



GENDER AND MEDIA MATTERS

WIDENING THE HORIZONS OF THE FIELD OF STUDY

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PANEL 12

GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE AND THE MEDIA

Chairs:

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Speakers:

- Anna Petrus (Pompeu Fabra University, Spain), Laura Pousa (TAI–Universidad Rey Juan Carlos, Spain), Pilar Medina-Bravo (Pompeu Fabra University, Spain)
- Mariagiovanna Musso (Sapienza University of Rome, Italy), Rachel R. Reynolds (Drexel University, USA), Dacia Pajé (Drexel University, USA)
- Marinella Belluati, Francesca Tampone, Paola Maria Torrioni (University of Turin, Italy)
- Déborah Gay (University of Toulouse-Paul Sabatier, France)
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Rape culture in the era of Me Too. Representations of the limits of sexual consent in film and television

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Abstract

The social debate around the Me Too phenomenon has led to the appearance of films and TV series in which the concept of sexual consent is approached from a new complexity and, therefore, demonstrating the difficulties in defining with preciseness its limits or the so-called the “affirmative yes”. These are the cases of the series *I may destroy you* (HBO, 2020), *The morning show* (Apple TV, 2019), *Nevenka* (Netflix, 2021) or the film *The Assistant* (2021) by Kitty Green. In them, the representation of sexual abuse distances from the classic “male gaze” (Mulvey, 1989) to bring to the fore the emotions and experiences of the victims, either from their explicit “no” (*I may destroy you*, *Nevenka*); either evidencing a state of the victim far from her full faculties (*I may destroy you*); showing a power relationship in which the victim has no space to say “no” (*The morning show*, *Nevenka*) or inquiring into the negligent sexual abuse, as legislated by July 1st 2018 Swedish Law (*The morning show*). In fact, the negligent sexual abuse becomes a key concept to analyse all the proposals mentioned above because proposes to fell to the aggressor the responsibility of perceiving if a person really participates consensually in a sexual act, beyond the explicit and verbal “affirmative yes” . In all those examples, the representation of sexual abuse from the point of view of the victim leaves aside the univocal stereotype of the use of explicit and physical violence and, therefore, they are valuable indicators of an openness of social conscience to the vast and complex subtleties through which the rape culture continues operating at the fictional, social and collective imaginary. The aim of this communication is to point out how this representations of sexual abuse focus on fragility, loneliness, and lack of tools of any kind (psicological, social, legal) of the victims opening a space on the screen to make visible and understand their situations and by consciously trying to leave behind the historical normalisation of rape.



When rape becomes a spectacle

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Abstract

Violence against women is one of the most persistent and widespread phenomena that human societies know and in many contexts its practice still proves difficult to eradicate. On the other hand, its perception and acceptance as normative are rapidly changing in every part of the globe, thanks to feminism, policies derived from studies of gendered violence, and global phenomena such as #MeToo. In this change, the medium of television has played and continues to play a fundamental role, both as a receiver and diffuser of the collective imaginary, and as a generator of its transformations.

In this essay we ask about the specific logics that emerge from television narrative in relation to violence against women, especially around the rape myth. Through a discussion of the different television formats and genres (fiction and non fiction, including broadcast, cable TV, streaming and video demand) we intend to examine the language and television clichés in the representation of violence and rape, to see if and how these have changed over time. How does the culture of rape emerge and/or appear in various television genres and how is it changing in new streaming video content? What are the implications and key effects of televisual images of violence against women for the audience? How does televised violence against women reflects and influence the social imaginary?



Gender-based violence and outreach information. Limits or opportunities?

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Abstract

Given the role of the media in the representation of gender-based violence in the public debate, the V.A.R.C.O. project (“Violence against women: networked actions to prevent and contrast it”) at the Department of Cultures, Politics and Society of the University of Turin focuses on the role of local media in constructing good practices and promote actions against gender-based violence. One of the objectives is to monitor local news media and their links with the community, in order to capture the limits and opportunities of outreach information. This is fundamental to stimulate local debates and to give visibility to individuals working to contrast gender-based violence. The research focuses on the year 2020, which became an important year due to the pandemic crisis and the systemic weaknesses of social welfare. We aimed to understand the extent to which local information still represents a valid resource in the complex local network, and how it can influence high-level public decision-making at different levels. The objective of the research was achieved by analysing the coverage by a number of local media outlets and how they selected and discussed the topic of gender-based violence. Additionally, we carried out focus groups with journalists working in local media. We provide a number of hypotheses. The first is that news still represents the prevalent genre. The second is that the media adopt more inclusive language and avoid a genderisation of the topic. Finally, we aim to demonstrate that outreach information is most effective at creating direct links with individuals working on this topic and to create synergy between institutions and citizens. Expected results are that local information still represents a cognitive resource to construct a bottom-up opinion resource, especially for action networks.



Symbolic violence and coercion: women's voices in French radio shows

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Abstract

What place holds nowadays women's voices in French radio shows? In an era post-MeToo, and before the Covid situation arised, what could be heard at the radio? Thanks to a postdoctoral work, I have listened to 144 hours of radio on the month of October 2018 to analyze the way women's voices can be heard on the radio, the links that may exist between the apparatus and the way they can be heard. Radio shows were chosen both on public and private radio stations in order to be compared, with the help of the archivists of INA (Institut national de l'audiovisuel / Audiovisual National Institute): two sports show (After Foot, l'Oeil du Tigre), two culinary shows (La table des bons vivants, On va déguster) and two phone-ins (Radio Libre, Les Auditeurs ont la parole). Those shows are broadcasted on major French radio stations (France Inter, RTL, RMC, Europe 1, Skyrock) and have a vast audience. To analyze this corpus of documents, this work is based on gender studies (Christine Delphy, Colette Guillaumin, Judith Butler...), communication studies (Hervé Glévarec...), but also on the linguistic works done in Anglo-Saxon fields (Deborah Cameron, Jilly Boyce Kay...). Some preliminary trends can already be seen through the gender-media dyad: first of all, masculine voices hold most of the scene and women are silenced through symbolic violence. Some of those women's voices manage to be heard during their chronicles, so shorts segments that are dedicated to a women columnist. Women's voices are hence part of a balance of power, with the scales tipping towards men's voices, though some exceptions can be heard. This communication aims to analyze this balance of power, the way women are silenced and how women's voices managed to be heard.



Gender violence in the French national media. The conditions that make it possible for female political journalists to denounce their working conditions

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Abstract

On 5 May 2015, French daily newspaper Libération published an op-ed piece with the title “We women political journalists and victims of sexism...”. In the piece, women denounced the impunity of political representatives, whose sexist behaviour toward female journalists constitutes a form of gendered oppression for their profession. The publication of this article raises questions on the conditions that make denouncing gendered violence possible, as this exists in the production process of political information. Specifically, gender-based violence is visible in the relations between women journalists and their colleagues, their superiors and their information sources. How do these journalists deal with different types of violence (everyday sexism, sexual harassment or assault) in their professional field? How do they frame these as a problem and denounce it in professional and/or public spaces? To what extent do these positions trigger changes in media editorial staff?

In order to answer these questions, we employ concepts from Pierre Bourdieu’s theory of social fields, particularly those of “disposition” and “symbolic capital”. The former refers to ways of doing, thinking or feeling that constitute “a matrix of perceptions, appreciations, and actions”. The latter indicates the level of recognition and legitimacy gained by an individual in their professional field (Bourdieu 1972 : 178 ; 238). Our hypothesis is that the heterogeneity of women journalists’ “gender consciousness” (Gurin 1985) and of symbolic capital explains both their different interpretations of gender relations and the strategies they adopt to deal with them. In a favourable sociopolitical context, it seems that the probability of transforming the information production process and the functioning of editorial staff increases with the combination of a critical interpretation of gender relations, a solid professional position, and a certain editorial policy. This editorial policy places importance on the theme of equality between women and men and, more generally, to a number of issues relating to gender, minority rights and discrimination. These transformations happen at an organisational level (reflecting on interactions on meeting in order to prevent “maninterrupting”, creation of the position of Gender Editor, etc.) and at an editorial level (employing ethical guidelines on gender representation...).

This enquiry is based on qualitative research conducted between 2016 and 2021, conducting semi-structured interviews with around twenty women political journalists. They work in French national media (audio-visual, print, online media), who cover a range of positions in journalism.



Image-based Abuse of Women (Photo-) Journalists in Italy and Brazil

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Abstract

This paper presents the partial results of the ADVOOCATE project, “Addressing visual imagery in online harassment and/or offline abuse of women (photo-) journalists,” to address the following question: What is the place of visual imagery – still and moving images and even memes, to (online) harassment of women journalists and photojournalists, and what is their emotional response to gender-based hate speech and image-based abuse?

There is a growing body of literature on how the use of technology might facilitate coercive control and domestic violence.¹ Furthermore, studies on “revenge porn²” and “image-based abuse³” describe the non consensual production and/ or distribution of nude or sexual images in online social networks, and the latter shows that “image-based abuse victims experience high levels of psychological distress.”⁴

Studies on trauma journalism⁵ indicate that photojournalists are more vulnerable than reporters to violent aggression and eventually to develop Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, because unlike reporters who can gather information from newsrooms, photojournalists must explore the situation on the ground, getting physically closer to victims, exposing themselves to the greatest dangers⁶. Being a woman increases

1 Woodlock, D. (2015). *ReCharge: Women’s Technology Safety, Legal Resources, Research, and Training*. Melbourne, Australia: SmartSafe. <https://wesnet.org.au/about/research/recharge15/>; Woodlock, D. (2017). *The Abuse of Technology in Domestic Violence and Stalking*. *Violence against Women*, 23 (5): 584–602; Dragiewicz, M.; Burgess, J.; Matamoros-Fernández, A; Salter, M; , P. Suzor, N; Woodlock, D & Harris, B. (2018). Technology facilitated coercive control: domestic violence and the competing roles of digital media platforms. *Feminist Media Studies*, DOI: 10.1080/14680777.2018.1447341

2 Bates, S. (2016). Revenge porn and mental health: A qualitative analysis of the mental health effects of revenge porn on female survivors. *Feminist Criminology*, 12(1), 22–42; Salter, M, and Crofts, T. (2015). “Responding to Revenge Porn: Challenging Online Legal Impunity.” In *New Views on Pornography: Sexuality, Politics, and the Law*, edited by Lynn Comella and Shira Tarrant, 233–256. Santa Barbara, California: Praeger; Englander, E. (2015). Coerced Sexting and Revenge Porn Among Teens. *Bullying, Teen Aggression & Social Media*, 1(2), 19-21; Drouin, M. & Tobin, E. (2014). Unwanted But Consensual Sexting Among Young Adults. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 31, 412-418.

3 Flynn, A, Powell, A & Henry, N. (2018). *Image-Based Sexual Abuse in DeKeseredy, W. (Ed.), Dragiewicz, M. (Ed.)*. *Routledge Handbook of Critical Criminology*. London: Routledge; McGlynn, C., & Rackley, E. (2016, February 15). Not “revenge porn,” but abuse: Let’s call it image-based sexual abuse. *Inherently Human*, <https://inherentlyhuman.wordpress.com/2016/02/15/not-revenge-porn-but-abuse-lets-call-it-image-based-sexual-abuse>; McGlynn, C., Rackley, E., & Houghton, R. (2017). Beyond “revenge porn”: The continuum of image-based sexual abuse. *Feminist Legal Studies*, 25(10), 25–46.

4 Henry, N., Powell, A. & Flynn, A. (2017). Not just ‘revenge pornography’: Australians’ experiences of image-based abuse. A summary report.

5 Buchanan, M., Keats, P. (2011). Coping with traumatic stress in journalism: A critical ethnographic study. *International Journal of Psychology*, 46(2), 127-135; Keats, P. A., Buchanan, M. J. (2009). Addressing the effects of assignment stress injury: Canadian journalists’ and photojournalists’ recommendations. *Journalism Practice*, 3(2), 162–177; Feinstein, A., Owen, J., & Blair, N. (2002). A hazardous profession: War, journalists, and psychopathology. *American Journal of Psychiatry*, 159, 1570-1575.

6 Ghaffar, O., & Feinstein, A. (2005, April). Reporting under fire: Understanding psychopathology of war journalists. *Psychiatric Times*,



the vulnerability as their position might change from bearing witness to becoming victims themselves. Notwithstanding, there is a dearth of studies that assess the emotional response of women journalists and photojournalists to image-based abuse.

Methodologically, this paper comprises the findings of the computer-mediated survey on the impact of visual imagery on women journalists and photojournalists working in Italy and Brazil. The online questionnaire in English, Portuguese and Italian, was circulated with the help of professional journalism associations, FENAJ and ABRAJI in Brazil and FNSI in Italy, from 1 August to 31 October 2020. Of the 164 participants, there were 80 Brazilian journalists and 42 photojournalists and 42 Italian journalists.



Challenging the narratives of (in)security: #Metoo and mainstream media

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Abstract

Media Studies have long been interested in security discourses, but they mostly focused on dominant representations of security (war, terrorism, or urban violence). As such, Media Studies took part in the construction and circulation of certain representation of safety and danger, along with the media they critically describe and the political discourses. Yet, I would argue from a feminist perspective that these dominant narratives are constantly challenged by alternative definitions of safety which discreetly coexist and circulate amongst minorities (Scott, 2009). These alternative narratives have the potential to alter the dominant order but have mostly been left out from academic research on security discourses (Wibben, 2010).

Drawing on an empirical analysis of security narratives in the main Belgian newspapers and television news (RTBF, RTL, Le Soir, La Libre) conducted in January 2019, I will firstly briefly show how alternative definitions can exceptionally emerge in mainstream media through the voices of minorities, mostly following digital campaigns (#Blacklivesmatter, Gilets Jaunes or Youths for Climate for example). I will then focus on the specific case of #Metoo to study and describe the new narratives of securitization (Buzan et al., 1998) produced by the movement. I will argue that they differ from dominant discourses by addressing these narratives' relations to space and territory, to identity and community and to emotions. I will finally interrogate their circulation between different spaces of communication (mainly Twitter and Belgian news media).

Exploring how digital activism challenge(d) and reshape(d) the highly political representations of (in)security will offer a different perspective on the gender-media dyad and on the relationship between media and feminist movements.