



GENDER AND MEDIA MATTERS

WIDENING THE HORIZONS OF THE FIELD OF STUDY

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Department of Communication and Social Research

PANEL 1

GENDER (IN)EQUALITY AND THE MEDIA

Chairs:

Claudia Padovani (University of Padua, Italy)

Franca Faccioli (Sapienza University of Rome, Italy)

Speakers:

- Lucia D'Ambrosi (University of Macerata, Italy), Gea Ducci (University of Urbino "Carlo Bo", Italy), Alessandro Lovari (University of Cagliari, Italy)
- Barbara Wolfram (University of Music and Performing Arts, Vienna, Austria)
- Daniel Edem Adzovie (Tomas Bata University in Zlin, Czech Republic), Rita Holm Adzovie (University of Cape Coast, Ghana), John Oti Amoah (University of Cape Coast, Ghana)
- Hanna Szabó (Free University of Berlin, Germany)
- Alessandro Lovari, Paola Carboni, Manuela Aru, Giorgia Cadeddu, Ester Cois, Barbara Barbieri (University of Cagliari, Italy)



Public sector communication and gender equality: an explorative study on digital storytelling strategies of Italian municipalities

Lucia D'Ambrosi (University of Macerata, Italy), Gea Ducci (University of Urbino "Carlo Bo", Italy), Alessandro Lovari (University of Cagliari, Italy)

Abstract

This contribution addresses the theme of Italian municipalities' communication in order to investigate the impact of institutional storytelling strategies through a gender lens. The theoretical framework of the study is based on the international and Italian literature on public sector communication with a gender-sensitive perspective (Daymon & Demetrious 2013; Capecchi 2018; Faccioli 2020), also incorporating institutional recommendations and guidelines to prevent and fight stereotypes and sexist languages (CEMR 2006; Robustelli 2010; Somma & Maestri 2020), according to the principles of the EU 20-25 strategy for gender equality and intersectional approach. These theories intertwine with the concept of institutional storytelling (Fontana, 2009; Salmon, 2013; Ducci, Lovari, D'Ambrosi, 2019), with reference to the representation of gender issues on digital public communication.

The paper presents an exploratory and qualitative study focused on Italian municipalities conducted through in-depth interviews with communicators and social media managers supported by the analysis of social media channels. Many research questions arise in this context: 1. Has the gender sensitive approach been considered in municipalities' communication? What strategies and recommendations have been adopted? 2. What does it mean to do storytelling on institutional social media? Through which main gender narratives are social problems (e.g., gender violence) represented on digital communication?

These research questions have been investigated in 15 Italian municipalities, selected considering different factors likewise geographical location, number of inhabitants, and their effectiveness in using social media according to national rankings (Censis, 2019).

Main results show interesting innovations at local level in adopting guidelines and languages to prevent gender bias and stereotypes, also used to enhance transparency and trust toward citizens. At the same time interviews highlight existing barriers and cultural resistance in using specific storytelling communication strategies for promoting inclusion and gender equality. In particular, the study highlights the need to use a gender sensitive approach to develop new practices and models of public sector communication combined with targeted actions and intersectionality.



How to measure inequality? A quantitative approach on measuring gender representation and portrayal in the audio-visual sector

Barbara Wolfram (University of Music and Performing Arts, Vienna, Austria)

Abstract

“Who controls the story, controls reality.” (MMCAA – Multicultural Media Correspondents Association, 2019)

„If she can see it, she can be it.” (Geena Davis, 2004)

“Media shapes us, informs our ideas, policies and politics. It tells us who we are, and what we can be.” (WWC – Women’s Media Center, 2005)

Media and especially the audiovisual media have a never before seen power to inform and shape social realities. For decades, it has been widely known that narratives in the audiovisual sector reproduce Gender stereotypes and foster marginalization of non-heteronormative ways of living. Many evidence based studies (f.ex. USC Annenberg Inclusion Initiative, Geena Davis Insitute on Gender in Media) have shown that the status quo has to change. In Europe, a clear lack of evidence based research in terms of representation and portrayal of gender is still prominent.

This paper is a first step to close the evidence based research gap in the audio-visual media (film) sector in Austria. It deals with the representation and portrayal of gender and diversity in Austrian feature films from 1997 to 2017, the first longitudinal analysis of this kind in Austria. It is using a mixed-method and transdisciplinary approach and lies between quantitative studies on film, quantitative method development, feminist film studies,

psychological test construction (classical test theory) and gender studies. The work has three main focuses:

1. Development of scales for a survey instrument that captures on-screen as well as offscreen dimensions of gender and diversity in feature films.
2. Creating a status quo analysis of on-screen data in Austrian feature films as well as a first longitudinal analysis of Austrian feature films from quantitatively comparable data over 20 years, in order to also compare on- and off-screen data.
3. Evidence-based derivation and elaboration of implications for the policy making and allocation of funds of training and funding institutions (policy measures).

So far, 150 feature films produced in Austria with theatrical release in Austria were analyzed and the survey instrument is tested test-theoretically in terms of reliability, objectivity and validity to ensure the quality of the survey instrument and the data.

In my presentation, I want to present the survey instrument (11 dimensions, 110 items) with focus on the scales that measure representation and portrayal of gender as well as the quantitative findings of my research that focus on gender representation and portrayal. As the instrument also measures diversity, I also want to highlight some intersectional findings that are important in terms of understanding how marginalization specifically lies at the intersection of gender and non-white representation.



Gender disparity in film industries: a conceptual study from a Developing Country, Ghana

Daniel Edem Adzovie (Tomas Bata University in Zlin, Czech Republic), Rita Holm Adzovie (University of Cape Coast, Ghana), John Oti Amoah (University of Cape Coast, Ghana)

Abstract

Globally, a considerable amount of space has been accorded issues regarding gender from varied perspectives. Gender equality as well as gender equity at various fronts such as access to education, employment, political office and a host of others have been topical in the media for some time. The subtle institutionalization of male dominance in the film industry in the 1930s and its rippling effect of gender imbalance especially regarding female active participation in film industries across the globe in terms of number and influence is a worrying trend. Despite the considerable attention given to issues relating to gender, not much scholarship has focused on the gender disparity overtly or covertly displayed in the film industry the world over. The main purpose of the study is to explore the role gender themes, especially patriarchal themes in films play in influencing the disparity experienced in film industries. Partially, we examine the motivating vis-à-vis the demotivating factors that attract and or refract females from enrolling in film schools as against their male contemporaries. Employing a qualitative inquiry with a specific focus on document analysis as well as experts' opinions in order to ascertain the antecedents and consequences of patriarchal themes in films on female participation in film industries, we drew extant literature from reputable databases such as EBSCO, Scopus, Web of Science, ERIH Plus, Google Scholar as well as notable books on gender and film. Secondly, the authors conceptualized a research model for future qualitative research design that could take into consideration a study from at least three different film industries and analyze using Thematic analysis. This could help validate the proposed conceptual model of the study. The literature review revealed that society's conceptualization of gender and gender roles, to a large extent influences the patriarchal themes conveyed in films, which inhibits female enrolment in film schools thereby hindering their active participation in film industries. Research implications have been discussed.



Gender politics and media in Hungary: the case *Fairyland Is For Everyone*

Hanna Szabó (Free University of Berlin, Germany)

Abstract

The socio-political environment of Hungarians in the last decade can be characterised by strengthening the neoliberal economic structure and policy-making, as well as the right-wing conservative political agenda. The government is making an increasing effort to spread the importance of traditional gender roles, while categorically making it impossible for non-profits and educational institutions with progressive ideologies to operate.

This research uses a critical discourse analysis approach to investigate how the Hungarian media report on gender politics by analysing the publication and censorship of a children's book with well-known story adaptations to LGBTQ+ narratives. The children's book, *Fairyland Is For Everyone*, was published in September 2020 and immediately received political and media attention when a member of the Hungarian Parliament publicly destroyed a copy and condemned it as the propaganda book of homosexuality. This incident has certainly put the LGBTQ+ community in the spotlight more than ever, both in the media, politics and public life.

The research takes a case study approach that integrates a descriptive case study analysis with quantitative data and examples of discourse to illustrate the positionality of government, media and the public. The analysis examines trends in digital articles, Facebook and Instagram posts in the two-month period after the incident on 25 September 2020. This research examines how the incident was reported and commented by journalists and the public, both in digital media and social media sites. Given Hungarian public media structure and the government's strong influence in broadcast media and online news, it is paramount to include content appearing on social media to give a comprehensive picture of the discourse at hand. Accordingly, instead of looking exclusively at traditional media, this research examines both digital broadcast and social media content to analyse how discourse has been shaped by the media and perceived by the Hungarian public.

The analysis shows how the incident in parliament unfolded in the media, how journalists, politicians, celebrities and members of the public shared and reacted to the publication of the book, and how the various nuances of Hungarian gender politics are discussed and spread in digital media.



The Implementation of the Gender-sensitive Communication Guidelines on Social Media: the #GenderedImpact Case Study

Alessandro Lovari, Paola Carboni, Manuela Aru, Giorgia Cadeddu, Ester Cois, Barbara Barbieri (University of Cagliari, Italy)

Abstract

Universities are learning environments with a strategic role to play in the growth of society: this awareness has led them to develop their own communication tools and digital channels, and to foster relationship management, which is becoming increasingly crucial to support sustainable and inclusive development (Lovari, Mazzei & Vibber, 2015). Gender awareness can have a positive impact in this process: since inequalities can develop and be reiterated through language and communication, institutional communication should ensure equity, openness and inclusion in each context, including social media channels (Barret & Davison, 2006; Capecci, 2018; Faccioli & Bonanno, 2020).

In the framework of the Horizon2020 project SUPERA (Supporting the Promotion of Equality in Research and Academia), the University of Cagliari developed tailor-made gender-sensitive communication guidelines that aim at introducing a deeper understanding of gender biases and stereotypes and at providing advice in adopting a gender-sensitive approach to communication. The document covers five communication areas: gender-sensitive language, visual and graphic, planning and management of the events, digital communication, and media relations. Though communication is a structured and organised function, with specific staff who produce and disseminate institutional messages at different levels (Luoma-aho & Canel, 2020), these guidelines are meant to be used by everyone in the university environment, in order to spread a sensitivity toward this topic.

Following these recommendations, SUPERA launched the social media campaign *#GenderedImpact* on May 2020, disseminated on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, aiming to raising awareness on the dramatic gender effects of Covid-19 on the academic community. The preliminary analysis of social media environments and the data study related to online perceptions of gender roles have been relevant for the choice of the topics and the production of a digital campaign unfolded in six gender-sensitive illustrations, linked to captions and key messages that sought to tackle gender biases affecting women in research and academia.

The article investigates the effectiveness and the impact of the gender-sensitive guidelines implemented in the social media strategy, by carrying out a quantitative and qualitative analysis of the metrics collected during the campaign. Theoretical and practical implications on public communication and social media will be discussed.