



GENDER AND MEDIA MATTERS

WIDENING THE HORIZONS OF THE FIELD OF STUDY

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PANEL 11

HATE SPEECH AND GENDER

Chairs:

Giovanni Ciofalo e Vittoria Bernardini (Sapienza
University of Rome, Italy)

Speakers:

- Maria Silveirinha, Bibiana Garcez, Gustavo Freitas, Mateus Noronha (University of Coimbra, Portugal)
- Rosario Lacalle Zalduendo (Autonomous University of Barcelona, Spain), Virginia Martín-Jiménez (University of Valladolid, Spain), Dunia Etura-Hernández (University of Valladolid, Spain)
- Silvia Díaz Fernández, Elisa García-Mingo (Complutense University of Madrid, Spain)
- Francesca Ieracitano, Sabrina Girardi, Caterina Balenzano (Sapienza University of Rome, Italy)
- Katharine Sarikakis, Johanna Dorer (University of Vienna, Austria)



From the “responsibility to report” to the “responsibility to protect”: intersectional misogyny and gendered online violence against women journalists

Maria Silveirinha, Bibiana Garcez, Gustavo Freitas, Mateus Noronha (University of Coimbra, Portugal)

Abstract

Sexist hate speech is a form of violence against women that perpetuates and exacerbates gender inequality. In its online form, it is fuelled by and fuels further offline misogyny. Women journalists disproportionately experience the problem of sexist hate speech, which has a direct impact on the security of their personal and professional lives, including the attempt to silence the issues they cover. It is also an exemplary dissuasive for other women journalists (Nadim e Fladmoe, 2019; Edström, 2016). This allows us to speak of gendered online violence against women journalists, an issue that should also be looked at with intersectional lens: “networked misogyny and gaslighting intersect with racism, religious bigotry, homophobia and other forms of discrimination to threaten women journalists - severely and disproportionately” (UNESCO, 2021). In covering questions of gender equality, the traditional “masculine fields” or “sensitive” issues, women are exposed to even more violent discourse. In the words of female journalists brought to the titles of two research articles, to be a female journalist, “You Really Have to Have a Thick Skin” (Chen et al, 2020) because “They Go for Gender First” (Adams, 2018).

Our research focuses on these issues in the Portuguese context, combining content analysis and discourse analysis of news and its online comments (Erjavec & Kovacic, 2013; Frischlich, Svenja, & Quandt, 2019; Quandt, Schatto-Eckrodt & Frischlich, 2020; Hellmueller, Lischka & Humprecht, 2020). We began by identifying the main news on the Facebook pages of two national generalist and sports news media. These were then filtered to obtain the main articles signed by women journalists and their respective comments. We will present the results of this stage of research, trying to establish the qualitative characteristics of gendered hate speech, as well as the intersectional analysis of reported issues and hate comments. We aim to show why the “responsibility to report” (Thompson, 2007) needs to go together with the “responsibility to protect” women journalists to ensure their safe working conditions. Also, as feminist researchers, we take the standpoint that, as in the title of a Unesco report (2016), “An Attack on One is an Attack on All”.



Hate speech on Twitter towards feminist women: the case of the Spanish radical right around 8M

Rosario Lacalle-Zalduendo (University Aut3noma of Barcelona, Spain), Virginia Mart3n-Jim3nez (University of Valladolid, Spain), Dunia Etura-Hern3ndez (University of Valladolid, Spain)

Abstract

Last March 2021, the Spanish radical right party, Vox, tried to capitalize on the first anniversary of COVID-19 to attack the call for the 8M demonstrations during the International Women's Day, in relation with the characteristic misogyny of Vox's discourses about feminism. Among other actions disseminated by digital media, Vox launched a campaign focused on the massive sending of multimedia messages under the label "This feminism is violence" and included a manifesto stating that Women's Day must be declared "Day of Victims of Coronavirus".

Taking this campaign into account, this research analyzes the hate speech towards feminist women in social networks in Spain, taking as a study universe all the messages published on Twitter, on the occasion of the celebration of the last International Women's Day, through the hashtags # 8MDiaVictimasCovid (#8MdayVictimsCovid) and #EsteFeminismoEsViolencia (#ThisFeminismIsViolence) during the days before and after 8M; to thus cover a period of eleven days from March 1, that included the week before International Women's Day and the days immediately afterwards.

To carry out the research, a triangulation method has been chosen that combines the technique of quantitative content analysis with qualitative analysis and the linguistic corpus through the Sketch Engine tool. The compilation of all the published tweets was carried out through the VostonDash and Rtweet libraries of the RStudio program.

The results show how a hate speech developed towards feminist women on the occasion of March 8, linking feminism with violence and with the deaths from Coronavirus that took place at the beginning of the pandemic.



Antifeminist women in the Spanish manosphere: role (and discourse) of women in misogynistic spaces of the Internet

Silvia Díaz Fernández, Elisa García-Mingo (Complutense University of Madrid, Spain)

Abstract

Innovative, critical, feminist and activist media contents and practices have been widely studied by feminist media scholars (Mendes et al, 2019; Horeck, 2018). There is also a growing number of studies about the antifeminist backlash (Banet-Weiser, 2021; Boyle, 2021; Lawrence and Ringrose, 2018) and the digital and networked misogynistic cultures (Ging, 2017; Lilly, 2016). However, there is a gap in the role of women in the so-called manosphere. Drawing on pertinent work about women in male-chauvinist internet spaces, such as the ones on women in the alt-right-“shield maidens” and “trad wives”- (Love, 2020; Ebner, 2020; Mattheis, 2018) we research a self-identified antifeminist group of women called #TeamAlienadas in Spain. #TeamAlienadas is a group of women organised in Twitter and Youtube that have created a community of antifeminist women allies under the hashtag #TeamAlienadas. In this regard, the research questions guiding this contribution are: 1) What is the role of #TeamAlienadas in the Spanish manosphere? 2) What socio-economic discourses are mobilised by them? 3) What relationships are established with other subgroups of the manosphere? To answer these questions we have employed digital ethnographic research and discourse analysis methodologies.

Our research shows that these antifeminist women collaborate, argue and share online spaces with other male misogynistic internet subcultures (MGTOWs, alt-right youtubers...), create anti-feminist contents (videos, podcasts and memes) and hold a closed community in Discord. The anti-feminist sentiment mobilised by these women is underpinned by wider societal discourses such as neoliberalism and postfeminism that, through what McRobbie (2007) has called a new sexual contract, construct women as privileged subjects of global economies. The rising popularity of feminism (Banet-Weiser 2018) is being met with a postfeminist logic where feminism is rendered as unnecessary and passé. It is in this ontological tension where we locate #TeamAlienadas as they work the ruins of feminism, resignifying it through an explicit misogynistic frame. In doing this, postfeminist logic is reworked and taken to the extreme: for them, feminism is not just old-fashioned, but it actively damages women and most crucially, victimises and vilifies men, who are seen as the main casualty of feminist advances.



Judging hate speech as right or wrong is a gendered moral dilemma: exploring moral reasoning of female and male users of social network sites

Francesca Ieracitano, Sabrina Girardi, Caterina Balenzano (Sapienza University of Rome, Italy)

Abstract

Hate speech (HS) is an important issue in the academic, public and legal debate (Mondal et al. 2018; Florio et al.2020). Many authors have focused on the effects HS has on victims,(Leet,2002; Nielsen,2002; Leader et al.,2009; Hawdon et al.,2017) and society (Calvert,1997;2018), but it emerges a lack of attention on the process of moral reasoning occurring in males and females (Wilhelm&Joeckel,2019) victims or perpetrators when they face with homophobic, racist or sexist HS on Social Network Sites. Moral reasoning (Kohlberg,1976) refers to the process of "finding morally relevant decisions using specific moral schemes" (Schnell&Bilandzic, 2017:202), which are: the personal-interest scheme (a primitive form of thinking), the maintaining norms scheme (morality depends on the respect for norms and authority) and the post-conventional scheme (moral decisions are based on universal principles).

Inspired by the Neokohlbergian approach (Rest et al.;2000), this study explores gender differences in the moral reasoning patterns adopted by males and females when exposed to HS on social networks, judging whether there are circumstances in which it might be morally acceptable to practice HS.

The study involved 522 subjects aged between 18 and 38 who compiled a questionnaire, inspired by the Definition Issues Test-2 (DIT2 see Rest et al., 1999), which proposed three different scenarios, purposely constructed (racist, sexist and homophobic) with moral dilemmas regarding the perceived acceptability of HS on SNS. In this way we explore the kind of moral patterns preferred by males and females when considering a moral decision in three different situations where HS occurs on SNS.

The results obtained by ANOVA show that on all three dilemmas there is a gender difference in the personalinterest scheme($p \leq 0.000$) and in the maintaining norms ($p < 0.005$). Examining specifically the dilemmas posed to subjects, there are substantial gender differences both in the homophobic scenario (in all three reasoning schemes) and in the racist one, with greater significance in the personal interest scheme in the homophobic ($M=2.41$; $SD=2.28$; $p \leq 0.000$), and in the maintaining norms scheme in the racist dilemma ($M=4.07$; $SD=2.5$; $p \leq 0.001$). On the other hand, there are no differences in the sexist scenario.

Moreover, significant gender differences were found between HS perpetrators ($p \leq .001$) who are mainly males.



Re/focus on political economy: The Austrian case of quotas, hate speech and feminization of the media worker

Katharine Sarikakis, Johanna Dorer (University of Vienna, Austria)

Abstract

Feminist economics addresses the voids and blind spots in mainstream economic research. Traditional economic research neglects the systematic exclusion of gender-constituting differences in all economic domains and social contexts. Feminist economics has primarily examined aspects of strategic power and exploitative structures, in particular in the labour market, in the sphere of unpaid domestic work, and care work (Haidinger and Knittler 2014). In this paper we are addressing the ways in which these blind spots are crucial in revealing and understanding the (standing question of the) intersection of (media) economics, social and political culture and content output as a feminist question.

In particular we are focusing on three seemingly unconnected areas:

The revival of the “quotas discourse” in Austrian journalism and media

The experiences of hate speech against women journalists in the country and

The “feminization” of journalism and the media in the platformisation era and their consequences.

These aspects, we argue, provide us with the magnifying glass necessary to examine the underpinning synergies of economic and labour precarity of the female media worker and its impact on the domains of power (for decision making), protection (against violence against women) and pluralism (as a requirement for democratic media). Reflecting on international agreements and instruments placing feminist political claims at the core of policy agendas (such as Beijing, Sustainable Development Goals, Safety of Journalists) we discuss through the lens of women’s economic disadvantage the far-reaching consequences for content production, cultural and social change and political climate. Two dimensions are crucial here: on the one hand, women’s presence and voice in the media and in the public debate is growing, through the numbers of journalists, students in journalism courses, social movements. On the other hand, the reaction against women’s voices is stronger with systemic hate speech attacks, increased precarity in media jobs and a cultural political backlash against public female leaders. Although the economic aspect is an afterthought in analyses about these conditions, we argue embedding feminist guided political economic aspects in the analysis allows us to uncover blindspots, such as for example the role of precarity in pursuing certain reporting when under threat or the role of private and public run media in adhering to feminist political claims.

To this end, we will address the following aspects in our presentation: The systematic gender inequality in media production, contextualised within the international aspects of the media industry and its platformisation, the meso-level of national and local media organizations, with aspects of structural discriminations in journalism, advertising and film being of importance here, which show their powerful effects on the individual level among female actors. Furthermore, we address aspects of media economics



in media content and point out scientific findings and research gaps. Not unimportant, but still little analyzed in feminist media studies, is the field of new technologies and their material conditions of production. Looking at the global interconnectedness of the conditions of production provides a concrete example of how the "global South" and the "global North" are re-emerging in a capitalist entanglement reminiscent of former colonial times.

In our paper, we will take a closer look at the economic connections between media and gender and address the following questions: What scholarly findings have feminist media studies produced so far regarding gender and media? Which fields of research have remained unconsidered so far? What media policy measures are needed to redress systemic gender inequalities in the media sector and in the international media industry? And finally: How can we systematize the scientific findings in order to arrive at a comprehensive feminist political economy of the media industry that takes into account all facets of unequal gender relations, both on a global level, as well as on an organizational level and on the individual level of media producers and media recipients?

With our contribution focused on a specific case study of politically stable and economically affluent Austria, we aim to systematize the study of the political economy of the "media" under the lens of gender justice and to open the view towards the theorization of a feminist media economy which is inextricably connected to the individual woman's life experience in the making and 'consuming' media content.