



GENDER AND MEDIA MATTERS

WIDENING THE HORIZONS OF THE FIELD OF STUDY

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PANEL 4

GENDER, MEDIA AND POLITICS

Chairs:

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Speakers:

- Tobias Rohrbach, Daphne van der Pas, Loes Aldering (University of Fribourg, Switzerland)
- Gilda Sensales, Gabriele Di Cicco, Enrico D'Urso (Sapienza University of Rome, Italy)
- Arulselvan Senthivel (Pondicherry University, India)
- Verónica Israel-Turim, Josep-Lluís Micó-Sanz, Miriam Diez Bosch (Ramon Llull University, Spain)
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Gender Differences and Similarities in Media-based Evaluations of Political Candidates: A Bayesian Meta-Analysis

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Abstract

Purpose: the goal of this review is 1) to assess overall gender differences in the effects of political media messages on voter's evaluations of politicians across the existing body of research, 2) to shed light on patterns in which aspects of media coverage moderate these gender evaluations, and 3) compare moderated candidate evaluations across different evaluation outcomes.

Background: The paper re-conceptualizes the literature on gendered mediation as media-moderated candidate evaluations: Because voters rely on political media coverage for political information, their evaluations of women and men candidates are moderated by different aspects of media coverage (e.g. attention to candidate appearance or personal life). We currently lack a systematic overview of the combined effect of media coverage and gender on voter evaluations.

Methods: A systematic information search (according to PRISMA guidelines for meta-analysis) yielded a final sample of 50 studies containing 671 candidate evaluations from more than 23'000 participants. Bayesian random-effects models with weakly informative priors were ran to estimate summary effects for all media moderators in the sample.

Results: The results indicate little evidence of "media moderation bias" against women candidates. Subgroup analyses of media moderators show that negative media coverage of scandals or candidate appearance actually hurts women less than men candidates. However, a media focus on communal traits disproportionately diminishes women candidates' perceived viability.

Conclusions: The meta-analytic evidence suggests that various aspects of media content do lead to gendered evaluation of political candidates. Contrary to the general narrative of hostile or sexist media, however, the moderating effect of media coverage seems to benefit women more than hurt them. Across media moderator and evaluation outcomes, gender similarities are far more common than gender differences.



Linguistic gender biases in the representations of populist and non-populist Italian leaders. A textual analysis of the comments of their followers on Facebook

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Abstract

The results of national and international studies on journalistic communication have highlighted systematic biases in the way of naming women politicians, compared to their men colleagues. In particular, it emerged that for women the reference to their political office is used less, only the first name and the full name and surname are used more, while for men only the surname is privileged. With our study we want to verify these trends by shifting the focus from journalistic communication to that of common sense conveyed by Facebook, one of the most widely used social media for political communication. In particular, we will analyze the comments of the followers of two pairs of Italian politicians, one expression of right-wing populism, is composed of Giorgia Meloni and Matteo Salvini, and the other, expression of traditional center-left politics, is composed of Laura Boldrini and Nicola Zingaretti. In this way we will cover a gap in the studies so far focused on the posts of leaders and the reactions of followers, but never on the analysis of their comments. 43796 comments were extracted during the second Conte's cabinet from the official pages of the four leaders by using Facebook API connection. For each post of the leaders, we selected the four higher-ranked comments by the followers. A textual analysis was conducted with the Vospec step of the Spad-t. The results only partially confirmed the trends mentioned above. For both pairs, women are more frequently called by their first name, men by their surname, while the use of first and last names shows balanced tendencies for both genders. The reference to the political office confirms the expectations only for the center-left pair, but not for the center-right one, where the woman leader is appointed with her political office more frequently than her man colleague. The results are commented on with a view to gender differences: in reference to other linguistic markers present in the comments differently characterizing the four leaders; in their link with the processes of disintermediation, trivialization and personalization of politics via social media; in relation to populism and traditional politics.



Assertion of Dalit women in Indian elections and denial of their rightful space in the mainstream media

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Abstract

Dalits, formerly untouchables, are one of the most oppressed communities in India that have been suffering caste-based social exclusion from civil, political, cultural, and economic rights and they continue to remain poor, ill-treated, and discriminated. Though they constituted about 16.60 percent of India's female population, the Dalit women suffer from the triple disadvantage of gender, caste, and class deprivations. When we look at the upper caste dominated Indian media, there is absolutely no space given in the mainstream media, to the most deprived Dalits and Dalit women in particular. An Oxfam report provides empirical evidence for the observation that the Indian news media reflects the views of a small minority of the population i.e., the upper castes, even as it claims to speak for everyone (Oxfam 2019).

Despite the denials of space in the mainstream media, the political assertion of Dalit women is significantly higher than the non-Dalit caste Hindu women in Tamilnadu. The dataset compiled by the author indicates that in the recently held Tamilnadu state legislative assembly elections 2021, Dalit women were the single largest group of women who have contested widely in the state, than the upper caste and backward community women.

Content analysis of 8 newspapers published in Tamilnadu during the election period indicates that the Dalit women have been denied their rightful space in the mainstream media during the whole election campaign period. Balasubramaniam (2011) argues that the Dalits must have their say in the nation's opinion, without the representation of people of every section of society, the opinion of the media tends to become partial and biased.

This study aims to establish through empirical data that the Dalit women continue to assert their political positions, despite the unrelenting denial of mainstream media, the rightful space of the Dalit women. The study would also strive to find out the reasons for the negation of due space for Dalit women in the mainstream media, through in-depth interviews with the select political leaders and editorial staff of newspapers.



Are women's voices being followed by power groups on Twitter?

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Abstract

Digital platforms and social media have prompted transformations in the influence flows between the media, politicians, elites and citizens (Chadwick, 2013; Guo & Vargo, 2017; Jenkins, 2006; Meraz, 2014). But do these changes translate in the amplification of women voices online? Do power groups follow women on Twitter?

This exploratory research aims to analyze whether power institutions present a gender balance in the accounts they started following on Twitter in 2017, 2018 and 2019. To do so we analyzed the accounts that the 50 most followed Spanish Generalist Media and the Catholic institutions with most followers started following on Twitter. Via a machine learning and big data analysis software, we were able to create these contexts and extract the data of the accounts they began following as networks. We categorized these accounts in Women, Men and non-binary (Butler, 1988; Richards et al., 2016). We melded computational and manual methods and used data visualization techniques in the search of trends and patterns (Bail, 2014; Batrinca & Treleaven, 2015; Mahrt & Scharrow, 2013) that could help us shed light to the relationship between power institutions and women in the online world, specifically on twitter, considered one of the most potent informational and political social platforms (Colleoni et al., 2014; Harder et al., 2017; Verweij, 2012).

Media institutions have a long tradition of gender disbalance in media representations (Armstrong & Gao, 2011; Zoch & Van Slyke Turk, 1998) such as the overuse of male sources and overrepresentation of men in the news and media (Armstrong, 2004; Armstrong & Gao, 2011; Bustamante, 1994; De Swert & Hooghe, 2010; Caro González et al., 2014; Len-Ríos et al., 2005), while Catholic Institutions present a tradition of women's marginalization from religious authority (Lövheim and Lundmark 2019). Preliminary results show how both networks of institutions started following a majority of men, with an even higher percentage coming from the Catholic Institutions. These results seem to indicate that the most followed Generalist Media from Spain and the most followed Catholic Institutions perpetuate these gender disbalances in who they choose to follow on Twitter.



How to become the visual icon? The social semiotic analysis of the female protest in Poland

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Abstract

We are observing growing use of the media to gain visibility in the discursive arena in order to defend women's rights (Aiello, Parry, 2020;). Visual messages with female representations are created, disseminated and circulated in the media, gaining importance as an element of a contemporary visual spectacle (Baer, 2016). Especially in the tensed period of political and social polarization during pandemic, visual materials become crucial to campaigns in media. This study focuses on one of them in the framework of visual activism (Young, 2021). This paper seeks to answer the question: what characterizes a picture that might become a visual icon of the female protest in media? The black and white photography of a female activist was taken, by a committed photographer, during Women's Strike in Poland (fall 2020). The paper analyses the image of a female protester as an iconic representation (Dahmen, Mielczarek, Morrison, 2019). Methodology used derives from visual social semiotics (Kress, van Leeuwen, 2021), where the three functions of images are presented: ideational, interpersonal and textual function. The regional context of female fight is being presented in this proposal. However, it depicts "local" actions, such phenomena are increasingly constructed and interpreted on a transcultural level (Thomas, Stehling 2016). The paper offers also descriptions of the female body in persuasive messages, using the levels of meaning according to Gillian Dyer's categories (2009), all in the attempt to capture the presented ideology encoded in the photograph (Aiello, 2020). This study uses qualitative tools to describe the iconic image from important event during street protests that were part of the larger social movement, called the Women's Strike (Król, Pustułka, 2018). The explanatory framework provides the theory of social activism and the paradigm of critical studies of visual media (Kukkonen, 2011). This proposal advances discussion on how the visual social semiotics can help to describe the importance and functions of female visual activist in the context of media coverage.