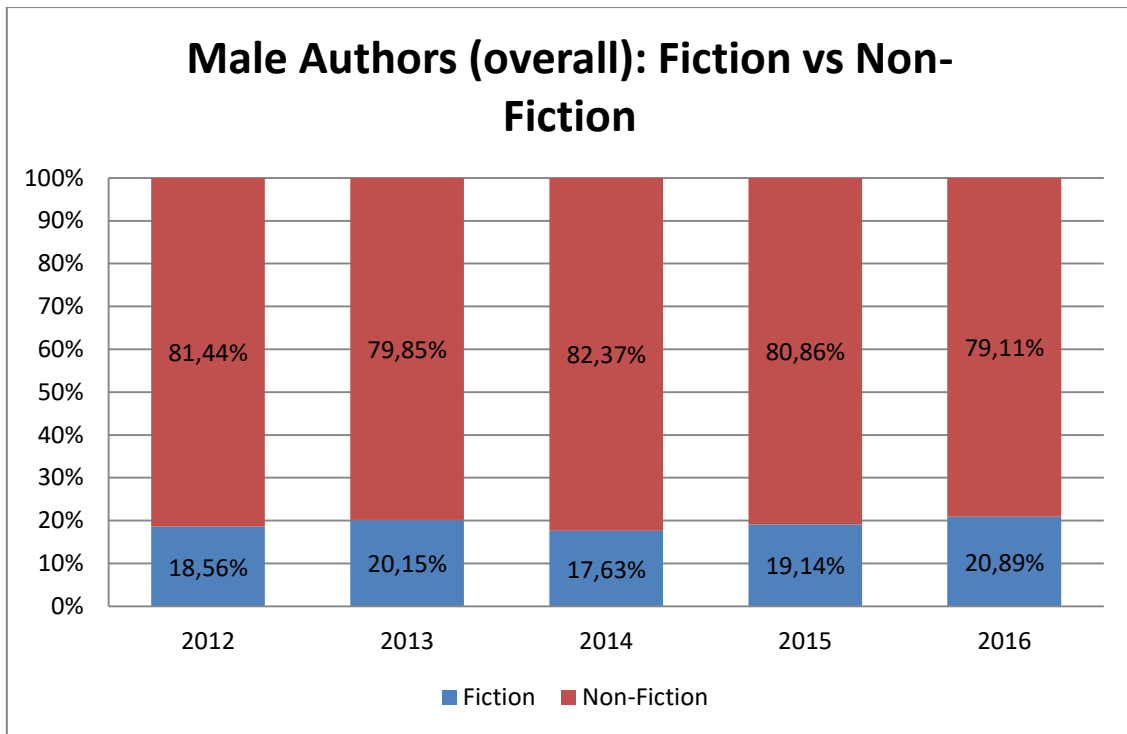


Figure 4.4: Male Authors: Fiction vs. Non-Fiction

However, if we look at the genre breakdown for male authors (figure 4.4) the genre representation for male authors is 30% higher in non-fiction than that shown in figure 4.1 for female authors. In 2016, only about 20% of male authors published fiction titles. This split is much more pronounced than that found among women authors.

We can conclude that female authors publish double the amount of fiction than male authors regardless of industry trends, and that non-fiction is a male-dominated genre. This is significant because non-fiction sells more copies in South Africa. The below graphs show bestselling titles (having sold over 5 000 copies) within a year, broken down by gender and genre. The below two graphs (figure 4.5 and figure 4.6) break down what genre is most likely to sell 5 000 copies or more by gender.

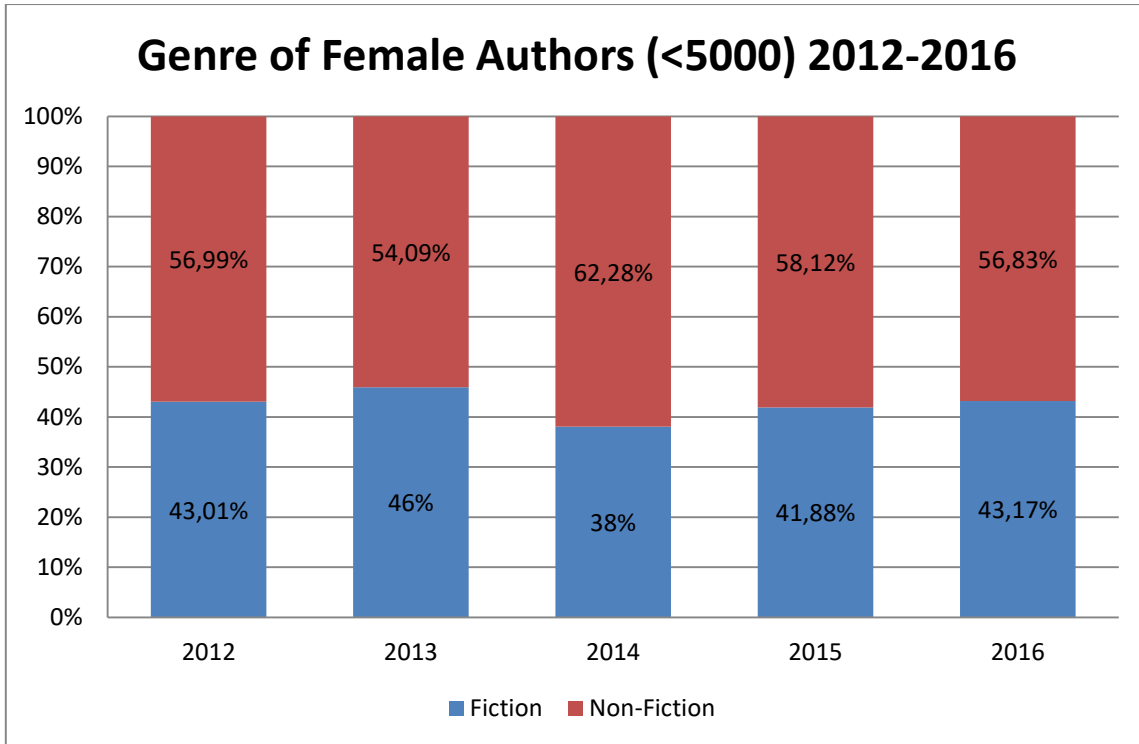


Figure 4.5: Genre of Female Authors selling over 5000 copies

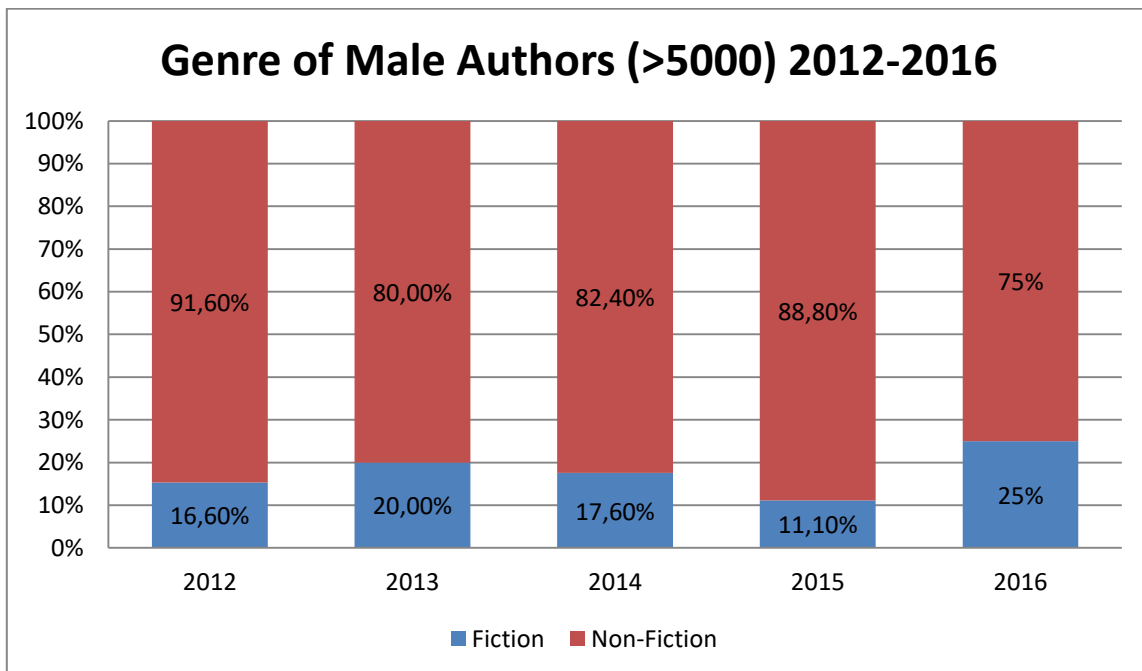


Figure 4.6: Genre of Male Authors selling over 5000 copies

Non-fiction, as we have established, is the most likely to sell in South Africa for both female and male authors. What figure 4.6 shows us is that male authors sell more non-fiction than fiction; and figure 4.5 shows us that female authors are also more likely to sell non-fiction than fiction (as per the industry trend), but have more of a 'dual' standing in both genres. Female authors still dominate the fiction genre.

When comparing figure 4.5 and figure 4.6, it was found that there are more male authors selling over 5 000 copies overall. Therefore, it is even more likely that males will sell that quantity in non-fiction. There are gradual dips but these 'recover' in subsequent years and do not affect the overall trend. Female authors publish and sell more fiction than male authors. However, when compared to male authors, female authors sell (on average) 30-40% less in the non-fiction genre. In fiction sales, women almost double the sales numbers of male authors. Male authors sell better overall due to them having more domination in the non-fiction genre.

The author gender split on the Nielsen charts was thus more even than expected, especially when compared to international studies and articles published on this topic. When we look deeper at overall sales and genre, we can conclude that female authors publish and sell in both the fiction and non-fiction genre, while male authors are more likely to succeed in the non-fiction genre – which means they sell better overall.

Nielsen figures provide us with a numerical breakdown of how many male and female authors are: (a) being published and sold within South African trade publishing; (b) which genres male and female authors are most likely to succeed in according to sales numbers. We can conclude that male authors will most likely be more successful publishing and selling a non-fiction title, while female authors can publish and sell both fiction and non-fiction.

4.2.2 *Sunday Times* Reviewer Findings

In addition to counting the number of authors and the quantity of sales, consideration was given to authors who are reviewed and to the reviewers themselves. This data was collated manually by counting and segmenting the genre, gender of reviewers and authors published in the *Sunday Times* Lifestyle section during the years 2016 and 2017.

This graph (figure 4.7) illustrates the comparison of male and female authors reviewed in the ST Lifestyle page during 2016 and 2017. The details of this data can be found in appendix B.

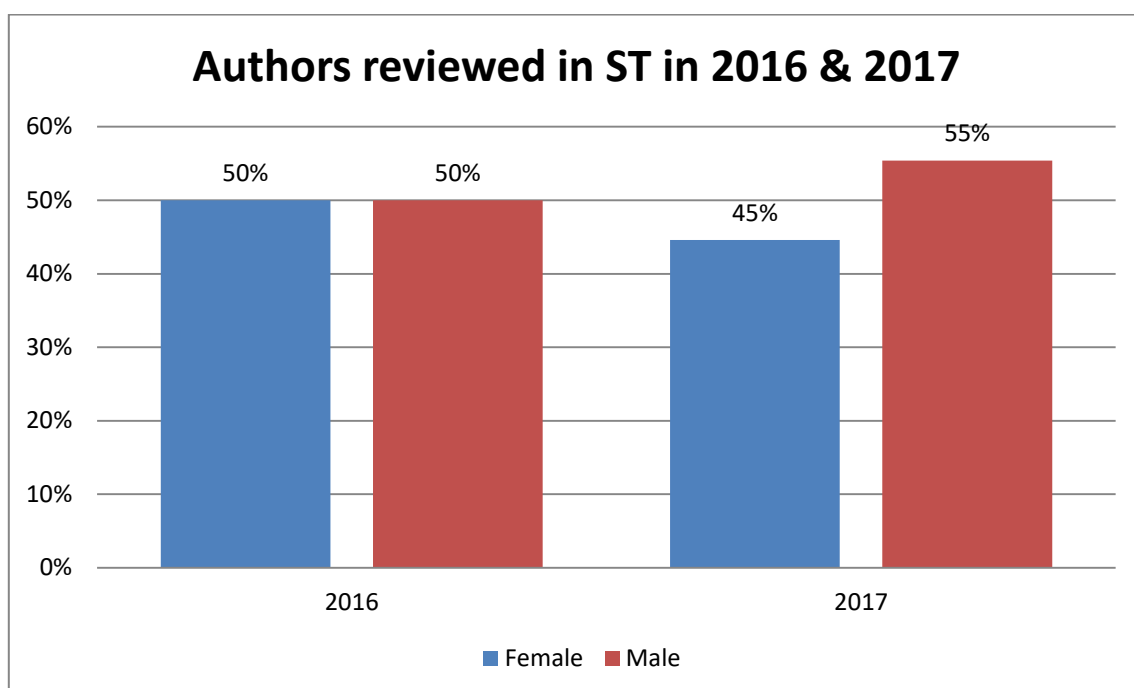


Figure 4.7: Authors reviewed in ST during 2016 & 2017

In 2016, a total of 102 female authors and 102 male authors were published making the author gender breakdown a 50% split exactly. In 2017, 99 female authors and 123

male authors were reviewed. Compared to international reporting (such as the VIDA and Stella counts) this data is far more evenly split, and even favours female authors.

If we go on to consider the gender of the reviewers who published in the ST Lifestyle pages during 2016 and 2017, we find a similar pattern. As shown in chapter 2 through VIDA count and Stella Prize data, these statistics do not match with the international trends of newspapers and other outlets publishing more male-written reviews than female-written reviews (e.g. VIDA, 2016).

In 2016, 180 reviewers were female, and only 58 were male, while in 2017, only 15 male reviewers were published to 117 who were female. The imbalance here is starkly in favour of female reviewers.

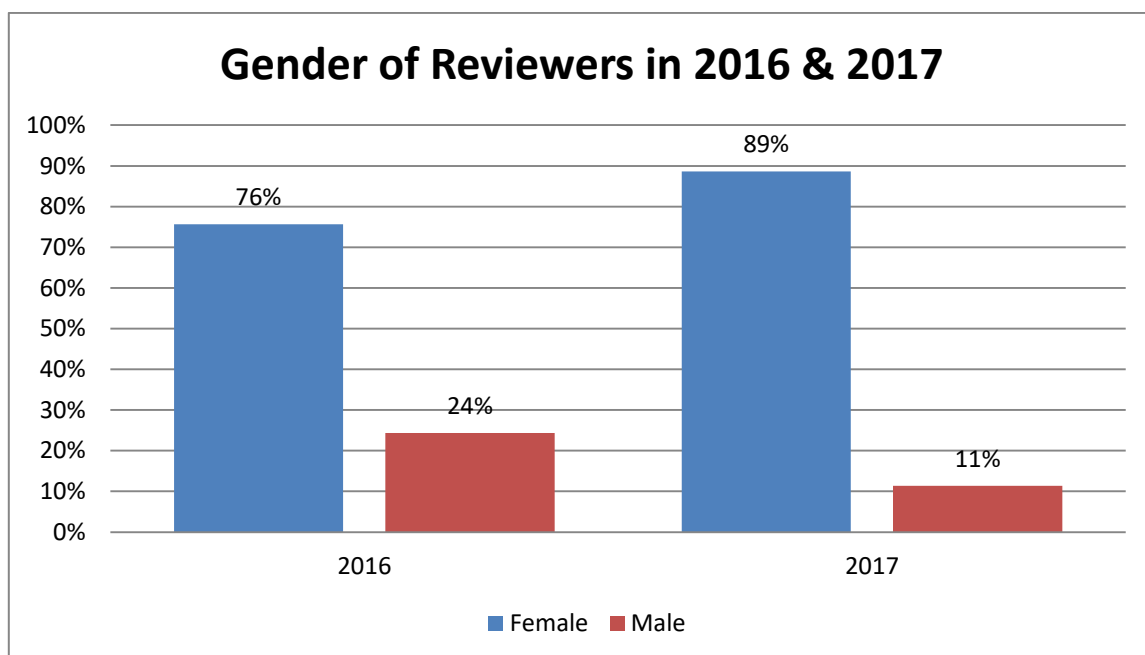


Figure 4.8: Gender of Reviewers in 2016 & 2017

The genre of the books reviewed was also examined. The below graph looks at how many reviews were fiction or non-fiction across 2016 and 2017.

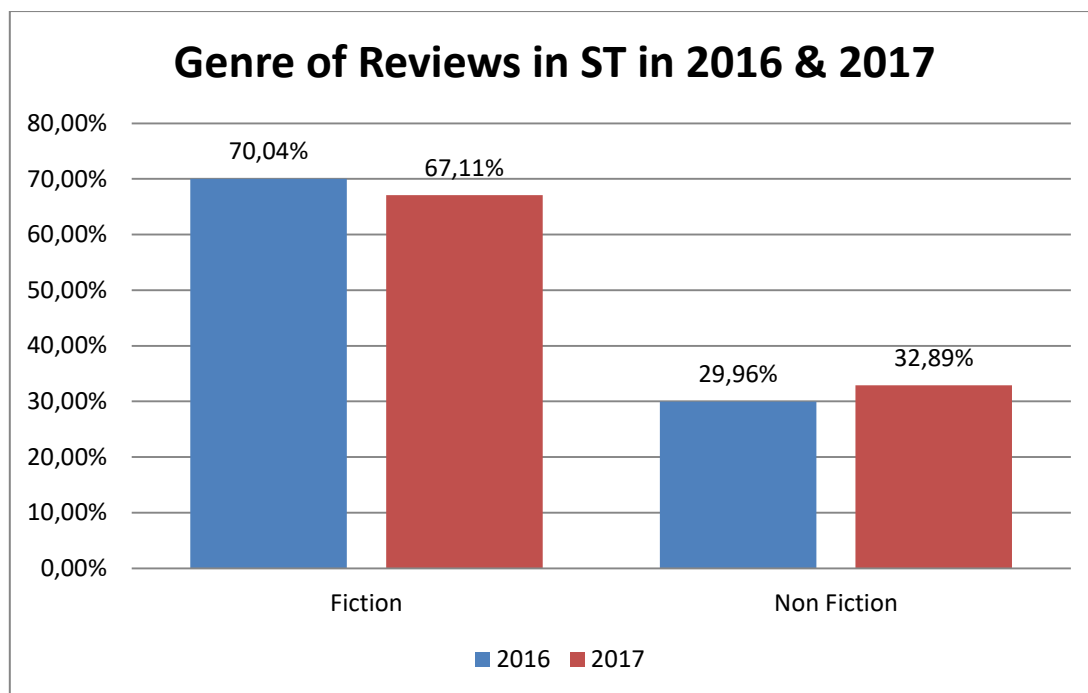


Figure 4.9: Genre of Reviews published in 2016 & 2017

In 2016, there were a total of 257 reviews published in the *Sunday Times*: 180 of the reviews published were fiction and 77 were non-fiction. It must be noted that this included young adult titles, but not children’s picture books (none of which were reviewed in 2016 or 2017). In 2017, a total of 228 reviews were published in the *Sunday Times*: 153 of these reviews were fiction and 75 were non-fiction. Overall, the number of reviews published decreased by 29, while fiction reviews were harder hit decreasing by 27, while non-fiction only dropped by two reviews. This data does not take into consideration seasonal publishing (i.e. bigger lead authors being published for Christmas) and review space. This preference for fiction is interesting, given the sales data that shows that non-fiction titles sell more in South Africa.

According to most international studies based on the gender of author reviews in major publications, the statistics lean towards female authors gaining more and more exposure over the years. However, in the case of the data collated from the ST Archive, the graph shows a more equal split of female authors being reviewed. A few

caveats should be added: the data was only collated from a single publication (although it is one of the biggest publishers of book reviews in the country), and only for a short period. Moreover, this data doesn't delve into the number of women published in 2016 versus 2017; the titles available for review in 2016 compared to 2017; trends of the book-buying public impacting publishers lists at the time; or the theme of the ST lifestyle page. The review section is versatile, offering a range from longer reviews to short "book bites". This shows the extent and versatility that the page wants to show, a type of 'something for everyone'.

In spite of the limited data, figure 4.9 shows the opposite of what international statistics show. Female reviewers are getting more exposure and published reviews (regardless of size or title), growing almost 13% from 2016 to 2017. Male reviewers do not seem to get much review time at ST. This data does not reveal whether there are more female reviewers on the ST database (this data was requested, but they were unwilling to share); or whether female reviewers simply reviewed more books. The pool of reviewers may be skewed in South Africa by the repeated use of respected 'powerhouse' reviewers such as Jenny Crwys-Williams and Michele Magwood.

By looking at the above graphs from the ST review data, we can conclude that this publication has a larger female reviewer split in comparison to other publications internationally; in fact it grew from 2016 to 2017. It is worth noting that this data didn't compare various other review publications with a large readership. What was interesting was that male authors reviewed grew from 2016 to 2017 while female authors reviewed dropped – though, if this was collated for 2018 we would see an even split again. Fiction titles were reviewed the most throughout 2016 and 2017. This shows a clear contrast to higher non-fiction sales from the Nielsen's figures.

Could it be that reviews in the *Sunday Times* do not necessarily translate into sales? With that said, the ST review statistics did not mimic the bibliometrics nor is there a comparison to other publications with this readership size or type. So, ultimately, we can only deduce that the ST highlighted and reviewed more fiction regardless of book buyer habits, perhaps shedding light, albeit unintentionally, on the 'underdog' genre of the industry.

4.3 Qualitative Analytics

This section outlines the qualitative data. The interviews were analysed using thematic coding as outlined in the previous chapter. A table of the phrases and themes assigned can be found in appendix D.

4.3.1 Participant Data

Gender:	All nine participants were female.
Position in publishing:	Of the nine participants, five are published authors (four are published in South Africa, while one is published internationally). The remaining four participants work for publishers (three work for publishers featuring in Nielsens Bookscan RPG, the top 10 ranking publishers, and one participant works for an independent publisher).
Age:	Participants' ages ranged between 25 and 60.
Race:	Eight participants were white and one participant was black.

4.3.2 South African Publishing Industry and Gender Breakdown

Respondents were asked whether they perceived the local publishing industry's workforce to be dominated by women. Five participants agreed that the gender breakdown within an average South African publishing house is predominantly female – although three participants noted that men continue to hold senior and decision-making positions. One publisher participant stated that: 'I think top management is, obviously, predominantly male – white male – and junior positions, beneath that, so middle- to lower-management [...] that's mostly female and that's generally the breakdown'. Another publisher mentioned, 'my general impression based on my years of involvement in the industry is that the workforce is predominantly female, particularly within the editorial staff'. An author participant stated that, 'there are hardly any men and it's very white'.

This impression needed to be verified as there is a lack of literature that analyses numbers for the publishing industry in South Africa; one such survey, while not fully representative of the South African trade publishing industry, is the Publishers Association of South Africa (PASA) industry survey collated annually by the University of Pretoria. Below is a tabulation (table 6) of the total gender breakdown from the PASA surveys from 2016 and 2015. Note: this survey does record the racial breakdown, but for this research I added 'black female' and 'white female' numbers together, as with male, to gain an overall picture of the gender breakdown.

Male		Female	
2016	2015	2016	2015
411	584	1020	1178

Table 6: Gender Breakdown from PASA surveys 2016 & 2015

While this survey is not fully representative of the entire industry and no specification of what percentage this survey represents is given, it is the only industry survey done in South Africa within the publishing industry. It is true that males – noticeably white males – hold higher ranking and decision-making positions (PASA, 2016); however, in 2016, the PASA survey reported that 12 (mostly white) females held the position of CEO while 10 males (also mostly white) held the position of CEO at the largest local publishing companies (PASA, 2016). Yet, editorial, marketing and admin remain are dominated by females with 564 females versus 152 males in these positions (PASA, 2016). With a large workforce of women, we can extrapolate that women will tend to publish for women; but this cannot be concluded just from the interviews held in this research – there will need to be further research into whether the majority of females who work in publishing end up publishing more works for a female audience.

Tomlinson and Colgan found a similar trend in the United Kingdom: ‘what emerges from this research, and from similar studies of other industries and occupations, is a complex picture of gender politics within organisations, which reflects traditional ideologies and beliefs concerning the “appropriate” roles of men and women in the “private” sphere of domestic life and the “public” sphere of employment’ (1991:24). In the United States, the patterns are slowly changing as reported by Porter Anderson: ‘over the full course of AAUP [i.e. university press] history there have been 53 male presidents and 14 female presidents, including [Sally Williams]. But there were 23 male presidents before Miriam Brokaw filled out the term of Howard Bowen in 1974/75 and there were 12 more men before Carol Orr was the first president to have a full term in 1987/88. Thereafter there have been 18 men and 12 women. But we are getting close to equity. Since 2000 there have been 10 male and 8 female presidents’ (Anderson, 2017d).

There is an obvious gender imbalance of males versus females within the employment base of publishing houses. This gender imbalance within South African publishing houses does not mimic the international industry in terms of employment numbers of gender within publishing houses. However, even though data shows us that the gender split is weighted towards women holding decision-making positions than men, the impressions from interviewees were the opposite.

One publisher noted that the South African industry has not caught up to the equality of gender representation elsewhere:

'We kind of follow what the US or the UK does, so unfortunately we haven't even adapted with the times as they have because I've heard now in the UK it's completely the opposite where you have so many more female managers – you know, much more multicultural sort of work environment'.

Various studies reveal that this breakdown may impact what books got published. Similarly, in the interviews an author stated: 'more women in senior, decision-making positions will affect the extent to which women authors get taken seriously in publishing'. A publisher participant stated that, 'the impact is more on who we market to rather than who we publish', while another publisher said, 'it's only natural that the more women or the more of one type of person you have on a selection panel for publishing or that kind of thing it will be more biased towards what those people enjoy reading'.

Participants also said men tend to respect men over women and that was important and has become a reality. One author participant noted: '[the gender imbalance] is just the way things are'. Participants highlighted that this was not just a publishing industry impression but a cultural impression that exists in South Africa.

One publisher participant said, 'I think there's still a belief – and maybe this ties in with our culture because culturally it's how culture works in this country, there's definitely a very heavy male patriarchy and I think that's kind of filtered into business and all other industries'.

There is a thinking that men are classed as the natural leader, which other men tend to gravitate to and respect more – this comes from a patriarchal society and cultural aspects of South Africans. This idea has become 'the way it is'. This means males will find themselves more easily gravitating to decision-making roles and upper management than their female counterparts. We can conclude that the South African trade publishing industry is predominantly female even in decision-making roles in publishing houses and that participant impressions do not align with the data found and international studies and articles published. This may show that the industry has transformed more than participants realise.

The next section will look at the findings and trends concerning feminist presses and female-headed publishers. This section will break down the differences between feminist presses and female-headed publishers and how this influences female-authored works.

4.3.3 Feminist Presses and Female-headed Publishers

The interviewees were asked if they could name a local feminist press. Four participants named Modjaji Books as a South African feminist press; three named Blackbird Books; two named MF Books; and two participants said they couldn't name a local feminist press. One publishing participant referred to FemRite in Uganda. It should be noted that Blackbird Books and MF Books aren't self-proclaimed feminist presses, but are female-headed publishers.

Six participants mentioned that feminist presses and female-headed publishers are different from one another, in terms of content and publishing strategies; but one participant cited that they could be similar if the female CEO of a female-headed publisher was a feminist. Their definitions will be outlined below.

One publisher participant noted that for a feminist press ‘the female agenda is priority. Doesn’t matter if you’re talking books, social media, you know across all platforms – the female conversation completely dominates’. Another PP said that ‘a feminist press is more of a political agenda in the sense that it is trying to do something that is pushing a feminist agenda’. These definitions align with those of Murray (2004).

In contrast, a publisher participant argued that ‘female-headed to me means that you have you know predominantly maybe females at top management, let me say females are the ones making the big decisions but it doesn’t generally mean that they necessarily you know have other women’s interests at heart’. Another PP said, ‘a female-headed publishing house could be any kind of publishing house, you know, that has a woman as the managing director’.

Four participants said that traditional publishers are different from feminist presses; and one noted that they are similar; one participant said they are similar in book content; and another two participants acknowledged that they can be similar in terms of publisher strategy to publish feminist books within traditional publishing houses. Seven participants said that both traditional publishers and feminist presses were on equal terms in stature in the publishing industry; while one participant said that more feminist publishing is needed.

One author participant noted that, ‘traditional publishers do what they say on the tin, they publish traditional fiction, be it genre or literary, as well as non-fiction, there may be feminist titles within these. However, a feminist press sets out to solely

publish feminist works'. This is a significant difference in mission, as well as resources: A publisher participant stated that 'more resources are put in [to traditional publishing houses] because there are more resources for the more traditional publishing houses'. One PP said that 'in terms of changing readers' perspectives, a feminist press is likely to be more influential than a mainstream publishing house. I think the way in which the publishing house shapes its list will be determined according to its priorities. The focus of a feminist press will be specifically on women'.

International studies emphasise that feminist presses differ in terms of:

'their political priorities, internal organisation, profitability and longevity, all of these imprints were united in their perception that the act of publishing is, because of its role in determining the parameters of public debate, an inherently political act and that women, recognising this fact, must intervene in the processes of literary production to ensure that women's voices are made audible' (Murray, 1999: 10).

What we can take from Simone Murray's research on the importance of feminist presses, is that like traditional publishers, feminist presses play a vital role in publishing, and have done so since the 1970s. Participant opinion aligned with this ideal, agreeing that traditional publishers and feminist presses were equally important and could survive successfully alongside one another.

Murray goes on to say that by creating and developing new ways to sell, market and produce books to an audience who are seeking out social inclusion in feminist bookshops and in feminist publishing; as well as creating works that act as a social commentary on that time in history. Participants felt that traditional publishers had

more of a footprint in bookshops and with larger chain retailers and ultimately had more resources and mainstream fiction and non-fiction titles that made them money.

We can conclude that there is a difference between female-headed publishing houses that are headed by a female MD/CEO (and are the same as a traditional publisher at the core of their strategy). Their differences centre around political feminist ideals, and creating content that is female-issue centred. The same for traditional publishers, in that they do have more impact in terms of reach and access to getting books on shelves, and have the resources (financially) to publish more because their lists have higher selling volumes locally. These differences are confirmed in international studies and interview impressions.

4.3.4 Authors and Publishing

When asked what might lead to a book getting published, five participants said that predicted sales numbers were a factor; two participants said that a publishing deal was based on prize-listings, content of the books, and publisher strategy. Three participants said that it was the marketability of an author that secured them a publishing deal. One participant mentioned that the gender of the author helped the process of getting published. Lastly, one participant said authors were published due to the personal preference of the publisher and publishing house.

Participants were specifically asked about gender. One publisher participant mentioned that,

'I think it's no question that people like Sisonke [Msimang], Redi Tlhabi, Margie Orford, at some point were definitely reckoning forces in the business – still are. But, I think more traditional publishing houses, tend to follow that old-school approach and might then take a, say, Deon Meyer quite seriously. Not to say

that he shouldn't be taken seriously but I think it's a waste of resources to be flooding lots of money into something you know already is going to sell well or is an established market'.

Another publisher said, 'I think female authors are not generally treated equally to their male counterparts so generally there's a sense of there being a lot more comfort with a male author'. Similarly, a publisher said, 'I think that's because historically men were generally given the publishing deals much more easily than women were and a lot more resources were put behind promoting male authors. I think that's why you've got your established few who've been writing for years and years and years maybe a handful of female counterparts but not necessarily the same as men'. However, one publisher participant differed: 'The focus for me is very specifically on the individual author – male or female makes no difference – it is the quality of the work and their platforms that I am interested in'. This could very well be lip service from a publisher, but looking at this particular publisher, their publishing list is more evenly split than their competitors are and is driven by current topical fiction and non-fiction – regardless of gender and genre.

An author said, 'I think I have a skewed idea of bestseller lists because I mainly read books written by women and hardly touch non-fiction at all. I suspect the non-fiction lists are heavily male. Not sure if I am wrong in thinking that women are more represented on the fiction lists than before.'

We can conclude that the opinion is that book sales are the determining factor in deciding whether to publish an author or, though prize-listings, content of books, publisher strategy and the marketability of the author also contribute. Only one participant noted that gender played a part in this decision. If we look at the quantitative

data, male authors sell more than female authors do, so if sales are the determining factor in being published, we can conclude that if male authors sell better that they are more likely to be selected if a previous title has sold particularly and will most likely be published over a debut female author.

4.3.4.1 Difficulties Authors Face

If we look at the difficulties that are gender-specific among authors, five participants said that regardless of gender authors face difficulties in the publishing process. One participant said that there are opportunities for all genders of author, and another participant couldn't say if there were any difficulties that authors faced. One publisher participant said, 'I think authors in general face difficulties in the publishing process because of the very fierce nature of the competition to get a publishing deal in the first place. But my experience is that this is not specific to a particular gender.'

However, some gender-specific difficulties were raised. Looking more closely at the data, one publisher spoke about the issue of traditional gender roles:

'I think it's easier for men to travel and to promote their book than it is for women because often women are working and they're mothers and I know that's a global where it's just easier for men to step out of hearth and home than it is a woman'

Another publisher raised the issue of stereotypical gender roles:

'I think that it is in some cases so you'll probably find that there's some topics where we all sort of operate under our normal gender biases so you know if it was a book coming out on concrete-pouring you know you'd be a bit surprised to see a female author'.

An author backed this up by referring to the genrefication of women:

'there is a bias even in the book buying public that a woman's by-line on a book means a) it's romance or b) chick-lit or c) is not serious literature and d) is meant to be read by women. Case in point: Jeffrey Eugenides' The Marriage Plot would have been considered women's fiction had it been written by Jenny Eugenides. It would have had a pink cover. It's about a woman choosing between two men. And yet, it was hailed as literary fiction.'

One author raised the issue of an author's gender and their marketability:

'I've had issues around, but always around marketing, it always comes back to that – I don't know if you're doing a section on that around covers. Book covers, I've had huge battles over. I mean I think that's the issue: deciding where your book wants to land up and how you going to be pitching it, as opposed to – and I think maybe the substance – I mean I was certainly encouraged to be much more commercial in my writing but I don't know if that's specific to being a woman'

An author mentioned that, 'there are white male authors who believe there is no "space" for them anymore, but they are wrong. They are still massively dominant worldwide in terms of the advances, the size of the marketing budget, literary prizes, and review space they get'. The quantitative data shows us that there is certainly a place in the South African publishing industry for male authors' voices.

From the above we can determine that authors face difficulties, though we already know this from various author biographies and interviews. Female authors

may face a specific set of difficulties after being published, such as domestic role constraints (for instance, leaving families and small children when touring for their book's publicity or marketing); being classified as specific genre writers ;and the argument that topics explored are characteristic to female authors only. These themes are dealt with extensively in the literature review, and we can conclude that there is a set of specific and characteristic stereotypes assigned to female authors, such as protagonists being female, issues dealt with being feminine and exclusive to female readers, and importantly that this type of writing isn't considered important or even literature, for that matter.

While it can also be said that male authors may also be boxed into a genre and experience less freedom in terms of writing in a specific genre, this can also be seen in the quantitative data. Male authors are more likely to write non-fiction and be successful in this genre than they would be writing fiction (even though there are successful male fiction writers). Male authors experience issues of lack of space for their racial voice in the market, even though the numerical data shows otherwise. With that said, male authors are seen to be dominant in the market, with higher advances, receiving more respect, higher marketing spend, and review space than their female counterparts.

As we have discovered from research by Koolen (2013), Zangen (2013), The Stella Count (2017), the VIDA count (2017) and others, male authors are given more gravitas and respect than their female counterparts. This seems to be an industry wide trend; even though the gap is getting smaller as some periodicals are rectifying their female versus male publishing statistics and being more aware of the gender gap.

4.3.5 The Definition of Chick-lit

The interviews also explored the definition and experience of chick-lit in South Africa. Six of the nine participants did not like the term chick-lit. While each gave different definitions, there were elements of each that were very similar. Five participants said that chick-lit was a bubbly, light and easy-reading genre; four participants said that chick-lit would have a strong female protagonist, it would be written by a female author, and be for female readers. Two participants mentioned that chick-lit would deal with women's issues, be commercial, be price-sensitive/-driven, that the book's cover would have a specific look, and it would be driven by a specific type of tone. One participant specified that a chick-lit novel is light reading: more for book club circles, holiday reading or something that you would pick up at an airport; this we can combine with the terms bubbly, light, and easy-reading.

Below is a tabulation (table 7) of the key codes that emerged from participant answers (the coding tabulation can be found in appendix D).

Code	Number of participants
Didn't like the term	6
Bubbly, light, easy-reading	6
Strong female protagonist	4
Female author	4
For women only	4
Dealing with women's issues	2
Commercial	2
Price Driven	2
Cover Design	2
Tone Driven	2

Table 7: Key words participants used in defining 'Chick-lit'

One publisher participant said:

'I really don't like this term – and have moved on from using it several years ago. Technically, I suppose, it is fiction that has a female-centred narrative and it focuses on the central character's life's ups and downs/twists and turns. So, it's a genre of fiction, but I don't find the label useful and we don't use it. Instead, we talk about commercial women's fiction in general. These days even "commercial book club fiction" isn't necessarily female-orientated, there are many more men actively participating in book clubs than there were five years ago. But I think "commercial women's fiction" is probably as close to "chick-lit" as you are going to get from me!'

An author said:

'I would say it is a genre of women's fiction. That fits a certain type where – and I'm not sure if this is so applicable anymore – but it was very much about the formulaic rom-com, happy ending, and it was about finding Mister Right or retaining Mister Right and it was more you knew the ending but it was more about how you got there. That was actually what made the book interesting or whatever. I think along the way dealing with sort of issues that women face and I think it is, I think it's kind of an umbrella term that covers a very broad base of books.'

Another author said:

'I believe it is a term that is on the verge of going out of use. It has been replaced by 'women's fiction'. It referred to a particular genre of books that were ushered in by Bridget Jones's Diary in 1996. It encompassed books with female main

characters who were preoccupied with relationships, female friendships, shopping, fashion, shoes’.

On the term ‘chick-lit’, another publisher participant said:

‘It’s that annoying term that a man gave to all books written about women that deal with contemporary women’s issues and books that they think that women generally read.’

An author said:

‘I would say that chick-lit is or has been – I think it goes through fluctuations – it has originally been women’s fiction, very commercial, written by women, aimed at women, and, and kind of with a built-in high-volume expectation – that’s what I would say. It doesn’t claim to be a prizewinner; it doesn’t claim to be what it’s not. It’s meant to be light reading, popular – that’s what I would say.’

The following answers were given in response to the question: what sort of titles might be considered chick-lit? Or, what sort of authors writes chick-lit?

The table (table 8) is organised such that each column represents an answer from participants who chose to answer the question:

Titles		Bridget Jones	Bridget Jones	Bridget Jones	Bridget Jones	
Female Authors	Marian Keyes	Jilly Cooper	Marian Keyes		Marian Keyes; Sophie Kinsella, Katie Forde, Cecilia Ahearn;	Amanda Prowse, Jodi Picoult, Lauren Weisberger
Male Authors						Nicholas Sparks

Table 8: Titles and Authors considered Chick-lit

Four out of nine participants mentioned *Bridget Jones's Diary* as a chick-lit title; Marian Keyes was mentioned three times and Nicholas Sparks was the only male author mentioned.

4.3.5.1 What are the 'tropes' of Chick-Lit?

The participants were also asked about the presentation of chick-lit. Below is a tabulation (table 9) of the codes used to describe what participants knew to be a typical chick-lit book cover:

Code	Number of Participants
Illustrations	7
Feminine (fashion/body part/woman)	6
Bright/Pastel colours	6
Book/Content Dependent	3
Publisher Dependent	2
Romantic	2
Stereotypical	2
Marketability	1
Country Dependent	1

Table 9: Codes used to define a Chick-lit Cover

Seven out of nine said that a chick-lit cover will most likely have an illustration on the jacket; six participants said that there would be a feminine aspect on the cover, be it an item of fashion (i.e. handbag, shoes) or a woman’s body part (i.e. face in profile, hands, legs, lips); six participants said that there would be bright or pastel colours (four of these six participants said the colour would be pink; one said watercolour, and another said it would be a general bright colour). Three participants said that the cover would be dependent on the book, while two said the cover would depend on the publisher; two participants said that the cover would be romantic and ‘stereotypical’. One participant mentioned that the cover would be based on the marketability of the content, and an author said: ‘But covers are country-dependent. Jojo Moyes, for example, has a typical chick-lit cover in the UK but not in the US. I don’t consider the covers to reveal what’s inside. As I said, it’s a tonal genre.’

The next part of the tropes of chick-lit is the content and plot, below is a tabulation (table 10) of the key codes that participants highlighted:

Code	Number of Participants
Female protagonist	8
Difficulties of a women’s life	8
Quest for love and happiness	8
Humour	6
Male hero character	2

Table 10: Codes used to define a Chick-lit plot

Eight out of nine participants said that a typical chick-lit novel centred on a female protagonist (as mentioned above), the plot centres on the difficulties in this woman’s

life, and there would be a quest for love and happiness. Six participants highlighted that an average chick-lit novel would have humour and two participants noted that the male character would be a 'hero' who would save the female heroine. An author participant said, 'you think about *Bridget Jones's Diary* and we laughed at the ridiculous things she did but actually how many of us have done it?' while another author stated, 'a woman finds herself in some sort of conundrum and, wittily and in ways that make you laugh out loud, triumphs. (This COULD be chick-lit. It could also be *Pride and Prejudice*...)'.

A publisher said, 'it doesn't matter how much success she has in her life, there still needs to be a love interest, so the story doesn't start until she meets the male lead – or the female lead, let's be fair. And then there's – generally the male lead is like... they're a bit misogynistic I find.'

Another publisher said:

'It's generally girl moves to a small town to escape big city life. Girl is trying to find her footing in city life or girl is trying to figure herself out. There always has to be a male counterpart in it which also pisses me off about chick-lit because then he's kind of painted as this hero-like figure. Either he's completely drop-dead gorgeous or he comes in to save her or deliver her from whatever hell she's kind of you know going through. So I think that's always the generic part, the plot. There's always girl meets boy, or boy meets girl, but somehow girl always ends up being the more wounded one, ya. So I think that's generally the kind of formula.'

An author said, 'there's usually some kind of woman in distress. She's always alone which is considered a very bad thing. Then she meets a man, maybe two, it tends to

be a triangle or a tussle'. Another author said, 'I think the happy ending is always, you know, it had to be resolved'. A publisher stated, 'so I always feel with chick-lit if you cry in it it's not chick-lit anymore then for me it crosses over to women's fiction'.

Seven out of nine participants said that the cover was the most suggestive of a chick-lit novel; while two mentioned that it was the plot. Referring to the positioning, an author said, 'because that's a marketing thing, that's how they going to try to sell the novel to you and I'd say [via a description of the plot]', while a publisher said, 'the cover obviously, because we're visual creatures and I think in a bookstore generally your vision tends to guide you but if you actually pick it up it's both. I think the blurb will more confirm it but the cover will say a lot'.

An author also said, 'the cover gives away the fact that the publishing team decided to package the book in a certain way, probably for commercial reasons. If the plot hits enough of the tropes of the genre, then you would know that you are reading chick-lit'. A publisher stated, 'Well, certainly the cover first because I mean as much as we don't judge books by their covers we do, and that's the first thing you're going to see on a book'. Another author said, 'the plot. But marketing execs like to try to pigeonhole audiences for a book by suggesting it through cover'.

4.3.5.2 Chick-lit versus Romance

Six out of nine participants said that chick-lit is not the same as romance; four participants said that the writing formulas of these genres were very different. A publisher said, 'no, I don't think these two areas are the same. Danielle Steele is "romance"; Gail Schimmel or Angela Makholwa (and others) are commercial women's fiction'. Another author said, 'that is a very specific genre: romance, with incredibly

strict rules about how you have to write it and I think chick-lit has got more freedom than that’.

Three participants noted that romance is for a different audience, and one participant said that romance was a very different business model.

4.3.5.3 Difference between Women’s Fiction and Chick-lit

Nine out of nine participants said that women’s fiction was not equal to or the same as chick-lit. Two participants highlighted that chick-lit is a way to market, sell and interact with the book. A publisher participant said: ‘you can see it from the customers we interact with, the way that we sell in, even the way publishers pitch the books, there’s definitely a sort of slight... the only place you’ll get real passion for chick-lit is from people who enjoy reading the chick-lit in the industry’. Another publisher said, ‘chick-lit is a marketing term, I guess, in a way that books can be written about in media’. On the same subject, another publisher said, ‘I would argue for the label “commercial women’s fiction” to be used in place of “chick-lit”; and then I feel there is a need to be more specific than simply using a blanket “women’s fiction” label’.

4.3.5.4 Impressions of a Chick-Lit Reader

Seven out of nine participants said that chick-lit readers would be female, though participants noted that readers couldn’t be generalised, or they expressed that they ‘didn’t know’ in the more specific questions of age, career, and marital status of a chick-lit reader. A publisher said, ‘I think you generalise at your peril in South Africa in 2018. My experience is that readers are very varied in age; in interests; in leisure pursuits; in marital status and in careers’.

An author said:

'I don't feel qualified to generalise about readers in this way, but I will try to answer your questions. A chick-lit reader might be in her twenties or thirties. She might be looking for love or cycling between relationships. Her friendships would be more dominant in her life than family ties. She is constantly trying to 'upgrade' herself in terms of her weight, health, grooming, fashion choices, fitness etc. She is probably childless, but not necessarily. She would relate to a main character who is struggling to find career direction but will probably ultimately find success. She would enjoy reading an aspirational book with a guaranteed happy ending.'

Another author said:

'I think both as writers and readers, there is an element of catharsis and therapy. And a kind of feminism at that, of women just – it feels sometimes like a bit of a secret club – women writers, women readers, where we explore issues we're not supposed to talk about, you know, because it's just not the done thing.'

And another author said:

'I also think a big thing of reading chick-lit is that feeling of "I've been there", "I know what this person is talking about"'. Another AP said, "it's a subset that can be read by anyone looking for that kind of read. Why, for example, is it assumed that thrillers can be read by men and women (and are) but that chick-lit is only for female readers? That implies gender discrimination for both the writers of chick-lit, as well as its readers.'

From the above headings, it is clear that the term chick-lit evokes a sense of irritation in participants across both publishers and authors alike. Further, chick-lit is considered a genre for a female reader which is written by mostly female authors (the exception of Nicholas Sparks was mentioned by one participant). Chick-lit is not considered literary fiction, but more commercial and price effective. Chick-lit plots focus on a female protagonist who is dealing with female-centred or -specific issues. What was interesting is that three participants mentioned that chick-lit seems to have changed in the last few years expanding into various avenues of 'mom-lit' to the broader 'women's fiction'. We can conclude that chick-lit won't be seen as the same in years to come which makes this genre seem quite adaptable as well as in flux depending on market, social issues and readers. Locally, chick-lit also seems to be quite adaptable in terms of the themes it encompasses. As one publisher said: 'Look at *The Blessed Girl* by Angela Makholwa – highly commercial in nature (has sold more than 5 000 copies in its first format in the local market alone), but I think it is more hard-hitting in its examination of social issues and the outcome of the novel as a whole than would be considered traditionally "chick-lit".'

Chick-lit clearly has its stereotypical tropes of plot and cover, both of which are very feminine in style, and the genre's 'focus' on female issues. *Bridget Jones's Diary* and Marian Keyes are market leaders and participants identify with them. The definitions above fall into the definition explored by Ferris and Young (2006b) detailed in the literature review. It also aligns with Shaw's outline of the 'middle-brow' novel and 'the kind of book their mothers read' (1998: 31). These are aspects and characteristics that readers and publishers assign to chick-lit, therefore stripping it of any literary credentials.

Romance and women's fiction cannot be grouped together as suggested by the participants. Chick-lit and Romance each have their own writing dynamics and audience. While the audience of chick-lit is seen to be female, most participants couldn't generalise this reader further into more definable properties, which highlights the 'in-flux' aspect of women's fiction, romance and chick-lit – a variety of different women of all ages from all walks of life are reading chick-lit novels.

4.3.6 The Impact of Reviews and Reviewers

When reading reviews, four participants said that they check the gender of the reviewer; one said that the publication where the review appears is more important; one said that if the review is scathing, and is written by a male about a female author, only then they will take into consideration the gender of the reviewer.

A publisher participant said, 'this is all very much a generalization, but I think that men are more ambitious and would push to do reviews than women who probably have other things to do. But you know I think that in a way women aren't pushy and you know whatever, and I think there is that and men are often seen to be more, objective, or whatever, I don't know what it is'

An author noted the respect given to male authors: 'because books written by men are greeted with a presumption of gravitas, worth and seriousness. Books by women are regarded as niche – of interest to women only'.

Another author said:

'It's just kind of 'this book must have gravitas, this is a serious book, this is a book we can really look into and gives us gravitas to be associated with it' and if the reviewer's a male, of course they want to read a story that they, you know, it's relatable, it's a load of rubbish I keep hearing. If I hear one more book that's

relatable... and I think people stick with what they know and if the head of the editorial team gets 20 books on his desk – and it will be a “he” – he’ll say ‘well let’s review these five books, these look fun to me, I like the look of those’. Or he might say ‘lob it to one of the gals and see if they’re interested’, you know? It’s just what’s true. And I sort of understand – I’m not excusing it – I read within my walls as well. I’m also attracted to things that speak to me, so I understand that. And that’s a conscious bias let alone an unconscious one.’

Seven out of nine participants said that there is a gender bias for reviewers; one participant said they did not know. One author said when asked if there is a gender imbalance in reviewing that ‘it’s the patriarchy, isn’t it? Men rule. Simple. Very simple’. Another author said: ‘the biggest, most highly regarded literary reviewers are mostly men’ while a publisher said: ‘I think that more women buy books than men. So you would think that we would be reviewing towards that. I do not know, maybe we are still traditional in the sense that we like a man to tell us what to do, what to read’.

The review data do not support the above impression from the participants. While male authors in 2017 were published in the ST more than women, there was an even split in 2016 – this could be due to what was published in 2017 that more male authors were reviewed. However, there are more female reviewers in the reviewers’ pool at the ST than male and their reviews are published more than their male counterparts are.

Another publisher referred to the general constraints on book reviews:

‘Generally you know who’s going to have done a really good job reviewing a book. I think one of the biggest issues is time and how much time journalists have to put together a piece and you kind of understand that you’re not the only

publishing house sending them 4-5 review books and they've got [only] so much time and space to get through them all, so you can kind of tell also by the length who's been through what, who's really gone in-depth with the book'.

An author said, 'some review outlets have become more equitable, but there is still an imbalance. And reviewers, like agents and editors, are the gatekeepers of success in publishing. Let's look outside the book world'. Another author mentioned, 'I tend to trust [woman] reviewers more than men. I suspect men of mansplaining in their reviews and of patronising women authors'. Another aspect that an author mentioned was, 'reviews are – and increasingly so in the absence of marketing campaigns and any kind of money being put behind titles, because there isn't any – you rely on reviews – and that's what's true. And I do that – I read the reviews and I'm like "oh, I haven't heard about this book" and if you aren't even, if you aren't even in the newspaper, you don't exist.

A publisher said 'I think people who rely on book reviews rely on people who they know generally would have read the book and that's how you get your Michelle Magwoods and John Maythams, and your Jennifer Platts of the review industry – people generally know that they've done their homework' and 'that there are those reviewers who within the industry or publically people who read, you can drop a name and people know "okay, well that's a good reviewer" or that's someone who when they say get the book they actually mean buy the book'.

Five participants mentioned that content was the first thing they think readers look for in reviews; while two participants said that readers would look at the reviewer; and one participant said that readers look on social media, and that readers appreciate

a comparison title mentioned in the review text. Seven participants agree that readers have particular reviewers that they trust with book reviews.

We already know from Marcotte (2015), Zangen (2013), Anderson (2017a), the VIDA count (2017) and the Stella Count (2017) that reviewers play an important role in getting a book and author noticed, as well as taking up a 'watchdog' role when it comes to which books and authors get the coverage they deserve; they are also majority male. The above participant answers acknowledge and enforce the studies and articles of those mentioned above, ultimately arguing that reviewers are watchdogs of what gets reviewed and that readers look for content over gender, even though participants perceive a gender bias in published reviews.

We have seen that VIDA statistics show that more men are reviewed and published. With the *Sunday Times* statistics, because the pool of reviewers is majority female, we can conclude that female reviewers would most likely review both genders; whereas for male reviewers the impression is that they only review men, or highbrow titles that aren't considered 'women's fiction'.

Reviewers are a trusted source of book recommendations and readers have tried and tested reviewers that have similar tastes to them.

4.3.7 The Impact of Prizes on Sales

Apart from reviews, prizes also have an impact on sales. Four out nine participants said that a prize nomination (a shortlisted title) would increase sales internationally, but locally it only gives the author literary merit (said by three participants). Participants noted the following literary prizes, in order of most to least mentioned:

- (1) The Man Booker
- (2) The Pulitzer Prize

- (3) The Women's Prize (referred to as the Bailey's or Orange Prize)
- (4) The *Sunday Times* Award (Alan Paton)
- (5) The National Book Award
- (6) Barry Ronge Fiction Prize
- (7) The Nobel Prize for Literature
- (8) The University of Johannesburg Prize
- (9) Kate Greenaway
- (10) Costa
- (11) Caine Prize
- (12) Etisalat
- (13) Media24

The Man Booker and Pulitzer prizes, according to participants, are considered the most respected but participants also acknowledge and respect women-only prizes. Participants all noted that they knew a women-only prize; this further acknowledges and adds to the prestige of prizes that celebrate and acknowledge literature written by women. The one prize mentioned was the Women's Prize. All participants cited this prize as one that they respected and followed amongst the Booker, Pulitzer and *Sunday Times* awards.

What is the impact of prizes? Five participants said that titles shortlisted for a prize are more likely to get more review coverage due to it being newsworthy and the prize pulling the title out of the 'noise' of other books. Two participants noted that a prize shortlisting gives the author literary merit. Zangen's (2003) study tells us that readers will hold male authors in higher esteem than female authors. Koolen (2013) says that this gender socialisation occurs from a young age; so we can say that unless

the judging panel of a literary prize is a 50/50 split that a gender bias will influence how a shortlisted book is read and judged by a majority male (or female) panel. Prize-shortlisted titles are given gravitas and review coverage (even if the book hasn't been a seller before the shortlisting).

Internationally, there is the impression that there is an increase in sales; the review coverage, local sales, front of store attention in local retail book chains of international titles show us that these titles do sell better. Kovács and Sharkey (2014) discuss that a shortlisted title will 'quadruple' in sales after the announcement. However, the participant impression is that local prizes do not have an impact on the sales of shortlisted titles; while this might be true (we don't have specific data looking at the sales of all shortlisted titles), we do have data that shows us that the 2016 *Sunday Times* non-fiction winner, *Rape*, did increase in sales significantly, although we cannot say for sure that the shortlisting definitely caused sales to spike. This is another area in which South Africa may not mimic the international market trends, but further research is called for.

4.3.8 How to Overcome Gender Bias in Publishing?

During the interview stages participants were asked two questions: (1) what, in your opinion, can change the gender imbalance in publishing? and (2) what can publishers and authors do differently to help this process? These questions were intended to try to identify solutions to improve the gender bias in trade publishing currently. The answers supplied varied and could open doors for further study in this area.

Seven out of nine participants said that changing the gender imbalance has to start with publishers taking the first step, through various elements of open structural

reorganisation, to opening up publishers and what they do to the broader public, and knowing their gender split on their publishing lists.

4.3.8.1 Structural Reorganisation

The majority of participants said that the structure of male decision makers and lower level positions being female-dominated needed to change. One author said the gender bias in publishing could be overcome by:

'Having women – feminists – and women of colour running publishing houses and until we have women who actually give a shit about other women, it's not going to change'.

An author said:

'Small feminist presses that are prepared to take a chance on [woman's] writing that might not be commercially successful'.

A publisher said:

'I think part of the problem with publishing is with the, you know the majority of people work[ing] the lower levels of publishing are women and it isn't paid as well as it could be'.

Another author said:

'It has to be at the top, instead of at the bottom, because the minute you get past marketing, PR, all the – most of that, the acquisitions decisions are made at the top. Structural reorganization, disrupt the power, and also around – it would have to be industry-wide – so you sort of wonder.'

From what we gathered by defining differences between feminist presses and female headed publishers, the issues outlined merely looked at what publishers published. Data also showed that female-headed publishers were still traditional publishers headed by women. Would this change the dynamic and gender bias? Looking back at the PASA statistics, there are more women heading up publishers than men. Yet, the impression of men being the decision makers is still dominant. What the PASA report doesn't tell us is which publishers are headed by women and which are headed by men – would larger publishers representing a larger market share be more likely to be headed by a male, or a female? These are some questions that could be considered for further study.

4.3.8.2 Commissioning and Marketing

Another theme that emerged was that the changing of how publishers market and commission authors could be a way to realign the gender bias. One author said:

'Structural reorganization, disrupt the power, and also around – it would have to be industry-wide – so you sort of wonder. I think it's very much to do with marketing and it's got to do with where you put the books and how you market the books and how you separate books out.'

Another publisher said:

'My own publishing efforts focus primarily on the quality of the work submitted and other criteria such as debut vs established; commercial or literary; fiction or non-fiction; black authors; etc. I don't consciously choose authors based on their genders. The result is a list (2018) that features 11 female authors and 9

male authors (and a few backlist paperbacks from both sexes thrown in). But when I look back at 2017, our list featured 6 female authors and 13 male authors – obviously it was very title dependent, but it certainly wasn't an even split. And, at this stage, 2019 features 9 male authors and 9 female authors. I think publishers should be aware of the gender split of their lists, and make an effort to shape something that is more equally split between female and male authors (but also, debut and established voices; black authors; etc.). Think very carefully about (1) who your readers are; and (2) who are the readers you are trying to reach in order to grow your reading numbers; and (3) what is the shape of the local market in terms of bestsellers? Shape your list accordingly'.

Another author said:

'I think that publishers need to stop marketing books as if women should be reading only one thing and men another. I think that reviewers need to realize [sic] that there's something fundamentally wrong if you get a book about family and connection from a woman and call it women's fiction but if it's written by a man, it's the great American novel. I think that readers need to challenge themselves to read books by female and male authors equally'.

Studies show us that publishers say that commissioning is dealt with on an author-to-author basis, and the quality of work is what shines. However, it is not always the case in all publishers. Our data does show that the gender split is more even than international studies and articles are reporting.

4.3.8.3 Public Awareness and Government Support

Two publishers suggested that transformation would be assisted if there was some sort of governmental support, saying:

'There's a lot that publishers also with government help – and I think that's just what slows everything down generally – that we have to do to fast-track. We don't have time to slowly catch up because I think with social media everything changes so rapidly. We just have to take it upon ourselves to be a lot more giving of our time, a lot more resourceful, be prepared to be among the educated of our society.'

'I think in SA if we invested, if the government invested more money in books and publishing, uhm I don't mean direct investment, but say like buying books for libraries on a larger scale. Then there would be more money, and maybe some of that could be used to pay people better, you know.'

A publisher said:

'There are too many people out there who don't understand how book publishing houses in this country work, whereas internationally I think there's a lot more familiarity and a lot more understanding. So I think opening up the industry in the sense that creating more opportunities – even if it isn't a formal internship program – a similar concept to bring-a-girl-child-to-work but as publisher taking it upon yourself like Penguin UK does where online, you know they make use of their online resources in that you'll get the copy editor do a five-minute video where he or she talks about what they do. Same thing with the marketing head or the marketing intern, down to the person who does the illustrations and you know so I think you know yes, we can sort of bring people

in, but as publishers we have that responsibility to sort of transmit information out so people are aware of it'.

Colgan and Tomlinson (1991) point that publishers who develop and implement policies that meet the needs and aspirations of women workers tend to develop less traditional attitudes from staff. Other studies while discussing women in publishing tend to lean towards a political and feminist view of employment and publishing content; while these themes are important the changes participants in this research suggested a more subtle restructuring in publishers (i.e. promoting or hiring more women in decision-making roles). Sophie de Closets says at Hachette 'most of the executive committee is women' (Andersen, 2017d: 3); this aligns with the PASA survey as it reports more women in CEO/MD positions. Therefore, publishers need to work in changing the impression that there are only male-run publishers.

Various studies show that female authors are placed within a genre by marketing tactics implemented by publishers. Specifically, Butler and Desai (2008), Ferris and Young (2006) and Cabot (2003) discuss various avenues and definitions used to classify women's fiction.

In terms of the theme of public awareness that came up during the interviews, this is something that has not come up in other studies. This theme comes across as an issue that is considered of greater importance to the South African market.

4.4 Summary

The findings tell us that there are few issues exclusive to the local publishing industry; the issues around gender bias in publishing align with international studies, as explored in chapter 2. But interestingly, the South African trade publishing industry

stands out against international trends like gender imbalance, genre popularity, reviewing and reviewer breakdowns, and prizes influencing sales. Yet, the South African trade publishing industry follows keenly in participant impressions with definitions and impressions of the genre chick-lit, and differences and importance of feminist presses.

The data and participant interviews found that the South African trade publishing industry is mostly staffed by women in the lower- to middle-management positions. When impressions were compared to the data published in the PASA industry survey in 2016, management positions are held mainly by women. Racially, the industry is predominantly white. These findings were more diverse than expected at the beginning of this research study and do not align with international trends and the international publishing market.

While there are more male authors published overall within the South African trade publishing industry compared to female authors the split is more evenly aligned than international reporting and studies. Furthermore, female authors publish more fiction and non-fiction than male authors, even though male authors sell better overall. This may be because non-fiction is the largest genre published and sold (over 5 000 units). This is a trend distinctive to the South African book buying culture as has been cited in literature such as Van Rooyen (2005) and Business Tech (2016). This trend is also typical of non-Western countries, whose publishing industries are more dominated by educational publishing and by non-fiction.

In spite of this trend, the *Sunday Times* reviewed more fiction titles than non-fiction titles in 2016 and 2017. This seems to highlight a genre in spite of the fact that it sells fewer titles – perhaps because of the symbolic and cultural prestige attached to fiction. There were more male authors reviewed in 2017; this data matches

international trends, although the data of more female reviewers being published did not support international reporting or participant impressions.

The international research shows that publishers use cover design as a tool to genrefy female authors to market them to a specific buyer and audience. This occurs so heavily in chick-lit that various tropes of design are top-of-mind for all the participants that were interviewed, and more than half the participants listed the same tropes. Chick-lit is a disliked term, something leveraged by publishers as a tool to market, sell and promote a title aimed at a specific audience. It is a genre centred on a female protagonist facing some sort of struggle/issue that is dubbed a female issue; she will be faced with making a life-altering decision that involves a male hero. There is often a thread of humour and self-deprecation. This is a genre that is aimed specifically at female readers. These 'stereotypical' tropes are so pervasive that they are even used on the covers of books without a link to chick-lit. They are also used to market South African authors.

There is a perception that female authors have a unique set of difficulties they face that centre mostly around family responsibilities and respect from entities in publishing. They are given less kudos for 'women's fiction'. Conversely, men writing what could be deemed women's fiction, often receive critical praise.

It was found that prize shortlisting and winners do increase sales for international titles, we see this from front of store promotions and review coverage. However, participant impressions noted that local prizes do not increase sales for local authors, although they do add literary prestige. There was no data to support this, but there is anecdotal data to show that local prize-winning titles do increase sales and review coverage. It is also worth noting that The Man Booker and Pulitzer prizes are

the most revered prizes and these are known to have a heavier lean towards male winners and male judging panels.

The next chapter will conclude this discussion, highlighting and summarising this research body as well as looking at recommendations for further study.

Chapter 5: Concluding Discussion

5.1 Introduction

This research aimed to define the situation of women's publishing in South African trade publishing with a specific focus on what tools publishers use to position female authors in a specific genre. This research also sought to determine a definition of chick-lit that could describe and modernise the current definition for the genre. Another aspect of this research is to come to a consensus on the various issues authors face within the publishing industry, with a specific focus on female authors. And, finally, it will consider how feminist presses differ from traditional publishers when it comes to publishing women's writing.

This chapter will focus on summarising the findings by answering the research questions outlined in chapter 1. The implications of the findings will then be discussed and recommendations will be made as to how it should be used within the industry. Finally, the limitations of this research will be summarised and the recommendations for further research will be specified.

5.2 The Research Questions

Below we will look at the research questions listed in chapter 1 and summarise the findings.

5.2.1 What is the situation of women's publishing in South African trade publishing?

According to Coglán and Tomlinson (1991) the publishing industry has always been predominantly female, with it being a popular choice among art students. However,

Coglan and Tomlinson also found that women were under-represented in the top tiers of publishing. Hesmondhalgh and Baker add that feminised jobs '[tend] to denote an increase in the concentration of women within that occupation' (2015: 24). The idea that women are placed in specific occupations due to co-ordination (i.e multi-tasking) and communication which are stereotypically female in nature (Hesmondhalgh & Baker, 2015) is why women tend to be in marketing or press departments in publishing houses. These studies were done in 1991 and 2015, almost 27 years apart, but found few differences. Anderson also pointed out that in 2002 'white women working in publishing and bookselling, small marginal industries, were not considered a threat to the white men who dominated as owners and board members' (2002: 97). Managing directors are traditionally men, and women have been encouraged to take on roles of editors with the option for freelance to accommodate families (Anderson, 2002).

According to the PASA industry survey in 2016 (PASA, 2016) women held higher-ranking decision-making positions such as CEO and MD positions and well as mid-level (editing, marketing, publicity, etc.) positions than their male counterparts. The gender imbalance within South African publishing houses was more evenly spaced than international trends suggest. Coupled with various aspects looked at throughout this research paper, it can be concluded that the South African reading public and publishing industry are unique in challenges and issues that stand out from those of the international publishing industry.

While the gender imbalance within higher-ranking positions is true for international houses like Hachette, Penguin Random House, etc., locally the data shows us that women are running publishers as well as being the majority of the employee base. What isn't known from the PASA data is which of the larger publishers, especially those that have UK and US parent companies, were included in the data.

Two companies – Penguin random House SA and Jonathan Ball – hold the majority of the market share for local and international books, and each is run by a white male (PASA directory, 2018). Therefore, one cannot ignore that white males are still predominantly holding decision-making positions within the South African trade publishing industry; an area that is becoming apparent in South African publishing with its lack of racial representation in higher ranking and decision-making positions. Yes, women are better represented in South Africa than international trends and statistics lead us to believe, but there are major publishers who skew that view and create the opinions discussed by our participants.

Since this research was new in this area of South African trade publishing, racial breakdown was not considered and will be suggested for further study.

5.2.2 Subsidiary Research Questions

5.2.2.1 What is the gender representation of authors in South African trade publishing, as compared to the international publishing sphere?

Verboord's (2012) study was the only one comparable to the data collated from Nielsen Bookdata, on the gender breakdown of authors in the bestseller lists. His results show that male authors are usually the dominant gender in this regard. This study aided this research in what areas to look at, and what themes to focus on.

If one looks at the Nielsen Bookscan data (chapter 4), it was found that there is a more of an even playing field for female authors in comparison to male authors. While numbers aren't 50/50 split, the data do report higher numbers of women authors than international studies and data. Female authors were seen to publish across fiction and non-fiction (reporting double the numbers of fiction titles to that of male authors). The sales data show that non-fiction is the bestselling genre in South Africa. There are

no specific studies highlighting or discovering why non-fiction sells well in South Africa, nor is there any data recorded that explains this phenomena. Basil van Rooyen (2005) points out anecdotally that 'far more non-fiction than fiction gets published in SA – in English, in any case, for the opposite applies to Afrikaans. While non-fiction books are not as common as educational books, they are less specialised and easier for the ordinary person to identify with'. The sales data confirms this with the top sellers being current affairs, political, sport and celebrity biographies, and cookbooks.

The phenomenon of why non-fiction sells better can only be hypothesised as having been created from sales, publishing, or readers wanting a type of accesible learning of history, and our countries political sphere. There are not detailed reasons available as to why non-fiction sells well, so the researcher hypothesised the following ways in which this trend began:

- (a) The larger retail chain bookshops sold more non-fiction, and so started stocking more and more in the following years;
- (b) As a result of (a) publishers then started producing more non-fiction, creating an easily accessible text for South Africans;
- (c) One title could have been exceptionally popular – for instance, a current affairs title – one year which kicked off a flurry of similar titles in the market;
- (d) Publishers like Ravan Press gave prominence to accessible non-fiction works explaining the South African situation during Apartheid. Since then, through publishers such as Picador Africa, many titles have been published speaking of a history not accessible in South African schools under the Apartheid government.

It was found that male authors published more non-fiction and would sell more copies overall. This data didn't match the interview data which revealed the common impression that more male authors are being published. However, if male authors sell more overall, specifically in non-fiction, they would most likely be published by a publisher based on previous sales. This aligned with participant impressions as it was determined that a book's predicted sales were the main reason a publisher decided to publish an author. From which one can conclude that male authors are more likely to be picked up by publishers based on sales history.

Verboord points out that 'the systematic marginalization of women in both production and performance practices in the cultural and media industries has been demonstrated extensively in the past decades' (2012: 397). Verboord (2012) goes on to say that this imbalance manifests throughout cultural aspects – i.e. fiction. Verboord's conclusion was that the percentage of female authors represented on the bestseller lists improved over time – this is the same for the amount of female authors on the local Nielsen bestseller lists (ibid.).

The gender representation of authors in South African trade publishing shows an imbalance in terms of sales; while women are represented in publishing houses and sales charts, male authors were found to sell more overall. These findings are almost equal in South Africa, and don't mimic trends or numbers internationally from reported studies and literature. One cannot conclude from this research if the preception that female authors are not taken seriously, is true. We know readers internationally will take male authors seriously (Koolen, 2013) but if we look at the Nielsen figures a female author publishing non-fiction can also be successful and sell over 5 000 units. This highlights the issues unique to the South African publishing industry.

One can assume from industry trends that author representation will improve on the international bestseller lists; one can expect to see higher numbers in 2017 and 2018 as publishers reporting to publish women authors only, as well as recent feminist protests in the UK and US start a new publishing trend (Flood, 2018).

5.2.2.2 When women are published, how are their genres defined? What approaches (i.e. book covers, marketing) are publishers using when it comes to the genrefication of female authors?

When female authors are published, publishers tend to use stereotypical tropes to aim the plot, the plot's blurb and the book's cover to a specific audience. Smith (2008) said that women's fiction falls more into the form of 'easy beach reads', and demonstrates the 'man-crazed' and 'domestic goddess' characters. Ferris and Young (2006) say that readers identify with the heroines in chick-lit novels and that these novels are not popular because they are an escape but because they deal with modern female issues and fears. International publishers create covers with a feminine style by using illustrations, bright and pastel colours (mainly pink).

However, it was found that a novel with plots centring on a female protagonist is usually blanket-described – for marketing and sales pitches – as being a successor to *Bridget Jones's Diary* or being aimed at a "Marian Keyes" reader: i.e. as chick-lit or women's fiction. Participants noted that illustrated covers with feminine aspects and pastel colours were the key signs of a chick-lit novel. Coupled with this, the plot played a significant role in the identification of genre to a reader. It was noted that these tropes were stereotypical of female-authored books. These impressions follow international studies keenly, and translate in South African publishing for female-authored titles (Snyckers, 2016).

These tropes are not as widely used in South African publishing, according to participant impressions. Gender stereotypes may not be as common in South Africa as they are internationally due to the size of the South African book buying market. From our participant perceptions, female authors are misrepresented and positioned in terms of chick-lit, in terms of marketing plans, cover designs and publicity pitches to media. These are ways in which publishers attempt to position a specific title and author to a specific audience; this may come across as publishers 'dumbing the audience down', but it's merely a mechanism to get the correct reader to pick up the book.

We can conclude publishers locally and internationally use stereotypical tropes of cover and plot to genrefy female authors and aim female-authored books to female readers.

5.2.2.3 How is the chick-lit genre defined? How many female authors are placed within a certain genre?

Officially a term that comes with exceptional controversy, one of the first uses of the term 'chick-lit' was in an anthology titled *Chick-lit: Postfeminist Fiction* by Cris Mazza and Jeffrey DeShell, published in 1995 (Davis-Khal, 2008), and again by male journalist James Wolcott in 1996 in *The New Yorker* in a review (Walcott, 1996), as mentioned in chapter 2.

Chick-lit or women's fiction was defined with some irritation by interview participants. Books in this genre tend to follow a formula, fulfilling the definition to reach the required readership as well as to hold true to various expectations that media, publishers and readers have. Reading chick-lit provides a distraction and can emulate how readers behave in their day-to-day lives (Bal & Veltkamp, 2013).

Chick-lit is a genre with tropes that are identifiable and noticeable by participants – these tropes are stereotypical. These include a plot centred on a female protagonist facing some sort of struggle or issue that is dubbed a female issue; a female protagonist faced with making a life-altering decision that involves a male hero; there is a thread of humour and self-deprecation. This genre is aimed specifically at women. What was interesting is that three participants mentioned that chick-lit seems to have changed in the last few years expanding into various avenues of ‘mom-lit’ to a broader ‘women’s fiction’.

We can conclude that chick-lit is constantly in flux which makes this genre a very adaptable one, able to morph as the market, social issues, pop culture trends and readers themselves change. One interviewee mentioned Angela Makholwa as a specific local example, who has sold more than 5 000 copies in the South African market alone. Since female authors are published and sell better than male authors in the fiction genre in South Africa, publishers are more likely to keep them in that genre (depending on previous sales history) and use stereotypical tropes to aim them at a specific reader. While there are a few specific local titles mentioned, female authors are more likely to be pigeon-holed into a specific genre than male authors. This impression fits with international trends.

5.2.2.4 What difficulties are female authors facing in the publishing process?

All authors (male and female) face difficulties throughout the publishing process due to the stiff competition in getting published. However, female authors face a unique set of difficulties, such as leaving families and small children when touring for their book’s publicity or marketing as well as when writing their books. The genres and topics female authors are expected to write are also sometimes limited – our Nielsen

data shows this. Male authors writing on normally 'female' topics are seen as more serious than if written by a female author according to participant impressions and international studies. And finally, female authors are considered to not be getting the same respect as their male counterparts from media, booksellers and publishing houses due to their female-driven content. The review data and sales data showed that female authors stand on a more even ground locally than that of the international industry, even though participant impression was insistent and repeated that these issues are true and ongoing.

According to the VIDA Count (VIDA, 2017):

'Since the conception of the VIDA Count, one of the most common excuses levelled at our numbers has been that fewer women submit work, or, more brazenly, that women submit less marketable work. Now, it is becoming clear that women and non-binary people may "drop out" rather than attempt to fight a losing battle for justice, or to have to be in the company of men who abused them, or know their gatekeepers are more likely to side with their abuser in order to themselves benefit from these unbalanced power dynamics'.

This was not the impression from participants in this study. It specifically highlighted that both men and women face difficulties in being published, and that any discrimination happens after the book is published. This could be a result of our book market being smaller, and is typical of underdeveloped countries according to Van Rooyen (2005). The South African industry hasn't presented the challenge of gender discrimination so violently as VIDA suggests, not to say that it isn't happening. However, it was found that publishers are seen to aim a title specifically to a gendered reader but with specific reference to fiction.

It was also found that female authors faced difficulties of being confined by social gendered-expectations such as motherhood and domestic home creation, and certain industry expectations that prevented them from taking part fully in the marketing and publicity of their book in order to influence sales with an impactful effort.

It was concluded that while issues of gender discrimination occur in the international markets throughout the publishing process, female authors in the South African publishing trade are more likely to face issues after a book is published. Female authors face social gender issues that inhibit them from selling and marketing their books effectively and issues of gendered covers and marketing plans from publishing houses.

5.2.2.5 How do feminist presses and traditional publishing houses differ in their definition and approach to women's writing?

Feminist presses have continually had to adapt as imprints and publishing houses. While the literature on this topic focuses on international presses and issues and mostly between the '80s and the 2000s, we are likely to see a difference now with women writers having dominated 2017 bestseller charts (Flood, 2018).

This research found significant differences between female-headed publishers, traditional publishers and feminist presses. Feminist presses have a political agenda to create content aimed at women and their struggles; while traditional and female-headed publishers don't have a specific strategy to publish political feminist content (while they can publish this topic it isn't their sole mandate). They also tend to have higher budgets and income than smaller feminist presses. If more budgets and support were given to feminist presses, or publishing/promoting female authors could put them

front of stores in bigger book retail chains. There is no data supporting this claim to make it a conclusion or to put forward for recommendation.

According to van Rooyen (2005), South African book buyers are mostly female, whom we can see would most likely pick up international fiction rather than local fiction; we can assume that local fiction could be 'too close to home' for book clubs and women looking for an escape. This is very different from the Afrikaans market, which is heavily reliant on fiction works (van Rooyen, 2005). Women are purchasing more books, for gifts or the purpose of learning.

There are not enough local feminist presses to conduct a view of local feminist presses creating new channels. Because the South African market is so small, feminist presses are focused on selling rights to make larger sales internationally. However, there are new efforts being made to highlight female authored works (see feminist bookshop to open in Soho, United Kingdom) and publishing surrounding lift in feminist works according to Alison Flood's article in the Guardian (Flood, 2018).

There is a need and place for feminist presses locally even though there are not many; they empower female voices, create content aimed at women, and deal with specific issues that women deal with. In the industry it is believed that there is a space for feminist publishing (one participant specified it being a publishing trend in the year 2017-2018) as well as feminist presses.

5.3 Implications and Recommendations

The situation of South African trade publishing in terms of gender representation is that it is still very feminised. It was found that participants insisted that changes to the issue of unequal gender representation needed to be made at publisher level. Publishers need to restructure and hire more female decision-makers (i.e. female

employees sitting on executive boards – especially black female employees). Publishers also need to diversify their workforce – at top and bottom levels – as this will assist in creating more diverse and representative publishing lists. Another suggestion is for publishers to be aware of the gender split of the authors they publish on their local lists, and focus on publishing more diverse, gender-friendly content for South African readers.

This research sought to define the publishing situation within South African trade publishing and how women are represented within that. While the industry is feminised and women are represented in the majority, a 50/50 split of men and women as managers and on the sales charts would be ideal. This research acts as a stepping stone to the gender dynamics in South African trade publishing as further research takes place. By reaching the conclusion that males do sell better than female authors and are more likely to chart on bestseller lists, marketing budgets and focus could rather be shifted to female authors instead of their male counterparts. The manner in which women's books are represented – as seen in the tropes associated with chick-lit book covers – could undergo a redesign so as to reach to a broader audience. The final step towards this gender representation could take the form of publishers acknowledging their shortcomings and making changes to rectify gender inequality as well as supporting their female authors and making information regarding their industry available to a wider South African audience.

5.4 Limitations of the Study

The methodology and design of this research was structured to avoid limitations, but like any study involving humans, it is hard if not impossible to avoid completely. As Biggam points out, 'the student dissertation that is problem-free or not limited in some

way does not exist' (2008: 121). There are limitations and issues that relate to this research and its methodology, the sample design, and outside factors that may have changed the outcome of this study.

The choice of sample design – non-random (non-probable) – in participant selection for the interviews was driven by quota sampling. In spite of the researcher's best efforts to maintain ethical considerations around interviews there were participants who took part in the interviews who didn't understand the questions clearly; a few declined to participate due to time constraints; and others opted out of certain questions. Also, the timing of the interviews meant that some higher ranking managers were too busy to take part. There is also a risk of generalising the population with a non-probability sample; it's impossible to know the representation of the population with this design choice.

Another limitation facing this research is that data from the Nielsen Bookscan before 2014 only represented a portion of the South African trade retail market (SAPnet, 2017). This would skew some of the bestseller numbers in a significant way as it doesn't represent the book retail industry fully prior to 2014.

There were also some limitations regarding accessibility of data, although these were overcome. The *Sunday Times* archive had to be consulted at two different locations. If all the papers had been in good condition, it would have been easier to break down and add and check the data. It would also have been possible to expand the data to include a wider range of years surveyed.

The literature on South African female authors is lacking, so finding papers on this topic was extremely difficult and time consuming. There are papers that explain the female dilemma of selling less than male authors, but there is very little information regarding sales history, royalty history, or female authors in the industry as a whole.

My hope is that this paper will add to the body of research on the gender gap in publishing, whilst also adding to the literature on the South African publishing industry.

The implementation of triangulation in the research methods was intended to avoid bias. Using comparison and various methods I hoped to achieve a sound research outcome.

5.5 Recommendations of Further Research

There are a few areas that this study did not cover. These are highlighted below:

- (1) One could delve further into the gender breakdown by pinpointing the exact number of females versus males in various departments within a publishing house to corroborate impressions.
- (2) This research did not analyse the racial breakdown in publishing houses and among published authors, or how they are marketed and sold. A conscious decision was made to exclude race from this research as it would dilute the problem of gender. This is a consideration for further research. I would also recommend further study into the intersection between race and gender, for example: black females in publishing (authors, publishers and on the intersection) as well as how Apartheid impacted the role of black women in South African publishing.
- (3) Another aspect of this study that was not expanded on was the impact prestigious literary awards have on sales of longlisted and shortlisted titles in South Africa.
- (4) One could expand on female authors selling over 5000 units, by using qualitative research to delve into aspects of genrefication, marketing, promotion, branding, cover design and positioning of these titles.

- (5) Another recommendation would be to look into the South African tropes of chick-lit.
- (6) The next recommendation would be to look at the developmental aspect of readers, such as the presence of books in South African homes and how children are socialised to pick an author that suits their gender. This topic could be delved into deeper by looking at the impact of libraries and schools and their recommended reading lists for children.
- (7) Research is severely lacking on how authors who publish in vernacular languages are impacted and what publishers are doing to engage with readers in other languages.
- (8) The review data did not include other publications such as women's magazines, online book pages, weekly newspapers and men's magazines over a longer period of time. This could affect the reviewer gender gap and show which genres are more likely to be reviewed in specific publications that are aimed at different audiences.

The above recommendations are very broad and barely scratch the surface of the South African publishing industry and the expanse of issues and topics that could be added. These are the main issues that came up during interviews and findings throughout the process of this research.

5.6 Conclusion

Looking back on the research paper, this chapter sought to answer the research questions stipulated in chapter 1, and add to a body of research within this school of thought. To conclude this chapter talking about the gender gap, it is hoped that any

imbalances can be rectified in the future. The researcher felt it would be fitting to end this paper off with a quote from one of the participants: *'I think both as writers and readers, there is an element of catharsis and therapy. And a kind of feminism at that, of women just – it feels sometimes like a bit of a secret club – women writers, women readers, where we explore issues we're not supposed to talk about, you know, because it's just not the done thing.'*

Appendices

Appendix A: Nielsen Bookscan (RPG)

Top 10 RPG						
2016						
Po s	RPG	Value	QTY	ISBN	ASP	% Val
	Total	1,498,316,288	9,843,026	309,606	152.22	100.00%
1	Penguin Random House (Pty) Ltd	342,788,736	1,944,736	45,914	176.26	22.88%
2	Jonathan Ball Publishers SA	318,046,927	1,622,848	71,729	195.98	21.23%
3	Christian Art Distributors	146,582,864	1,212,030	12,734	120.94	9.78%
4	Pan Macmillan South Africa	107,545,527	658,286	16,663	163.37	7.18%
5	NB uitgewers/publishers	80,163,142	441,906	4,008	181.40	5.35%
6	Struik Christian Media	44,384,963	325,092	5,945	136.53	2.96%
7	LAPA Publishers (Pty) Ltd / LAPA Uitgewers (Edms) Bpk	42,419,195	454,681	1,746	93.29	2.83%
8	Ingram Book Company	35,675,720	168,045	40,360	212.30	2.38%
9	Jacana Media (Pty) Ltd	22,836,866	112,793	2,251	202.47	1.52%
10	Phambili Agencies	21,456,732	207,674	8,950	103.32	1.43%
2015						
Po s	RPG	Value	QTY	ISBN	ASP	% Val
	Total	1,480,008,527	10,553,685	299,407	140.24	100.00%
1	Penguin Random House (Pty) Ltd	336,964,125	2,015,230	45,584	167.21	22.77%
2	Jonathan Ball Publishers SA	317,601,808	1,767,058	69,894	179.73	21.46%
3	Christian Art Distributors	128,633,344	1,371,895	12,727	93.76	8.69%
4	NB uitgewers/publishers	106,622,378	649,303	3,722	164.21	7.20%
5	Pan Macmillan South Africa	88,340,141	661,091	16,115	133.63	5.97%

6	Struik Christian Media	51,056,492	439,358	5,361	116.2 1	3.45%
7	LAPA Publishers (Pty) Ltd / LAPA Uitgewers (Edms) Bpk	41,073,966	472,708	1,676	86.89	2.78%
8	Ingram Book Company	27,403,191	153,563	35,161	178.4 5	1.85%
9	Jacana Media (Pty) Ltd	23,882,535	118,622	2,202	201.3 3	1.61%
10	Phambili Agencies	23,782,108	216,293	9,305	109.9 5	1.61%

2014

Po s	RPG	Value	QTY	ISBN	ASP	% Val
	Total	1,253,345,930	8,931,801	254,826	140.32	100.00%
1	Penguin Random House (Pty) Ltd	288,054,295	1,686,032	41,477	170.8 5	22.98%
2	Jonathan Ball Publishers SA	268,364,369	1,528,155	57,180	175.6 1	21.41%
3	Christian Art Distributors	119,640,303	1,263,068	11,753	94.72	9.55%
4	NB uitgewers/publishers	75,945,864	471,292	2,790	161.1 4	6.06%
5	Pan Macmillan South Africa	68,403,866	488,551	13,637	140.0 1	5.46%
6	Quivertree Publications	39,621,889	135,297	48	292.8 5	3.16%
7	Struik Christian Media	39,297,265	312,476	4,236	125.7 6	3.14%
8	LAPA Publishers (Pty) Ltd / LAPA Uitgewers (Edms) Bpk	35,509,154	436,735	1,261	81.31	2.83%
9	Jacana Media (Pty) Ltd	21,489,321	112,591	1,990	190.8 6	1.71%
10	Phambili Agencies	19,472,277	181,709	8,622	107.1 6	1.55%

2013

Po s	RPG	Value	QTY	ISBN	ASP	% Val
	Total	1,099,329,125	8,457,366	221,950	129.98	100.00%
1	Penguin Random House (Pty) Ltd	249,844,384	1,594,717	36,074	156.6 7	22.73%
2	Jonathan Ball Publishers SA	243,609,527	1,523,729	48,369	159.8 8	22.16%

3	Christian Art Distributors	102,356,518	1,099,355	10,490	93.11	9.31%
4	NB uitgewers/publishers	85,155,577	522,609	2,373	162.9 4	7.75%
5	Pan Macmillan South Africa	60,533,145	432,537	10,940	139.9 5	5.51%
6	LAPA Publishers (Pty) Ltd / LAPA Uitgewers (Edms) Bpk	31,457,305	370,317	1,016	84.95	2.86%
7	Struik Christian Media	27,471,658	214,814	3,911	127.8 9	2.50%
8	Jacana Media (Pty) Ltd	21,502,936	119,179	1,811	180.4 3	1.96%
9	Open Market	18,261,869	109,924	10,853	166.1 3	1.66%
10	Phambili Agencies	17,592,950	178,844	7,881	98.37	1.60%

2012

Po s	RPG	Value	QTY	ISBN	ASP	% Val
	Total	1,205,835,72 4	9,861,874	232,77 1	122.2 7	100.00 %
1	Penguin Random House (Pty) Ltd	290,394,473	2,004,627	37,979	144.8 6	24.08%
2	Jonathan Ball Publishers SA	257,346,961	1,797,737	50,214	143.1 5	21.34%
3	Christian Art Distributors	101,669,420	1,108,007	11,129	91.76	8.43%
4	NB uitgewers/publishers	90,387,247	596,514	2,684	151.5 3	7.50%
5	Pan Macmillan South Africa	63,221,657	529,392	11,318	119.4 2	5.24%
6	LAPA Publishers (Pty) Ltd / LAPA Uitgewers (Edms) Bpk	37,123,926	396,720	970	93.58	3.08%
7	Struik Christian Media	35,608,536	295,847	4,387	120.3 6	2.95%
8	Jacana Media (Pty) Ltd	24,277,761	134,331	1,907	180.7 3	2.01%
9	Open Market	23,323,336	163,184	11,765	142.9 3	1.93%
10	Phambili Agencies	17,174,743	177,547	8,462	96.73	1.42%

Appendix B: Sunday Times Review Data 2016-2017

2016								
Date		Authors		Reviewers		Genre		
Day	Month	F	M	F	M	F	NF	
24	Jan	3	3	4	2	3	3	
31	Jan	0	4	3	1	2	2	
7	Feb	3	4	4	2	3	3	
21	Feb	4	2	5	1	4	2	
13	March	5	2*	7	0	5	2	
20	March	2	5	4	3	4	3	
27	March	2	4*	1	5	4	2	
10	Jan	1	4	3	2	3	2	
17	Jan	4	2	5	1*	4	2	
14	Feb	3	3	6	0	5	1	
28	Feb	1	2	2	1	3	0	
6	March	3*	4	5	1	5	2	
3	March	ST Award Showcase						
10	April	3	3*	3	3	5	1	
17	April	2	5*	4	3	6	1	
24	April	2	4	6	0	5	1	
1	May	5	2	6	1*	5	2	
8	May	3*		3		3		
15	May	ST Award Showcase						
22	May	3	3	5*	1	2	4*	
29	May	1	2	1	2	1	2	
5	June	2	3*	2	3	4	1	
12	June	2*	1	2	1	2	1	
19	June	3	3	5*	1*	4*	2*	
26	June	3	4	5	2	5	2	
3	July	4	2	6	0	4	2	
10	July	4	1	5	0	2	3	
17	July	3	3*	4	2*	5	1	
24	July	2	4*	5	1*	4	2	
31	July	3	3	5	1	3	3	
7	August	3	4	6	1	6	1	
14	August	6	1	6	1	4	3	
21	August	0	1		1*	1		
28	August	2	3	3	2	2	3	
4	September	4	2*	4	2	6	0	
11	September	5*	2	6	1	5	2	
18	September	3	4*	5	2	5	2	
25	September	1	1	2	0	1	1	
2	October	4	3	6*	1	6	1	
9	October	5*	2	6	1	5	2	
16	October	1*	1	1	1	0	2	
23	October	1	4	3	2	3	2	
30	October	1	4	5*	0	5	0	
6	November	3	4	4	3	6	1	
13	November	3*	4	3	4	3	4	
20	November	2	5*	5	2	6	1	

Appendix C: Interview Questions

Process of Interviewing:

- An informed consent form will be provided for signature before commencing the interview.
- The interviewer will explain the purpose of the study to the interviewee.
- All data gathered will be kept confidential and anonymous.
- The informant is free to withdraw at any point during the interview.
- Permission will be requested for audio recording which will be used to transcribe the interview. Notes will be taken as back-up in case of equipment failure.
- The interviewee will be asked to verify the data gathered once transcribed or written up. S/he is free to ask for a copy of the recording to verify accuracy and correct any errors.

After concluding the interview:

- The interviewer will thank the interviewee for his/her time and interest in participating in the study.
- The audio recording will be stopped and the interview will end.
- Based on the interviewee's responses, the interviewer will ask if s/he is willing to provide copies of any documentation discussed.

Notes on the use of the interview guide:

- Text enclosed in square brackets '[']' is intended only for the interviewer to provide to the informant if s/he does asks for clarification on a question.
- Conditional questions depend on the informants answer to a question. Depending on the answer the follow-up questions are asked under the applicable heading, 'If yes' or 'If no'.

[Opening]: Hello, my name is Kelly Ansara. I am doing a Masters paper the gender imbalance in South African trade publishing. **[Speak about referral if this is a referral interview].**

I would like to ask you some questions about your opinions and experiences you have had within the trade publishing sector as a publisher/author. I hope to use this information within the qualitative section of my research. The interview should take about 60 minutes. Are you available to respond to some questions at this time?

About Study: *There is a clear imbalance of female- and male-penned fiction and non-fiction within local and international publishing. The problem of misunderstanding and/or misrepresenting female authors within the boundaries of women's fiction (so-called 'chick-lit') is dominated by publishers, reviewers and readers. International studies have begun to examine this phenomenon, but there is no comparable research available in South Africa. The aim of this research study is to investigate the development of 'chick-lit' within a South African publishing context, and to provide evidence for the anecdotal observation of a gender imbalance. The study thus aims to determine the gender representation of South African authors, using data from the sales history of trade books, content analysis and participant interviews.*

This study will use a mixed method of quantitative research design by using Nielsen's sales history (bibliometrics) and review counting of book reviews in the Lifestyle section of the Sunday Times; and qualitative research design with semi-structured interviews with pre-selected participants from within the South African Trade Publishing arena.

Please can you fill out the consent form, and before we start can you agree to the stipulations on the consent form? **[Sign and provide participant with copy]**

Interview Questions

Publishing Industry

Firstly, I wanted to discuss the publishing industry...

1. What has been your involvement in the South African publishing industry?
2. Do you know the gender breakdown in an average South African publishing house?
3. Do you think this is in line with the gender breakdown of international publishing houses?
 - a. Why/why not?
 - b. Is this important?
4. Do you think the gender breakdown in a publishing house impacts the gender breakdown of authors published?

5. Can you name a feminist press publishing house (locally)?
6. We have the term female-headed publishing house as well as feminist presses, with regards to these, would you say:
 - a. [**PROBE**: they are similar? If so, why?]
 - b. [**PROBE**: they are different? If so, why?]
7. Finally, if you were asked to define either of these, how would you do it?
8. Do you think feminist presses and traditional publishers are the same?
 - a. What do you think are their differences, if any?
9. Do you think one is more important/better than the other?
 - a. [**PROBE** about own experiences]

Authors

Let's discuss a little bit about authors...

1. When publishers 'show off' their authors through various means (publishing decisions, book launches, front-of-shop displays, review space in major publications, overall sales, etc....), what do you think drives the decision behind who gets selected?
 - a. [**PROBE** sales forecasts, likeability, prize short-listings]
 - b. Do you think an author's gender might be an influencer in this area?
 - c. Why/why not?
2. Do you think authors face any difficulties in the publishing process?
 - a. More specifically, female authors?
 - b. More specifically, male authors?
 - c. [**PROBE** interviewee's own experiences as an author]

Chick-lit

Now let's discuss the chick-lit genre...

1. The term 'chick-lit' is bandied around in publishing circles. Could you define or perhaps give me your definition of what you think chick-lit is?
 - a. [**PROBE** what sort of titles might be considered chick-lit? Or, what sort of authors write chick-lit?]
 - b. Would the authors mainly be female or male?
 - c. Do you think romance titles are the same as chick-lit?
2. Chick-lit is often considered shorthand for women's fiction in the publishing industry, would you agree with this?
 - a. Would you consider the two equal?
3. With specific reference to a book's cover, could you describe what a chick-lit genre novel cover might look like?
 - a. Would you consider this a tell-tale sign of a chick-lit book?
4. With specific regard to a chick-lit genre novel's plot, could you perhaps give a brief outline of what the story might be?
 - a. Would you consider this a tell-tale sign of a chick-lit book?
5. What do you think 'gives away' that you might be reading a chick-lit novel, the cover or the plot?
6. Do you read chick-lit novels?
 - a. Why/why not?
7. Who is more likely to read a chick-lit novel?
 - a. Could you describe them to me?
 - b. What might they do in their spare time?
 - c. What sort of things does the reader like?

- d. What age band do you think they fall into?
- e. Is the reader married, single, divorced?
- f. Do they have kids?
- g. What sort of career do they have?

Reviews

Let's talk about book reviews...

1. Maybe when you're looking for a book review, and you read a good review for a book, do you ever query the gender of the reviewer? Is that something that's important to you/something you look for?
 - a. Why/why not?
2. With what I've just said in mind, in the same way we looked at the gender breakdown in publishing, what would you say the gender breakdown might be for reviewer? Is there one?
3. [**LEAD-IN** about gender breakdown in reviewing **FACT**].
 - a. Why do you think this is?
 - b. Do you think has any sort of impact? [**PROBE** – for publishing, for authors, for reviewing]
4. What impact do you think a half-page review in a major publication might have for a title?
 - a. Does this differ from fiction/non-fiction, etc....?
 - b. Are there any books you might not see getting a half-page?
5. What do you think a review reader looks for in a review?
 - a. [**PROBE** – is it the content of the review, the name of the reviewer, the frequency of reviews/hype surrounding the title?]

6. Do you think readers favour reviewers they know and trust?

Bestsellers

Let's talk a bit about bestsellers...

1. What do you think constitutes a bestseller?
 - a. [**PROBE** is it sales numbers, hype surrounding the title, taglines/reviews, prizes, content/story]
2. From recent memory, could you perhaps tell me a few bestseller titles? These could be international bestsellers, titles from local authors, etc....
3. Now, with regards to gender, what do you think the male/female author split might be on a bestseller list?
4. **So my next section is about prizes**, do you think a literary prize might change the status of an otherwise 'normal' book to a bestseller?

Prizes

Let's talk a bit more about prizes in general...

1. What sort of literary prizes do you think will grab a reader's attention?
2. Do you think a title shortlisted for a literary prize will get more review coverage?
 - a. Why do you think that is?
3. What sort of literary prize, if any, do you think a chick-lit novel will get shortlisted/win?
4. Can you tell me if you know of any literary prizes awarded to female authors only?
 - a. [if any prizes are known] do you think this prize is the same as any other literary prize?

5. What was the last prize-winning title you read (of any literary prize)?
 - a. What was the author's gender?
 - b. What literary prize did it win?
 - c. Did you enjoy reading the title?
 - d. Did you recommend this title to friends and family?
 - e. Did you see it being reviewed in major publications/social media, etc.?
6. What literary prize, or prizes, do you respect the most as a reader?

Finally, to end off...

1. What, in your opinion, can change the gender imbalance in publishing?
2. What can publishers and authors do differently to help this process?

End off:

Great, thank you for your time. Your comments and opinions are invaluable to this research.

[Interviewer to turn off audio recording]

Appendix D: Coding Tabulation

Questions	Codes		Notes		Participants				Participant #
	Author	Author	Author	Author	Author	Author	Publisher	Publisher	
4. Prize Change Status (or Bestsellers)	Yes						Don't know if true in SA, they have increased sales, but not in a huge way. None of my books have won prizes make a huge difference. I think the author gives them gravitas, attention & importance.		4
	No						Winning a prize doesn't mean sales will rise		1
	International > local						International prizes get a reader's attention; local titles get additional publicity but not noticeable sales spike		3
Prizes									
1. Literary Prizes That Grab Attention									
	Newsworthy						Man Booker, Pulitzer, Booker Prize, Sunday Times, Costa, Orange, Caine, Sunday Times	Man Booker, Erislat, Sunday Times, Media24, Orange Prize	
	Author Credit						Shortlisted, but not long listed; there is something you can say about it, newsworthy.		5
	Literary Merit						Yes; Pulled out of the media		1
	Prize Dependant								2
	Hype								1
	Yes								5
	No								2
	Doesn't know								2
3. Literary Prizes for Chick-lit?	Yes								
	No								
	Doesn't know								
4a. Prizes for Female Authors Only? Similar to Other Prizes?	Yes								
	No								
	Yes								
	No								
5. Last Prize-winning Title Read	Male								
	Female								
5a. Author Gender	Male								5
	Female								3
5b. Prize Name	Man Booker Prize								
5c. Enjoy Reading?	Yes								
	No								
5d. Recommend to Others	Yes								
	No								
5e. See/Read Review?	Yes								
	No								

6. Lit Prizes Respected Most			not always important *		The Bailey's	International Man Booker; Women's Prize	Women's Fiction Prize	Women's Prize/UK Prize/Bailey's Prize	Booker; Pulitzer; Caine; Bailey's	Booker; Pulitzer & Women's Prize	Man Booker; Sunday Times; Women's Prize
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