



# GENDER AND MEDIA MATTERS

WIDENING THE HORIZONS OF THE FIELD OF STUDY

## INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

October 15-16, 2021

Sapienza, University of Rome (online and in-person)  
Department of Communication and Social Research

## ROUNDTABLE

# GENDER AND MEDIA STUDIES IN EUROPE AND IN THE MEDITERRANEAN REGION

### Chairs:

Karen Ross (Newcastle University, UK)

### Speakers:

- Carla Cerqueira (University of Minho, Portugal)
- Rosario Lacalle Zalduendo (Autonomous University of Barcelona, Spain)
- Flavia Laviosa (Wellesley College, USA)
- Janet McCabe (Birkbeck, University of London, UK)
- Claudia Padovani (University of Padua, Italy)



## **Gender and the media in Portugal: advances, metamorphosis, and setbacks**

Carla Cerqueira (University of Minho, Portugal)

### **Abstract**

Research in the field of gender studies started late in Portugal, largely due to the impact of a dictatorship that ruled the country for 48 years. Also, creation of higher education courses in the area of communication was delayed, when compared with other European countries. It is in this context that research in the field of gender and media studies starts to develop, and it is only in the 21st century that it becomes a more solid and active domain, with a steady increase in the number of master's dissertations, doctoral thesis, research projects, scientific events and national and international publications clearly demonstrating its relevance. It is also important to bring into this discussion the divergences and convergences between women's, gender and feminist studies in the field of communication, focusing on the media and the particularities in Portugal.

Along with the development efforts arising from academia, the role of the civil society organisations and governmental institutions in this field is to be highlighted. Several recommendations were made, training courses and projects were developed in an attempt to approach the professional media. In some instances, there has even an articulation between academia, civil society, the governmental sphere and the professional sector.

Production, content, reception/consumption and, in some cases, the interconnection between the three are present in the body of studies developed, which takes on an increasingly interdisciplinary character. However, the path has not always been easy. The precariousness in the field of research and the impact felt in terms of resistance to themes related to gender and other identity issues are also visible in this context.

The challenges encountered in this field today are much more complex than they were a few decades ago, due to strong transformations operated in the field of media and in society itself. There is also a certain urgency in developing an intersectional and transnational matrix designed to think about these issues.

In this presentation, we intend to discuss the trajectory of gender and media studies in the Portuguese context, as well as its intersection with some (national and international) public policies. More than 25 years have passed since the Declaration and Platform for Action resulting from the Beijing Conference, a pivotal document in this field of gender and media, and our main objective is to understand the advances, metamorphosis and setbacks resulting from more than two decades of research. This will allow us to understand the challenges we are facing, and outline the priorities in the research and action agendas, aspects which are fundamental in a changing society.



## **Cartography of research on hate speech discourses (misogyny) in the Spanish Manosphere**

Rosario Lacalle Zalduendo (Autonomous University of Barcelona, Spain)

### **Abstract**

Two of the key events of the history of feminism in Spain are the first all-female strike on 8 March 2018, and the outrage of women at the perpetrators of a gang rape (“La Manada”) in May of the same year. Spain is characterised by extreme positions, where significant progress for gender equality is contrasted by backlash and traditional values by the more extremist conservatives.

The growing visibility of the feminist movement on the Internet that followed these two events has sparked the interest of Spanish researchers, and the impact of phenomenon is still difficult to capture. This is a rather new field of study in Spain, with very few contributions before 2019, which mostly analyse misogynist comments against women by integrating quantitative and qualitative methods. The computer-automated capture of hate speech is also a focus in the most recent contributions.

In this presentation I will summarise the most significant contributions with the aim of constructing a cartography of misogynist discourses. The demonstrations of the extreme right-wing party Vox, also very active on social media, constitute a further area to be taken into account in an overview of the Spanish Manosphere.



## **Frames lives, screened deaths. Honor crimes in European cinema**

Flavia Laviosa (Wellesley College, USA)

### **Abstract**

Over the past twenty years, honor killings have garnered increasing international media attention. The horror and injustice of these crimes perpetrated predominantly against women have surfaced strongly within the human rights framework alerting filmmakers to this pressing issue. The dramatic confluence of social and cultural events that have made these killings a worldwide problem, crossing cultures, religions and nations, is poignantly portrayed in films produced in Asia, Europe, North Africa, the Middle East and North America. The purpose of the proposed paper is to analyze the work of filmmakers who explore the patriarchal notion of honor as it permeates modern Western nations and more specifically as honor based crimes are represented in European cinema.

When families migrate to new countries, they bring with them their traditional honor codes and forms of punishment inflicted on women who are deemed to have stained their family's reputation. These practices inevitably cause intercultural and intergenerational clashes when young women, born and raised in the multi-religious and multicultural host country and society, aspire to education and a career, and want the freedom to socialize with other groups and make their own choice of partner.

The critical analysis of films portraying these crimes would be informed by social and cultural anthropology theories, these multiple perspectives problematize the unresolved coexistence of culturally diverse and parallel worlds. These theories offer critical lenses to examine the complex picture of psychological and sociological forms of cultural marginalization and discrimination as experienced for example by Turkish migrants in Germany or Asian immigrants in the United Kingdom as well as the inability of these groups to reconcile the two cultures.

The films selected for this paper retell the compelling story of the struggle for social and cultural integration in Western communities, while maintaining a respectful attitude to women's murders by refraining from showing graphic images or playing up the event. These films avoid any vampire-like exploitation of the tragedy, and instead develop a more participatory and painfully intimate tone. They are an expression of human rights activism, giving voice to the marginalized as they chronicle the tragedy of these women and their families.



## Some notes on transnational TV studies and the ‘place’ of feminist television criticism

Janet McCabe (Birkbeck, University of London, UK)

### Abstract

Reorienting the television map to take account of the latest phase of media globalisation has preoccupied contemporary TV studies for the last decade or so; but what of the intervention for a TV feminist theory and critical practice. This presentation identifies some key questions and challenges for theory, but also offers an intervention (of sorts), to ask how we can practise a feminist TV theory across cultural and national divides.

My contribution begins with the ‘place’ of women and television in culture and speaks to a feminist intervention marked by a broad interdisciplinary approach to methodology and method. Drawing down the lessons I seek to make sense of discourses of the female *made* under transnational conditions—the distinctiveness of representational forms crafted *through* cross-border activity, careers not made ‘at home’, debates about female representation reworked or contested in the relocation from one territory to another.

Drawing down the lessons I contend, invites us to consider the role of syncretic but also the discrete shaping what is crafted in the various points of arrival and departure involving TV culture and media commerce. This is a story of ‘place’ and value scaled up in a transnational context. It is about a way of thinking made in the process of some kind of crossing, in the interaction, reciprocity and multi-layered-ness of the criss-crossing.

Inquiries into transnationalism must contend with a constant shapeshifting, and in the attempt to make visible all kinds of females (subjectivities, identities), both representational and real, requires appropriate conceptual frameworks and analytical tools capable of grasping precisely the coordinates of what is happening in the mutual, but often muddled interaction between the local and the transnational *inside* a national context. Transnationalism in television is what Trinh T. Minh-ha calls ‘the boundary event’ (2011), and what I am intent to identify are various female geographies—of bodies and representational forms, of theory and critical theoretical practice—situated in a *locally* realised TV materiality intertwined with a television concept conceived elsewhere designed for *global* circulation. I turn to critical trends and theories in transnational feminism to help me write such a feminist disciplinary endeavour into transnational television studies.



## **Who's interested in media policies for gender equality?**

Claudia Padovani (University of Padua, Italy)

### **Abstract**

Over the past two decades feminist communication scholarship has increasingly focused on macro-level realities of communication governance, international and national, as well as on meso-level developments of policies, codes and regulatory measures at the level of media organizations. In light of persisting gender inequalities in the media and IT sector- notwithstanding recurrent mobilizations and the multiple initiatives that have been activated over the years worldwide – the relevance of having normative frameworks and policy provisions in place is gradually being recognized as strategic. It is crucial to define principles and goals for traditional and digital media to operate; and it is needed to establish mechanisms to assess progress and change in response to longstanding and new forms of gender inequality in the sector. In my presentation I shall retrace some of my own work in this area so as to highlight some of the elements that may help consolidating the field, and inspire new research developments.

I shall open with a global snapshot taken in 2021, so as to identify relevant spheres of political intervention that are worth paying attention. By reporting on global internet forums, supra-national gender equality processes and national recovery plans adopted to contrast the Covid-19 pandemic I shall highlight the extent to which, and the ways in which gender perspectives on media and communication are part of contemporary policy debates.

I shall then proceed by discussing the what, why and how of gender-responsive communication governance. In particular I shall present and discuss the findings from a study published in 2020 on the adoption of gender equality policies by media organizations around the world. The example will allow providing conceptual and analytical lenses to direct future explorations.

In conclusion I shall make a case for the integration of a 'media gender equality regime' approach in the study of gender and media; one that may help acquiring more articulated understandings of media and communication governance that may inform and transform the public agenda on gender, media and communication.