

WOMEN IN THE MEDIA SECTOR

Research and theoretical perspectives

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Field perspective

feminist theory/gender studies + media studies
= gender media studies

- different knowledge, different perspective, different questions
- media studies: gender factor not isolated from other influences (culture, socio-demography, economy, media routines, organizational structure, professional values)
- media studies: production – content – audiences

Women in media production: focus and numbers

- Representation of women as media employees (numbers of female/male journalists etc.)
 - Global Media Monitoring Project (GMMP) 2015: “Only **37%** of stories in newspapers, television and radio newscasts are **reported by women**. This overall statistic has not changed in 10 years” (female television presenters: 57% - age!)
 - EUROPE: **41%** female reporters+presenters (print 34%; radio 40%; and TV 48%), reporters: 37% (average), presenters: 47% (below average)
 - Digital news: “**42%** of news published online are reported by women.”
- Horizontal segregation (hard vs soft news, ‘female’ vs ‘male’ topics)
 - GMMP: “The proportion of female reporters in news stories falls well below parity in all topics except science and health where the ratio is at par. Only **31% of stories on politics** (EUROPE: 30%) and **39% of economic news** (EUROPE: 42%) are reported by women.”

Women in media production: focus and numbers

- Vertical segregation (hierarchies, women in management) – glass ceiling a remaining problem
 - Global Report on the Status of Women in the News Media 2011 (International Women's Media Foundation):

*“73% of the top **management jobs** are occupied by men compared to **27% occupied by women.**”*

- Media gender policies (work-life balance etc.)
- Sexism and ad-hominem attacks on female communicators (online)

Women in media production: expectations/beliefs vs reality

- BELIEF: Strong relationship between gender composition of the newsrooms and media content (more women = more balanced, more gender sensitive, more female sources and ‘female’ topics)
- DATA: GMMP 2015: “... no difference between women and men reporters in terms of including more or fewer women as sources”; “Women reporters were only slightly more likely to write stories with a female focus than men, mostly those concerning women’s rights or activism. However, the majority of stories did not have a female focus (90%).”
- BELIEF: Strong relationship between gender composition of the newsrooms and the newsroom cultures
- DATA: Hanitzsch, T., Hanusch, F. (2012) Does gender determine journalists’ professional views? A reassessment based on cross-national evidence: “... women and men do not differ in any meaningful ways in their role conceptions on either the individual level or in newsrooms dominated by women, or in sociocultural contexts where women have achieved a certain level of empowerment.”

Problematic assumptions

„... for ethical reasons (equal rights for all citizens) an increase in the number of women journalists should be pursued, but this has nothing to do with news content.“

“Because there are no convincing empirical data that indicate what it actually is that differentiates (all) female journalists from (all) male journalists, the meaning of ‘change’ is subject to individual speculations and political positions.”

Van Zoonen, L. (1988) Rethinking Women and the News

Why are they problematic?

- gender – **non binary category** (vs shared female experience!)
- **‘gender blindness’** – gender blind women (blaming women themselves)
- **lower status of ‘femininity’** → women tend to identify with masculine values (one of the boys’ club)
- **professional journalism**: objectivity, impartiality → stress on gender issues perceived as non-professional by journalists (gender/feminist bias)
- individuals vs organizational factors + professional routines (**‘news is news’**)
- Dimmick and Coit (1982): **9 levels of influence** in the media (from individuals to international policies) – **autonomy** of individuals?
- political **economy** of the media – professional values in conflict with the interests of the owners (**profit**, ‘what people want’)

Feminization of journalism – a trap?

- Increased numbers of women in the profession – since 1970s – commercial logic (attracting new – female – audiences)
- supporting gender polarization: ‘new girl writing’ (pro-feminine, openly anti-feminist)
- decline of the presence of women in the profession with age
- the trap of feminized professions – lower status, lower wages (‘pink collar ghettos’)

Conclusion

- Unequal representation of women in the media / vertical / horizontal segregation = an indicator of obvious gender discrimination
- Implications for media content/gender culture of the newsrooms – very problematic (the role of ‘critical mass’ not clear)
- General gender culture – a crucial influence (sociocentric perspective – media stemming from and reflecting the societal norms/culture → media not only contribute to, but also reflect general gender relations)



Thank you!

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