



# GENDER AND MEDIA MATTERS

WIDENING THE HORIZONS OF THE FIELD OF STUDY

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Department of Communication and Social Research

### PANEL 13

# JOURNALISM AND WOMEN

#### Chairs:

Mihaela Gavrilă (Sapienza University of Rome, Italy)

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#### Speakers:

- Viviane Schönbachler (Ruhr University Bochum, Germany)
- Diane T. Prusank (Westfield State University, USA),  
Robert L. Duran (University of Hartford, USA)
- Einat Lachover (Sapir College, Israel)
- Manon Libert (Université libre de Bruxelles, Belgium),  
Florence Le Cam (University of Mons, Belgium)
- Giuseppina Bonerba, Sofia Verza (University of Perugia, Italy)
- Amal Almoualed (Bournemouth University, UK)



## **Multi-level intersectional analysis of women journalists' role in conflict resolution: A case of forced marriage in Burkina Faso**

Viviane Schönbachler (Ruhr University Bochum, Germany)

### **Abstract**

Even though the concept of intersectionality has found its way into media studies (see Costanza-Chock, 2018; Harvey, 2020; Lünenborg & Fürsich, 2014; Rigoni, 2012), German media and communication studies only recently adopted the concept (see Gouma & Dorer, 2019). However, social scientists such as Winker and Degele (2009) have developed a multi-level intersectional analytical framework to study social inequalities. The aim of this paper is to offer an adaptation of this framework and to apply it to a specific case study on the role of women journalists in conflict resolution in Burkina Faso, and hence, to contribute to intersectional media scholarship.

As theoretical ground for this paper, I discuss Nico Carpentier's work, as one of the rare scholars to link community media, participation and conflict (2011; Doudaki & Carpentier, 2011). The theoretical framework relies on his work on the discursive-material knot (Carpentier, 2017), in which he combines the two dimensions, structure/agency and the material/discursive. This builds on feminist research highlighting the entanglement between discourses and the material (see Butler, 2006; Haraway, 1985).

The empirical argument is based on a case study about a Burkinabè journalist, who is often approached by people from the community seeking help in cases of forced marriage. I take a specific case on which she reported and was actively involved in its resolution. I analyse the interviews and media content about this case through the four interdependent levels adapted from Winker and Degele's multi-level intersectional framework (2009):

- Identity/experience level
- Relational/interpersonal level
- Symbolic/discursive representations
- Social/societal structures

This attention to dynamics and processes (Gouma & Dorer, 2019, p. 348) is crucial to avoid falling into the trap of essentializing or simply adding up intersecting categories, an often made critique to intersectionality (Nash, 2008).

Even though the material might seem limited, I follow Gouma and Dorer's argument, that scholarly practice of peer-reviewed articles with limited space pose major constraints on such complex intersectional research projects (2019, p. 356).



## **The Role of Journalists in Mediating Gender Tensions: A Case Study**

Diane T. Prusank (Westfield State University, USA), Robert L. Duran (University of Hartford, USA)

### **Abstract**

Worldwide events leave historic marks and these are often experienced differentially by gender. The recent attention to the COVID pandemic has highlighted the overburdened nature of women's work and lead to calls in the media to explore and realign gender roles (e.g., Taub, 2020). This was also true at the end of WWII when media participation in the establishment of the domestic sphere as the domain of women served the critical function of expelling women from the workplace to open paid labor positions for men. This transition proved challenging at best, laying the groundwork for the second wave feminists in the U.S. while media organizations were challenged to both cover and be part of the story.

Caught in the nexus were writers for the, by then established, women's pages. A staple of U.S. city newspapers by the 1950s, the women's pages were designed to capture a female audience, providing consistent coverage of the four Fs (family, fashion, furniture, and food). Research in this area indicates that while under attack by feminists at the time, often the women's pages served as a site for resistance to homogenization of the home-front and the roles of women (e.g., Mills, 1988; Wilmot Voss, 2018). This proposed paper examines the work of Dorothy Barclay, editor of the parent and child section of The New York Times between 1950 and 1965. Specifically, the paper uses Barclay's published articles explicitly addressing proposed changes in gendered work to determine strategies used to mediate public and private conversations about components of the women's movement and defining gender roles. Initial analysis indicates that Barclay uses coverage of public authorities and public events to bring questions about the gendered nature of domestic work into dialogue with women in their private lives. The paper further elucidates the rhetorical strategies Barclay implements to enter the conversation on behalf of others and argues that this is a model for looking at journalists as mediators of the of the dialectical tensions between change and stability and public and private reorganization of gender roles and representations after seismic shifts in the culture.



## **Visibility, Inclusion, and Exclusion in Work Experiences of Immigrant Women Journalists: Three generations of Russian-Israeli Women Journalists**

Einat Lachover (Sapir College, Israel)

### **Abstract**

In order to negotiate and acquire equal rights and civic belonging, ethnic minorities and other marginalized groups, including women, must successfully enter the public sphere. As a result, participation in news-making has been a key concern of ethnic minorities and women—and, more specifically, women of ethnic minorities. However, intersectionality is rarely applied in a systematic way in the study of news production. The current study focuses on Russian-Israeli women journalists who resettled in Israel during the mass immigration wave from the Former Soviet Union (FSU) of the 1990s and who contend with intersecting exclusion relating to their gender, ethnicity and immigration. Based on narrative interviews with 18 Russian-Israeli women journalists, the study aims to conceptualize how their complex subjectivities emerge in their journalistic work. The findings demonstrate how each generation experiences, adopts, and develops distinct mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion deriving from its social visibility. The interviewees of the first generation gave up integrating into mainstream Hebrew journalism despite their strong will to assimilate within Israeli society because of what they perceive as their inferiority in the Hebrew-language. Similarly, the interviewees of second generation see their high visibility in the mainstream Hebrew journalism as symbolic of their full integration within Israeli society. In between first and second generations, Russian-Israeli women journalists of the 1.5 immigration generation are in an identity transition: On the one hand, they reject the journalism of the Russian community in Israel for professional reasons, while they still must work within it. On the other hand, they are not fully embraced by mainstream journalism because of their Russian identity, and they rationalize their exclusion in the context of Israeli racism directed at post-Soviet immigrants. Identifying and understanding the barriers and the resources of minority women journalists can contribute to efforts to create a more diverse journalism that gives voice to muted social groups as a matter of justice.



## **“Double Jeopardy”: On Being Older and a Woman in Journalism**

Manon Libert (Université libre de Bruxelles, Belgium), Florence Le Cam (University of Mons, Belgium)

### **Abstract**

Since the 2000s, gender studies in journalism have gradually questioned the changing gender of journalism (Van Zoonen, 2002), the place and role of gender in organizations and in the construction of professional identities (De Bruin, 2000; Damian et al, 2010). These studies have demonstrated the existence of the Glass Ceiling effects, or the horizontal and vertical segregation in newsrooms (Chambers et al, 2004).

This communication proposes a theoretical reflection, grounded in empirical research, which aims to defend an intersectional perspective. Following the proposal of Steiner, we suggest “that feminist standpoint epistemology and intersectionality productively re-present gender as a notion that is not sexually deterministic or dichotomous but emerges at the intersection of complex historical, material and cultural/social conditions” (Steiner, 2012). And this argument is particularly relevant as we look at the intersection of gender and age variables, focusing on senior women journalists.

Research on the work of older people is relatively recent. Being a senior worker, in addition to being a woman, is a "double jeopardy" (Beal, 1970). The perspective of studying intersectionality (Bourque and Maillé, 2005) leads us to consider the penalization of senior women in a sex-ageist dimension in which the two factors combine to amplify the social fate of people throughout their lives (Faure & Ndobu, 2014: p. 172). Age reinforces the permanence of the gender logic, far from the dominant view that the second half of women's careers rhymes with a stronger investment in the professional world thanks to reduced family responsibilities (Rosende & Schoeni, 2012), and that discrimination linked to this factor is stronger for women than for men (EWCS, 2010).

This paper attempts to explore the hypothesis of a double burden that would be the lot of senior women journalists in Belgium. It is based on a simple question: How does age play an aggravating role for women journalists? This work, based on a qualitative and quantitative survey of women journalists in French-speaking Belgium (working conditions, careers, representations of the profession, etc.), offers an innovative look at the multiple ways of ageing in journalism. Crossing age and gender offers another perspective for thinking about constructions of journalistic identities.



## **Women terrorists in the Italian press: from the red passionate to lady Jihad**

Giuseppina Bonerba, Sofia Verza (University of Perugia, Italy)

### **Abstract**

Gender stereotypes predict that women are the bearers of non-violent values and behaviors, and are prone to empathy, conciliation and domestic concerns rather than the exercise of struggle and competition in the public arena. At the same time, men are considered more aggressive, more self-centered and better suited for public activities. Even more so, when political activity becomes violence as in the case of terrorism, it is associated with the sphere of masculinity, for which the ideal-typical terrorist is definitely a man (Sylvester and Parashar, 2009). In this context, terrorist women- as more generally women who engage in violence- undermine the stereotypical construction of women (Elshtain 1987; Sjoberg and Gentry 2011; Nacos, 2016) and therefore the media elaborate labeling and narrative processes (Becker, 1963; Giomi, Magaraggia 2017) aimed at demonstrating how violent women are not "real women", but have deficiencies or abnormalities, in order to reconfirm the stereotypical model of femininity. In particular, in the case of terrorist women, the literature has highlighted how information spreads the frame according to which women would undertake political activity as companions of men who already practice it (Staccioli, 2015; Bini, 2017; Martini, 2018) rather than by autonomous choice. This paper focuses on Italy as a case study and analyzes the representation of the press of four terrorist women: Margherita Cagol and Barbara Balzerani, important characters of the so called "years of lead", and Maria Giulia Sergio and Alice Brignoli, members of ISIS and for this condemned between 2015 and today. The corpus consists of articles published by Il Corriere della Sera, l'Unità and Il Giornale for the 1970s and by Il Corriere, La Repubblica and Il Giornale for the two cases of contemporary terrorism. The method used is critical discourse analysis (Fairclough, 1992; Lindekilde, 2014). The comparison between the two periods will allow us to highlight the narratives used to construct the figures of the terrorists, the differences between these narratives in different newspapers and their eventual change over time.



## **Saudi Women Journalists: an exploration of their roles and practices in an age of technological revolutions**

Amal Almoualed (Bournemouth University, UK)

### **Abstract**

For many years journalism was seen as a male-dominated profession where men occupy crucial decision-making positions. In many countries, this is now changing, with women not only entering and practising journalism in increasing numbers but also gaining recognition and leadership positions in newsrooms. But what is the situation of women journalists in Saudi Arabia, a notoriously conservative culture in which the role of women in many areas of society has traditionally been limited? This article explores the roles and practices of Saudi women journalists, particularly focusing on potential changes taking place since the introduction of wide-ranging societal reforms announced in 2016 by the Saudi Crown Prince.

The paper draws on face-to-face semi-structured interviews with 30 Saudi women journalists working for four Saudi newspapers and ethnographic observation of the newspapers' working environment in the cities of Riyadh and Jeddah. It explores a variety of factors that contribute to the construction of female journalists' professional practice, including: personal factors such as identity and educational background; political-economic factors such as social, cultural, and religious values; technological factors such as the proliferation of social media and the emergence of citizen journalism; and organisational factors such as the internal policies of news organisations.

The paper argues that the journalistic practices and the roles of Saudi women journalists differ markedly from generation to generation. The older generation still faces occupational challenges arising from the cultural and societal views prevalent when they started in the profession and when journalism was not accepted as an appropriate job for women – their place was as housewives or teachers, if they were allowed to work at all. These pioneers seem, however, to have successfully paved the way for a new generation of Saudi women journalists who today face a different challenge more akin to that encountered by their western counterparts.

For this new generation, the challenge is to become an all-round journalist, combining traditional and digital skills, fostering creativity of content, the ability to work in both Arabic and English, and navigating the rapidly evolving media environment in Saudi Arabia. The paper thus draws a clear distinction between the occupational challenges facing Saudi women journalists across these two generations, what could be called the 'old golden generation' and the 'new young' generation. It also seeks to identify the skills Saudi women journalists need today to succeed in the country's rapidly evolving digital media environment.