



GENDER AND MEDIA MATTERS

WIDENING THE HORIZONS OF THE FIELD OF STUDY

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PANEL 8

GENDERED DIGITAL SPACES

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- Laetitia Biscarrat (Côte d'Azur University, France)
- Emiljano Kazai (University of New York Tirana, Albania)
- Melike Asli Sim (Koç University, Turkey)
- Antonietta De Feo (Roma Tre University, Italy)
- Mariana Fagundes Ausani, Fábio Henrique Pereira (University of Brasilia, Brazil)



Gender and reviewing culture: a case study of the French website Allociné

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Abstract

This paper presents the results of a postdoctoral research (Lerass – LabEx SMS, Université Toulouse Jean Jaurès) dealing with the gendered organization of TV series reviewing on the main reviewing French website Allociné. While online amateur ratings and comments have triggered a strong academic interest in France (Allard, 2010, Béliard, 2014, Bonaccorsi & Croissant 2015, Combes, 2013, Pasquier, Beaudouin & Legon, 2014), little attention has been given to the gendered dynamics of user-generated contents. This case study develops a feminist analysis of the website in order to take into account both its technical and social mediations (Jouët, 1993). The first part of the analysis tries to determine the function of amateur reviewing in the history of the website. Relying on the French legal deposit of the web by the Audiovisual National Institute (INA), it provides a diachronic perspective from 1998 to 2018 of the evolving place given to amateur reviewing. The evolution of the editorial line of the home page highlights the dynamics of accumulation of user-generated contents and its uses by the industry. As such, “free labor” (Terranova, 2020) plays a part in the “merchantable gratuitousness” (Farchy, Méadel, Sire, 2015) model of the platform. The second part of the analysis focuses on a corpus of reviews of the 10 TV series broadcasted on French television with the biggest audience shares in 2017. A lexicometric analysis with the software Iramuteq coupled with the study of visual paratexts reveals that female and male contributors have developed similar skills. In other words, there is gender diversity in writing the two types of reviews, based either on content analysis or on the viewer’s experience. Yet, the overrepresentation of male visibility within the reviews is strengthened by a sexist structure that favors male visibility through the dynamics of rating and promotion of the reviews. Another result suggests that this lack of acknowledgement is intertwined with an axiology of cultural goods that devalue the symbolic capital of TV genres associated to women, with a strongly opposed perception of female protagonists in TV series. These findings indicate that 1/free labor obeys gender rules that benefit male participation 2/ Similarly to Boyle’s conclusion regarding IMDb, this French website “is discursively constructed as a male space where male voices and systems of value dominate” (Boyle, 2014).



Hate speech towards women in online news websites, in Albania¹

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Abstract

This study investigates hate speech content in four major Albanian online news websites. The monitoring process was conducted during 15th march- 31st august 2020. In total, 239 news articles were identified as containing discriminatory/sexist and/or hate speech language and were further analyzed. Findings show that women comprise the major targeted group for hate speech. Additionally, the age group 19-25 among women, was most targeted.

The goal of this study is two- fold. On the one hand, it reveals those discursive constructions of hate speech related to women that are mostly reiterated in media. On the other, it provides insights on the role that journalistic choices on style and language play in reinforcing such occurrences. By using a combination of qualitative and quantitative analysis, this study aims to present a comprehensive inquiry on the role of online news websites in inciting hate speech content targeting women in Albania. This is of immense importance for Albania; a country where violence against women is a pervasive phenomenon. Insights provided in this study could be beneficial for online media professionals to gain perspectives on their potential contribution to improving media coverage, especially as related to women. Furthermore, as hate speech is reported to be a controversial issue undermining freedom of speech, such study aspires to contribute to the current and ongoing debates – in Albania and abroad- on online media regulation.

¹ Findings from a similar study conducted by the author in 2018, have been published as a book chapter in Scarcelli et.al. (2021), *Gender and sexuality in European Media*, Routledge.



Women as Hoping Subjects: Negotiating Fame, Labor and Identity in Turkish Blogosphere

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Abstract

Work done in digital environments and media production are generally examined within certain binaries. These binaries may include exploitation or pleasure debate in digital labor studies, public vs. private, and real vs. virtual dualities in virtual world studies. The main purpose of this study is offering a new way of looking to the digital culture production done in blogs to go beyond these dualities and examine the practices and performances of women in a non-western context with a patriarchal and authoritarian regime through the concept of hope. The study considers blogging as a media practice and tool, and the blogosphere as a field that creates salient performances and conflicting emotions with its fragmented structure. Based on ethnographic research methods, through the narratives of amateur, professional and celebrity female bloggers, I analyze the Turkish blogosphere, the motivations and expectations of women, their negotiation of hope, along with the labor they produce.

This research examines how hope is attached to blogging as practice and is experienced and understood in ordinary performances of female bloggers. The aim is not to suggest that the experiences of blogging discussed are uniform, but rather to draw attention to some points of connection with coalesce around ideas of hope temporality, and to examine these connections through the notions of aspiration, fame and success. Categorizing female bloggers as aspirants, professionals and celebrities, it is shown that as an existential affective tool, hope also has a replicative reorientation dimension among bloggers which allows it to travel, circulate, transcend and expand. While doing this, it also earns the ability to challenge the dominant normative conceptualizations.



Social media and LGBTQ+ activism: the #LeggeZan case

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Abstract

One of the issues recently explored concerns the role of social media platforms on the forms and content of social activism. Protest movements in the digital age have been approached from different angles. Some studies focus mainly on the potential of platforms for actors marginalised by contemporary politics, hypothesising a strengthening of the impact of mobilisation especially in terms of media coverage (Castells, 2012; Chenou, Cepeda-Másmela, 2019). Other research takes a more critical posture by highlighting, among other issues, how the business logic of platforms can limit collective action (Poell, van Dijck, 2018).

This paper explores the relationship between social movements and social media platforms by presenting, as a case study, the activism born around the bill Zan (an Italian politician) brought against homobiphobia. Specifically, it aims to analyse the way in which the architecture of the main social platforms, such as Twitter, influences the actions of the LGBTQ+ movement in relation to the bill.

From a theoretical perspective, social media activism is considered as a set of socio-technical practices (Poell, van Dijck, 2018). From a methodological point of view, my research starts from one of the main devices around which the space of public debate has been built: the hashtag #DDLZan. This means plotting the biography of a digital object (Pollock, Williams, 2009), following it from its conception to its social appropriation. In other words, analysing the trajectory of the hashtag (as a metadata tag that allows cross-referencing of content) focuses us on the connective flow between users, and between content and users, highlighting how this flow affects the activism of the social movements.



The social world of digital feminist media activism in Brazil

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Abstract

The article intends to understand how digital feminist media activist initiatives in Brazil are structured and how a set of social actresses engage themselves to participate on these organizations. The feminist media activism is considered a social world derived from the journalism world. This study seeks to understand the forms of collaboration and articulation between these groups through the analysis of four Brazilian feminist publications (the magazine AzMina, the site Lado M and the ONGs Think Olga e Não Me Kahlo).

The literature support is based on gender and feminist studies (SCOTT, 1989; BLANDIN, 2017; JOUËT, 2018; HOLLANDA, 2019), especially those ones focused on the role of the press (BUITONI, 1990; CHARRIER-VOZEL, DAMIAN-GAILLARD, 2005; BYERLY, ROSS, 2006). The theoretical framework of symbolic interactionism (MEAD, 1934; BLUMER, 1969; FLICK, 2014) and the social worlds perspective (STRAUSS, 1978; UNRUH, 1980; BECKER, 1982; DICKINSON, 2008) is used to identify the conventional systems and the cooperation link among the collaborators of feminist publications.

These publications are considered a collective practice that depends on the contributions and engagement of a set of social actresses/actors involved in the creation and dissemination of news. The journalism production daily life is constituted not only by journalists, but also by IT programmers, news sources, audiences and a network of collaborating people who work on different sectors inside the media organizations.

The qualitative methodology is based on virtual ethnography; in-depth interviews with actresses who participate in different degrees of these groups; and direct observation of their practices. The results suggest the constitution of a network of actresses, placed in the interstices of the worlds of journalism, digital activism and feminist activism, and engaged in the content production for these initiatives.

The paper highlights the forms of cooperation between these social actress and actors and the contexts of interaction and negotiation of journalism practice in the context of digital feminist media. This study seeks to contribute to the understanding of the practices and ways of collaboration agreed in this social world, which result in a set of conventions that sustain the collective work, as well as the personal motivations that lead these collaborators to engage themselves within the feminist media activism.