

Monográfico. La construcción social del género en los medios

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Asistimos a un momento en el que la comunicación ha tomado la delantera a la propia realidad, pues vivimos en la era del sujeto-pantalla, cuyo conocimiento del mundo se produce a través de las imágenes proyectadas en cualquiera de los formatos de pantalla que nos acompañan. Las construcciones mediáticas anteceden con frecuencia al conocimiento directo de la realidad y el significado de las identidades sociales se establece por medio de las imágenes ofrecidas por dichas construcciones. Las personas conocemos la realidad mediatizada como referente del significado de la propia realidad y los medios se convierten así en administradores de los códigos semióticos de las identidades de género y de sus escenarios sociales en los que interactúan. En cierta forma, esta transferencia de los iconos mediáticos como significados de la identidad de género se advierte en su adopción, por parte de los jóvenes, para expresar su personalidad en las redes sociales.

En otras palabras, los medios de comunicación construyen el significado de las identidades de género que actuarán como referentes en los que se mirarán hombres y mujeres, porque son ellos los que administran el poder simbólico y normativo del imaginario social. Su influencia para reforzar o debilitar las convicciones y actitudes en relación con los mandatos de género resulta incuestionable, pues a través de los personajes mediáticos o de los temas de la agenda informativa se propicia el debate y el reconocimiento social de nuevas propuestas identitarias. La comunicación visibiliza las ideas y los problemas sociales y, a partir de sus propuestas comunicativas, expresadas en personajes de series, *spots* publicitarios o temas de la agenda informativa, se consigue llamar la atención de la ciudadanía sobre las nuevas formas de entender las identidades de género. En este sentido, los medios deberían adoptar un compromiso para evitar la difusión de representaciones y discursos discriminatorios para las mujeres y, en cambio, favorecer opciones comunicativas que ilustren la igualdad de género como un beneficio para todos.

Los distintos trabajos de este volumen mantienen una tesis común: la persistencia de una perspectiva androcéntrica en los contenidos y las representaciones de los medios de comunicación, adaptados a nuevas expresiones culturales acordes con lo políticamente correcto. Sin embargo, un análisis detallado de los discursos mediáticos en sus diversos formatos permite advertir la permanencia de la visión dicotómica de la división de los roles de género en los que se basa la sociedad patriarcal, así como la presunción de la superioridad de todo lo relacionado con el hombre frente a las formas de vida que han caracterizado a las mujeres.

Los medios de comunicación tienen la oportunidad de invitar a la reflexión a través del entretenimiento, de construir sociedades paralelas a través de la ficción o de informar desde perspectivas más femeninas, que traten la actualidad como algo más que el negocio «político», en el sentido de la actividad de las instituciones y sus dirigentes. Pues, recogiendo uno de los lemas del feminismo, lo personal también es político, por lo que convendría retomar el sentido de la democracia desde los espacios de convivencia más próximos, mediante temas que reflejen la política de la cotidianidad y respeten la igualdad y la libertad de las personas en el modo de entender y compartir las responsabilidades que atañen a cada uno.

Por otro lado, convendría superar las representaciones de las mujeres desde esa óptica androcéntrica, que hace de la belleza su cualidad predilecta y casi exclusiva para su éxito social, o bien las virtudes de una madre perfecta que convierte el cuidado de los demás en su único horizonte vital. Estas representaciones pueden constituir formas de reforzar roles tradicionales que, sin embargo, no deberían condicionar los proyectos de autonomía de las mujeres ni sus aspiraciones profesionales.

Si la igualdad de género exige repensar la identidad femenina, no menos urgente y necesario resulta revisar también los estereotipos de masculinidad presentes en los medios de comunicación. La masculinidad debe ser de-construida en sus distintos escenarios patriarcales y mostrar la necesidad de recuperar los valores asociados a los modelos de vida femeninos como cualidades disponibles para el desarrollo de las personas. Estas masculinidades, sin los complejos de la superioridad jerárquica otorgada por el patriarcado, lograrían una mejor adaptación a los modelos de vida actuales en los que las condiciones socioeconómicas han mostrado el fracaso de asignaciones rígidas de los roles de género, frente a las virtudes de identidades «líquidas» (Bauman, 2003), es decir, con capacidad de adaptarse a las exigencias de los nuevos tiempos.

Por último, permítasenos unas breves líneas para denunciar la lacra social de la violencia de género, fomentada en buena medida por los discursos mediáticos sobre la identidad femenina. A nuestro juicio, no resulta admisible mantener la imagen permanente de la mujer víctima de la violencia machista, pues se corre el riesgo de publicitar y legitimar esta barbarie como un modo de afirmación de la identidad masculina en su forma más extrema y perversa. La emisión de imágenes sensacionalistas o un relato detallista de la tragedia podría alimentar el imaginario machista del maltratador antes que dotar a la mujer de fuerza para enfrentarse a este crimen. La sangre de las mujeres no

puede ser el ícono para la lucha contra la violencia de género, sino que más bien ha de serlo su vida, su lucha y su empeño para que la sociedad les reconozca el lugar que les corresponde en igualdad con los hombres.

Bibliografía

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Gender and media studies: progress and challenge in a vibrant research field

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Recommended citation: BUONANNO, M. (2014). "Gender and media studies: progress and challenge in a vibrant research field". *Anàlisi. Quaderns de Comunicació i Cultura*, 50, p. 5-25. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.7238/a.v0i50.2315>

Abstract

Gender and media studies has witnessed in recent years a resounding revival, as is testified by number of published monographs and collections, articles, themed issues of international journals, conferences that bring into focus the diverse features of the relationship between gender and communication. The field has gone through an ebb and flow process over time, since it began to take shape inside the academia in early seventies, under the determining influence of the second-wave feminism, which had made the media a primary object of inquiry and criticism. Actually feminism, its waves and shifts and multiple voices, is a major factor to be considered –alongside equally shiftings conceptual frameworks and methodological tools underpinning research and analysis, and the changing media contexts and contents– in order to account for the constitution and development of the gender and media scholarship.

This paper is aimed at drawing an overview of such a history, through a narrative of change and continuity that strives to render how the field has come to be configured and reconfigured over time, and has readjusted its mode of engagement with the fundamental challenge of disclosing and understanding the gendered and gendering dimensions of the media discourses and practices. More focus will be put on the strands of the vibrant debate that enlivens the current revival, much informed by competing ideas as regards gender and media in a postfeminist and media-saturated cultural environment.

Keywords: gender, media, images of women, feminism, post-feminism

Resumen. *Género y Media Studies: progreso y retos en un campo vibrante de la investigación*

Los estudios de género y los medios de comunicación han sido testigo en los últimos años un renacimiento rotundo como atestiguan varias monografías, colecciones, artículos o ediciones temáticas en revistas internacionales. El campo ha pasado por un proceso de flujo y reflujo a través del tiempo desde que comenzó a tomar forma académica en la década de los setenta. Este artículo tiene como objetivo elaborar un resumen de su evolución histórica a través de una narrativa de cambio y continuidad.

Palabras clave: género, media, la imagen de la mujer, feminismo, post-feminismo

1. An overview of the field

Gender and media studies has witnessed a resounding revival in recent years, as is testified by the wide array of published monographs, articles, themed issues of international journals and conferences that bring into focus the diverse features of the relationship between gender and the media of communication. Gender and media still matters and still calls for dedicated attention and commitment from scholars. Indeed the relationship between the two components of the dyad has perhaps never before been so challenging and complicated – indeed ‘tricky’, to quote Karen Ross (2010: viii); this becomes apparent in the contemporary scenario, characterised by dramatic change in the media landscape and by redefinition of the boundaries, as well as pluralization, of gender identities. We live as never before in a media-supersaturated world, owing to the growing proliferation and interconnection of technologies and cultural forms of communication. This situation may not necessarily entail *per se* a generalized intensification of the grasp of the media on our lives – and we should be pretty cautious in drawing such an inference – but it creates the conditions of an expanded media environment in which the power of the media, essentially the *symbolic power* of defining and constructing reality, “of imposing the vision of legitimate divisions” (Bourdieu, 1989:22) today finds extensive scope and unprecedented wide variety of sites of production and diffusion.

We are concerned precisely with this power when we interrogate and investigate the gendered and gendering dimensions of the media – as discourses, institutions, technologies and so on – in order to grasp and understand the role they play, *always at the intersection with other social and cultural factors*, in influencing processes of gender identity formation and development. And since both the notion and the lived experience of gender identity are today in a state of flux, and the male/female dichotomy (whether predicated upon traditional essentialist positions or on theories of the social construction of male/female differences) has been transcended by a broader spectrum of gender identities, it becomes evident that the intellectual challenge of doing gender and media scholarship is more stimulating, demanding and ‘tricky’ than ever. This challenge calls into play the theoretical perspectives, methodological approaches and interpretative strategies that we embrace as scholars and researchers in undertaking such an intellectual endeavour: in other words *how we do* gender and media studies.

I can obviously see the crucial importance to focus on this issue from the perspective of the current state of the art, of which I have only just sketched-out the complex and intriguing picture. I intend however to do this only in the second part of the article, after providing a brief and selective reconstruction of the history of gender and media studies. As is widely known, this field of scholarship began to take shape in the early 1970s and has evolved at different

paces in more than 40 years of existence. I have spoken of a fairly recent revival. But regardless of ebbs and flows or waves of evolution, gender and media studies has witnessed – not surprisingly – turning points and shifts in the conceptual frameworks and methodological approaches underpinning research and analysis. Those steps and moves are worth recalling, as retracing our intellectual genealogies may help to fight historic amnesia of previous fallacies, while on the other hand it provides the opportunity to rely and “build on previous insights” (Van Zoonen, 2011: 4). Media studies today is all too often flawed by lack of historical perspective – which may be cause for repetition and redundancy in research (Carlsson, 2007; Corner, 2013) - and younger researchers are not always aware of how their field of studies has been configured and reconfigured in the long duration.

I have mentioned a selective reconstruction and am therefore required to declare my criteria for selection. I must first say that I use the term ‘gender and media’ as an extended synecdoche (the whole that represents the part) whereas in fact I am referring mainly to *feminist media studies* and, still more specifically to the field of studies known as *feminist television criticism* (Brunsdon and Spigel, 1997, 2008; Lotz, 2001; McCabe and Akass, 2006), which focuses on diverse articulations of the relationship between women and television. In no way is this choice premised on the misconception of the plurality of genders and the ‘manifoldness’ of the media (Couldry, 2012), or on the implicit assumption that ‘gender’ is merely a synonym for ‘women’; nor does this choice advance the claim that all research on gender or media can, or must, be subsumed under the feminist banner. As Dow and Condit have stated explicitly: “The moniker of ‘feminist’ is reserved for research that studies communication theories and practice from a perspective that ultimately is oriented toward the achievement of ‘gender justice’” (2005: 445). Thus feminist-inspired media scholarship is concerned with gender justice and equality; it aims to foster *change* in accordance with the *will to change* (Hooks, 2004), which is a constant of feminism even in the heterogeneous and changing theoretical positions and political practices that have shaped the successive waves of the movement over time.

In any case feminist-inspired scholarship, even if it does not cover the whole field of gender and media studies (especially since a branch of scholarship on masculinity and later on various sexual minorities was established openly in the 1990s) has generated the largest body of research on the construction of femininity in the media, putting a major (albeit not exclusive) focus on television as the medium with the prime position in the media system. Although this primacy has been challenged in recent years by the impact of digitalisation and convergence, the continuing importance of television is undisputed. Despite numerous announcements of its imminent death, television is in no way an old medium: it remains for most people their main source of information and entertainment, *their main definer of reality*, regardless of how and where is made available and watched. There should be no one more aware of the risk and error in the dichotomy between old and new media (an idea enthusiastically embraced by a good many present-day media studies scholars)

than those who engage in gender theories and who are thus conscious that the thinking behind any dichotomy - as male/female - is fallacious.

Feminist media studies has the peculiar characteristic of having taken origins and stimulus *outside* academia, in the activist circles of second-wave feminism. In placing the formative stage of this criticism between mid-1970s and mid-1980s, Charlotte Brunsdon – a key figure of feminist television criticism in Europe – emphasises “the move from outside to inside the academy” (1997: 189); this move changed the figure of the ‘feminist activist’ into the ‘feminist intellectual’ holding an academic position. It was a consequential move, in that it favoured the creation – within media studies, at that time still under the banner of mass communication research – of a space (if only a marginal one, in accordance with the inequality regime of academia) where the voices of women concerned with, and about, the way women were treated by the media could be expressed and listened to: it might be said that this was one of the first achievements of the *will to change* that the movement infused into scholarship, even if this change concerned a restricted and somewhat privileged circle and not the ‘ordinary women’, whose ‘images’ portrayed in the print and especially the electronic media were persistently sought out by the female activists and intellectuals in the early phase of feminist media studies.

The story of feminist television criticism starts with the ‘images of women’ research trend, and that is also how I shall start my overview. But since the feminist discourse permits and indeed encourages recourse to autobiography (a recourse rejected by other modes of thinking and scholarship as an obstacle to scientific objectivity) I must add a further motive for my choosing to focus on feminist-inspired media and television criticism. The story of this field or sub-field is in many respects *my own* story. I was a feminist who later became an academic and have dedicated most of my research, begun precisely in the formative phase of feminist media studies, to investigating the discursive construction of gender identity (specifically female) in television.

2. Images of women

The feminist thinker Cynthia Enloe (2004) has brilliantly reconverted a common stereotype of femininity – curiosity – into a resource for production of knowledge, coining the expression ‘the curious feminist’ to denote an inquiry-based approach that aims to unveil and unpack structures of power, starting with the fundamental question ‘Where are the women?’ This, as it happens, was the precise key-question, well before Enloe thought-up her original idea, that was raised by the first feminist researches into women and the mass media.

‘Where are the women in [public] television? In front of the television set’ In the 1970s and the early 1980s, when the issue of women’s representation in the media was the main concern of academic and extra-academic research and was prominent also in the political and cultural debate raised by the feminist movement, recourse was had to the ironic aphorism coined by Muriel Cantor

(1978) in order to deplore the fact that women were much more often the viewers of TV than its protagonists. No aphorism coincides with the truth; it either exceeds it or falls short of it, as Karl Kraus teaches us; and although the quantitative research methodologies that predominated at the time seemed to support them, assertions of that type inevitably reflected to a greater or lesser extent the position that Angela McRobbie was later (1997) to define as feminism's 'angry repudiation' of the media.

In this first phase, which coincided with the emergence of second-wave feminism, research on women and the media was conducted mainly by having recourse to methodologies of content analysis, with the main objective of discerning and criticising the sexual stereotypes conveyed by television, the press and advertising. Variously referred to as 'images of women paradigm' or the 'sex roles approach', this trend in research came into existence in spheres of feminist activism and was consequently imbued with the strong criticism directed by the women's movement at the media, which they had marked out as a major target for a polemic attack. Betty Friedan's very influential book *The Feminine Mystique* (1963), which is widely credited for sparking off second-wave feminism, accused the media (in particular the women's magazines) of reproducing a sexist ideology that was provoking growing unhappiness among American women, trapped in their domestic roles as dedicated mothers and subordinate wives.

There may not have been precisely 'angry repudiation', but there is no doubt that a great deal of suspiciousness and mistrust towards the media permeated academic research. An example of a landmark work of that time (which is even today an essential point of reference for any historical overview of gender and media studies) is the collection *Hearth and Home: Images of Women in the Mass Media*, in which the sociologist Gaye Tuchman formulated the thesis of the 'symbolic annihilation of women' (Tuchman, 1978: 3-38). In introducing the outcomes of a series of researches on sexual stereotypes, Tuchman drew on the theories of George Gerbner to maintain – with specific reference to television – that by putting into practice systematic policies of under-representation and misrepresentation, the mass media had reached the point of denying or degrading the very social existence of women. In the 'fictional world' created by symbolic portrayals in the media, women turned out to be grossly under-represented; they were almost excluded from the sphere of work outside the home, yet did not escape the roles of wife and mother. Furthermore women were portrayed as weak and vulnerable, the helpless victims of masculine violence, and in general they seemed to be dependent or submissive in their relationships with men. Absent, marginalised, trivialised, victimized: in short, '*symbolically annihilated*'. According to the researchers, those images reflected the dominant ideas concerning gender and power relationships between the sexes (the reflection hypothesis), but did not do justice to the true condition and the aspirations of modern women. "Television images of women in large measure are false," proclaimed the conclusions of the volume, "portraying them less as they really are, more as some might want them to be" (Tuchman, Kaplan, Benét, 1978: 273).

The ‘sex role approach’ was destined to fall into disuse in subsequent decades, although its presence continued to hover in the persistent cliché that research on gender and the media should remain firmly anchored to the discourse of sexual stereotypes and the dualism of positive and negative images. The progressive abandonment of this approach obviously does not mean that gender stereotypes (both old and new) no longer exist or persist to this day, nor does it negate the importance of unveiling and unpacking them and finding the means of making them – to quote Stuart Hall – ‘uninhabitable’ (in Lotz, 2006: 12). The reasons for the decisive shift, from the 1980s onwards, of feminist media studies towards other approaches were however numerous and well grounded.

Inspired by the paradigm of ‘communication research’, the analysis of sexual stereotypes moved from assumptions and came to conclusions that have been the object of serious criticism and revision: the assumption of full transparency as well as univocality of media’s images; and the conclusion that these images were immediately assumed as models of behaviour (‘role model framework’: Lotz, 2006) on the part of vulnerable and inactive female viewers. Merri Lisa Johnson describes this as “the media culture as a threatening man and the female spectator as vulnerable maiden”, in her pungent synthesis (2007: 14). The most compelling criticism was directed at the epistemological fallacy of the merely mirror-like and mimetic understanding of media portrayals that underpinned the approach of the images of women; from there originated the deliberate imputation that the media were spreading unreal and distorted images of women. ‘Distortion’ was a key concept of that research approach; and the accusation that the media were misrepresenting the true situation of women in turn disclosed the claim, on the part of academics and feminists, that they possessed the authentic and legitimate version of the true situation of women and wished to impose it. “Arguing for more realistic images is always an argument for the representation of ‘your’ version of reality” (Brunsdon, 1997: 28). In fact what emanated from these researches was a high level of self-confidence on the part of feminist authors, who assigned to themselves the duty of raising the consciousness of ordinary women, the unconscious dupes of media sexism. Tuchman spoke for many in closing her chapter on the symbolic annihilation with the question “How can we free women from the tyranny of media messages limiting their lives to hearth and home?” (1978: 38).

In expressing its own will to change, the emerging scholarship on gender and media did not avoid the tension and, in its true sense, the opposition between feminism and femininity: between the liberating mission of the former and the unwitting subjection of the latter to dominant patriarchal ideology. This tension opened up a contradiction in feminist criticism of media, since it seemed paradoxically to incorporate the same vision of women as victims, which cultural critics blamed in researches on sex roles: a further reason for wanting to explore new approaches. And we must finally acknowledge, as Rosalind Gill has remarked (2007a: 14) the saturation effect provoked by the accumulation of a body of work that, in confining itself to intercepting and

analysing sexual stereotypes, failed to enquire into other aspects of the relationship between gender and media. This repeated ‘discovery’ of sexism in the media ran the risk in the longer term of becoming more tedious than enlightening.

The quantitative methodologies, the restricted range of objects of study, the implicit adhesion to a transmission view of communication that took no account of audience agency, the undeniable prejudice towards the media: all these make the ‘images of women’ approach seems inexorably dated. Nevertheless we must acknowledge that the approach played a fundamental role in the formative phase of feminist media scholarship; its very limits helped to orientate gender and media research towards more sophisticated conceptual frameworks and to expand avenues of research and deploy more subtle interpretative strategies. Furthermore, even though the ‘images of women’ paradigm may no longer constitute a valid theoretical and methodological point of reference for present-day gender and media studies, it testifies to a pioneer phase of feminist scholarship in which the production of knowledge was envisaged as a premise of action for change toward more gender justice in media and society. This is probably a testimonial that still preserves its value as an exemplar.

3. The paradigm shift

A characteristic (and a strong point) of feminist media studies is the particularly permeable nature of a field that has taken shape and developed at the intersection with numerous other fields and disciplines, each of which has contributed to the orientation and reorientation of theoretical frameworks and the choice of objects and methods of study. Although mass communication research was the prevailing disciplinary context of the foundational phase of feminist media studies, gender and media research soon found space in the agenda of other disciplines; and the progressive academic institutionalisation of the field exposed it to intellectual influences that over the years have penetrated most of the areas of scholarship with which it has intersected: media studies, obviously, but also film studies, semiotics, sociology, cultural studies, women and gender studies and more so. The feminist perspectives and concerns of the young (at that time) field of scholarship have in turn exercised influence on more established branches of study; this happened especially in television studies, which have benefited from the refreshing and groundbreaking contribution of feminist criticism in two key areas of research, namely television genres and audiences. The engagement with genres and audiences marked a significant and consequential paradigm shift in the formative phase of feminist television criticism, which culminated in the course of the 1980s. Like any process of historical evolution, the development of feminist television criticism does not fall into a succession of self-contained decades; the prerequisites for the shift that I have referred to, for example, were already in place in the late 1970s, in the full bloom of the ‘images of women’ approach.

The realist paradigm informing this approach had provoked criticism within feminism itself; the rise to prominence in the 1980s of an influential school of social constructivism within social theory helped to dismantle the assumption that media representation should reflect reality. Media do not mirror, instead they construct reality, and “they are involved in actively producing gender” (Gill 2007a: 13). At the end of the 1980s the Italian theorist Theresa de Lauretis (1987) was to propose the definition of the media as ‘technologies of gender’. The content analysis, so much ingrained in a deterministic vision of the influence of media messages, had for its part been undermined owing to the qualitative analyses that were carried out under the banner of film studies and cultural studies; those in-depth textual analyses were not concerned with images and stereotypes but sought to throw light on wider and deeper structures of meanings, which did not lend themselves well to univocal interpretations and automatic inferences concerning impact on viewers.

During the same period, media studies were abandoning traditional research on effects in favour of a resolute turn to audiences – the so-called ethnographic turn or new audience research – to which British cultural studies made a decisive contribution. Stuart Hall’s famous essay ‘Encoding/decoding’ (1980) proved to be hugely influential in generating an important trend in reception theory and research that posited the semiotic openness of media texts for plural audience readings and responses - from dominant to negotiated to oppositional - according to the different socio-cultural positioning of viewers and the different contextual resources which frame making sense of television. Hall’s communicative model (in particular certain interpretations that went too far in confirming the subversive potential of audience responses) has subsequently aroused criticism (see Livingstone, 2007); but reception theory initiated an exciting phase of research informed by the new paradigm of the active and interpretative audience.

Against this background of shifting paradigms should be placed the works of those feminist scholars (for example Ien Ang 1985; Dorothy Hobson 1982; Michèle Mattelart, 1982 and 1986; Tania Modleski, 1982; Ellen Seiter, 1989) who have favoured the emergence and enhancement of objects of study and research that were previously neglected: in particular the traditionally feminine genres and more especially serial narratives such as soap operas, along with female viewers who were freed from the stigma of ‘cultural dopes’ and regarded as subjects actively engaged in the negotiation of the meanings and pleasures offered by media texts.

Feminist engagement with the soap opera did not happen without ambivalences. Although second-wave feminism’s “general framework of hostility to media stereotyping” (Brunsdon, 2000: 52) was by now somewhat toned down, soap opera still remained the televisual genre that was mainly linked, on account of its content and the profile of its viewers, to the female figure that along with advertisers’ woman-as-an-object was the feminists’ prime polemical target: the housewife. Admittedly, the soap opera was the only kind of programme in which women were not under-represented, indeed they accounted for the majority of characters; but this feature, which had clearly emer-

ged from previous content analysis, helped to intensify contempt for daytime serials that were stigmatized as *feminine ghetto*.

In any case, the choice of the soap opera as a new object of study for feminist scholars was influenced by growing interest in exploring a genre “that was perceived to be both for and about women” (Brunsdon, 2000: 29), and by the wish to capture and understand the nature of the pleasure that female viewers derived from watching them. Accordingly, this shift in feminist television criticism is also referred to as a ‘turn to pleasure’ (Gill, 2007a: 13).

On the other hand, the focus on soap opera and on pleasures and the identifications experienced by a female viewership entailed challenging established cultural hierarchies in academy; feminist scholars were thus expressing a criticism of the gendered agenda of media and television studies, which in setting up a hierarchy of relevant and legitimate objects of study had up till then failed to give serious consideration to a cultural form that was aimed at women. Research into soap opera audiences was equally situated at the intersection of a twofold intent: to gain fundamental insights into consumption and reception of a genre that was so central to women’s everyday life, and to turn marginalised social categories into key-objects of study. The critical readings carried out by feminist scholars speculated on a hypothetical figure of the female viewer, inferred from textual constructs; but it was necessary to interrogate real women to achieve an understanding, not merely a theoretical one, of how they made sense of television. And for its part researching the empirical female viewer was a way of giving voice to ordinary women and conferring visibility and value on the personal narratives, hitherto not listened to, of their experience as viewers.

Studies of soap opera and audience research have offered opportunities for encounters and a rapprochement between two figures – the feminist intellectual and the female viewer – who were poles apart in many feminist writings. This relationship was, and remains, ambiguous and contradictory in its oscillation and sometimes entanglement between identification and dis-identification. But the shift in the 1980s was significant, not least because it taught feminist media scholars to regard with more sympathy and respect (without abdicating but at the same time problematizing their own critical stance: Brunsdon, 1997: 43) both the ordinary women and the much-denigrated cultural forms that addressed and pleased them.

4. Does television empower women?

For once I am going to renounce my intention to limit my references to the field of feminist media studies and will instead recall the thinking of an author, Joshua Meyrowitz, who is certainly not in this field but who in the 1980s drew up a general interpretative model on the influence of electronic media on the lives of women. In the context of a work that soon became a classic (*No Sense of Place*, 1985) and was rooted in the intellectual tradition that

falls under the heading of ‘Medium Theory’, Joshua Meyrowitz identified in the new ‘patterns of access to information’ created by the electronic media a key factor in raising the feminist consciousness and contributing to the breaking up of the rigid dualism of sex roles.

In the course of history, Meyrowitz pointed out, the social strategy aimed at naturalising the inferior status and subordination of women was brought about by, amongst other things, the institution and maintenance of distinct and separate spheres of presence, action and information for males and females. Assigned to the private sphere in her house, a symbol and a place of physical containment, excluded from participation in social arenas and from access to the fields of knowledge that were reserved for men, a woman would lead her own life and develop her own subjectivity in a situation of relative isolation and experiential separateness from the opposite sex. Such isolation, in turn, constituted not only the consequence of a socially-determined mode in which femininity was constructed, but an essential device for this very construct.

The advent of electronic media, and more especially the advent of television, radically changed this state of affairs. Television is perhaps the main creator of that ‘delocalisation of social life’ that is recognised as one of the distinctive characteristics of modernity; the physical location no longer circumscribes the range of knowledge and experience, now enormously broadened by the capacity of electronic media to overcome spatial barriers. Television creates informative systems or models for access to information that break up and neutralize the structures of isolation and greatly help to erode the significance and extent of domestic segregation – with all its cultural and behavioural associations – by which in the past the social construct of femininity and the separation of sexual spheres was sustained. In this way, Meyrowitz concluded, television triggered processes of merging female and male identities, driving them towards a ‘middle region’ that combined aspects of both genders in a sort of ‘situational androgyny’.

No automatically progressive vision of communication technology is intrinsic to this theory of the media’s impact on the lives of women. Meyrowitz emphasised the need to take account of several causal factors and the validity of his observations was to be understood as being confined to the first televizual generation, to the young and very young women who in the 1950s happened to be the first to experience the irruption of the new medium into the concrete and symbolic spaces of their daily life.

I wanted to recall this theory, which feminist authors such as Lynn Spigel (1992) have contested, because of the daring originality with which Meyrowitz subverted (against the received feminist opinion at that time) the role of television in relation to the crucial problem of changes in conceiving and experiencing femininity. His sophisticated analysis in fact leads us to acknowledge television, in given conditions and circumstances, as an innovative force, helping to integrate women into male-dominated social arenas. In present-day parlance we could say ‘a resource for feminine empowerment’.

Furthermore, Meyrowitz accredited to television the then incipient process of blurring the boundaries between female and male identity, thus indicating the fluid and flexible character of gender: a view that was soon to be theorised from a far more radical perspective (I am thinking of Judith Butler's *Gender trouble*, 1990) becoming in turn part of present-day received opinion, feminist or other, in matter of gender. It is perhaps no surprise that the interpretative model advanced by Meyrowitz should have had little impact on feminist media studies in the 1980s, which were cautiously renouncing their hostility (not their critical attitude, and for good reason) towards the media and popular culture in general, and were just beginning to acknowledge media texts as resources for the imagination, capable of offering female audiences the pleasure of cultivating fantasies of empowerment and exploring modes of femininity that could not otherwise be enjoyed in real life. But the emphasis, consistent with the advent of new audience research in media studies, was on the viewers' interpretation and not at all on television; researchers were discovering that audiences created their own meanings resisting or negotiating the power of television texts to shape sensemaking processes. What is more, Meyrowitz himself went along with the traditional and sexist character of many television discourses, if only to reassert that the specific contents could be less important and influential than the breakdown of gender segregation in access to information. His insistence on structural and contextual factors, without wishing to undermine the importance of the textual elements, was a warning against the claim (never entirely abandoned) that one could infer the effects of television simply from its content: not merely because television is a complex entity, which operates at different levels and speaks, as it were, with many voices, not necessarily consistent with one another – this is why it can be simultaneously, but on different levels, emancipatory and male chauvinist – but because the content itself can conceal ambivalent or ambiguous meanings and constitute a site of struggle between different ideological and cultural positions. Meyrowitz thus puts forward a conception of television as a multi-faced and potentially contradictory medium, at the same time liberating and sexist as far as gender politics are concerned. Twenty years after its elaboration, this conception preserves intact its capacity to introduce us to a more articulated and complex understanding of television, suggesting modes of investigation and analysis and interpretative keys that take into account the multi-layered and multivocal nature of the media, whenever we engage in exploring the forms and manifestations of their power to define reality. Thus Meyrowitz's theory preserves the appeal of an intellectual challenge to the widespread and persistent tendency to 'put the blame on TV'.

Recently Elihu Katz, one of the founding fathers of communication studies, revisited and subsequently worked on Meyrowitz's theory, basing on it a positive response to the question 'Does television empower women?' (Howard-Williams and Katz, 2013). Katz has declared that he was driven by the intent "to challenge the common tendency of ascribing to it [television] only negative outcomes" (19). I shall take up these suggestions in the concluding section of this article.

5. Assessing the state of the art

In the introduction to one of her last books, the English scholar Karen Ross relates that when she announced in a conversation with a few colleagues that she had just finished a book on gender and the media, their response was ‘What? Another one?’ (Ross, 2010: VII). Ross observes, rightly, that no-one would make such a comment concerning studies of the internet or war or politics; yet when the issue of gender and media literature comes up even in the academic circles, there seems to be a perception that there is an oversupply, indeed an unnecessary accumulation of works in a field of enquiry that some people, despite their polite expressions of interest, tend to regard – in their more or less conscious adherence to a post-feminist perspective – as rather old-fashioned.

The episode referred to by Ross is hardly an isolated case. Working in the fields of feminist media studies and feminist television criticism has entailed, and still entails, the probability of encountering reactions on the lines of ‘What? Another one?’ – as if those matters with which we are concerned were dusty and outmoded, fit only to be consigned to the attic or indeed to the archaeology of a feminism of yesteryear or the languishing margins of niche studies. Instead the abundant flowering of gender and media studies in the international academia of the new century testifies to the vitality of this branch of scholarship, which is engaged in the ongoing task of mapping, analysing and understanding the manifold gendered forms of media production, portrayals and reception.

Nevertheless it is true that after the major paradigm shift that occurred in the 1980s, generating a steady flow of innovative research and publications, the history of scholarship seemed to go through a phase of relative stasis. Liesbet Van Zoonen locates the pause in the evolution of feminist media studies in the mid-1990s and attributes it to the complex of institutional and technological transformations that fuelled the idea of a clear demarcation between old media e new media. The irresistible attraction of the new, instigated also by the growing channelling of funds for research towards projects relating to digital technology, soon came to eclipse the old electronic and printed media. What is more, said Van Zoonen ironically, “Didn’t we know all there was to know about these old media already? What more could be found about the stereotypes of women in advertising?” (Van Zoonen, 2011: 3).

In truth we certainly did not know (and we still do not know) all there is to know about the increasing complexity of the relationship between gender and media in times when old and new intersect, converge and merge. But although the growth of feminist media studies seemed to slow down in the 1990s, this temporary phase was not without its achievements: it allowed scholarship to reap the fruits of the previous innovative season and to assess and to reflect upon the state of the art of scholarship. Several important works on expertly-researched topics were published in those years, including (but not limited to) the landmark books by Ann Grey on gendered video technology (1992); the groundbreaking research by Julie d’Acci (1994) on the pioneering series

Cagney and Lacey; the wide-ranging study by Bonnie J. Dow (1996) on feminism making its way into prime-time television programming. But what particularly characterised the literature of the 1990s was the works, whether in the form of the monograph or a collection, that offered extensive overviews of the field of feminist media studies. Worth mentioning in this connection are Liesbet Van Zoonen's broad-ranging critical introduction to *Feminist Media Studies* (1994); the *Reader in Women and Media*, edited by Helen Baehr and Ann Gray (1996); and the first edition of *Feminist Television Criticism: A Reader*, edited by Charlotte Brunsdon, Julie d'Acci and Lynn Spigel (1997).

Insofar as they set out to restore a representative picture of their area of scholarship, these works emphasised the level of maturity and sophistication and the critical and reflexive capacities developed by feminist media studies in two decades of history. The range of objects studied, from representations to texts, audiences, reception contexts and production practices; the diversification of theoretical and methodological perspectives, thanks to fruitful interdisciplinary intersections (with semiotics, film studies, cultural studies, post-modernism, post-colonialism, social constructivism and more still); the important move towards the acknowledgement of class-race-culture-inflected differences among women; the engagement with ideas of gender identity as flexible and dynamic, and of meanings as sites of struggle and negotiations: whether they were single-authored monographs or multivocal collections, the state-of-the-art reviews that appeared in the 1990s displayed evidence of the expansion and deepening of the now firmly established field of feminist media studies, which also allowed for more complex accounts and understanding of how gender was addressed and articulated in the media. The notion of post-feminism, which was due to become the predominant issue in the feminist debate and in popular culture in general in the 2000s, also made a first appearance (Probyn, 1997) in *Feminist Television Criticism: A Reader*.

6. Feminist media studies in the post-feminist era

Nowadays television and feminism find themselves associated in conventional wisdom – which may sometimes subtly percolate into academia – by a common belief: i.e. that the one and the other are now both regarded as outmoded and *passé*. Narratives of death that take their demise for granted are produced and widely circulated.

As for television, we can clearly see at work the enduring ‘substitution approach’ that so often prevails in discussions about the media and their evolution. By ‘substitution approach’ I refer to the intellectual penchant of accounting for processes of change and development in terms of displacement of the ‘old’ by the ‘new’: the new, in this case, being obviously the internet and in general the digitisation affecting the whole media environment. Consistently with the verdict of demise, the present stage of television history has been conceptualized and is typically defined as *post-broadcast*: television has been granted the prefix *post*. Is television really gone? In a sense, we could say that

television has never been so healthy and triumphant as it is today: it has entered an age of ‘plenty’ (Ellis, 2000), characterised by an unceasing proliferation of channels, an uncontrollable spread of output across media, screens, platforms and national and transnational phenomena of immersive and addictive fandom that was unthinkable in the old days of the medium. But on the other hand it may be said that owing precisely to the transformation undergone by the medium in the digital age, television is no longer what it used to be. Predictions and announcements of death have been a regular feature of the history of almost all the technologies and cultural forms of modernity - novel, film, radio, press, painting, photography etc. – and have proved to be systematically unfounded. But we should be wary of dismissing those announcements, since they reveal underlying essentialist conceptions that tend to harden the nature of whatever is at issue into a set of given and unchanging characteristics: essentialist visions that resist coming to terms with processes of change and becoming.

Things are no different for feminism. Its alleged ‘pastness’ is claimed by many, both in intellectual circles and in popular culture; and the word has in turn acquired the prefix *post*, attesting that we live now in a *post-feminist* era. Admittedly, post-feminism is a highly contradictory and disputed notion, as is apparent from the burgeoning debate that has resounded over the last two decades in the vast array of writings dedicated to feminist media studies. I do not intend to embroil myself in the intricacies of this heated debate, to which numerous feminist scholars (Boyle, 2008; Brooks, 1997; Budgeon, 2011; Genz and Brabon, 2009; Gill, 2007a and 2007b; Hollows and Moseley, 2006; Lotz, 2001; McRobbie, 2009; Press, 2011; Tasker and Negra, 2007) have contributed, supplying – from different standpoints – diverse and competing versions and interpretations of post-feminism. I shall confine myself to a brief overview, starting from the unquestioned acknowledgment (see Gill, 2007a; Boyle, 2008; Budgeon, 2011; Thornham and Weissmann, 2013) that the term ‘post-feminism’ entered public discourse some time ago “as shorthand for the death of feminism” (Budgeon, 2011: 27). Two opposing grounds are cited for the validation of this claim: the success of feminism – gender equality is now a *fait accompli* – or its failure: gender equality has proved to be an unattainable utopia – but in either case feminism is constructed as outmoded and outdated. In a word, it is *history* (Thornham and Weissmann, 2013). The term ‘post-feminist’ may also encompass an oppositional stance and be associated with rejection of second-wave feminism (Paglia, 1993; Wolf, 1994), or even backlash against it (Faludi, 1992).

In academic circles post-feminism may conceal ulterior connotations. Some feminist theorists (Brooks, 1007; Lotz, 2001) see it as a historical shift, a revitalising development triggered by the encounter with other ‘posts’ – post-structuralism, post-colonialism, post-modernism – that has oriented feminist thinking and practice towards a new engagement with issues of differences between women. “Post-feminismis about the conceptual shift within feminism from debates around equality to debates around difference” (Brooks, 1997: 4). Post-feminism in this sense offers a new analytical perspective that stresses the intersection between gender and “other forms of marginalization

and other axes of power” (Gill, 2007a: 250) along lines of class, ethnicity, nationality and sexuality, thus displacing the once-accepted idea of a commonality of women’s experiences. As Braithwaite (2002: 341) highlights, “the breadth of feminist issues is now much broader than ever before”.

Gill and Budgeon are for their part the proponents of definitions of post-feminism that do not coincide either with the demise or rejection of feminism or with an analytical perspective focused on difference; they rather conceive post-feminism as a set of distinctive features of contemporary culture. Gill speaks about a “post-feminist *sensibility*” (Gill, 2007b) that informs media culture and should therefore constitute the *critical object* of feminist media studies. Budgeon has recourse to the concept of a ‘*constellation*’ (2011: 37) to describe the historically specific combination of factors that make up the post-feminist context to which contemporary feminist scholarship has to respond.

Interestingly enough, despite the diversity and divergences of opinion about the terminology, conceptualizations and evaluations that have characterised the debate on post-feminism in the 2000s, there still exists within scholarly circles an ample margin of consent on what constitutes the critical feature of post-feminist culture: that is to say, the incorporation of a series of typical elements of feminism into popular culture, into media discourses and representations, where they co-exist in a complex and contradictory relationship with contrasting elements and tendencies to ‘re-traditionalise’ femininity. As Rosalind Gill writes: “In this post-feminist moment...feminist ideas are simultaneously incorporated, revised, and depoliticised” (2007a: 161).

According to Tasker and Negra: “Post-feminist culture works in part to incorporate, assume or naturalise aspects of feminism; it also works to commodify feminism via the figure of woman as empowered consumer” (Tasker and Negra, 2007: 2). Andrea Press in turn points out “the media’s tendency to reinforce simultaneously both feminist goals and the post-feminist repudiation of feminist gains” (Press, 2011: 110). In this connection Angela McRobbie has put forward the concept of ‘double entanglement’ to define the co-existence between neo-traditional values and demands for liberalisation: that is to say, between including and at the same time discarding feminism within popular culture. “Feminism is taken into account, but only to be shown to be no longer necessary” (McRobbie, 2009: 17).

Broadly speaking, then, this is the scenario that contemporary feminist media studies are faced with. Feminism is no longer deemed necessary, as the current conventional wisdom is that women - at any rate in Western society – have achieved equality or are at least sufficiently empowered to successfully attain personal goals in any field of private and public life. A lengthy list of women who have ‘made it’, be they managers, politicians, professionals, media celebrities, fictional heroines, offers in this connection an abundance of exemplars and models; the dazzling evidence of this allegedly achieved equality is liable to overshadow (though not to eliminate) the continuing existence of gender inequalities in contemporary societies.

In the context of a media environment that has considerably expanded, interconnected by digitally-enhanced technologies, television is still alive and well,

pronouncements of death notwithstanding. And television is at the forefront of the post-feminist trends that have dispersed through myriad sites of popular culture the intriguing and controversial interconnection between media and feminism. More precisely, television has been in the vanguard of this phenomenon since the 1980s, when post-feminist signals first began to surface. As pointed out by Julie d'Acci in her outstanding research that adopted a still unequalled 'integrated approach' encompassing production textuality and reception (d'Acci, 2002: 93), *Cagney and Lacey* (1981-88, CBS) was the first TV show to address feminist viewers and feminist issues from the position of a mainstream police series. Bonnie J. Dow, in her book published in the mid-1990s (1996), further documented the intersections between television and feminism in prime-time dramas of the 1980s and 1990s, making explicit reference to post-feminism. Amanda Lotz, for her part, has indicated a series of attributes of post-feminism that can be identified in the unprecedented variety of female-centred dramas which at the start of the twenty-first century have offered unusually complex portrayals of female characters (Lotz, 2001, 2006).

This is not to claim that television, or more generally the 'media manifold' (Couldry, 2012) and popular culture, has embraced feminist ideals and values. They may however be said to share "the acknowledgement of gender equality as a social good" (Budgeon, 2011: 184) that characterizes post-feminist cultural sensibility. In fact feminist values and goals are co-opted into discursive media constructs where they are often altered or contradicted, thus complicating the production of gendered subjectivities. "This provides a focus for feminist critique" (Budgeon, 2011: 184).

The co-option of the objectives and key words of feminism – *agency, empowerment, choice* – into popular entertainment is regarded with suspicion and scepticism in feminist scholarship circles. Most female media scholars take issue with the 'mainstreaming' of feminist ideals, on the grounds that they are diluted and adjusted so as to fit into an individualistic neo-liberal consumer culture, focused on consumption and the celebration of the body.

As Genz and Brabon (2009: 24-25) have observed, opposition towards the media, a characteristic of the initial phase of feminist media studies, is being reconfigured more specifically in the post-feminist context as opposition towards consumer culture and the sexualisation of the female body. Female sexual objectification, in particular, is blamed for reviving "old forms of oppression and colonisation of the body and of female sexuality" (Casalini, 2011: 46) in a new and questionable guise of women's self-determination and free choice. In consequence, the notion of sexism that seemed to have fallen into disuse has been resurrected and is used in criticism of the widespread practices of girls' and women's sexualisation to be found in advertising, the press, television, the cinema, video games and the internet alike. (Douglas, 2010; Gill, 2012).

Rather paradoxically, this insistent criticism ends up being as much pervasive in contemporary feminist media scholarship as the phenomenon it addresses is ubiquitous in popular culture. In some way it also recalls feminist criticism's original obsession with sexual stereotypes. In truth there is some

justification for the fear that by putting sexualisation of the female figure at the centre of attention and making it a focal point of the criticisms aimed at the media and at popular culture in general, we run the risk of abandoning all the other issues in a sort of blind spot. Liesbet Van Zoonen, from her standpoint as an influential feminist academic and author of the now classic *Feminist Media Studies* (1994), has recently warned us against the blindness, already occurred in the past, of subordinating an entire agenda of important questions to the primacy of the (although legitimate) criticism towards a culture that is “so pervaded by images of perfect and (hetero) sexualised, predominantly female bodies” (Duits and Van Zoonen, 2011: 492). She has gone further, stating that the alarm about the vulnerability of today’s young women, exposed to the insidious indoctrination of a strongly-sexualised popular culture, “is offensive and forswears decades of feminist research and politics” (Duits and Van Zoonen, 2011: 504).

Clearly the combination of the post-feminist cultural context and the plurality of the connected technologies and cultural forms that saturate the media environment we inhabit raises new challenges and revives old risks for contemporary feminist media studies. The risk, as I have already noted, is that of adopting a new posture of hostility, thus remaining trapped in what Carolyn M. Byerly has aptly named ‘the paradigm of the misogynist media’ (Byerly, 1999: 386). Encapsulated in this paradigm is a vision of the media as fundamentally embroiled – an exception is often made for the internet though – in conservative gender ideologies that allow for representational politics that undermine and trivialise women’s gains in society, while pretending to take them into account. Although such a vision certainly captures one of the most insidious inflections of the women-and-media relationship – and one that calls for a high level of feminist attention and criticism – nonetheless it needs to be transcended, so as to allow feminist scholarship to regard and understand the complex patterns of this relationship from broader and more nuanced analytical perspectives. I refer once again to the trope of the ‘curious feminist’ to indicate that nowadays the question to be addressed by feminist media studies – as suggested by Merri Lisa Johnson – is ‘*What else is there to say?*’ (2007: 14). The challenge that is worth tackling today implies going beyond (without disregarding or minimising) sexualisation and women’s disempowerment and containment in popular culture: in order to explore *also* the progressive and empowering *potential* of the media, as they have to a lesser or greater extent integrated elements of feminism. At least alternatively, as suggested by Braithwaite (2002) feminist studies might take into account the role of media in helping to naturalize feminist ideas and desires and hence to improve women’s status. If and how media play a part in supporting progress and not merely gender containment is a matter of interest to communication scholars, who are (or should be) highly concerned with the capacity of media to produce change.

I have deliberately referred earlier in this article to the claim made by both Joshua Meyrowitz and more recently Elihu Katz that television may operate in given circumstances as a resource for women’s empowerment. For instance, a

television landscape that offers the choice of a rich array of ‘amazingly complex’ (Lotz, 2001: 114) and diverse female characters may create the conditions for female viewers to encounter “exciting new definitions and identities, also of feminist origin” – as Joke Hermes has acknowledged (Hermes, 2006: 93). By the same token we must bear in mind the possibility that the hybrid and contradictory nature of post-feminist culture, which informs in varying degrees the discursive constructions of gender in today’s media, may allow for more complex rendering of the equally hybrid and contradictory nature of the identities and subjectivity of women. A fair number of feminist scholars (Lotz, Byelby, Genz and Brabon, Akass and MacCabe) have undertaken fruitful work in this direction, producing nuanced and comprehensive analyses of popular post-feminist series and heroines that embody ambivalence and conflicts experienced by contemporary women in everyday life.

But I remain of the view, and I am certainly not the first to maintain that the most critical challenge that feminist media studies are required to confront today concerns the study of audiences. Now that the impetus created by the paradigm shift in the 1980s has lost its impact, media consumption and reception have remained “one of the under-studied aspects of the women-and-media relationship” (Byerly, 2012: 11), owing to the pre-eminence that the textual approach, the focus on texts and representations, has notoriously achieved within feminist scholarship (and more generally in media studies).

Representations matter and have consequences: consequences that can be grasped only by inquiring what active, interpretative viewers do, think and say in relation to them (Couldry, 2012). This has always been a complicated matter to study, still more since the transformation of the media environment allowed for a range of innovative and diverse viewing patterns and modes of engagement with media content. Without over-emphasizing notions such as expanded media texts or trans-mediality, there may be a more significant divergence than ever between the discrete text as selected and analysed by critical scholars and the text as experienced by audiences in varying practices and contexts of consumption – which have a significant impact on processes of sense-making along with socio-cultural positioning of the viewing subjects. Thus it becomes a priority for feminist media scholarship to bring their inquiry into the sphere of the lived experience, where real women encounter (post-feminist) media discourses on gender. Failing to connect scholarly readings and interpretations of media texts with audiences’ sense-making activity would risk further perpetuating the long-held hidden assumption of the ordinary woman’s *otherness and separateness* in respect to the feminist intellectual, precisely when the embedding of feminism in popular culture seems to aim at reconciling, for better and for worse, feminist with feminine identity.

Doing feminist media studies has become an increasingly complex intellectual endeavour, but it is completely within the reach of an established scholarship that has proved to be resourceful, vibrant and reflexive: and whose capacity to meet the challenges of the changes in media, culture and society is nurtured by the unremitting commitment to help improve gender equality in the world we live in.

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Gender Dimension in Media and Communication Studies: Main Concepts and Illustrations in Mass Mediated Texts.

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Recommended citation: RODRÍGUEZ, M P.; CUCKLANZ, L. (2014). "Gender dimension in media and communication studies: main concepts and illustrations in mass mediated texts". *Anàlisi. Quaderns de Comunicació i Cultura*, 50, p. 27-38. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.7238/a.v0i50.2250>

Abstract

This article defends the notion that incorporation of the gender dimension in all Communication and Media studies is highly desirable because of its contribution to the study of ideology, ethics, and balance in media. The first part of the article explores the main reasons for the need of such transversal integration of gender studies in university curricula, especially in the field of Communication and Media Studies and indicates the main concepts that should be part of undergraduate degrees that include these areas. The second part of the article provides an illustration of the pervasive presence of gender bias in mass mediated texts including mainstream news stories and television programs. The exposition of insights related to gender stereotypes and biases in these two areas are intended as illustrative examples that point to the range and significance of scholarship on gender and communication/media more generally.

Key words: gender, media, stereotype, bias, ideology, news, television, Spain, ethics, education

Resumen. *La perspectiva de género en los medios y los estudios de comunicación: conceptos clave y ejemplos*

En este artículo se defiende la idea de que la incorporación de la dimensión de género en los estudios de comunicación y medios es muy conveniente debido a su contribución al estudio de la ideología, la ética, y el equilibrio en los medios de comunicación. En la primera parte del artículo se exploran las principales razones de la necesidad de esta integración transversal de los estudios de género en los programas universitarios, especialmente en el campo de la Comunicación y Estudios de los Medios e indica los principales conceptos que deben formar parte de títulos de grado que incluyen estas áreas. La segunda parte del artículo proporciona un ejemplo de la presencia dominante de los prejuicios de género en noticias y programas de televisión.

Palabras Clave: género, medios de comunicación, estereotipo, prejuicio, ideología, noticias, televisión, España, ética, educación

Introduction

The aim of this article is two-fold. First, it seeks to detail the rationale behind the urgent need to include the gender dimension in Communication and Media studies and to accomplish such purpose it details the main concepts and learning results to be included in the curricular agenda. Second, it attests to the benefits that students would derive from such knowledge of gender studies by exploring the pervasive presence of gender bias in television programs. The article intends to provide an illustration of the advantages that undergraduate students would obtain from the implementation of gender studies from both a theoretical and an applied perspective.

This article defends the notion that incorporation of the gender dimension in all Communication and Media studies is highly desirable. The first part of the article explores the main reasons for the need of such transversal integration of gender studies in university curricula, especially in the field of Communication and Media Studies and indicates the main concepts that should be part of undergraduate degrees that include these areas. The second part of the article provides an illustration of the pervasive presence of gender bias in mass mediated texts including mainstream news stories and television programs. The discussion of these two areas is intended to provide elaborated examples of the operation of stereotypes and biases in just two major areas of media. In outlining the specifics of the biases that have existed in these two types of media, and in discussing their implications as elaborated in scholarly works related to them, our exposition intends to illustrate the importance of undergraduate course work at the intersection of Gender Studies and Communication/Media Studies.

It is particularly important that students majoring in Communication and Media Studies be exposed to the significant field of gender studies as it intersects with their subject matter because of the important role media play in constructing our ideas about social reality. It is now a widely accepted truth that the mass media are instrumental in forming our ideas about identity, values, and social norms and roles. However, although a majority of scholars may agree about the important influence of mass media on these important elements individual and social thought, students require exposure to these insights as well as the provision of specific illustrative examples in order to fully grasp their implications. Course work that incorporates theoretical material about the social construction of reality, ethics and mass media, and ideological functions of mainstream media is essential to any university-level education in Communication and Mass Media. In these areas, the incorporation of analyses of the operations of gender stereotypes and gender biases will be a natural fit. Thus, it is likely that universities are already offering courses that cover general concepts and theories amenable to the inclusion of gender-based analyses. Our discussion below illustrates two such areas.

2. Gender dimension in Communication and Media Studies: main concepts and learning outcomes.

This section details the contents and learning outcomes that students should acquire in order to develop professionally in an ethical and well-informed manner. As Rosalind Gill notes, gender studies in this field have explored the relationship between the fact that we live in a world stratified along the lines of gender, race, ethnicity and class—among other variables—in which the privileges, disadvantages and exclusions associated with such categories are unevenly distributed and the reality that we live in a world increasingly saturated by media and information and communication technologies (2007: 7). In such context, Communication and Media students will enhance their appreciation of the cultural constructions of the world by understanding how such images and texts are connected to patterns of inequality and power struggles. Gender analyses of media aim to understand how images and cultural constructions are connected to patterns of inequality and oppression. In the same manner in which media are involved in constructing our representations of reality, media are actively involved in producing gender conceptualizations. As Teresa de Lauretis suggests, gender is the product of various social technologies, such as cinema and the media, as well as institutional discourses and critical practices (1987: 8).

Universities are presently conceived as centers in which students develop the skills, knowledge, and abilities necessary to create a more civil and humane world. Jesuit universities, in particular, emphasize values such as humanity, justice and sustainability. See, for example, Santa Clara's statement: "Santa Clara University will educate citizens and leaders of competence, conscience, and compassion and cultivate knowledge and faith to build a more humane, just, and sustainable world"¹. In that sense, students should be provided adequate instruction to learn to develop a way of communicating that is strongly based in an acceptance and appreciation of others and that involves communicating in ways that express respect for others regardless of their gender, ethnicity, race, or any other quality. The following three concepts will now be explored: sex and gender, stereotypes and myths in social and political constructions, and message elaboration and evaluation. They are all basic, indispensable, fundamental concepts that all students in Communication and Media studies should know. At the end of the explanation of each concept, the expected learning outcomes are mentioned.

2.1. Sex and Gender

For a good understanding on the interactions and negotiations present in the intersections of gender, media and culture, students should start by acquiring a clear understanding about the concepts of sex and gender. Sex

1. <http://www.scu.edu/jesuit/University-Mission.cfm> (Accessed June 25, 2014).

is a designation based on biology whereas gender is socially, historically and culturally expressed. As Julia Wood explains, what gender means depends heavily on cultural values and practices; a culture's definition of masculinity and femininity shape expectations about how women and men should communicate; and how individuals communicate establishes meanings of gender that, in turn, influence cultural views (2009, 20).

The elaboration of the multiple perspectives and nuances of such distinction has undergone a laborious path from authors such as Simone de Beauvoir and Betty Friedan to more recent elaborations by Luce Irigaray, Monique Wittig and Judith Butler, among others. A basic exploration of such figures and major contributions should be provided, but to facilitate the explanation and dissemination of such concepts there are a number of excellent textbooks which provide a complete and accurate account of such terms, such as the one by Julia Wood, which details sex and gender particularities and historical developments. Wood emphasizes that gender is a social, symbolic construct that varies across cultures, over time within a given culture, over the course of individuals' lifespans, and in relation to the other gender (2009, 23-4) and suggests that more important than whether biological differences exist is how we perceive and treat differences (2009, 23). She includes concepts such as intersexuality and uses examples of transsexual and transgendered individuals to strengthen her explorations of sex and gender differences; transgendered, transsexed, and intersexed people challenge the idea that sex and gender are dualities that is, that male and female, masculine and feminine are opposite, stable, and the only two possibilities (2009, 26). The author provides numerous examples taken from daily life situations which help students relate to the notions being explained, but, more relevantly, she insists on the constant options for challenge, change and intervention: "The fact that the social meanings of gender are taught to us does not mean we are passive recipients of cultural meanings. We make choices to accept cultural prescriptions or to modify or reject them. Individuals who internalize and embody cultural prescriptions for gender reinforce existing social views. People who reject conventional prescriptions and step outside of social meanings for gender often provoke changes in cultural views" (2009, 24-5). To implement teaching of these concepts a variety of materials can be added to readings such as newspapers articles, television series, songs, films, video clips or artists manifestations of various kinds, to explore and analyze gender representations and gender performances.

The learning outcomes for this concept include an understanding of the differences of sex and gender and an appreciation of the complex and flexible nature of gender constructions. A basic knowledge of the key figures in the history of feminist studies should be provided. Students should be able to recognize their capacity for challenge, intervention and change in gender elaborations. Learning outcomes should incorporate a reflection on each student's position regarding gender in their culture in terms of expectation, identification and intervention.

2.2. *Stereotypes and myths in social and political constructions.*

To understand the presence of stereotypes and myths throughout history and in our contemporary societies, it is necessary to begin by underlining the connections among concepts such as culture, communication and gender. Each culture consists of political and financial structures, primarily institutions, and practices that reflect and uphold a particular social order. As Julia Wood explains, “they do this by defining certain social groups, values, expectations, meanings, and patterns of behavior as natural and good and others as unnatural, bad, or wrong. Because gender is central to cultural life, society’s views of gender are reflected in and promoted by a range of social structures and practices” (2009, 30), and adds that one of the primary practices that structures society is communication: “We are surrounded by communication that announces social views of gender and seeks to persuade us that these are natural, correct ways for men and women to be and to behave” (2009, 30). In such context, students should be able to understand and recognize that the main barrier to gender equality continues to be gender stereotyping and various mythical differences perceived by society.

Feminist Studies have produced a rich and sophisticated body of research on various types of media and artistic productions (especially rich in the fields of literature and film), and therefore it is quite easy to access pertinent theoretical sources to be implemented in courses and workshops. Feminist literary critics, from Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar to Nancy K. Miller and Toril-Moi, and feminist film critics such as Mary Ann Doane, Laura Mulvey and Kaja Silverman provide excellent examples of both theoretical and practical insights in their respective fields. Recently, Sheryl Sandberg has revived the debate by referring to “stereotype threat”, a phenomenon by which members of a group are likely to perform according to a negative stereotype when made aware of it (2013: 22). She specifically focus on the stereotype of a working woman, which is, she writes, “rarely attractive”, and adds: “Popular culture has long portrayed successful working women as so consumed by their careers that they have no personal life” (2013: 22).

In this case it is particularly relevant to provide students with current examples of newspapers articles, television commercials and series, and films to elicit analyses that underscore stereotypes and myths portrayed in such texts. Students are particularly original and creative when given opportunities for subverting or reversing original texts to eliminate such stereotypes and myths. The learning outcomes for these concepts include awareness and ability to critically recognize gender stereotypes and myths in past and present media texts and contexts and to provide responses that challenge such constructions.

2.3. *Message elaboration and evaluation.*

This last section conceptually and logically follows the previous ones. As a last step in the inclusion of the gender dimension in Communication

and Media Studies, the competence of Critical Thinking should be deeply developed to provide students with the necessary skills and strategies to be able to evaluate media messages. Such competence, as elaborated by the University of Deusto² involves questioning the underlying assumptions behind our usual ways of thinking and acting, and then, on the basis of this critical questioning, being willing to think and act differently. Critical thinking is *why* thinking: Why are things like that? Why can't things be some other way? Why do you think things are like that? Why would anyone want things to be like that? Consequently, we will say that students have developed the *competence of critical thinking* to the extent that they wonder about things and are interested in the foundations underlying their own and others' ideas, actions, judgments and evaluations.

It is necessary to develop critical thinking in order to be able to recognize the conditions under which a given set of ideas can be transformed into knowledge or beliefs that will have a decisive influence on decisions and actions, as well as the way in which people construct their own mentalities based on ideologies. Critical Thinking in relation to Gender Studies is fundamental in exploring underlying ideological constructions in all kind of visual and narrative texts that are part of our daily experience. In the case of media messages, students should be provided with the necessary message evaluation techniques such as concept testing, attitude and opinion tests, emotional reaction texts and persuasion analysis, among others, to effectively implement evaluation.

Basic notions on the construction of messages in different media (press, television and film) need to be briefly explored to promote an understanding of how messages are encoded from an ideological and political perspective so that expected responses from audiences are already incorporated in the messages. The concept of power is key in understanding gender negotiations in public life; as Amy Allen has noted, Gender Studies are interested in analyzing power because they have an interest in understanding, critiquing, and ultimately challenging the multiple array of unjust power relations affecting women in contemporary societies, including sexism, racism, heterosexism, and class oppression (1999). As learning outcomes, students should be, first, capable of recognizing and evaluating messages with a sharp view on elaborations of gender, race, sexual orientation and other pertinent categories, and, second, as future producers of messages in their different capacities as professionals in the field of media, should develop an ongoing awareness that may reject any elaboration or construction of messages that oppose equality, ethical thinking and justice.

2. http://intranet.deusto.es/rectorado/Innovacion_y_calidad/Competencias%20Genericas_Inglés/03%20pensamiento%20crítico_ingles.pdf (accessed May 5, 2014).

3. Gender bias in mainstream news and television

For many years, universities around the world have made courses on the study of gender available to their undergraduate students in a wide range of fields. In particular, students of liberal arts, humanities, and social sciences have had access to a range of these courses. It is especially important that students majoring in Communication and Media Studies be exposed to the significant field of Gender Studies as it intersects with their subject matter because of the role media play in constructing our ideas about social reality. For example, in a recent study on the influence of media in such mental conceptualization of social issues, 70% of Spanish people surveyed said that they learned about domestic violence from the media, and that they did not have first-hand knowledge of this issue³. It is important that the people we are training to be the writers and producers of media in the future have a solid grasp of gender-related issues, that they understand and are able to convey the substantive facts of these issues, and that they have a true appreciation of the ways in which existing media are currently shaping their views of important social and political issues as well as the identities and abilities of key social and political figures. Without specific education on the ways in which communications media influence our thoughts, preferences, beliefs, identities, and actions, the creators of future media will not have the skills in critical thinking and message construction that will be necessary in the coming years. Without specific exposure to the ways in which media biases have created social harms, they will not be able to avoid further perpetuation of these harms. Gender Studies related to media and message production emphasize social justice for all individuals within a society, and teach ethical presentation of the facts in a changing environment. A brief look at some of the key biases in news and television will serve as an illustration of the range and significance of gender bias in mass media. These biases can only be reduced with the education and improved insight and understanding of the writers and producers of the future.

3.1. News/Journalism

The study of gender bias in news is very broad and encompasses a wide variety of specific subject matter. Mainstream news media are responsible for creating a fair and accurate impression of issues and events in a way that is as unbiased and ethical as possible. In spite of this requirement, news media have been characterized by certain tendencies that have worked against

3. In a survey carried out by the authors of *Tratamiento de la violencia de género en la prensa vasca* (Analysis of Violence Against Women in Basque Press), the results show that 69,97% of the respondents affirm that their only source of knowledge and information about violence against women is what they read or hear in the media (2003).

their ability to deliver on these promises. They have tended to favor personal explanations for problems and issues, focus on dramatic conflict when possible, and often omit central elements of historical background and structural explanations. Official sources and explanations are usually favored over all others. Reporters, quoted sources, and subjects of news are predominantly (approximately 80%) male (Burke and Mazzarella, 2008). The most significant are biases in news coverage of gendered violence, coverage of campaigns and politics (Burke and Mazzarella, 2008), and coverage of sports performance (Billings and Holt Duke, 2010).

When these characteristics are put in place in the production of stories related to gendered violence, such as in stories about sexual assault and wife abuse, victims have often been blamed for their own assaults and perpetrators have been understood as honorable individuals whose careers and future might be ruined by accusations of violence (see Benedict, 1992; Moorti, 2002; Meyers, 1997). News media have been very slow to reflect the reality that a preponderance of gendered violence incidents are perpetrated by men who know their victims, in cases of date and acquaintance rape, sexual harassment, and wife battering (see Cuklanz, 1996). Structural elements such as power imbalances in interpersonal relationships contribute to these problems, but without an understanding of such power imbalances, news media tend to ignore crimes by perpetrators who know their victims, focusing instead on “stranger danger” and cautioning women to be vigilant in preventing their own victimization. By placing the responsibility for prevention on potential victims or targets, media often inadvertently blame women again. Passive voice construction of stories often eliminates male perpetrators from headlines (i.e. Woman Was Raped), placing even more focus on victims.

News media have also contributed to bias against female candidates for political office, and even to bias against female office-holders. Studies of news from many countries have shown that male and female candidates have been treated differently by news media (Cantrell and Bachman, 2008). Stories focusing on “viability” of female candidates rather than stances on issues reinforce the idea that female politicians cannot win, without sufficiently emphasizing their positions on relevant political issues or qualifications for office. Coverage of female candidates and office-holders often treats them as women first and politicians second, with stories mentioning their clothing, hairstyle, family composition and responsibilities, personal preferences, and other elements of taste related to the private sphere. Stances on political issues are mentioned more often for male candidates, and professional titles of male candidates and office-holders are included in stories more often than those of women (Rhode, 1997). Researchers believe that these accumulated biases against female candidates and office-holders are significant factors in the continuing under-representation of women in positions of political power in many nations. Unless journalism students learn about these biases, they may simply repeat them in their future creation of news stories, further jeopardizing the ability of female candidates to operate on a level playing field in the political arena.

Sports news is also characterized by significant gender bias (Billings and Holt Duke, 2010). In addition to the notable preference given to the sporting achievements of men and boys over girls and women, sport news about female athletes often includes many other biases. Photos of female athletes are often sexualized, emphasizing scant clothing and/or sexualized parts of the body. Photos of female athletes seldom depict physical exertion, strength, and determination. In fact, many photographs of female athletes depict them outside the realm of sport altogether. Whereas male athletes are most likely to be pictured in a moment of athletic triumph or struggle, female athletes are most often shown with street clothing and make-up, or in physically appealing or sexualized moments of physical action. Explanations for women's sporting triumphs and successes are more often attributed to sources outside themselves, whereas peak performance is usually attributed to male athletes. In Olympic coverage, women are depicted more often in unsuccessful performances or contests than are male athletes. Male athletes are more often treated as national symbols of success and valor than are women. The female athletes with the highest income from endorsements are often those who are most traditionally beautiful rather than those who with the highest athletic achievement. All of these gendered differences in the coverage contribute to the general idea that sports are more suitable for men than women, and that women's athletic achievements are not as significant as those of men.

3.2. Television

Apart from television news, which exhibits the biases described in the previous section, other genres of television programming have been characterized by significant gender biases as well. As Gaye Tuchman noted as early as 1978, television was characterized by "symbolic annihilation of women," meaning that women were vastly under-represented. Through the 1970s, women and girls accounted for only about 25% of characters on US prime-time television. This percentage has improved over time as writers and producers have come to understand gender bias and correct for it. Historically, female characters have been most likely to be depicted as victims of violence or as housewives. Female characters with successful paid work have been extremely unlikely to enjoy satisfying personal lives, and women with power have often been evil characters and/or wielded their power through sexuality. On detective and police genre programs, female police officers have been somewhat rare, and depictions that resist using the female agent as bait for sexual offenders have been even more rare (Mizejewski, 2004). Rescuers are more likely to be male, while those being rescued are more likely to be female. Males are more often perpetrators of violence and females are more often victims (Cuklanz, 1996). Certain genres of television programming have been understood as gendered, with detective programs, for example, representing the action, task orientation, plot resolution, and use of violence to solve problems that characterize masculine genres (Fiske,

1987). Good masculinity is understood as protective of women and society generally, while bad men harm women and are not productive members of society. Soap operas, the most commonly studied feminine genre, are characterized by multiple plots, a process orientation, lack of plot resolution, and excessive iterations of emotionally charged events (Fiske, 1987; Brown, 1994; Modelska, 1984). Good women suffer in spite of their nurturing and care of others, while bad women manipulate others for their own pleasure and power.

Other genres of television have tended to exhibit gender bias in other ways. Situation comedies, a place where many television “firsts,” such as the first program centering on a single working woman, have tended to depict scenarios in which patriarchal power can be questioned by in the end is proven benign and unproblematic. Reality programming related to physical beauty and heterosexual romance has proliferated. In many ways these programs have brought increased stereotyping of women as vain, emotional, and competitive with other women over the attention of men. Male contestants are often placed into physical competition with each other, are able to select from among women, and are often depicted as needing help with interpersonal relationships and romance. In this and other media, women have superior knowledge and ability in interpersonal relationships and bear the responsibility for making relationships work.

Examination of the representation of gender in mass media is essential for the education of future practitioners. Without it, current biases and shortcomings will likely be perpetuated, and ethical treatment of important subjects such as violent victimization and political campaigns will be compromised. As long as our media continue to treat women differently from men, our understanding of their potentials will diverge, impinging on the development of a just society where each individual is able to pursue and develop their own strengths free of the limiting framework of stereotyping and inaccurate knowledge. Communication and media majors who are not destined to work in communications industries will gain essential skills in critical thinking and media literacy, and will become more intelligent and exacting consumers of media themselves. Perhaps most significantly, our own understanding of the society in which we live, and the individuals who make up our society, will become more complete and less constrained by the limitations of gender stereotypes and gender bias.

4. Conclusion

Through the discussion above, it can be seen that if these concepts are introduced and the learning outcomes achieved, a significant improvement in the quality of students’ education will be achieved. Another fact that cannot be dismissed is the potential of such students to become future researchers and to incorporate the gender dimension in Communication scholarship of all kinds. As will be seen in the following section, there is a strong deficit of

such incorporation of the gender dimension in Communication and Media Studies in most Spanish universities; as an example of the equivalent lack of such relevance in research, the recently published volume titled *Investigar la comunicación en España* (To Research Investigation in Spain) is a 900 page book in which the most prominent specialists in the field of Communication explore every possible aspect connected to Communication Studies. Although an excellent and most complete work, it must be noted that there is not one single article devoted to gender analysis or Gender Studies. Future efforts can't follow along these lines and the inclusion of the younger generations in research will be more effective in they have profited from the benefit of the exploration of gender.

The intersections of Gender Studies and Communication Studies have been elaborated in a range of contexts across media and geographical regions. The above discussion of US scholarship on the relevance of gender to mainstream news coverage and television programming is intended as a sample illustrating the broad range of insights that have been provided by such scholarship. It is important that students in Spain are introduced to this knowledge, and that they are encouraged to contribute to the production of similar analyses of their own media environment. Without these developments, they will be missing important educational elements that are widely available to students across the globe. With the additional of access to these important subjects at the intersection of Gender Studies and Communication Studies, students will be better able to understand and contribute to their own media environment to produce media texts that are more equitable, accurate, fair, and ethically balanced. These improvements should not be considered optional, but rather absolutely essential to university education in the coming years.

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Gender(ed) Matters in Communication/Media Studies: Integrating Curricular Innovation and Social Change in the Spanish Model

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Recommended citation: PANDO, M.; MARTÍN, A. (2014). "Gender(ed) matters in communication/media studies: integrating curricular innovation and social change in the spanish model". *Anàlisi. Quaderns de Comunicació i Cultura*, 50, p. 39-53. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.7238/a.v0i50.2249>

Abstract

This article investigates the benefits of making gender-related issues more central to the Communication Studies curriculum in the Spanish system of higher education. The shift to “value-impact criteria” as the standard of success of today’s curricula in Europe is one of the strongest critiques that higher education is facing in that context. This article focuses on the state of affairs in Spain, showcases why Communication Studies is a particularly relevant field for these changes, outlines how a multi-platform approach to learning (combination of teaching, research, and social activism) pays special attention to the ways gender, racial, ethnic, and economic parameters interface with each other, and details the value of introducing more interdisciplinary and gender-based cognitive paradigms into the curriculum for making our campuses sites of innovation, better learning, and forces for social change.

Key Words: media, higher-education, Communication and Media Studies, Gender Studies, citizenship, responsibility, Spain, currículum

Resumen. *Cuestiones de género en los Estudios de Comunicación: Integración Curricular de la innovación y el cambio social en el modelo español*

Este artículo investiga los beneficios de trabajar cuestiones relacionadas con el género en el programa de estudios de comunicación del sistema español de educación superior. La reflexión se centra en la situación en España y muestra por qué los estudios de comunicación son un campo particularmente relevante donde introducir la cuestión de género.

Palabras clave: medios de comunicación, educación superior, Comunicación y Ciencias de la Información, Estudios de Género, ciudadanía, responsabilidad, España, currículo

1. Introduction

Gender, racial, ethnic, and economic inequality stubbornly hinders progress in our social, cultural, scientific, financial, and technical worlds. It behoves us as educators, researchers, and social activists to address these disparities in the courses we teach, the scholarship we produce, and the community-related work we are involved in. This article is centrally concerned with how to make the challenging of these inequities a part of the values of our universities and our curricula, as well as a guiding force in the professional and civic lives of our students.

We live in times where our humanity is often defined in terms of economic expediency, where civic actions are measured according to their short-term cost and benefit, where the notion of education is reduced to the “usefulness” of studying particular disciplines as determined by the needs of the labor market. How can university curricula restrain and critique these forces? In this article we propose that one avenue consists in assembling a strong linkage between how we analyze and communicate difference about the world (the focus of Communication and Media Studies) and a sensitivity and theorization of that difference (the purview of intersectional Gender Studies) as a particularly apt model for understanding both the root causes of our current state of affairs and for offering alternatives. With this in mind, we will concentrate on the EU’s recent reorganization of higher education (with a special emphasis on the Spanish case given its lack of attention to gender) and compare this restructuring to other curricular models like those in place at liberal arts colleges in the US.

One of the strongest critiques of the paradigmatic transformation that higher education is facing in Europe is the shift to “value-impact criteria” as the all-encompassing standard of success of today’s curricula and its graduates. In the Spanish context, many institutions have faced serious obstacles in implementing urgently needed structural and content-based changes in their curriculum, restructurings that have foregrounded just how important interdisciplinary approaches to learning and knowledge production are while highlighting at the same time just how stubborn particular fields and departments have been to these changes, programs in Communication being one of them. The objectives of this article are to (a) detail the value of introducing such interdisciplinary cognitive paradigms into the curriculum; (b) showcase why the field of Communication is a particularly fertile and relevant area for this transformation; and (c) outline how a multi-platform approach to learning should pay special attention to the ways gender, racial, ethnic, and economic parameters interface with each other and with the “story” the Communication student receives and creates. We conclude that such an approach to education will help make our classrooms sites for innovation, better learning, and forces for social change.

Institutions of higher education are uniquely positioned today to be facilitators of social change. We now understand in much clearer terms why an innovative society is an inclusive, diverse, and open society; why knowledge production (the asking of good questions and the search for responsible solutions) is inextricably linked to social and economic progress. However, inclusi-

veness and diversity are multi-dimensional concepts given how they refer both to their human dimension (the participation of women, men, and all social minorities in the process of learning and research) *and* to its cognitive application, i.e., the broadening of perspectives, interpretation, heuristics, and models of research. This complex notion of inclusiveness and diversity is at the heart of progress and innovation and should translate into socially responsive models of research and learning. Its implementation, however, depends on the transformation of higher education, i.e., on the acknowledgement of the shortcomings of past curricular models and on the desire for change.

Gender Studies represents one of the most important areas through which curricula can be made more sensitive to social and political diversity and better oriented toward social change. Surprisingly, despite its well-established legacies in the areas of cognitive, theoretical, political, and educational development, we still find an extremely low profile of gender-related issues, courses, and pedagogies in most Communication and Media Studies curricula, the Spanish curricula being one of the most strikingly grave. In this case study, we will enquire further into the causes and formulate possible avenues for integrating gender-related issues into Communication and Media Studies programs thanks to the possibilities the new Bologna scenario has generated. In other words, we will address two key areas as they pertain to gender and communication and media studies in higher education: first, we will study the impact Bologna has had on the inclusion (or not) of gender-related material, topics, courses, etc., in the Spanish curriculum, especially in the design of the new degrees in Communication Studies and contrast that to the presence of gender studies in the US context, in particular, in the curricular offerings available in most liberal arts colleges; second, the differences will lead us to argue in favor of transdisciplinary models of learning that are much more in line with more inclusive cognitive paradigms that are geared toward social change. Our hypothesis is that the opportunity that this new educational space opened in European higher education has been insufficiently utilized in Spain given how many of the previous curricular models were superficially modified to the point that they merely reinstated the older disciplinary boundaries that, in most cases, lack an analytical orientation geared towards social critique and transformation. In order to challenge this hypothesis we carried out a qualitative and quantitative analysis of the number of Spanish universities that offer gender-related studies in their communication studies programs (journalism, audiovisual communication and advertising, and public relations) either in the guise of course content or learning objectives. We then contrast this with more flexible curricular models that helped us better delineate the goals of higher education in democratic and open societies.

2. Media Studies and Gender-Related Curricula

The implementation of the Bologna process in European universities, and in Spanish universities in particular, brought a dramatic transformation in the conception of higher education curricula. For the first time, universities could

develop their own programs without having to comply with the fixed models imposed by the Ministry of Education (Salaburu, 2011: 90-91). These fixed models relied on closed curricula with mandatory subjects and contents predefined by the government, hence allowing very little room for the inclusion of elective, subject-related courses that could shape different professional profiles. The result was a hermetic, closed catalogue or register of undergraduate/bachelor diplomas to which all institutions of higher education needed to conform. The spirit of flexibility, transdisciplinarity, and internationalization that pervaded the European convergence allowed for a new scenario in which universities could define the professional profiles of their graduates and devise curricular models according to their fields of expertise and their mission statements. In this context, Spanish universities undertook the challenge of redefining and reinventing themselves to compete at a European and global level. This process, like many others that involve dramatic changes, has been hard and controversial in all fields of knowledge, and has had some immediate consequences that remain unresolved to this date. One important outcome is the shift from a content- to a competency-based model of teaching, a change that is often confused with the championing of practical training over the theoretical and content-heavy preparation of students. For some, this is an operation that places short-term employability first and puts the theoretical and critical foundations of higher education at risk (Pando, 2011).

In the specific case of Communication Studies, several authors have studied how the Bologna process has polarized European higher education into two distinct camps: “a university for business and the market versus a university for critical transnational citizenship” (Cabrera, 2011:78). The former would reduce undergraduate education to the “how’s” whereas the latter defends a university that should be “the terrain of the why’s and wherefore’s” (Cabrera, 2011: 89). This is a heated controversy in areas such as Audiovisual Communication and Communication and Media Studies where professional training trumps the critique and analysis of our increasingly and falsely “simplified” world. Yet, even though the impact of the Bologna system on our graduates’ futures and on the job market cannot be adequately assessed so far, the European convergence and its flagship reform—the competency-based model—may not altogether be blamed for this vocational trend, as some were prompt to argue.¹ Transdisciplinary approaches, flexible tracks, and internationalized students and staff are some of the positive outcomes in the European

1. The changes carried out and prompted by the implementation of new curricula within the European Higher Education Area were subject to an intense social debate that, in the case of Spain, was mostly held in the daily press. The controversy did not only pivot around the change of a content-based to a competency-based learning model, but also affected the implementation, follow-up, quality assessment, and financial sustainability of institutions of higher education. In the Spanish context, the most comprehensive work in analyzing and explaining the controversial new model imposed on its universities is Pello Salaburu's *España y el proceso de Bolonia. Un encuentro imprescindible* (2011).

academy. Not surprisingly, this has been the educational and research ethos that has driven the field of Women's and Gender Studies for the past thirty years, *avant Bologna*. The authors of this article find the content vs. skills argument somewhat short-sighted particularly if we pay special attention to how the liberal arts model prevalent on many US campuses complicates this state of affairs, and even more so if we take a closer look at the educational, research, and social change paradigm at work in Women's and Gender Studies departments and programs in that context.

A comparison of several undergraduate programs in the US and Spain will illustrate that studies of gender (its interdisciplinary content area, pedagogical experimentation, and social justice impetus) are far from being fully institutionalized in the Spanish academy in the area of Communication and Media Studies. A brief examination of the Spanish universities offering undergraduate programs in Communication, Media, or Journalism Studies shows that out of the 60 undergraduate programs surveyed at 45 different universities, only four institutions offer courses that specifically address the connection between media, communication and gender issues. The reasons for this scarcity must be sought not only in the still weak institutionalization of Women's and Gender studies in Spanish universities, but also in the inherited academic culture that interprets undergraduate programs as independent, self-reliant curricula, potentially threatened by interdisciplinary and intersectional intruders. Out of these 60 undergraduate programs in the area of Communication and Media, nearly 50% are degrees in Audiovisual Communication, a little over 27% in Journalism, almost 15% in Advertising, and the rest are degrees in other areas of Film and Media Studies:

FIGURE 1. MEDIA AND COMMUNICATION STUDIES IN SPANISH UNIVERSITIES



This polarization between Audiovisual Communication and Journalism aligns with the recommendations made by the National Agency of Accre-

ditation in the *White Book of Communication* (2005), an agency charged with supporting and offering guidelines to universities devising new undergraduate programs. Edited by ANECA, (Agencia Nacional de Evaluación de la Calidad y Creditación) this *White Book* advocates for traditional distinctions between Journalism, Audiovisual Studies, Advertising and Public Relations on the ground of the continuous segmentation and specialization of these professional fields: “It is considered convenient—it is argued in this book—to keep the three fields independent, with particular emphasis on the specific development of each discipline” (Murciano, 2005: 15-16). It goes without saying that in the light of accelerating changes in mass culture and digital media, where traditional boundaries have necessarily been questioned and deemed obsolete, this distinction does not make sense: image, sound, and word are often brought together to indistinctly create informative, commercial, cultural, artistic, political, leisure, or advertising multimodal messages. What to study, how, and why remain, therefore, as critical questions for students whose professional horizons and expectations cannot, in any way, rely any more on a disintegrating professional body and on the fixed principles and limits of a discipline that is changing dramatically from day to day. Undergraduates should, on the contrary, be equipped with competencies that allow for a deep and critical understanding of their surroundings, with knowledge that enables them to face the complexity and diversity of mediated discourses, and with the creative and innovative spirit that makes them think everything anew. It is in this spirit that curricula should advance towards the inclusion of gender-related issues as a means to develop these critical competencies.

The following chart shows which Spanish universities offer gender-related courses in their undergraduate programs in Communication, Information and Media Studies:

TABLE 1: UNDERGRADUATE COMMUNICATION STUDIES PROGRAMS WITH COURSES IN GENDER STUDIES IN SPAIN (OWN SOURCE)

UNIVERSITY	DEGREE (240 ECTS)	COURSE	CREDITS
UPV/EHU	Audiovisual Communication	<i>Imagen, género e identidad</i>	6 OPT
University of Granada	Audiovisual Communication	<i>Representación audiovisual</i>	6 OPT
University of Sevilla	Audiovisual Communication	<i>Comunicación audiovisual y género</i>	6 OPT
University of Valencia	Audiovisual Communication	<i>Políticas de género y teorías del discurso</i>	6 OB
U Carlos III de Madrid	Audiovisual Communication	<i>Género y cultura audiovisual</i>	3 OPT

Despite Bologna’s intent to open the disciplinary fields, the chart shows how Journalism and Media Studies programs still heavily rely on traditional models of clearly cut professional venues. Problems arise when new platforms from which to rethink the routines of communication are left out, platforms that, for the authors of this article, should include trans-sectional

approaches to gender. It is not surprising that new courses are only offered in the specialty of Audiovisual Communication programs and not in Journalism or Advertising, given how most discussions of gender in this context are limited to audiovisual stereotypes and representations of gender. How could it be that only four courses in gender and communication are offered among the entire range of sixty different programs that run for four years and offer an average of 15 courses per year? Why doesn't gender have a stronger articulating presence in this curriculum? Why are issues of gender equity, gender stereotypes, gender violence, intersections of race and gender, of family, of sexual identity, of gender and economic inequality, being by-passed in these programs if all of these issues are at the heart of many of the most pressing social issues we face today?

Whatever the answers to these questions may be, the dearth of course work focusing on gender is alarming and the little offered requires a closer examination. First, three of the four courses are electives for students in their third and fourth years, and enrollment is limited to students majoring in Audiovisual Communication. This means that less than 7% of Communication and Media undergraduate programs offer students the chance to take a course with a focus on gender. This in turn shows that 93% of Spanish graduates in Communication are entering the professional world without ever having been exposed to any gender-related courses, and only 5% may or may not have taken an elective course in those universities in which gender-related courses are offered to begin with. It is only at the University of Valencia that a mandatory course is required. Overall, this means that less than 2% (1,78%) of Spanish graduates have been exposed to gender theory and discourse analysis. In the case of the University of Valencia course, this is a class taken at the beginning of the students' second year and with very little exposure to working with different kinds of media texts and narratives, and perhaps offered a bit too early for the inexperienced student wishing to develop a critical mind.

It is true that gender-related content may be present here and there in the curriculum at different universities, in courses offered in Communication Theory, Psychology, or Communication Ethics (this is the case of the University of Granada, for instance, that offers a course in audiovisual representations and stereotypes that includes gender stereotypes and misrepresentations among many other topics such as diversity, minorities, immigration, etc.). However, all in all, the sample is disheartening and calls for immediate action in compensating the gap in gender-related competencies and topics in this area. Even though Media and Communication Studies often occupy a strategic position as one of the most popular undergraduate programs in the schools of arts and social sciences, many other academic fields in the arts and humanities, with substantially weaker social impact, have nevertheless been more permeable to gender-related issues as a key interdisciplinary field and a productive space for social innovation. The remarkable exposure of media students and professionals together with their responsibility in the production, reproduction and consumption of mass media messages make them a strategic target for the development of gender and diversity awareness.

The reasons underlying this scarcity are complex and in our opinion should be sought in two structural problems in the institutions of Spanish higher education (HEI): on the one hand, the pervasive underrepresentation of Women's and Gender Studies departments or centers and their still too incipient impact on curricular development, and on the other, the problematic and erratic implementation of Bologna: the questionable way changes in the curricula were undertaken under the auspices of the Bologna protocol by Spanish institutions of higher education and assessed by the national quality assurance board. If, as stated above, the new scenario allowed for the design of more flexible and transdisciplinary curricula, very much in the light of the well-known slogan of the European Commission "New skills for new jobs",² it is equally true that this flexibility has somehow been resisted by professional and corporate bodies, as the previous example of the White Book of Communication illustrates. The fact that for the verification of new degrees the Spanish national quality agency (ANECA) demands very precise professional profiles that may assure a direct access to the job market has often transferred the old fixed and rigid curricula into the new system, putting "old wine into new bottles" so to speak, and allowing for very little flexibility in the choice of electives. This could be somewhat justified in the case of highly specialized scientific and technical education with very strict requirements for the exercise of a profession, as may be the case of engineering or architecture, but it is hardly defensible in extremely versatile fields such as Communication, Information and Media Studies, where awareness of social diversity (race, class, gender, ideology) is key in the coding and decoding of messages in the media and where interdisciplinarity is consubstantial to the area of study.

Unlike Spanish universities, US university curricula show that most students enrolling as Communication majors have access to several electives that are communication and gender-related. These offerings are reinforced by the presence of Women's and Gender Studies departments and programs that cater to a transversal education in women's and gender issues, irrespective of disciplines and curricular design. American courses are mostly content-based and courses in Women's and Gender Studies are often cross-listed between those programs and the more traditional departments such as sociology, anthropology, political science, economics, biology, fine arts, literature, or communication. Courses in gender studies are offered at all different levels of expertise ranging from introductory courses to highly specialized courses for fourth year students. All of these classes are based on critical thinking and offer students tools for analyzing and deconstructing the socio-cultural meanings attached to gender and for identifying patterns of representation in gender-related content in a diversity of texts and media. While US students could still complete a college degree without ever being exposed to gender-specific coursework, this is increasingly difficult given how most colleges and

2. European Commission : "New Skills for New Jobs; Employment, Social affairs and Inclusion"
<http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=568>

universities require that all students take a particular number of courses from within a core set of electives that guarantee exposure to issues and pedagogies such as these on gender, sexual identity, and difference. Hence, it must be said that all US college students at least have the opportunity to access this content.³

A closer look at the competencies associated with the gender-related courses offered by the Spanish universities addressed above shows that most of them are associated with critical thinking and its expression through the analysis of gendered discourses, both textual and audiovisual. Gender, discourse, identity, representation, or stereotypes are all key concepts in the development of course content. Analyzing discourses and narratives, understanding critical theories and concepts, developing critical skills and gender perspectives, are all competencies that gender-based courses necessarily develop. Accordingly, most of them pivot around the idea of cultural and societal narratives and their gendered construction, with a clear emphasis on textual representations and cultural theory and criticism. Hence, a gender perspective is developed by placing the focus on the object, the discourse, the construct, or the product and not on the subject, on the producer, i.e., on the individual who creates the textual or audiovisual discourse. Evaluating media messages through a gendered lens is crucial in the development of analytical and critical skills, but it is equally important to explore the gender bias in the practice of media production and in the configuration and development of media professional teams. Yet, this approach to the gender gap in the reproduction of market-driven practices has not been sufficiently addressed and demands closer attention.

The analysis of stereotypes and representations have become commonplace for gender and intersectional studies, but the question remains as to how to address the gender gap not only in the mediated discourses but in the agency and creation of the texts themselves. The inclusion of a gendered lens within Communication and Media Studies should not only mean a close scrutiny of the wide variety of texts (written, oral, visual, etc.) at play but also a questioning and understanding of the gender biases that operate in the practice of the profession itself as new media is created and produced. A recent survey carried out by the Association of Spanish Journalists (Federación de Asociaciones de Periodistas de España) revealed how sexism was still pervasive in the practice of journalism, especially in decision-making positions. Even though most of the participants of the survey recognized that there were no apparent major obstacles for women to actively participate and reach executive positions, they also recognized that the figures and data were per-

3. The extensive and intensive landscape of American undergraduate curricula in colleges and universities, and their organization in majors and minors, make it particularly difficult to undertake a systematic and exhaustive study in comparative terms with the Spanish system. However, all of the universities surveyed showed a similar pattern and more or less balanced offerings in Women's and Gender Studies and, in particular, in media and communication with a focus on gender. See lists of programs and courses at <http://www.artemisguide.com/>; <http://creativefolk.com/directories.html>; <http://userpages.umbc.edu/~korenman/wmst/programs.html>

sistent in showing a male dominated world.⁴ British feminist cultural theorist Rosalind Gill defines this type of situations as scenarios of “flexible sexism,” i.e., as sexism that takes place in working environments that apparently are “cool, creative, and egalitarian” and calls this subtle phenomenon the “unmanageable inequalities’ … because they exist and operate outside the interventions and management strategies invoked to challenge those injustices” (2011: 62). These are, of course, “unspeakable inequalities” because, in Gill’s terms, they go “largely unnoticed and unspoken about even by those most adversely affected by them” (2011: 63). The current unyielding economic deterioration undoubtedly stimulates a sexism that finds its most severe face in media and cultural industries (2011: 63), an aspect that is also highlighted in the Spanish survey mentioned above (FAPE, 2013: 10-11).

This brief analysis of the poor presence of gender-related issues in the field of Communication Studies in Spanish undergraduate curricula proves, on the one hand, that the flexibility and interdisciplinarity underlying the spirit of the EHEA (European Higher Education Area) and the Bologna process did not necessarily result, in the case of Communication and Media Studies, in an opening of the curriculum to intersectional questions related to gender, sexism, and social inequalities. On the other hand, it does show that this opportunity should not be missed, as inequalities and sexism still operate in the world of the media, not only in the production and consumption of media artifacts, but also at the very core of media industries and their management. Never before has the European academy been in a better position to fill this gap and work towards the full integration of gender-related issues in Communication and Media Studies, through the development of gender-related competences and skills in textual and visual media culture. Learning and developing these competences matter for media and communication students, not only because they will help them grow as better and more critically engaged individuals, but also because they are, and will be, strategic agents in the production and reproduction of mediated reality, with the capacity to inspire others and with the power of change.

3. Gender, the Media, and Learning for Social Change: A Multiplatform Effort

The initial analysis we conducted points to the severe lack of attention given to issues of gender within the curricula and research agendas in Spain.

4. The survey was carried out in 2013 by FEPA (Federación de Asociaciones de Periodistas de España) and Estudios de Comunicación and shows that more than 91% of those surveyed accept that media management positions are still dominated by men, and 72% admit discrimination in these management positions. What is more interesting is that 71% of the people surveyed think there is a substantial gap between the academic records of both men and women and their relation to the positions occupied in the firms, so much so that there is no correlation between the excellent academic performance of women and its translation into better job positions (4).

While cognizant of the role the media plays in the democratization of the public sphere in that it articulates and models notions of citizenship, of identity (both sociocultural and personal), and, of course, of emotions, we find it surprising that given the fertile research trajectory of Gender Studies in Europe and the US and the shift in curricular content, pedagogy, and emphasis of community values that the Gender Studies model facilitates, that there would be such a small impact in the Spanish curricula in general but especially in the area of Communication Studies for these programs set the tone for the future transmission of information, development of opinion, and sensitivity to social critique. Despite the shared interests and objectives, it would appear that the introduction of gender as a legitimate category of study is still tainted as “political” (non academic) or “partisan” (gender being a category only relevant to women). The lack of gender-related research in the disciplines and curricula in Spain can now be cleverly addressed within the parameters of Bologna.

In the context of the US liberal arts paradigm of higher education, Women's and Gender Studies students, researchers, and practitioners have become the vanguard of knowledge production (Berger and Radeloff, 2011:5) for they embody learning, research, and community practices that put interdisciplinarity, pedagogical experimentation, and advocacy at their core. In other words, on many college campuses, Women's and Gender Studies departments and programs have become distinctive because of how they uniquely triage research, learning, and activism.⁵ These programs have “pushed for curricula transformation that translates into students who have been trained to learn multiple perspectives and to demonstrate the application of knowledge in pursuit of a more equitable society” (Berger and Radeloff, 2011:59).

Historically, Women's and Gender Studies programs have pushed for profound structural changes on the level of research and pedagogy and in the classroom. In terms of the latter, the WGST classroom is conceived as an

5. Dartmouth College, the first Ivy-League institution to create a Women's Studies Program in 1978, began a pilot program in 2013 that brings together the teaching in the Women's and Gender Studies Program (WGST), the student activism in the Center for Gender and Student Engagement (CGSE), and a newly created research center, The Gender Research Institute at Dartmouth (GRID). This unique umbrella organization brings together the different synergies between classroom learning, research, and the messiness of change. This interfacing of teaching, research, and social change hopes to become a model for the future of higher education in many more disciplines given how this multiplatform dialogue allows us to better train future leaders to address the complexities, challenges, and dynamism of today's world. At Dartmouth College, WGST (<http://www.dartmouth.edu/~wstudies>) is a program that enlists more than 70 faculty members engaged in gender-related research and teaching, a program that develops the critical skills of 700-800 students each year through curricular offerings of approximately 40 courses per year in the different areas of study across the arts and sciences. Its close ties with the Gender Research Institute (<http://www.dartmouth.edu/~grid>) and with the Center for Gender and Student Engagement (<http://www.dartmouth.edu/~cgse>) link its pedagogical trajectory with those of great research impact and civic engagement.

emancipatory site of education and not one of disciplining (hooks, 1994: 2000; Freire: 2001), as sites that have encouraged active, student-centered learning instead of adhering to the passive-receptacle model of education grounded on the hierarchy of the professor “expert” and student “learner.” On the level of research, the Women’s and Gender Studies context allows for a qualitative shift in that women were no longer “merely” new objects of study or authors of a different sex; instead, these courses “allowed students to choose what subjects to study, to question how subjects would be studied, to challenge ideas of objectivity and power within research, and to create knowledge that would support the changes occurring on local, state, and national levels due to feminist organizing” (Berger and Radeloff, 33). It would seem then that the intellectual work of these programs is aimed at transforming higher education (how we teach and learn), at finding better ways of doing research (better questions, better probing of methods and suppositions, adding a broader diversity of voices), and at creating a new kind of subject or citizen-activist: informed, responsible, aware, empowered, and critical of his/her social realities. These changes and reformulations of teaching, learning, and researching have very concrete implications for the broader social context, implications that sometimes go unnoticed and that are not acknowledged as transformational. The Women’s and Gender Studies context has always been on the vanguard of social analysis and this makes its research and praxis key for the challenges our world faces today.

Many cultural critics have addressed the limitations of what could be termed the “learning-for-profit model” (see Bologna critique in the previous section) but the work of philosopher Martha Nussbaum is particularly insightful in her *Not for Profit: Why Democracy Needs the Humanities* (2010). Here she defines the model of education needed for democracy as a platform of “mediation.” Nussbaum’s educational paradigm is inspired in the arts and their mode of creating knowledge, a platform that challenges the logic of economic profitability as the grounds for success in the realm of learning. In her words:

Given that economic growth is so eagerly sought by all nations, especially at this time of crisis, too few questions have been posed about the direction of education, and with it, of the world’s democratic societies. With the rush to profitability in the global market, values precious for the future of democracy, especially in an era of religious and economic anxiety, are in danger of getting lost. [...] We should have no objection to good scientific and technical education [...] My concern is that other abilities, equally crucial, are at risk of getting lost in the competitive flurry, abilities crucial to the health of any democracy internally, and to the creation of a decent world culture capable of constructively addressing the world’s most pressing problems. These abilities are associated with the humanities and the arts: the ability to think critically; the ability to transcend local loyalties and to approach world problems as a “citizen of the world;” and finally, the ability to imagine sympathetically the predicaments of another person. (Nussbaum, 2010: 6-7)

The arts are not adornments or a surplus in Nussbaum's understanding of the public sphere but rather sites for political, ethical, and citizenship-making for the imagination has the power to question, to challenge, to re-imagine, to cure and heal but through a kind of symbolic "discomfort," i.e., by making each of us "strangers within our own languages" (Deleuze-Guattari, 1985: 26). If the students, researchers, and practitioners of Media and Communication Studies are to have this kind of "defamiliarizing" effect on audiences, if in order to live democratically within our public and private spheres we need to live as "foreigners," i.e., uncomfortable with the given, questioning and probing reality, asking the questions of the child-theorist (the "why's?" and "what if's?"), i.e., the imagination's questions (Rich, 2001: 167), what kinds of content and practices should Media and Communication Studies model? And why does the intersection of the area of gender studies prove to be so fundamental for this objective? These are the fundamental questions our article has attempted to address.

If Communication Studies were to fully embrace its uniqueness as one of the most interdisciplinary sites imaginable (given the confluence of science, social science, and humanities content in its output) and be inspired by the Women's and Gender Studies multiplatform model of learning (in the classroom, in research, in the community) its students, researchers, and practitioners would also generate avenues of interdisciplinary shifts of knowledge production through the creation and analysis of information that would in turn help the humanistic project of a better prepared citizenry. If Nussbaum argues that the capacity for critical thinking and reflection are crucial in keeping democracies "alive and wide awake" (10), the ability to think well about a wide range of cultures, groups, and nations in the context of a grasp of the global economy "is crucial in order to enable democracies to deal responsibly with the problems we currently face as members of an interdependent world" (10). Could this not be the mission statement of many Media and Communication Studies programs? If Bologna wishes new curricular design in the EU to be skill specific, focused on tangible and measurable (quantifiable) outcomes, redefining "education" as "training," let us resist this move or better yet, distinguish between a specific subset of disciplinary skills that students should gradually master and an psychological-ethical proficiency defined as the communication student's ability to imagine what Nussbaum terms "the experience of another" (10), a capacity she believes almost all human beings possess in some form but that need to be "greatly enhanced and refined if we are to have any hope of sustaining decent institutions across the many divisions that any modern society contains" (10). In Nussbaum's thinking here lies the crux of the health of our democratic systems:

Every modern democracy is also a society in which people differ greatly along many parameters, including religion, ethnicity, wealth and class, physical impairment, gender and sexuality, and in which all voters are making choices that have a major impact on the lives of people who differ from themselves. One way of assessing any educational scheme is to ask how well it prepares young people for life in a form of social and political organization that has these

features. Without support from suitably educated citizens, no democracy can remain stable. (9-10).

As a conclusion, it should be the goal of all Media and Communication Studies programs to encourage a deep self-awareness on behalf of its researchers, students, and practitioners of the supreme complexities of the world we live in and of the role of the media in our experience (or not) of that complexity. To do this outside an interdisciplinary paradigm or to ignore gender as one of the core threads of any course of study and analysis, as the Spanish case has proved to have done, is to condemn any given program to obsolescence and to short-change its students from developing critical thinking skills, interdisciplinary dexterity, openness and awareness of diversity, more intricate and better formulated research questions, and avenues for applying knowledge for social transformation. In today's context, this is something we cannot afford. Communication Studies have an integral role to play in the health of the social contract and in creating a meaningful diversity of players in the public sphere, and the structural change operated in the new EHEA scenario is the opportunity that should not be missed. If gender continues to be a particularly acute and stubborn marker of inequality (as evidenced in the United Nations Millennium Development Goals—<http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/>) Communication Studies curricula have a central role to play on the road to social justice.

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Sujetos sexuales, objetos comerciales: sexualidad femenina como *lifestyle* en *Cincuenta sombras de Grey*

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Cita recomendada: PUJOL, C.; ESQUIROL, M. (2014). "Sujetos Sexuales, Objetos Comerciales: la sexualidad femenina como lifestyle en *Cincuenta Sombras de Grey*". *Anàlisi. Quaderns de Comunicació i Cultura*, 50, pàgs. 55-67. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.7238/a.v0i50.2277>

Resumen

El artículo analiza la sexualización de la cultura popular y la construcción del nuevo imaginario sexual femenino omnipresente en los medios de comunicación y las redes sociales a través del fenómeno de *Cincuenta sombras de Grey*. La propuesta pasa por analizar los códigos de representación de las novelas en sintonía con los modos contemporáneos de comercialización de la feminidad, muy ligados al *lifestyle*, es decir, a la experiencia sexual como un valor de venta. La finalidad es observar de qué modo la comercialización de la sexualidad femenina, si bien en un principio parece que democratiza su representación y su vivencia en el espacio público, en el fondo la normativiza y la sistematiza.

Palabras clave: sexualidad, economía neoliberal, consumo, regulación, estilo de vida.

Abstract. *Sexual Subjects, Commercial Objects: Female Sexuality as a Lifestyle in Fifty Shades of Grey*

The article discusses the sexualization of popular culture and the construction of new ubiquitous female sexual imagery in the media and social networks through the *Fifty Shades of Grey's* success. The proposal is to analyze the codes of representation of the novels in relation with the commercialization of contemporary femininity, closely linked to lifestyle, ie, sexual experience as a market value. The aim is to observe how the commercialization of female sexuality, although at first it seems that democratizes their representation and experience in the public sphere, finally it works as a normativization.

Keywords: sexuality, neoliberal economy, consum, regulation, lifestyle.

1. Objetivos y propuesta de análisis

El objetivo de este artículo se centra en analizar los modos en que las industrias culturales contemporáneas tienden a producir un modelo de femi-

nidad acorde con los nuevos accesos socioculturales protagonizados por las mujeres en las últimas décadas. Para ello, centraremos nuestra atención en el análisis de la sexualidad femenina que proponen las novelas de *Cincuenta sombras de Grey* de E.L. James (2012, 2013), dirigidas a un *target* específicamente femenino.

Nuestra propuesta es que para analizar de un modo crítico este nuevo imaginario sexual femenino se necesita ir más allá del análisis de contenido o el estudio de personajes para entrar en los debates, problemas y conceptos que proponen tanto el feminismo crítico como la economía política. Por un lado, es necesario entender que este imaginario responde a la mercantilización del feminismo desde el momento en que el afán de búsqueda de nuevos nichos de mercado por parte de las lógicas de producción de las industrias culturales, cuando se han centrado en las mujeres, lo han hecho utilizando aspectos históricos de la lucha feminista como la liberación sexual, la necesaria emancipación económica, la autonomía del placer femenino... todos ellos incorporados en el imaginario cultural como reclamo o valor añadido a las expectativas por las que los nuevos públicos se sentirán integrados.

Por otro lado, e indisociable a esta primera cuestión, hay que tener en cuenta que este imaginario sexual femenino se construye en sintonía al orden meritocrático propio del modelo económico y cultural contemporáneo, neoliberal, que utiliza la libre elección como la base que empodera la agencia de los individuos, en este caso de las mujeres, mediante la que se negocian cuestiones como el poder, la ambición, la autocomplacencia y la pretendida autoconciencia con las que validar dichas representaciones (Gill, 2008, 2011).

Nuestro punto de vista propone analizar los códigos de representación de las novelas en sintonía con los modos contemporáneos de comercialización de la feminidad, muy ligados al *lifestyle*, es decir, a la experiencia sexual como un valor de venta. La finalidad es observar de qué modo la comercialización de la sexualidad femenina, si bien en un principio parece que democratiza su representación y su vivencia en el espacio público, en el fondo la normativiza y la sistematiza.

Como conclusiones observamos que, mientras la explotación comercial de la sexualidad femenina es entendida como un síntoma de la liberación sexual de las mujeres, por otro lado estos imperativos comerciales intervienen en la construcción de una identidad cultural femenina altamente normativa, fruto de unos mecanismos de regulación (auto)impuestos dentro de las lógicas de construcción de las identidades contemporáneas características de la ética neoliberal dominante.

2. Un fenómeno social en una cultura altamente sexualizada

Podríamos afirmar que las mujeres occidentales, en un proceso de empoderamiento auspiciado por el feminismo y las políticas de emancipación activadas desde los años cincuenta, han pasado de las habituales representaciones tabúes e históricas frigideces a exhibir desde los medios de

comunicación y las redes sociales una sexualidad desinhibida, hedonista y autocomplaciente. La mediación de esta transformación es tal que se habla de una «cultura de *striptease*» o una «cultura sexualizada» para describir un momento de hipersexualidad femenina omnipresente en los medios y las culturas occidentales.

Digamos que el sexo femenino ha entrado de lleno en el *mainstream* cultural para abrir todo un horizonte de expectativas y posibilidades con el objetivo de normalizar comportamientos y prácticas sexuales. Este sería el caso, por ejemplo, de la cada vez mayor presencia de artículos de opinión, reportajes, incluso blogs relacionados con el sexo que aparecen en la prensa generalista, suplementos culturales y revistas de tendencias. Por otro lado, también encontramos procesos de promoción social estandarizados mediante un imaginario femenino altamente sexualizado que bebe directamente de la iconografía pornográfica, que se entienden como «indispensables» y «necesarios» para que las nuevas *celebrities* y promesas del pop —Rihanna, Shakira, Jennifer López, Britney Spears, Paris Hilton, Kate Perry, Miley Cyrus...— sean incorporadas a las industrias del ocio y del entretenimiento. Otro ejemplo sería la cada vez más habitual ruptura de las fronteras entre lo erótico y lo pornográfico, como hemos visto en la incursión de la actriz porno Sasha Grey en el cine independiente con *The Girlfriend Experience* (Steven Sotzerbergh, 2009) u *Open Windows* (Nacho Vigalondo, 2014), así como la incrustación de escenas de sexo explícito rodadas con actores porno en las películas del director danés Lars von Trier.

Por su parte, en un medio tan conservador como la televisión, la sexualidad femenina también cobró protagonismo en dos series de éxito como *Ally McBeal* (Fox, 1997-2002), cuyas relaciones y casos jurídicos resueltos en el bufete de abogados giraban alrededor de las relaciones afectivas y sexuales de sus protagonistas, y *Sex and the City* (HBO 1998-2004), claro ejemplo paradigmático que supo explotar la libertad sexual de las mujeres, atreviéndose a representar relaciones sexuales, normalizar distintos modos de disfrutar del sexo y, lo más importante, poner en boca de las mujeres un vocabulario sexual nada habitual entonces en una producción *mainstream*.

Dentro de este contexto de promoción y mercantilización de la sexualidad femenina debemos incorporar el fenómeno de *Cincuenta sombras de Grey*. Las novelas empezaron siendo un *fanfiction*¹ de la saga *Crepúsculo*, otro fenómeno transmedia que incluye libros, películas y un sinfín de mercadotecnia alrededor de las fans de la saga. Entre ellos, *sites* en internet dedicados a prolongar el placer de la inmersión narrativa fanática mediante la reescritura y creación de universos ficcionales paralelos, como fue el caso de la autora de *Cincuenta sombras de Grey*, E.L. James.

1. El término *fanfiction* se refiere a los relatos de ficción escritos por los fans de una obra literaria o dramática (novela, película, serie de televisión, videojuego, comic...) y consiste en utilizar personajes o aspectos reconocibles del referente y desarrollar nuevas historias, personajes, escenarios o situaciones derivados de ellos.

Bajo el pseudónimo de *Snowqueen's Ieedragon*, la autora, en ese momento una ejecutiva de televisión residente en Londres, casada y con dos hijos adolescentes, fue publicando por entregas en la web *FanFiction.net* un relato erótico, *Masters of the Universe*, que trasladaba los conflictos y tensiones del universo fantástico de los protagonistas de *Crepúsculo* (una bella adolescente humana todavía virgen enamorada de un apuesto joven vampiro compañero de instituto, ambos enfrentados a sus comunidades en lucha por su amor) al mundo real: la relación de Anastasia, una joven estudiante universitaria de literatura, de nuevo virgen, y Christian Grey, un joven y apuesto empresario multimillonario aficionado al BDSM (Bondage; Dominación/Disciplina; Sumisión/Sadismo; Masoquismo) o prácticas sexuales sadomasoquistas. En este caso, Anastasia se debatirá entre la curiosidad, el rechazo y la aceptación de la sumisión, hasta culminar una historia de amor que incluye matrimonio e hijos. Al igual que *Crepúsculo* incorporaba elementos del fantástico y la ciencia ficción en un relato clásico de novela romántica, *Cincuenta sombras de Grey* también se estructura dentro de la lógica del romance, en este caso, asumiendo una carga erótica de iniciación al BDSM descrita con detalle desde el punto de vista de la protagonista femenina.

La repercusión y el seguimiento de las actualizaciones de las entregas en internet fue tal que los diferentes relatos pasaron a la autoedición en formato *e-book* por la editorial The Writer's Coffee Shop, especializada en la edición digital de copias por demanda. El éxito de ventas llevó a la editorial Vintage, sello del grupo Random House, a adquirir los derechos para su comercialización en papel, sin abandonar el *e-book*, a modo de trilogía, dando como resultado los tres voluminosos libros que se han hecho populares: *Cincuenta sombras de Grey* (2011), *Cincuenta sombras más oscuras* (2012) y *Cincuenta sombras liberadas* (2012). A diferencia de otras publicaciones eróticas, su distribución en hipermercadós, papelerías y librerías alejadas de los circuitos especializados convirtió la novela en un superventas, además de un fenómeno social. A finales de 2012, había vendido 65 millones de copias en todo el mundo, especialmente en su edición en *e-book*, iniciando el fenómeno del consumo femenino de literatura erótica en formato digital².

En este sentido, nos encontramos ante una obra que, desde sus procesos de producción y distribución, ha sabido explotar un nicho de mercado dirigido específicamente a un *target* femenino, combinando dos de los principales discursos culturales mediante los que hoy se promociona la feminidad: en primer lugar, el ya habitual discurso del amor romántico tradicional en el que la chica conoce a su príncipe azul protector; y, en segundo lugar, la vivencia de una sexualidad libre, plena y pretendidamente autoconsciente en la línea del posfeminismo contemporáneo.

2. El anonimato y la discreción que permiten la compra y la lectura de un libro erótico en soportes digitales por parte de las mujeres ha descubierto para las editoriales un nicho de mercado no explotado hasta la aparición del fenómeno *Grey*.

3. La sexualidad femenina como lifestyle

Como hemos visto anteriormente, la sexualización de la cultura popular pasa por convertir el sexo y el placer femeninos en el tema central de numerosas narraciones y productos populares, siendo la publicidad una de las plataformas más evidentes de promoción sexual femenina. A pesar de que es obvio que esto no supone ninguna novedad en un panorama mediático que ha utilizado históricamente el cuerpo de las mujeres como reclamo comercial, la ruptura se produce desde el momento en que, mientras las representaciones habituales presentaban a la mujer como objeto del deseo y el placer masculino, el énfasis contemporáneo recae en la agencia femenina (Gill, 2008). El resultado es un imaginario de mujeres empoderadas que buscan su placer y exhiben su deseo de forma desinhibida, activa, casi agresiva, dentro de un escenario publicitario heredero de las representaciones de la pornografía (posturas sexuales, miradas desafiantes a la cámara, jadeos y orgasmos...) pasadas por el *glamour* propio de los anuncios: una estética *pornochic* como valor añadido a todo tipo de productos que ha convertido «lo explícito en algo familiar y la transgresión sexual en *mainstream*» (Atwood, 2006: 80).

Esta sexualización de la cultura popular resulta referencial para marcar el paso de la niñez a la madurez de las mujeres, no solo performativiza su representación en los medios, sino que también actúa como valor o anzuelo mediante el que incorporar el vasto colectivo femenino al mercado cultural. Consecuencia de esto es que el mercado dirigido a menores de edad y adolescentes se encuentra cada día más sexualizado con la proliferación de comercios temáticos en los que las niñas pueden adquirir ropa, complementos, maquillajes... que las aproximen a sus ídolos mediáticos (Quart, 2003).

Por otra parte, la sexualidad femenina se ha instalado en los circuitos comerciales de la cultura popular, vinculados a las industrias del ocio y del entretenimiento, convirtiéndose de este modo en una mercancía (Atwood, 2005). En este sentido, podemos relacionarla con la explotación de algunos productos o contenidos mediáticos —proliferación de ficciones televisivas en que el sexo y las mujeres son los protagonistas, videoclips, videojuegos—; con el mundo de las *celebrities* que de un modo desinhibido entran y salen de tiendas eróticas o *sex shops*, o que explícitamente relacionan su imagen con la iconografía erótica o pornográfica; o con el mundo de la moda que, de un modo notable, asocia sexo con sofisticación, marca, estilo... convirtiendo la vivencia de la sexualidad femenina en una suerte de estilo de vida.

Dentro de este contexto podemos ubicar tanto el relato como la comercialización de *Cincuenta sombras de Grey*. Si seguimos de cerca la pestaña de «Prensa» de la web oficial de Grijalbo³, editorial de la trilogía en España, podemos observar cómo, a raíz de su éxito, han proliferado numerosos clubs de lectura erótica así como numerosos espacios de debate y venta de juguetes, lencería, películas, artículos eróticos para mujeres, en los que se discuten, descubren y

3. <http://www.cincuentasombras.com/>

explican, de un modo totalmente abierto y sin pudor, distintos aspectos de la sexualidad femenina que hasta hoy habían pertenecido, de un modo general, al espacio privado (Martin, 2013).

Por otro lado, nos encontramos con una proliferación de información en redes sociales, blogs, *fan vids*, artículos en revistas especializadas, e incluso en la web oficial de la autora E.L. James, en que se comparten distintas listas de referencia o decálogos a seguir para encontrar los ingredientes indispensables para una velada romántica perfecta, al *modo Grey*, con indicaciones sobre la música y el vino que degustan los personajes en sus encuentros, con las frases eróticas y románticas que se susurran, y con los artilugios que utilizan en sus relaciones sexuales⁴.

Así pues, más allá de la experiencia literaria de la que numerosas fans alaban el valor de lo explícito a la hora de relatar los encuentros eróticos de los protagonistas (Deller y Smith, 2013), *Cincuenta sombras de Grey* perpetúa su éxito en el mercado cultural en sintonía con las nuevas dinámicas de promoción cultural femenina contemporáneas: mediante la búsqueda de un nuevo nicho de mercado a abastecer —las mujeres—, e incorporando a la esfera pública cultural aspectos de la feminidad —la sexualidad femenina— que puedan desarrollar la emergencia de un nuevo mercado cultural.

Desde las lógicas de producción y la mercadotecnia, observamos que las mujeres son identificadas, cada vez más, como consumidoras sexuales. Hoy, si lo deseamos, disponemos de todo un mercado cultural que nos permite adquirir todos los ingredientes necesarios para preparar una velada sexual. Existe la proliferación y apertura de toda una industria que si bien antes iba dirigida casi exclusivamente a la mirada o a los placeres masculinos, hoy incorpora a las mujeres para las que, de acuerdo con el sentimiento posfeminista, el pudor o el tabú sexual es un aspecto que se relaciona con una feminidad anticuada y que obstaculiza la vivencia de la libertad sexual.

La comercialización de la sexualidad femenina en la cultura popular apela a los discursos de sofisticación, estilo y estética que impulsan y promocionan la idea de una feminidad independiente, autónoma, consumidora, y a la que no le importa invertir en ella misma (Atwood, 2005, 2006, 2009; Gill, 2008, 2009; Stillion Southard, 2008). En el caso de *Cincuenta sombras de Grey*, el relato erótico se construye en sintonía con el discurso estético y sofisticado al que hacíamos referencia: Christian Grey es un empresario enormemente rico que agasaja a Anastasia con una enorme cantidad de regalos, tales como ropa y lencería sofisticada, ordenadores personales, *blackberry*, deportivos... y que le hacen intuir a qué tipo de vida está destinada. Por otro lado, la teatralización de las escenas sexuales, ubicadas en lugares elegantes y excepcionales (en el ascensor del lujoso edificio de Grey; en habitaciones

4. Frases cortas y bonitas para enamorar [<http://frasescortasybonitasparaenamorar.com/frases-de-50-sombras-de-christian-grey/>] [fecha de consulta: 24/07/14]. Tumblr *Fifty Shades of Grey* [<http://www.tumblr.com/tagged/50%20sombras%20de%20grey>] [fecha de consulta: 24/07/2014].

de hotel; en el campo, cerca de una casa en obras que quieren comprar; en la caseta del jardín de la casa de los padres de Christian) y a menudo acompañados de la degustación de vinos o de una banda sonora expresamente elegida para enfatizar los momentos de placer... todos estos elementos trabajan para construir un imaginario de lujo y sofisticación. En el caso de la larga lista de objetos sexuales descritos (antifaces, corbatas y cuero con las que practicar el *bondage*, látigos, bolas chinas, tapones anales, alta lencería, medias rasgadas...) y utilizados en sus relaciones de la llamada «habitación roja» —un templo del BDSM decorado con materiales nobles, repleto de numerosos juguetes sexuales perfectamente descritos, y equipado con alta tecnología que se utiliza para crear una atmósfera idónea para optimizar los encuentros sexuales—, cumplen una doble función: la de narrar una experiencia de la sexualidad libre y desinhibida, y la de potenciar el despertar y el descubrimiento de los placeres sexuales femeninos.

Todo ello juega a favor de la narración de un relato erótico nada crudo, que las mujeres pueden compartir con amigas sin pudor, que puede debatirse entre copas y risas... En definitiva, el relato erótico de *Cincuenta sombras de Grey* alude directamente al ideal femenino contemporáneo basado en el estilo, la imagen y el *self-fashioning*.

4. Normativización de la sexualidad femenina

Sin duda, el hecho de que la sexualidad femenina circule hoy como una mercancía en el mercado cultural y se consuma a modo de estilo de vida, implica una democratización del sexo y de la vivencia de la sexualidad que difumina el tradicionalmente estricto sistema de regulación de los espacios público y privado en relación con las experiencias sexuales (Atwood, 2006). Esto provoca una privatización del espacio público en el que la educación sexual, la higiene y la salud reproductiva se aprenden e incorporan en la cotidianidad de las personas a través de las industrias del ocio y del entretenimiento, que en la actualidad pasan por enfatizar los aspectos de *reality*, interactividad y confesión de los gustos sexuales dentro de una lógica espectáculo-confesión-exhibición altamente mediática (*ibid.*: 82).

No obstante, no debemos olvidar que, tras esta democratización, lo que subyace es el valor mercantil que la sexualidad ha adquirido en el capitalismo financiero contemporáneo. Es decir, que el sexo no deja de ser una mercancía alrededor de la cual, tal como hemos visto, se ha desplegado una gran industria integrada dentro de las corporaciones empresariales que controlan las industrias culturales, del ocio y del entretenimiento. De este modo, si únicamente centramos la atención o celebramos la democratización cultural que el mercado erótico o pornográfico permite, estaremos dejando de lado otros aspectos que podrían explicar las formas en que la explotación de estas industrias interviene en los complejos procesos de regulación social. Con esto nos referimos tanto a la regulación del cómo tienen que ser nuestras relaciones sexuales a nivel simbólico y de imaginario cultural —representa-

ción— como al modo en que las prácticas y los debates sexuales tienen que ser performativizados en sociedad —discurso—. Y, en el caso de *Cincuenta sombras de Grey*, la regulación de la representación y del discurso sexual se establece mediante una relación de poder gestada en términos sociales y de género, principalmente.

Un aspecto sobre el que nos queremos detener es el hecho de que el carácter hedonista del consumo y de la industria del sexo en la actualidad promueve una vivencia de la experiencia sexual más relacionada con su calidad estética que con la ética, en la que se propone el sexo como algo divertido, *cool*, sofisticado... con lo que se promueve o explota un sentimiento de distinción propio de la modernidad burguesa (Jancovich, 2001). Dentro de las lógicas de representación dominantes, por tanto, la sexualidad femenina se diseña como un producto sofisticado bajo la representación de una agencia sexual preminentemente heterosexual y blanca.

Por lo tanto, detrás de la democratización sexual que se produce gracias a la explotación de la sexualidad femenina en la cultura del ocio, subyacen unas lógicas de producción condicionadas por unos procesos de distinción social. En este sentido, son dos los discursos que sintetizan esta construcción de la sexualidad femenina hedonista y libre: el logro y la celebración de la emancipación de las políticas sexuales reclamadas desde el feminismo histórico y la celebración de las políticas materialistas del capitalismo a las que las mujeres han accedido en los últimos años (Atwood, 2005; Gill, 2009).

Sin embargo, queremos resaltar que si, por un lado, la vivencia de la «nueva» experiencia sexual femenina puede producir un sentimiento de empoderamiento o celebración de un nuevo acceso cultural por parte de la sociedad —y de las mujeres en particular—, por otro lado la promoción de dicha sexualidad sigue preservando la mirada masculina proyectada sobre el cuerpo de la mujer blanca y el sexo heterosexual. En este sentido, la construcción de la ética o moral sexual contemporánea, a pesar de representarse y proponerse como una forma liberada y transgresora del gusto burgués tradicional por lo erótico —que históricamente ha preservado la intimidad como norma—, sigue manteniendo los estándares heteronormativos y sexualmente moderados desde el momento en que este imaginario sexual queda integrado en los procesos de promoción cultural hegemónicos determinados por la mirada masculina. Basta echar un vistazo a la televisión para observar de qué modo ciertos *realities* como «Gran Hermano» relajan la representación de la sexualidad heterosexual pero no la homosexual, o cómo la propia industria promociona un mercado *gay* pero no lésbico.

Debemos tener en cuenta, por tanto, cierto grado de normativización dentro de estos procesos de democratización de la sexualidad contemporánea, precisamente porque las estrategias mercantiles promocionan la sexualidad femenina con base en unas políticas de distinción —de género y sociales— que «empaquetan» su performativización, y tienden a homogeneizar las experiencias y los debates que se establecen a su alrededor.

5. La sexualidad femenina en la agenda neoliberal: autorregulación y autodisciplina

Actualmente, esta hipersexualización, enmarcada en las políticas de acceso reguladas por la cultura del consumo que son las que han contribuido a dar visibilidad a las mujeres (McRobbie, 2009), se construye sobre la interpelación directa a la agencia y al poder femenino; es decir, sobre una suerte de autoconciencia femenina que entiende y controla el poder de su sexualidad.

En un contexto dominado por unas subjetividades autoconscientes y reflexivas en torno a las construcciones identitarias, las relaciones que se establecen entre el imaginario cultural y la subjetividad femenina son muy complejas y difíciles de analizar. Una autora muy crítica con los sistemas de promoción de las representaciones como Rosalind Gill recurre al concepto de Michel Foucault de «tecnologías del yo» para explicar el modo en que el poder, o el imaginario dominante, actúan en y mediante los cuerpos y las conductas humanas: este proceso de normativización y control no se produce mediante nociones de «dominación», sino que actúa por regulaciones normativas y negociaciones que terminan asumiendo y performativizando dicho poder (Gill, 2008). Esto otorga cierta agencia a las mujeres de manera que no las presenta como sujetos dóciles ni pasivos, pero tampoco como las personas autónomas y capaces de elegir libremente propias del humanismo liberal (*ibid.*: 40).

Gill denomina «subjetivación sexual» al proceso por el que se deja de hablar de la utilización del cuerpo de las mujeres como objetos —imaginario sexista— para presentar su utilización como una herramienta de empoderamiento —imaginario progresista— entendiendo que los discursos mediáticos han corregido la conducta pasiva con la que las mujeres han sido representadas para reconocer su agencia y su actividad. De este modo, la representación del cuerpo de las mujeres se construye «a través de un discurso de disfrute, libertad y, sobre todo, elección. Las mujeres no son presentadas como deseosas de encontrar la aprobación masculina sino como complaciéndose a sí mismas y, como resultado, “sucede” que consiguen la admiración de los hombres» (Gill, 2008: 42). Este proceso, que pasa por instrumentalizar la agencia y el poder de las mujeres como valores de venta, termina construyendo un nuevo régimen visual, un nuevo imaginario, desde el que se incita e implica a las mujeres porque las interpela directamente. Y acaba convirtiéndose en un proyecto de regulación en sí mismo.

Esta idea de autorregulación y autodisciplina responde íntimamente al modelo social demandado por el capitalismo neoliberal: el del emprendedor autónomo, flexible, capaz de adaptarse a los cambios y a las estructuras de los mercados. Harvey y Gill (2008) acuñan el término «emprendeduría sexual» para describir de qué modo se organizan las nuevas subjetividades femeninas según este modelo de hipersexualización, una suerte de imperativo por el cual las mujeres siempre deben estar a punto y dispuestas a vivir su sexualidad según los discursos dominantes. El proceso de instrucción mediante el que la nueva feminidad sexual propuesta desde el imaginario institucional deviene

posible pasa por la autoexigencia y la autodisciplina para construir la imagen y el cuerpo de la sexualidad dominante.

Así, las mujeres son incitadas de una manera constante a ser sexis, a gustarse sexis y a estar siempre dispuestas a serlo. Además, este «estar siempre dispuesta» se constituye como un hecho que implica un trabajo, una dedicación, una voluntad, un permanente reciclaje, una inversión, una disciplina e, incluso, una responsabilidad. Lo que en definitiva se está promoviendo es la figura de un sujeto posfeminista, siempre a punto y disponible en que la belleza, el ser y estar deseables y su performativización sexual «constituyen su proyecto en curso y [la mujer] es exhortada a llevar una vida sexual “picante”, cuyos límites —no solo la heterosexualidad y la monogamia— son estrechamente vigilados a la vez que disimulados o desautorizados a través de discursos de disfrute y experimentación» (Harvey y Gill, 2008: 56).

En definitiva, la constante individualización que promueve el proyecto cultural del neoliberalismo, que para las mujeres se ha convertido en la celebración del sentimiento de la «libre elección», encuentra en la vivencia casi compulsiva de su agencia sexual una de sus representaciones más relevantes en el *mainstream* cultural. Dicho sistema de regulación meritocrático de las sociedades neoliberales promueve, por tanto, una cultura de la autodisciplina y la performativización constante que permite vivir una «subjetividad de género» (Gill, 2008, 2009) en consonancia con los discursos dominantes. Discursos que, recordémoslo, impulsan la construcción de una nueva feminidad narcisista en la que el sentido de la autoexigencia y la disciplina resultan fundamentales.

Desde esta perspectiva, asistimos a la construcción de un imaginario femenino en el que se produce una resexualización de las mujeres deliberada, en que las mujeres no dejan de ser mercancías en sí mismas. Por otro lado, no podemos olvidar que aunque la interpellación a las mujeres apele a su narcisismo, sigue existiendo una mirada dominante o, si se prefiere, una política del control, la exigencia y el escrutinio, a la que los cuerpos y las agencias de las mujeres son sometidos continuamente (Harvey y Gill, 2008; Atwood, 2009). Así pues, nos encontramos con que el imaginario hipersexualizado de las mujeres, a la vez que de algún modo promueve la imagen de una nueva feminidad, también se impone como la construcción de un nuevo imaginario mediático en el que la autodisciplina, la diligencia y la exigencia funcionan como nuevas tecnologías de regulación social en consonancia con el proyecto meritocrático del neoliberalismo.

6. *Cincuenta sombras de Grey*

El fenómeno de *Cincuenta sombras de Grey* debería leerse dentro de esta doble dinámica de empoderamiento sexual y acceso al mercado y al consumo de las mujeres contemporáneas. El éxito de la narración, más que explicarse por su trama, se debe a que ha sabido articularse a la perfección en el mercado cultural actual. Es decir, ha sabido jugar la coartada de la sexualidad femenina

desde su explotación comercial, y ha sabido detectar un nicho de mercado cuya vivencia de la sexualidad se debate entre el modelo romántico mediante el que se ha construido la educación sentimental femenina —el discurso institucional— y el de la liberación sexual que define el ser mujer en nuestra contemporaneidad —el discurso feminista—.

El desprecio y la condescendencia con que se trata el *fenómeno Grey* en las secciones culturales de los medios y las redes sociales —que ha recibido el apodo de «porno para mamás»⁵ y que ha sido asumido de forma irónica desde las industrias culturales⁶— suele girar en torno al carácter romántico y melodramático de la narración, que supedita las relaciones eróticas a la historia de amor de los protagonistas. Esto lo alejaría de los relatos pornográficos históricamente masculinizados, *hardcore*, en los que el sexo genital tiene todo el protagonismo; pero también de la hipersexualidad femenina dominante que hemos descrito, moderna, liberada y centrada en la agencia y el placer.

De todas formas, si bien es cierto que las relaciones sexuales de las novelas pueden ser y, de hecho, son asumidas dentro de una sexualidad normativa, hay un aspecto indiscutible que provoca el placer de las lectoras a la vez que la burla de las élites culturales: la focalización del relato en el placer de la protagonista femenina. En las novelas, la tensión y las relaciones sexuales que se producen entre los protagonistas de la historia siempre se centran en el placer de Anastasia: son los orgasmos de ella los que cobran auténtico protagonismo. Aunque pocas veces sea ella quien lleva la iniciativa de la relación sexual, es ella quien decide hacer felaciones⁷ e inventar modos de darle placer a él; la estimulación del clítoris o la práctica del *cunnilingus* son prácticas frecuentes en la narración; la eyaculación masculina, protagonista casi absoluta de los relatos pornográficos habituales, apenas aparece ni se nombra en los relatos; es ella quien experimenta distintos placeres sexuales gracias a numerosos artilugios y juegos que Grey le enseña... Sin embargo, Christian Grey, en casi todo el relato, solo logra placer después de ella o con ella, pero en ningún momento las acciones del protagonista masculino buscan su propia satisfacción sexual. El deseo de Christian es el placer de Anastasia y se entrega a ello con todos los medios a su alcance.

En la trilogía observamos que tanto la representación de los dos protagonistas como del estilo de vida que llevan se construye con base en un proceso de distinción en el que intervienen tanto las políticas de la diferencia de género como de clase. El esfuerzo de Grey no pasa solo por satisfacer sexualmente

5. Delia Rodríguez, «*Cincuenta sombras de Grey*: descargar un capítulo en español de *Fifty Shades of Grey*, el libro de “porno para mamás”», en *The Huffington Post*, 11/02/2012.
6. La compañía Amazon lanzaba en 2012 una campaña especial para el día de la madre cuyos anuncios hacían hincapié en el placer íntimo que buscaban las lectoras para estimularse sexualmente mientras leían el libro en un espacio doméstico dominado por el desconcierto de los maridos e hijos ante la actitud huidiza de las madres. Mientras los maridos no acertaban con los regalos... Amazon sí conocía los deseos de las mujeres.
7. Recordemos que la felación es la práctica sexual protagonista de los relatos pornográficos (L. Williams, 2004).

a su amada, sino que su enorme fortuna y su carácter dominante permiten ofrecerle a la precaria estudiante e inexperta Anastasia una vida de sofisticación, lujo y placer en que gozará de vinos caros, comidas exquisitas, paseos en helicóptero, coches y estancias en hoteles y apartamentos de lujo. Sin embargo, este proceso pasa por «construir» a Anastasia según la imagen de la mujer hipersexualizada que estamos analizando: a modo de Pigmalión, Grey modela a Ana y la empaqueta de acuerdo con lo que la mirada dominante espera de una mujer dispuesta para el deseo normativo: vestidos, maquillaje, lencería sofisticada, tacones, copas de vino y cócteles, perfumes...

Por tanto, a pesar de que cuando Christian Grey conoce a Anastasia y le invita a participar de su mundo sadomasoquista para ser su sumisa (hecho por el que debería aceptar cumplir duras normas mediante las que Grey tendría el control absoluto de su sexualidad, aspecto, higiene y cotidianidad), en la trilogía las experiencias BDSM son más bien anecdóticas, precisamente por el carácter eminentemente romántico de la narración. Así, es en beneficio de esta trama que se desarrolla el relato erótico: Grey, por amor a Ana, renuncia a su antigua vida sexual mientras que Ana aprende a negociar ciertos momentos BDSM para satisfacer a su amado. No obstante, y de un modo paradójico, si bien las prácticas sexuales sadomasoquistas no son las protagonistas del relato —entendiendo que en ellas es donde se establece una relación de poder y sumisión de un modo más conspicuo—, los elementos de control que implica la sumisión (higiene, salud sexual, aspecto, el dominio del deseo...) sí se mantienen a lo largo de toda la narración. La trama erótica del relato, por tanto, juega constantemente con esta dualidad: la construcción de un relato sexual fruto del amor y la construcción de un relato sexual fruto de un deseo de poder y posesión.

Esta construcción de la subjetividad de Ana desde un punto de vista narcisista va unida a la exigencia de disciplina y autocontrol necesaria para poder llevar a cabo unas prácticas sexuales altamente sofisticadas. Se necesita entrenamiento físico y *performance* a partes iguales para cumplir los requisitos del placer propios de la mirada dominante. Mirada que negocia la protagonista y se pretende que asuma la lectora ideal de la novela como el modelo de feminidad contemporánea.

7. A modo de conclusión

La novedad que introduce el fenómeno *Cincuenta sombras de Grey* en los relatos erótico-románticos para mujeres es la apelación a la agencia y la libre vivencia de la sexualidad femenina, en términos de lectura pero también como una práctica de consumo. Los proyectos contemporáneos de visibilización de las mujeres pasan por un discurso de la libre elección que, como hemos intentado explicar, propone la fetichización de la sexualidad femenina como norma. La participación en la esfera pública del consumo y del acceso cultural pasa por saber construirse y amoldarse a este proyecto.

Nos parece importante introducir los debates y las reflexiones sobre la sexualidad femenina que circulan en el terreno de lo popular dentro un aná-

lisis más amplio que tenga en cuenta el contexto económico y sociocultural contemporáneo. En este sentido, los mecanismos de poder y regulación no actúan mediante formas de dominación sino a través de modos de autodisciplina y autorregulación acordes con la ética neoliberal de la construcción de las identidades sociales. Las teorías de la individualización y las políticas del libre acceso marcadas desde la agenda económica y cultural del neoliberalismo convierten la agencia sexual femenina en un proyecto de regulación de las experiencias de la intimidad y la cotidianidad con una finalidad explotadora en términos de mercancía.

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Mujeres detrás de las cámaras en la industria española de televisión

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Cita recomendada: SIMELIO, N.; FORGA, M. (2014). “Mujeres detrás de las cámaras en la industria española de televisión”. *Anàlisi. Quaderns de Comunicació i Cultura*, 50, pàgs. 69-84. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.7238/a.v0i50.2252>

Resumen

En este artículo se analiza la tarea de las mujeres que trabajan detrás de las cámaras en las series de ficción de producción española emitidas en horario de máxima audiencia durante la temporada 2013-2014. Esta investigación es especialmente novedosa ya que no existen estudios previos que hayan realizado este diagnóstico en el ámbito de la ficción televisiva española. Se parte de la base de que la equidad y la participación de las mujeres en las industrias creativas suponen una mayor diversidad y un enfoque distinto en los contenidos. La muestra se compone de 14 series televisivas emitidas en abierto y en horario de *prime-time* en las que trabajan 2.156 profesionales. La metodología ha consistido en realizar un censo cuantitativo a partir de una distribución basada en categorías profesionales y cargos de responsabilidad y decisión.

Los resultados muestran que las mujeres suponen solo un 31,21 % de los profesionales de la industria televisiva española. En algunos sectores como el técnico este porcentaje se reduce a un 12,79 %, mientras que otros ámbitos tradicionalmente considerados «femeninos» como peluquería, maquillaje y vestuario las mujeres ascienden al 86,66 %. En los cargos de responsabilidad el porcentaje de mujeres desciende al 28,30 %, destacando la dirección de fotografía donde no se ha encontrado ninguna mujer en la muestra analizada.

Palabras clave: mujeres y televisión, industria televisiva, series de ficción, perspectiva de género.

Abstract. Women behind the Camera in the Spanish Television Industry

This article analyses women's behind the scenes employment on prime-time Spanish television series programs airing on the broadcast networks during 2012-2013. This research is particularly innovative, since there are no existing previous studies that have realized this diagnosis in relation to the Spanish TV fiction. It has been assumed that gender equality and women's participation in the creative industries implies greater diversity and a different approach to the television content. The sample consists of 14 television series aired on prime-

time in which they work 2156 professionals. The measurement methodology has involved a complete census with a distribution based on professional categories and positions of responsibility and decision.

The results show that women comprised only 31,21 % of all individuals working in the Spanish television industry. In certain areas such as the technical sector, this percentage is reduced to 12,79 %, whereas in other areas that have traditionally been seen as «feminine» such as costumes, make-up and hairstylist, the figure for women is 86,66 %. In positions where responsibility is implied, women comprises 28,30 % of all individuals. It is important to highlight that women comprised 0 % of directors of photography.

Keywords: women and television, television industry, TV series, gender perspective.

1. Introducción

Esta investigación explora un tema poco estudiado en España como la situación y distribución profesional de las mujeres en la industria televisiva de ficción española, con el objetivo de preguntarnos si existe una discriminación por razones de sexo en este ámbito laboral. Partimos de la base de que los medios de comunicación, y específicamente la ficción, cumplen una función socializadora que contribuye a construir la identidad de género (Belmonte y Guillamón, 2007).

En este sentido, destaca la importancia de estudiar quién realiza y crea este producto cultural teniendo en cuenta que analizar la ficción con una perspectiva de género tiene potencia educadora (Núñez, 2010) y que la falta de mujeres como productoras, realizadoras o ejecutivas en la industria audiovisual puede reforzar los estereotipos y enfoques androcéntricos en los contenidos (Martínez-Collado y Navarrete, 2011).

Además, una distribución laboral igualitaria con amplia representatividad entre los creadores y productores ofrece más oportunidades para contar todo tipo de historias con más temáticas y personajes, que pueden ser mejor recibidas por una audiencia cada vez más crítica y heterogénea que demanda contenidos más diversos y acordes con la sociedad actual (Hunt, 2013; Simelio, Ortega y Medina, 2013).

En el contexto español, las investigaciones sobre ficción televisiva desde una perspectiva de género se han centrado en aspectos como el contenido o la recepción (Galán, 2007; Instituto de la Mujer, 2007), pero no existen estudios sobre el papel de las mujeres en los ámbitos de la producción, creación y dirección.

Sin embargo, sí que se pueden destacar las aportaciones sobre este tema en el sector del cine y de la industria audiovisual en global. Núñez (2010), en una investigación sobre las mujeres directoras de cine en España, mostró que en el año 2006 de 140 películas producidas, solo 6 fueron dirigidas por mujeres (4,3 %) y en 2007 esta cifra ascendía a 9 (5,2 %). Por su lado, Martínez-Collado y Navarrete (2011) alertan de cómo desde 1997 la participación de las mujeres en la industria audiovisual ha ido disminuyendo, situándose en 2011 en el 9 % de directoras y un 19 % de mujeres en guión y producción.

Una de las investigaciones más relevantes es la realizada por Arranz *et al.* (2007) donde se muestra que las mujeres solo suponen una mayoría en las categorías profesionales tradicionalmente consideradas femeninas como la peluquería, el maquillaje y el vestuario. Por el contrario, los hombres copan el resto de sectores fundamentales: artístico, directivo y técnico (Arranz *et al.*, 2007: 48). Las autoras también advierten de la involución que se ha producido desde los años noventa con un descenso continuado de la presencia de las mujeres en todos los ámbitos, aspecto que tiene una notable influencia en la perpetuación de los estereotipos de género en los contenidos. Concretamente, en la producción y realización de largometrajes, en el año 2006 las mujeres suponían menos del 20 % de la plantilla en los sectores directivos, artísticos y técnicos, y en cambio eran el 80 % en los departamentos de vestuario, maquillaje y peluquería (Arranz *et al.*, 2007).

2. Las investigaciones sobre mujeres e industria audiovisual en el ámbito internacional

En Estados Unidos se han llevado a cabo diversos estudios sobre la distribución laboral en la industria audiovisual teniendo en cuenta aspectos como el género o la diversidad étnica. Respecto al ámbito cinematográfico, los datos coinciden con las investigaciones realizadas en España. Así, según un informe de la New York Film Academy (2013), en 2012 la industria de la ficción de Hollywood empleaba a 5 hombres por cada mujer. Respecto a la distribución por sectores las mujeres eran minoritarias en todos los ámbitos y nunca superaban el tercio del total incluso donde tenían una mayor presencia, que era en la producción (25 %), realización (20 %) y producción ejecutiva (17 %). Es de destacar que, en algunos ámbitos, las cifras son alarmantes: 15 % de guionistas, 9 % de directoras y solamente el 2 % de operadoras de cámara (New York Film Academy, 2013).

Estos datos coinciden con la investigación de Lauzen (2014) sobre las mujeres en posiciones clave detrás de las cámaras en las películas de producción independiente distribuidas por los principales festivales de cine de Estados Unidos durante el año 2013. Así, Lauzen (2014) encontró que las mujeres conformaban el 26 % de todas las plantillas en las películas de ficción, cifra que aumentaba al 28 % en el caso de los documentales.

En el ámbito norteamericano sí que podemos encontrar informes e investigaciones realizadas periódicamente sobre la presencia de las mujeres en la industria televisiva de ficción. Según datos del Writers Guild of America (Hunt, 2013) entre los años 1990-2000 y 2011-2012 las mujeres guionistas solo han aumentado un 5 %, pasando del 25 al 30,5 %, lo que significa que para llegar a la paridad real se necesitarían 42 años más. Más específicamente, durante la temporada televisiva 2011-2012, de un total de 190 series de ficción emitidas por las diversas cadenas, las mujeres guionistas contratadas fueron 519, destacando que en un 10 % de estas series no había ninguna mujer guionista (Hunt, 2013: 2).

El Center for the Study of Women in Television and Film analizó la presencia de las mujeres detrás y delante de las cámaras en las series de ficción estadounidenses emitidas en horario de máxima audiencia durante la temporada 2012-2013 (Lauzen, 2013). Este estudio, que se viene realizando desde hace 16 años, ha mostrado que las mujeres han ido incrementando muy lentamente su papel detrás de las cámaras, comprendiendo en 2013 el 28 % en conjunto, cifra que significa un aumento del 7 % desde 1997-1998 (Lauzen, 2013: 1). Específicamente, en la temporada 2012-2013, las mujeres suponían el 38 % en producción, el 34 % entre los guionistas, el 27 % en producción ejecutiva, el 24 % en creación, el 16 % en realización, el 12 % en dirección y solo el 3 % en dirección de fotografía (Lauzen, 2013: 2).

En relación con Europa, tal como sucede en España, se adolece de una falta de estudios sobre la distribución por sexos en el ámbito de la ficción televisiva y las investigaciones realizadas se han centrado más en los largometrajes. Bridges (2013) afirma que hay menos de un 9 % de directoras en el cine del Reino Unido. También en este país, en el censo de 2012 sobre personas que trabajan en las industrias mediáticas creativas, se mostró que las mujeres en la televisión representaban el 36 % del total, destacando el importante incremento de las mujeres provenientes de productoras independientes en un 30 % desde 2009, significando el 50 % del total en 2012 (Creative Skillset, 2012).

3. Barreras por razones de género en la industria audiovisual y sus consecuencias en los contenidos

Bridges (2013) adelanta algunas causas de esta situación de discriminación. Entre sus hipótesis menciona la dificultad general de las mujeres para alcanzar posiciones y romper el techo de cristal en profesiones tradicionalmente reservadas a los varones y en las que ellos imponen las cuotas a partir de los asentados «boys clubs», junto con los tradicionales problemas que tienen las mujeres para combinar la vida profesional y personal en este contexto androcéntrico (Bridges, 2013).

Este ambiente masculino dominante también es la causa que destaca Abramowitz (2000) para explicar el sexismó imperante en la industria audiovisual estadounidense. Sus resultados partieron de un estudio sobre las mujeres que han conseguido posicionarse en cargos de poder en Hollywood. Krasilovsky (1997) añade a estos factores el arraigado problema de que en un ambiente laboral fuertemente masculinizado, el ascenso profesional de las mujeres no es promovido ni defendido y predomina una consideración discriminatoria de que el trabajo de las mujeres es inferior. Así, las mujeres tienen que ser mucho mejores que los hombres para conseguir el mismo trabajo (Krasilovsky, 1997: xxiv). Arranz *et al.* (2007) advierte que es necesaria una legislación para contrarrestar esta situación y que hasta ahora en Europa no se han desarrollado políticas específicas contra la discriminación por razón de sexo en el ámbito de la industria audiovisual.

Smith, Pieper y Choueiti (2013: 9) resumen estas barreras en los siguientes aspectos: barreras financieras por razón de género (las estructuras financieras están dominadas por hombres, los proyectos presentados por mujeres están considerados como menos comerciales y las mujeres son vistas como menos seguras cuando tienen que solicitar financiación), las redes masculinas de poder, los estereotipos de género en el ámbito laboral, la dificultad para conciliar trabajo y familia y la exclusión de las mujeres de los espacios donde se deciden las nuevas contrataciones.

Como hemos mencionado, las consecuencias de esta falta de mujeres profesionales detrás de las cámaras tienen efectos en todos los ámbitos y especialmente en el de los contenidos. Lauzen y Dozier (1999a, 1999b) demuestran que las series de televisión estadounidenses producidas por mujeres atribuyen a los personajes femeninos un empoderamiento basado en el lenguaje que utilizan de forma más frecuente que en las otras ficciones producidas por hombres, pese a que no ocurre lo mismo cuando las mujeres detrás de las cámaras son guionistas o directoras (Lauren y Dozier, 1999a). Además, en la televisión estadounidense las mujeres productoras ejecutivas han influido a un importante nivel en horario de máxima audiencia, incrementando el porcentaje de personajes femeninos en las series de ficción y contratando a más mujeres como guionistas (Lauren y Dozier, 1999b).

Harris (2006) afirma que la «feminización de la televisión» produce nuevas narrativas de progreso en el contexto del posfeminismo. Además, las mujeres directoras son más proclives a representar a mujeres en escena que los hombres directores (Smith, 2010). Al mismo tiempo, tanto las mujeres directoras como las productoras modifican la forma en que la historia es contada. Así, según el estudio de Cerridwen y Simonton (2009), el uso de la violencia y las imágenes de armas o sangre son menores en las películas dirigidas o producidas por mujeres, que tienden además a tratar temas con más crítica social.

4. Metodología

Este artículo presenta los resultados del análisis que hemos desarrollado sobre la estructura ocupacional, según la distribución profesional y a partir de la variable de género, y la situación de las mujeres en las series de ficción televisiva de producción española que se emitieron durante la temporada 2012-2013 en las cadenas generalistas de ámbito nacional en abierto (TVE, Tele5, Antena3, La Sexta, Cuatro) y en horario de máxima audiencia (21-23 horas).

El principal objetivo ha sido conocer de forma cuantitativa y objetiva el porcentaje de mujeres y hombres que trabajan detrás de las cámaras en el sector de la ficción audiovisual televisiva por tratarse de un campo no explorado y muy significativo para poder hacer un diagnóstico de la situación actual. Esto es importante de cara a establecer un punto de partida para futuras investigaciones que promuevan soluciones en un contexto democrático y de igualdad de oportunidades entre mujeres y hombres.

4.1. Series de televisión analizadas

La selección de las series analizadas correspondió a las que se emitían durante la temporada 2012-2013 en las cadenas generalistas de ámbito nacional español y durante el horario de *prime-time* (21-23 horas). Solo se consideraron las producidas en España. Se han recogido datos de 2.168 profesionales. La muestra final quedó configurada por las siguientes 14 series de ficción televisiva: *Águila roja* (La 1-TVE), *Gran reserva* (La 1-TVE), *Cuéntame cómo pasó* (La 1-TVE), *El don de Alba* (Telecinco), *La que se avecina* (Telecinco), *Aída* (Telecinco), *Hospital central* (Telecinco), *Familia* (Telecinco), *El barco* (Antena 3), *Gran hotel* (Antena 3), *Con el culo al aire* (Antena 3), *Luna, el misterio de Calenda* (Antena 3), *Fenómenos* (Antena 3) y *Bandolera* (Antena 3).

4.2. Plantilla de datos y categorías

El análisis planteado ha partido de establecer una ficha con la distribución de categorías profesionales en la ficción televisiva. Para establecer las categorías se ha partido de las investigaciones anteriores citadas en el primer punto de este artículo. Nos hemos basado principalmente en los estudios de Lauzen (2013) y de Arranz *et al.* (2007). Los datos se han buscado en las páginas web oficiales de las series analizadas y se han contrastado con los que aporta la base de datos IMDb Movies, TV and Celebrities (<http://www.imdb.com>). Pese a que esta base de datos está construida a partir de aportaciones de profesionales y de personas anónimas, su credibilidad es muy alta y aceptada en las comunidades de usuarios y seguidores de ficción televisiva y cinematográfica. Los datos finales recogidos en las plantillas se han procesado con la base de datos Excel, mediante frecuencias y porcentajes.

Se ha establecido una distinción entre grados de jerarquía y categorías profesionales. La plantilla ha recogido los siguientes datos: *a)* nombre de la serie, cadena, productora, horario, argumento, cuestiones destacadas y observaciones; *b)* número de hombres y mujeres distribuidos por grados y profesión:

I. Ámbito ejecutivo/directivo: grado 1 (producción, coproducción, producción ejecutiva), grado 2 (producción asociada, producción delegada, jefatura de producción, dirección), grado 3 (supervisión *scripts*, coordinación de producción), grado 4 (ayuda y asistencia de dirección, asistencia y secretaría de producción, *scripts*).

II. Ámbito artístico: grado 2 (guion: creadores/as), grado 3 (dirección artística, dirección fotografía, coordinación de posproducción), grado 4 (fotografía, guion, montaje/edición, música, diseño, arte, decoración set).

III. Especialistas / función media: grado 3 (jefatura de peluquería y maquillaje, supervisión de vestuario), grado 4 (peluquería y maquillaje, vestuario).

IV. Grupo técnico: grado 3 (supervisión efectos visuales, jefatura de técnicos, jefatura de cámaras y eléctricos, dirección técnica), grado 4 (*casting*, cámaras y electricidad, técnicos/as de sonido, efectos especiales, efectos visuales).

Respecto a la distribución por grados es necesario apuntar algunas consideraciones metodológicas importantes que hemos tenido en cuenta en esta investigación: *script* y supervisor de *script* (grados 4 y 3) se han considerado cargos asimilables a la categoría de dirección (grado 2) por considerarse que están en su esfera de acción directa sobre la grabación de la serie. *Casting* (grado 4) se ha considerado en la categoría de técnicos siguiendo la categorización de Arranz *et al.* (2007). Se han unido los cargos de peluquería y maquillaje porque casi siempre aparecen unidos en las bases de datos consultadas y porque hemos podido observar que la mayoría de los empleados/as que aparecen en estos cargos ejercen ambos cargos al mismo tiempo en la misma serie.

Por otro lado, se ha decidido que cada empleado/a de cada serie se contabiliza solo una vez, por lo que cuando aparecen simultáneamente ocupando diversos cargos, se les adscribe a efectos de computación al de rango superior, no teniéndose en cuenta los siguientes.

Las palabras o expresiones que se han tenido en cuenta a la hora de considerar «cargos» de grado 3, son: *head, chief, manager, director, supervisor, coordinator*. En el caso de los guionistas, se ha considerado (grado 2) cuando se especifica que son «creadores» de la serie. *Production secretary* se ha considerado como grado 4, equiparándolo a la categoría de los ayudantes y asistentes de producción.

4.3. Elaboración de tablas

En la elaboración de las tablas de resultados se han utilizado categorías existentes en la plantilla de análisis pero también algunas nuevas que agrupan las existentes en la plantilla y que procedemos a especificar.

En la tabla I se han tomado los ámbitos profesionales de la plantilla de análisis. En esta clasificación hemos considerado en la producción todos los trabajos relacionados con la misma y en la dirección a los/as directores/as, ayudantes/asistentes de dirección, supervisores/as de *scripts* y *scripts*.

En la tabla II de análisis de la presencia femenina en puestos clave se ha considerado lo siguiente: creadores/as: solo guionistas de grado 2, que son los que marcan la pauta a los otros guionistas. Directores/as: solo directores/as (grado 2). No se han contemplado las otras categorías incluidas en el ámbito general de dirección porque al ser de rangos inferiores de responsabilidad no pueden considerarse cargos clave (ayudantes/asistentes de dirección, supervisores/as de *scripts* y *scripts*). Guionistas: solo guionistas grado 4 (no creadores). Productores/as y productores/as ejecutivos/as: dentro de estas categorías se han considerado también los coproductores (4 hombres) y coproductores ejecutivos (2 mujeres y 8 hombres), todos ellos de la categoría 1. Editores/as: se han incluido también en esta categoría los coordinadores de posproducción porque la diferencia es solo de rango (2 mujeres y 3 hombres).

En la tabla III: dirección: se ha considerado solo aquellos que ejercen como directores/as y no el resto de profesiones insertas en el ámbito de la dirección (ayudantes y asistentes de dirección, supervisores/as de *scripts* y *scripts*) debido a que los primeros no tienen la categoría 2 de responsabilidad para

poderse considerar «directivos» y los otros dos no se han considerado trabajos creativos.

5. Resultados del estudio sobre la presencia de mujeres profesionales en la ficción española

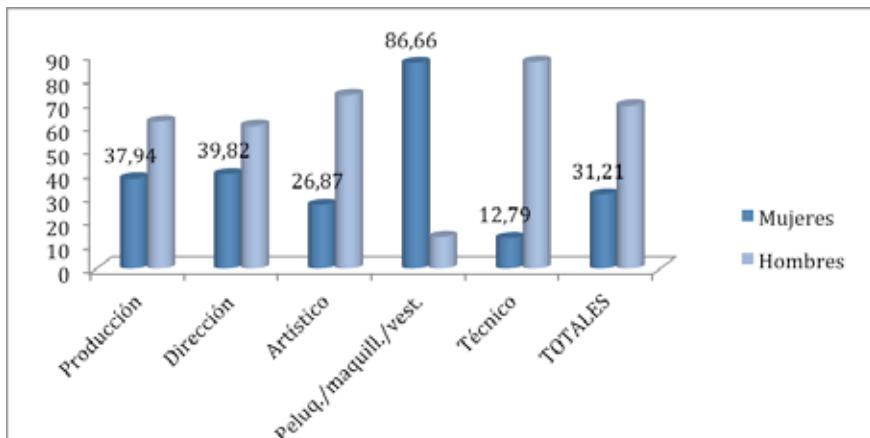
La investigación llevada a cabo sobre el personal profesional en las series de ficción españolas muestra en cifras globales la presencia de un 31,21 % de mujeres ocupando puestos laborales tras las cámaras frente al 68,79 % de presencia masculina. En todas las categorías profesionales, excepto en la relacionada con peluquería, maquillaje y vestuario, las mujeres son una minoría:

TABLA I: DISTRIBUCIÓN MUJERES/HOMBRES SEGÚN ÁMBITO PROFESIONAL

Ámbito	Mujeres	Porcentaje	Hombres	Porcentaje	Total
Producción	107	37,94	175	62,06	282
Dirección	135	39,82	204	60,18	339
Artístico	173	26,87	471	73,13	644
Peluquería y maquillaje / vestuario	169	86,66	26	13,33	195
Técnico	89	12,79	607	87,21	696
TOTALES	673	31,21	1.483	68,79	2.156

Fuente: elaboración propia.

FIGURA 1: PRESENCIA MUJERES/HOMBRES SEGÚN ÁMBITOS PROFESIONALES



Fuente: elaboración propia.

Por tanto, el *ranking* de participación en términos globales, que incluye todos los diferentes grados de responsabilidad de cada uno de los ámbitos profesionales mostrados, viene a confirmar la tradicional consideración del mundo de la estética personal como territorio femenino y el técnico como masculino. Así, como hemos apuntado, observamos que las mujeres están mayoritariamente representadas en el ámbito de peluquería/maquillaje/vestuario, con un amplísimo 86,66 %, y no llegan al 13 % en el grupo técnico, donde existe un claro techo de cristal. En la franja intermedia se encuentran la dirección (con casi un 40 %), la producción (casi un 38 %) y el ámbito artístico (cerca del 27 %).

5.1. Distribución de mujeres y hombres en cargos considerados clave

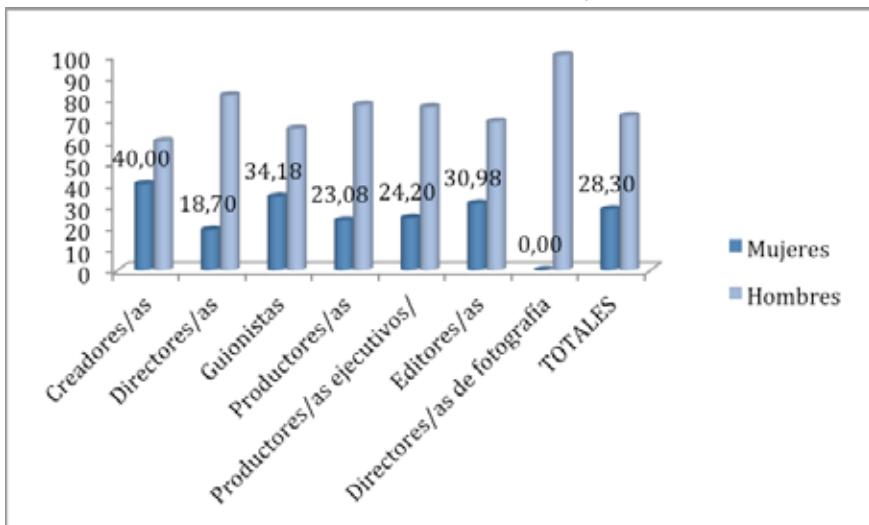
Si nos acogemos a la división de funciones en los papeles considerados clave y con posición jerárquica detrás de las cámaras, las mujeres solo representan un 28,30 % en las series televisivas en las que trabajan (Tabla II - Figura 2). En esta distribución se han considerado como posiciones jerárquicas clave también a los coproductores y a los coordinadores de posproducción por su naturaleza y grado de responsabilidad.

TABLA II: PRESENCIA FEMENINA EN PUESTOS CLAVE CON POSICIÓN JERÁRQUICA

Papeles clave	Mujeres	Porcentaje	Hombres	Porcentaje	Total
Creadores/as	2	40,00	3	60,00	5
Directores/as	20	18,70	87	81,30	107
Guionistas	81	34,18	156	65,82	237
Productores/as y coproductores/as	6	23,08	20	76,92	26
Productores/as y coproductores/as ejecutivos/as	15	24,20	47	75,80	62
Editores/as	35	30,98	78	69,02	113
Directores/as de fotografía	0	0,00	12	100,00	12
TOTALES	159	28,30	403	71,70	562

Fuente: elaboración propia.

FIGURA 2: PRESENCIA FEMENINA EN PUESTOS CLAVE CON POSICIÓN JERÁRQUICA



Fuente: elaboración propia.

Los resultados muestran cómo, en relación con las posiciones clave, las mujeres no superan nunca el 40 %, destacando en primer lugar a las creadoras de las series (40 %). Llama la atención que el rol de la mujer tras la cámara y en un puesto clave es en primer lugar como escritora, lo que incluye «creadoras» (quien escribe el guión como autora marcando las pautas para el resto de guionistas) y guionistas (34,18 %). En posiciones intermedias aparecen los puestos de editoras, productoras y productoras ejecutivas (30,98 %, 23,08 % y 24,20 %), estas dos últimas asociadas a mandos de tipo empresarial y organizativo. Finalmente, como última posición en puestos clave aparecen las directoras (18,70 %), un cargo ejecutivo y de mando directo sobre todo el equipo, además del más conocido y reconocido por el público, y dirección de fotografía, en el que las mujeres no están representadas.

5.2. *Cargos directivos en labores creativas*

En este apartado analizamos las profesiones consideradas tradicionalmente de más creatividad dentro del equipo que lleva a cabo una ficción televisiva y nos hemos concentrado en detectar el porcentaje de mujeres que ocupan cargos directivos en este ámbito (Tabla III).

TABLA III: DISTRIBUCIÓN DE MUJERES Y HOMBRES EN DIRECCIÓN DE LABORES CREATIVAS

Cargos directivos (creativo)	Mujeres	Porcentaje	Hombres	Porcentaje	Total
Dirección	20	18,70	87	81,30	107
Guión (creadores/as)	2	40,00	3	60,00	5
Dirección artística	3	20,00	12	80,00	15
Dirección de fotografía	0	0,00	1	100,00	1
Coordinación de posproducción	2	40,00	3	60,00	5
Dirección musical	1	25,00	3	75,00	4
TOTALES	28	20,43	109	79,57	137

Fuente: elaboración propia.

En términos globales, las mujeres ocupan solo un 20,43 % de cargos directivos en el ámbito creativo de la ficción española en televisión. Se aprecia que es en los apartados de guión y coordinación de posproducción donde las mujeres tienen más presencia directiva (40 %), el doble de la que tienen en dirección artística (20 %) y dirección (18,7 %). Se reafirma la idea de que las mujeres tienen una cuota mayor en el ámbito creativo en tareas de escritura, aunque siempre muy inferior a la masculina (60 %). En dirección musical la distancia respecto a los hombres es de 25 % - 75 %, y destaca especialmente la nula representación de las mujeres en la dirección de fotografía, en la que solo aparecen hombres. Estos datos sugieren la pregunta de si las profesiones relacionadas con las artes visuales como la pintura y la fotografía siguen siendo feudo masculino cuando se trasladan al mundo de la ficción televisiva.

5.3. Puestos no directivos en labores creativas

Analizamos a continuación los puestos no directivos ocupados por mujeres en el ámbito creativo (Tabla IV), que contempla aquellos trabajos dentro del equipo artístico que no conllevan atribuciones de mando.

TABLA IV: PRESENCIA DE MUJERES EN PUESTOS DE ÁMBITO CREATIVO NO DIRECTIVO

Puestos no directivos (creativo)	Mujeres	Porcentaje	Hombres	Porcentaje	Total
Ayudantes/asistentes de dirección	68	40,71	99	59,29	167
Guion	81	34,18	156	65,82	237
Fotografía	0	0,00	63	100,00	63
Montaje/edición	33	30,56	75	69,44	108

Departamento de arte	30	29,70	71	70,30	101
Diseño y decoración	17	32,70	35	67,30	52
Música	4	7,54	49	92,46	53
TOTALES	233	29,83	548	70,17	781

Fuente: elaboración propia.

Las mujeres representan menos de un 30 % de los puestos medios en el ámbito creativo o artístico de base, una cifra que, aunque superior a la de los mandos en este mismo sector (20,43 %), está todavía muy lejos de ser paritaria. Si observamos cada área por separado, destacan como ayudantes/asistentes de dirección (40,71 %), lo que puede interpretarse como una posible cantera de futuras directoras que compense el escaso 18,7 % que hay en la actualidad. La escritura de guión continúa siendo un lugar destacado (34,18 %) aunque muy lejos de cualquier optimismo paritario, seguido por diseño y decoración (32,7 %), el montaje/edición (30,56 %), el departamento de arte (29,7 %) y la música (7,54 %), que se podría calificar de muy preocupante frente al 25 % registrado en la dirección musical. Terminamos este apartado con la nula presencia de mujeres en fotografía, un ámbito masculinizado en su totalidad.

5.4. Trabajos de ámbito no creativo

Respecto a los puestos considerados de especialización más técnica y que no se sitúan entre los que exigen un elevado nivel de creatividad, valoraremos los siguientes trabajos que, por su menor incidencia directa en la obra final de ficción televisiva y su menor relevancia en el ámbito de toma de decisiones, se han situado dentro de los grados 3 y 4 de responsabilidad (Tabla V).

TABLA V: TRABAJOS FUERA DEL ÁMBITO CREATIVO

Trabajo ámbito no creativo	Mujeres	Porcentaje	Hombres	Porcentaje	Total
Supervisión <i>scripts</i>	36	80,00	9	20,00	45
<i>Scripts</i>	11	55,00	9	45,00	20
<i>Casting</i>	21	70,00	9	30,00	30
Jefatura peluquería y maquillaje	11	100,00	0	0,00	11
Peluquería y maquillaje	69	85,19	12	14,81	81
Supervisión vestuario	1	100,00	0	0,00	1
Vestuario	88	86,28	14	13,72	102

Jefatura cámaras y eléctricos	0	0,00	1	100,00	1
Cámara y electricidad	37	9,31	360	90,69	397
Jefatura técnicos de sonido	0	0,00	1	100,00	1
Técnicos de sonido	16	8,17	180	91,83	196
Dirección técnica	0	0,00	1	100,00	1
Efectos especiales	2	25,00	6	75,00	8
Supervisión efectos visuales	0	0,00	3	100,00	3
Efectos visuales	13	22,03	46	77,97	59
TOTALES	305	31,90	651	68,10	956

Fuente: elaboración propia.

Cuando nos adentramos en responsabilidades de tipo técnico o no incluidas en el ámbito creativo del equipo, el porcentaje global de mujeres es de un 31,9 %. Si desglosamos esta cifra en los diversos apartados uniendo aquellos que pertenecen al mismo ámbito temático aunque tengan diferente grado de responsabilidad, obtenemos los siguientes porcentajes de mayor a menor representación: peluquería y maquillaje (86,95 %), vestuario (86,4 %), *scripts* (72,3 %), *casting* (70 %), efectos visuales (22 %), efectos especiales (18 %), cámara y electricidad (9,29 %), sonido (8 %) y dirección técnica (0 %).

De estas cifras se desprende lo que ya vimos en la Tabla y Figura 1, que el territorio femenino por excelencia continua siendo el de peluquería, maquillaje y vestuario. El listado continua con la labor de *script*, oficio este también muy ligado al rol femenino en la tradición de los rodajes de cine y que, al parecer, continua siéndolo en su traslación a la ficción de televisión. La elección de los actores y actrices parece ser también territorio femenino, mientras que la presencia de las mujeres desciende en picado en aspectos técnicos como los efectos especiales, visuales, cámara y electricidad y sonido, estos dos últimos un auténtico feudo masculino.

5.5. Cargos de producción no claves

Finalmente, analizamos aquellas funciones del ámbito de producción que no han aparecido en ninguno de los análisis hechos hasta el momento por no encajar en las categorías escogidas. Se trata de trabajos de producción que por no ser del mayor rango de responsabilidad no pueden considerarse puestos clave y tampoco resulta sencillo enmarcarlos entre una clasificación de labores creativas o no creativas en el sentido de mayor exigencia de tipo técnico.

TABLA VI: CARGOS DE PRODUCCIÓN NO CLAVES

Trabajos producción no claves	Mujeres	Porcentaje	Hombres	Porcentaje	Total
Producción asociada	1	25,00	3	75,00	4
Producción delegada	1	6,67	14	93,33	15
Jefatura de producción	14	35,90	25	64,10	39
Coordinación producción	2	100,00	0	0,00	2
Ayudantes/asistencia producción	68	50,74	66	49,26	134
TOTALES	86	44,32	108	55,68	194

Fuente: elaboración propia.

En estas tareas de producción no claves, que van desde el rango 2 al 4 de nivel de responsabilidad, las mujeres presentan una mayor participación, el 44,32 %, la mayor obtenida globalmente. Destaca especialmente la labor de coordinación de producción (100 %) y ayudantes o asistentes de producción (50,74 %).

6. Conclusiones

Los resultados muestran que las mujeres solo representan un 31,21 % en los equipos que llevaron a cabo las teleseries españolas que se vieron en la temporada 2012-2013. Su presencia asciende en un 39,82 % en el ámbito de la dirección, pero es solo un 26,87 % en el sector artístico. Entre estas cifras se encuentran terrenos baldíos como la fotografía, donde las mujeres, simplemente, no participan; o las labores de cámara o técnicos de sonido, donde solo son un 12,79 %. Por el contrario, aparecen también ámbitos como peluquería, maquillaje y vestuario que siguen siendo considerados territorios femeninos superando el 86 % de presencia, y *script* y *casting*, con una presencia superior a un 70 %.

De las 14 series televisivas analizadas en esta investigación, en términos globales las series con más representación femenina tras las cámaras son *El don de Alba* (Telecinco), con un 37,97 %; seguida muy de cerca por *Gran hotel* (Antena 3), con un 37,89 %; mientras que las últimas en este ranking son *Fenómenos* (Antena 3), con un 23,91 %, y *La que se avecina* (Telecinco), con un 23,86 %.

Los resultados de nuestro estudio coinciden en gran parte con la situación en la industria televisiva de Estados Unidos en cifras globales si atendemos a la Tabla II de puestos clave. Allí las mujeres que trabajan detrás de las cámaras en puestos clave en las series de ficción son el 28 % (Lauzen, 2013) frente al 28,30 % en las series españolas. En cambio, se aprecian diferencias en la distribución de estas funciones. Así, existen más mujeres productoras en Estados Unidos (38 %) que en España (23,08 %) y más productoras ejecutivas (27 %

- 24,20 %), pero hay una considerable menor proporción de creadoras (24 % en Estados Unidos frente al 40 % en España). También en el caso de las directoras (12 % y 18,70 %) y de las editoras (16 % y 30,98 %), en España existe un mejor resultado. Los porcentajes son prácticamente iguales en el caso de las guionistas (34 % y 34,18 %). En los cargos relacionados con la dirección de fotografía la mujer es en ambos países prácticamente inexistente, con un 0 % en España y un 3 % en Estados Unidos.

Respecto a futuras investigaciones es necesario analizar más cualitativamente esta situación a partir de entrevistas con profesionales del sector con el fin de proponer pautas que puedan ayudar a modificar esta desigualdad. En este sentido, la legislación debería actuar para poder establecer cuotas de discriminación positiva que ayuden a no perpetuar esta falta de equidad al igual que se ha hecho en otros sectores profesionales.

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Posmachismos y medios de comunicación: nuevos mecanismos para viejos problemas

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Cita recomendada: RIVERO, D. (2014). "Posmachismos y medios de comunicación: nuevos mecanismos para viejos problemas". *Anàlisi. Quaderns de Comunicació i Cultura*, 50, págs. 85-97. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.7238/a.v0i50.2268>

Resumen

Desde que el art. 14 de la Constitución reconoció la igualdad entre mujeres y hombres se ha extendido la idea de que, efectivamente, la discriminación por razón de sexo ha sido erradicada. Este espejismo de igualdad ya conseguida se ha extendido también a la profesión periodística.

Sin embargo, los posmachismos han surgido como nuevas formas de perpetuar las desigualdades históricas que afectan a las mujeres. En este artículo trataremos de identificar los posmachismos más extendidos entre la profesión periodística. Así, en este recorrido teórico analizaremos si el periodismo es una profesión feminizada, cómo se articulan las fórmulas narrativas para excluir a las mujeres de la profesión y relegarlas a las secciones de menor empaque dentro de los medios de comunicación, el papel que juegan los medios en la construcción de estereotipos sobre las mujeres, así como las causas que propician una representación testimonial de periodistas al frente de los medios.

Palabras clave: posmachismos, medios de comunicación, periodismo, discriminación, estereotipos.

Abstract. *Post-male chauvinism and the mass media: new mechanisms for old problems*

Since Article 14 of the Constitution recognized equality between women and men the idea has spread that discrimination for reasons of sex has been effectively eradicated. This mirage that equality has already been attained has also spread to the journalistic profession.

However, post-male chauvinism has emerged with new ways of perpetuating the historical inequalities that affect women. In this article we will try to identify the most widespread forms of post-male chauvinism in the journalistic profession. In this theoretical review we will analyze whether Journalism is a feminized profession, how narrative formulas are articulated to exclude women from the profession and relegate them to less important sections in the mass media, the role played by the media in constructing stereotypes on women, as well as the causes that favor a merely token presence of women in top media positions.

Key words: post-male chauvinism, mass media, journalism, discrimination, stereotypes.

1. Introducción

Una de las últimas resoluciones del Parlamento Europeo (2012/2116) sobre el sexismo en los medios de comunicación denunció que «la discriminación de género en los medios facilita la reproducción de los estereotipos de género».

Y es precisamente a través de esos estereotipos e ideas falsas asumidas como ciertas como el machismo opera actualmente en contra de la igualdad, ya que, de acuerdo con Lorente (2009: 66), «desde las posiciones masculinas más reflexivas se percibe que el enfrentamiento frontal y la posición rígida ya no podrán ser efectivos».

Tal como anunció la Plataforma de Beijing (1995) los medios de comunicación pueden contribuir de forma fundamental al logro de la igualdad entre mujeres y hombres... o no. Dependerá de la elección de los temas, el tratamiento informativo, las fuentes, el uso no sexista y estereotipado del lenguaje y las imágenes, entre otras cosas. Pero hay que tener presente que la subinformación y la desinformación como partes de la estrategia del posmachismo se traducen en una ocultación de las noticias e informaciones que hacen referencia a posiciones diferentes a las suyas. Y es que «la verdadera desinformación está en informar mal, en distorsionar voluntariamente esa realidad objetiva para conseguir crear un efecto determinado» (Lorente, 2009: 96).

Según este autor, bajo esta estrategia la red posmachista se extiende de manera que se multiplican los mensajes y se diversifican las imágenes y los contenidos con la intención de invisibilizar aún más, bajo el camuflaje de normalidad, el objetivo de sus estrategias.

Por ello, en este artículo se identifican las formas actuales de posmachismo más extendidas entre la profesión periodística, con la intención de desenmascarar así las inercias e ideas preconcebidas que ayudan al sostenimiento de un sistema discriminatorio dentro de la profesión que lleva indefectiblemente a la elaboración de informaciones sesgadas y carentes de enfoque de género.

2. ¿Feminización de la profesión periodística?

En los últimos tiempos se ha extendido la conceptualización del periodismo como una profesión feminizada. Tal como comprobaremos a continuación, en esta afirmación encontramos una primera forma de posmachismo que trata de extender la igualdad obtenida entre los muros académicos al terreno laboral, desdibujando así el mapa real de las mujeres dentro de la profesión periodística.

Según los datos del Instituto Nacional de Estadística de 2010 existen en España un total de 37 universidades y centros universitarios que imparten estudios de periodismo, de los cuales un 56,5 % son públicos y un 43,2 % son privados. En cifras del *Informe anual de la profesión periodística 2010*¹, las mujeres

1. No se hace referencia a los informes de la profesión periodística publicados en años posteriores porque ofrecen las cifras totales de licenciados y licenciadas en periodismo, pero no segregadas por sexo.

representan el 70,1 % de las licenciadas frente al 29,9 % de licenciados. Estos datos hacen que autores como Costa y Tuñez (2009: 777) califiquen a la profesión periodística de «eminente femenina».

Se trata de un fenómeno que cada curso académico va en aumento, ya que en 1994 eran un 64 % las licenciadas, en 2006 ya alcanzaban el 65 % y en la actualidad superan los dos tercios —70,1 %— (APM, 2010: 91).

Si tomamos como ejemplo el caso de la Facultad de Ciencias de la Información de la Universidad Complutense de Madrid, dos de cada tres estudiantes son mujeres, el 65 % del alumnado (Garrido, 2005: 122). Los datos relativos a la Facultad de Ciencias Sociales y de la Comunicación de la Universidad del País Vasco - Euskal Herriko Unibertsitatea (Rivero: 2012) reflejan también esta tendencia con un 67 % de licenciadas en periodismo en la década 1999-2009.

Teniendo en cuenta estas cifras lo que parece indiscutible es la adecuación de acuñar el término «feminizada» a la fase académica del periodismo. Ahora queda comprobar si estas cifras son extrapolables al terreno laboral.

En principio, el estudio del Col·legi de Periodistes de Catalunya nos advierte que conviene falsear la hipótesis de la feminización o que, al menos, habría que definirla con mayor precisión, dado que parece que los datos nos hablan más de una feminización de los estudios de periodismo, pero no así de la profesión periodística como tal. Tal como apuntan Soriano, Cantón y Mercé (2005: 44), el 70 % de los periodistas catalanes son hombres mientras que la cantera donde se forman los futuros periodistas no ha dejado de licenciar cada año a muchas más mujeres que a hombres.

Actualmente, uno de los estudios más completos sobre las diferencias salariales y profesionales con base en el género lo encontramos en *El diagnóstico de la profesión periodística de Aragón* realizado por la Asociación de la Prensa de Aragón en junio de 2001. Asimismo, también podemos destacar el estudio *La situación profesional y laboral de los periodistas*; el estudio publicado por el Colegio Profesional de Xornalistas de Galicia sobre la situación laboral de la profesión en la comunidad autónoma gallega, publicado en 2002; y el diagnóstico sobre la profesión periodística elaborado por la Asociación de la Prensa de La Rioja en 2009. El perfil general de periodista profesional que se desprende del cruce de los datos de estos estudios es el de un hombre de 35 años, licenciado en Ciencias de la Información, con jornadas laborales que exceden las ocho horas, salario medio de 1.200 euros y una percepción de precariedad de las condiciones en las que realiza su trabajo.

Uno de los datos destacados sobre el perfil del/la periodista nos indica que las jornadas laborales se sitúan entre las ocho y las diez horas diarias, lo que reafirma la premisa de que «no hay un tiempo concreto para ser periodista, sino que el periodista ha de serlo durante todo su tiempo» (Ortega y Humares, 2000: 17).

Uno de los indicadores, tal como destaca Rodríguez López, para medir la presencia laboral de las mujeres son los índices y edades de participación de las mujeres en la vida laboral. La representación mayoritaria corresponde a mujeres con edades comprendidas entre los 40-50 y los 50-60. Es decir, las mujeres

en edad reproductiva (30-40) están infrarrepresentadas en el mercado laboral periodístico, lo que pone de manifiesto que la participación se contempla una vez desaparecidas las responsabilidades familiares. Este argumento justifica, cuando menos, el hecho de que las mujeres no puedan participar de esta condición *sine qua non*, ya que el relevo generacional se descarta con una media de edad de 35 años. Esta teoría se ve avalada por los datos del *El diagnóstico de la profesión periodística de Aragón*, donde el estudio por tramos de edad revela que por debajo de los 30 años, tres de cada cuatro periodistas son mujeres. Y es precisamente la ausencia de políticas de conciliación, según el *Informe de la FAPE* (2013), lo que produce mayores tasas de paro femenino, menos oportunidades de empleo, de formación, de promoción y de acceso a puestos de responsabilidad. Todo ello además de la segregación profesional, la mayor precariedad, la expulsión del mercado de trabajo por motivos relacionados con la maternidad y las responsabilidades familiares, las retribuciones inferiores por trabajo de igual valor y las dobles jornadas de trabajo.

3. Las formas narrativas del periodismo como obstáculo a la carrera profesional de las periodistas

A la dificultad de conciliar la vida laboral con la familiar se suman otros mecanismos para la exclusión de las periodistas de las redacciones, pero una vez más lo hacen de manera clandestina, lo que dificulta su identificación.

Para muchos teóricos y teóricas el discurso entre lo público y lo privado es el que construye estas desigualdades. Para Hannah Arendt, tal como expone en su obra *La condición humana* (1958), desde la polis griega la base del espacio privado se asentaba sobre la necesidad de procurar un espacio público en el que los hombres pudiesen participar como ciudadanos. En palabras de Nancy Fraser en la obra *Unruly Practices: Power, Discourse, and Gender in Contemporary Social Theory* (1989), el concepto de esfera pública hace posible el intercambio de opiniones libres e iguales, eso sí, desde una visión masculina del mundo. Joan Landes, por su parte, en su obra *Gender, representation and revolution* (2001), concibe la exclusión de las mujeres de la esfera pública como la razón misma de su creación desde los tiempos de la Revolución Francesa.

Este antagonismo entre los espacios público y privado, aplicado a los medios, tal como expone Holland (2011: 32), hace que «las mujeres aparezcan en los medios encerradas en unos estereotipos que son producidos por hombres para construir su poder por medio de los excesos con que adornan a las mujeres que caricaturizan en sus páginas».

Van Zoonen (2011: 34) considera que las periodistas trabajan en áreas que son una extensión de sus responsabilidades domésticas y sociales determinadas por su cualidad de cuidadoras y factores socioeconómicos, como el hecho de que perciban una retribución inferior a la de hombres en los mismos cargos que ellas. De la explicación de esta distribución del tipo de contenido con base en el rol «privado» de las mujeres se entiende, como señala Van Zoonen (2011: 34), «que a mayor prestigio de un medio o una sección menor probabilidad de

encontrar mujeres en ellos». Según este mismo planteamiento, la autora Myra Macdonald (2011: 105) va más allá y considera que «los hombres que diseñan las *agenda setting* televisivas refuerzan las antiguas jerarquías de estereotipos mediante la producción de fórmulas de entretenimiento en las que participan, sobre todo, mujeres».

En sintonía con lo expuesto, John Hartley clasifica en cuatro categorías narrativas el periodismo actual: conflicto (seguridad nacional e internacional, defensa y conflictos bélicos); progreso (economía, industria nacional, financiación y presupuestos del Estado); competición (que abarca desde el arte hasta el deporte); accidentes (desastres naturales, innovación y desarrollo y anomalías). Hartley (1998: 53) defiende que en las tres primeras categorías las informaciones están elaboradas en su mayoría por hombres y que de la cuarta categoría participan mujeres y hombres. Según esta idea los hombres periodistas acaparan casi todas las formas narrativas del periodismo actual, lo que obstaculiza el acceso de las mujeres a la profesión.

Asimismo, la mayor presencia de mujeres en radio y televisión, donde las *soft news* (noticias blandas) son más abundantes, apunta a que el contenido resulta determinante para el acceso de mujeres y hombres a los medios de comunicación. Ross, por ejemplo, habla del periodismo político como característicamente masculino, lo que según esta autora se debe a que «en un estudio realizado por el British Group Women in Journalism se destacase que las mujeres políticas habían sentido que las periodistas frecuentemente habían realizado una cobertura más masculinizada que sus compañeros» (Ross, 2011: 113) probablemente en un intento de entrar en el mundo del periodismo de calidad.

Stuart Allan (1998: 68) considera por ello que un equilibrio entre mujeres y hombres en las redacciones no supondrá un cambio en el contenido, porque las periodistas tenderán a imitar las formas androcéntricas de informar pre establecidas debido a los mecanismos de inclusión-exclusión del discurso, que se sustentan en que los juicios de valor, la credibilidad y las fuentes expertas escasamente responden a mujeres.

Otro de los puntos clave para el entendimiento de los procesos de exclusión de las mujeres de la información de calidad es la objetividad. Desde el siglo xix los medios de comunicación han prodigado su objetividad como una fórmula para resultar atractivos a todo tipo de anunciantes. Según Steiner (1998: 147) «la demanda de objetividad inmediatamente descarta a las mujeres por su inherente subjetividad». Esta atribución de falta de racionalidad de las mujeres las relega a las páginas destinadas para audiencia femenina o a la elaboración de *soft news*. Steiner (1998: 152) relata: «cuando me contrataron para trabajar exclusivamente para las páginas femeninas, se me rompió el corazón al comprender que mi oportunidad de convertirme en una auténtica periodista había fracasado». Kitzinger (1998: 193) va más allá y muestra su pesimismo a la hora de corregir estos estereotipos profesionales por lo que ella denomina *False Memory Sindrome*, que se refiere a que las características que atribuimos a cada uno de los sexos forman parte de un poso de aprendizaje desde la edad más temprana muy difícil de corregir. Por ello, esta autora considera que con-

tabilizar la composición de las redacciones con base en el sexo no es suficiente porque una distribución distinta no implicaría nuevos resultados «hasta que no se incluya en las categorías de análisis la relación entre feminismo, antifeminismo, feminidad y cómo la masculinidad opera sobre ellas y se van diseñando y perpetuando en los medios» (Kitzinger, 1998: 202).

En definitiva, las actuales narrativas del periodismo que distinguen entre informaciones de contenido blando —*soft*— y duro —*hard*— suponen un mecanismo de exclusión asumido por la profesión y el trabajo diario de las redacciones que no hace sino excluir a las periodistas por su característica e inherente «subjetividad y sensibilidad».

4. Techo de cristal vs. techo de cemento, dos nombres para un mismo problema

Tal como explican Larrañaga y Rodríguez (2004: 202), «Las percepciones sociales de lo que constituye un trabajo adecuado para hombres y para mujeres suelen implicar que se les asignen tareas y responsabilidades distintas desde el comienzo». Teniendo en cuenta esta afirmación, los primeros empleos pueden resultar cruciales para el futuro del avance profesional y si las mujeres consiguen trabajos iniciales inferiores a los hombres, pueden sufrir ciertas desventajas que afectarán al resto de su vida profesional. Y aquí encontramos una de las formas de posmachismo más extendida y efectiva, que consiste en atribuir las posiciones de mujeres y hombres en la pirámide laboral con base en supuestos méritos objetivos cuando en realidad en esa asignación operan las diferencias de género ya desde los inicios.

Acerca del debate sobre la capacidad de gestión de las mujeres, el estudio de Deaux «Interpersonal networks and social categories: Specifying levels of context in identity processes» (2000) reveló diferencias en la forma de percibir su propia capacidad de gestión entre hombres y mujeres: ellas perciben problemas adicionales a su trabajo que resultan imperceptibles para ellos. En trabajos iguales, los hombres consideran que ejecutan su labor mejor que sus compañeras, que poseen más habilidades e inteligencia. Además, ellos creen que las labores que desempeñan presentan mayor complejidad que las que desarrollan sus compañeras en el mismo puesto. Asimismo, los hombres se presentan más seguros respecto a su capacidad de obtener el éxito laboral y creen que se debe exclusivamente a sus capacidades. Ellas se muestran menos optimistas y consideran un freno a su carrera profesional el hecho de ser mujer. En el caso español, los resultados derivados del informe *Profesionales del periodismo* (2000), realizado para el CIS por García de Cortázar y García de León, arroja nuevas perspectivas sobre qué relacionan las mujeres y los hombres periodistas con el hecho de que ellas sean menos —según el *Segundo informe de representación de género en los informativos de radio y televisión* (2005) el 22 % de las redactoras de televisión son mujeres y el 23 % de las redactoras de radio— y ocupen puestos inferiores. Los datos nos indican que el 37 % de mujeres y hombres reconocen que este desequilibrio se debe a que no existe

la misma igualdad de oportunidades, el 20 % de los hombres y el 11 % de las mujeres lo achacan a que la presencia femenina en la profesión es un fenómeno emergente, el 14 % de hombres y el 30 % de mujeres creen que se debe a que las empresas dudan de la capacidad directiva de las mujeres, el 8 % de los hombres y el 13 % de mujeres lo relacionan con los problemas de responsabilidad (Harrison *et al.*, 2011: 187).

Otro obstáculo en la capacidad directiva de las mujeres se encuentra en la gestión del tiempo. Se puede decir que todos los empleos en general, pero muy especialmente los trabajos de dirección, se han estructurado de forma tradicional para adaptarse a alguien que cuenta con un sistema de apoyo a tiempo total que lo respalda desde el hogar, es decir, alguien que haga la compra, cocine, lave y mantenga las relaciones personales y familiares. En otras palabras, como señalan Larrañaga y Rodríguez (2004: 198), «se sigue funcionando como si hubiera siempre alguien en casa, alguien que se encargue de todo lo que está fuera del trabajo profesional».

¿Puede ser esta la causa principal para la infrarrepresentación de mujeres en los órganos directivos? Lo que resulta indiscutible es que tanto hombres como mujeres son capaces de asumir roles directivos, hasta ahora impregnados de características masculinas ya que los hombres han sido los ocupantes de esos cargos.

Podríamos plantear que a las mujeres no les motiva estar en estas posiciones, al considerar que el poder solo es posible ejercerlo emulando el modelo masculino. Además se podría considerar que a las mujeres no les interesa el ejercicio del poder al existir una cultura femenina que definiría a las mujeres como un grupo social diferencial y homogéneo.

Otra hipótesis es que a las mujeres les interesa de forma similar que a los varones el ejercicio del poder. Pero el capital social, las redes sociales de clase y género, siguen funcionando en la asignación de posiciones sociales a los individuos, fundamentalmente, a medida que las mujeres saltan las barreras de capacitación educativa. El requisito del mérito ya no es suficientemente funcional para frenar el acceso de las mujeres a los espacios públicos, y por ello los pactos de fraternidad entre los varones son nuevamente vitales, es lo que se ha venido a llamar patriarcado. Justamente cuando el mérito académico de las mujeres está probado, el papel de las relaciones sociales se vuelve más relevante, y de ahí se deriva el famoso «techo de cristal». Este mecanismo casi imperceptible de discriminación se muestra en contra de implantar la paridad sexual, sostiene que con esta medida se pervierte el principio de igualdad de oportunidades que debe regir la sociedad. Es decir, se parte de la lógica de la igualdad, al entender que esta es una realidad para los sexos. Por lo tanto, se considera que la asignación de las personas a las posiciones sociales es eficaz, y viene dada por el mérito que cada individuo haya acumulado. Esto es lo que plantea el enfoque de «capital humano», cuyas teorías ignoran los mecanismos de exclusión y el papel que la clase y el género tienen en la estructuración social.

Las nuevas formas de discriminación sexual emergen a medida que las mujeres se incorporan en los espacios «públicos», considerados tradicionalmente «monopolio» masculino, y obtienen mejores calificaciones académicas que los

varones. Esta nueva situación provoca, tal como señala Torralbo (2006: 198), «que cuando el requisito de mérito ya no es absolutamente funcional a los intereses del género masculino, se crean nuevas barreras de acceso a estos espacios, legitimando nuevas formas de desigualdad, si bien más sofisticadamente, lo cual dificulta su proceso de visibilización».

Por otro lado están quienes defienden la teoría del «techo de cemento», es decir, son las propias mujeres quienes frenan su ascenso a los altos escalafones de los medios de comunicación. Normalmente, estas renuncias suelen atribuirse a la alta dedicación que requieren estas posiciones y a que ellas prefieren inclinarse por el disfrute de su vida personal y familiar.

Pero, ¿no son al fin y al cabo el techo de cristal y el techo de cemento los resultados de un mismo problema? Las mujeres que deciden optar por su vida profesional y están dispuestas a adoptar cargos directivos se ven frenadas por un sistema discriminatorio del mercado laboral que afecta a sus carreras desde los inicios. Por otro lado, aquellas que renuncian a puestos que dificultan la conciliación de la vida laboral con la familiar adoptan esa decisión bajo el rol que el patriarcado las ha atribuido, en su función de cuidadoras y procuradoras del ámbito privado. Sin embargo, el techo de cemento es manidamente utilizado por el discurso posmachista para hacer ver que las oportunidades son las mismas para todas las personas, pero que las mujeres carecen del más mínimo espíritu de sacrificio en el terreno profesional y que son ellas mismas las que se blindan el acceso a espacios históricamente monopolizados por los hombres.

5. El papel de los medios de comunicación en la imagen de las mujeres

En las últimas décadas se han producido cambios relevantes en la imagen que los medios de comunicación ofrecen de las mujeres, aunque ello no ha supuesto la erradicación de los contenidos sexistas y estereotipados, más bien se ha producido una nueva forma subversiva de difundir el androcentrismo a través de los medios.

Así, en lo que se refiere a los contenidos resulta obvio para Núñez y Loscertales (2010: 238-39) que «los temas de género rara vez tienen acogida en las secciones de los periódicos y, por supuesto, es todavía más extraño que se recojan en la primera página. No obstante, resulta más descorazonador que sean muy pocas las noticias que se traten desde una perspectiva de género, esto es, destacando la diferente posición que ocupan hombres y mujeres en la pirámide social».

El dominio de lo masculino en el ámbito público está tan interiorizado que no somos conscientes del predominio de la mirada androcéntrica que presentan los medios de comunicación, entre otras cosas, porque los parámetros de lo masculino, de tanto repetirse, se han convertido en «modelos de normalidad». Si atendemos al discurso periodístico, llaman la atención dos aspectos. El primero: los hombres son juzgados por sus acciones: si son positivas se les aplaude y, si no, se les critica, pero, en ningún caso, se pone en tela de juicio su derecho a estar donde están. Sin embargo, esto no ocurre con las mujeres,

que son juzgadas por su apariencia, por sus actitudes, por su adecuación. Paradójicamente, el movimiento de mujeres, que como sector organizado registra una importante inserción en el mundo de las tecnologías de la comunicación, no ha puesto el grito en el cielo frente a esta forma de marginación. Y es que, como afirma León (2007: 19), «esta indiferencia resulta, sin duda, de múltiples factores sociopolíticos, pero también da cuenta de un orden de prioridades en las cuales las reivindicaciones relativas al derecho a la comunicación y a la tecnología son percibidas como temas especializados».

Tal como asegura Lledó (2004: 379): «se puede constatar que el androcentrismo tiende a no citar a las mujeres y, si lo hace, no las presenta como protagonistas ni como parte central de lo que se cuenta. En cambio el sexismo sí que hace aparecer a las mujeres en el discurso, siempre en contextos que las presentan con los tópicos, las cualidades, las situaciones... más manidas». Para esta misma autora (2004: 381) uno de los fenómenos más graves en la ocultación del papel público de las mujeres radica en un aspecto gramatical que articula tanto el castellano como otras muchas lenguas y «que consiste en el uso del género masculino como neutro, como genérico». De esta manera, de forma casi imperceptible anulamos la presencia femenina de la realidad informativa narrada siempre en genérico.

Esta particular relación que los medios de comunicación han establecido con las mujeres supone una categorización sólida por medio de la cual la imagen social nos conduce al reconocimiento de las personas que son representadas por ella de forma organizada y asequible. Esta categorización derivada de una síntesis cultural prolongada en el tiempo resulta muy peligrosa, ya que «su gran potencia estriba en que se acepta y se generaliza siendo compartida por toda la ciudadanía; y puede estar cargada de estereotipos y prejuicios» (Núñez y Loscertales, 2009: 20).

De este tipo de prácticas se deriva el segundo de los problemas: las mujeres aparecen representadas como un todo homogéneo impregnado de las mismas características. Esta proyección de lo femenino contribuye a desvirtuar la realidad al no reflejar a las mujeres con base en sus identidades y vidas únicas y diferenciadas.

Tal como expone María Pilar Rodríguez (2008: 7-8), las mujeres en los medios aparecen de modo que cumplen la función general asignada por el sistema, que es la de interiorizar el papel de economía de apoyo y resolver los desequilibrios y contradicciones en campos tales como la educación y la familia. La mirada informativa se ha anquilosado en un enfoque androcéntrico, reducido a varones adultos que ocupan los puestos de poder, de modo que la prensa resulta insensible a las transformaciones políticas y sociales de los últimos años.

6. A modo de conclusión

El reconocimiento formal de la igualdad entre mujeres y hombres, así como los avances conseguidos en esta materia, han hecho proliferar la falsa creencia de una igualdad plena ya conseguida, que ha servido de marco per-

fecto para el desarrollo de la discriminación sexista de la nueva era: el posmachismo. Así las cosas, el entramado patriarcal ha inventado nuevas formas de perpetuar viejos roles.

En el caso que nos ocupa, el de la profesión periodística, este posmachismo puede detectarse en los tres vértices de un triángulo que perpetúa sistemas que frenan las carreras periodísticas de las mujeres.

Por un lado, se ha extendido la idea de que la profesión periodística es una profesión feminizada. Para sustentar este concepto erróneo se entrecruzan de manera poco inocente los datos académicos y los laborales, de manera que el hecho de que las aulas de periodismo en las universidades españolas estén ocupadas en su mayoría por mujeres sirve para extrapolar esa realidad a las redacciones, cuando los datos nos muestran precisamente lo contrario. Y es que esa infrarrepresentación de mujeres en el seno de los medios de comunicación es una clara manifestación de las barreras que todavía hoy obstaculizan el acceso de un número cada vez mayor de graduadas en periodismo. Lo que demuestra además cómo esos sistemas desprecian la capacitación académica de ese gran porcentaje de mujeres periodistas.

El segundo vértice, tal como hemos comprobado en este artículo, para la exclusión de las mujeres lo encontramos en las formas narrativas, es decir, en el instrumento central de trabajo. Esta forma de discriminación es una de las maneras más sutiles de mantener a las periodistas fuera del círculo de las corporaciones mediáticas. La objetividad requerida en la elaboración de las noticias constituye una farsa que sirve de gran ayuda para el sostenimiento del posmachismo. Dentro de los estándares de rigor y pluralidad se pueden elaborar informaciones más ajustadas a la realidad y a los criterios democráticos. Ahora bien, ninguna palabra, enfoque ni selección de imágenes... responde a criterios de objetividad, ya que en todo ello subyace la subjetividad de quien lo selecciona. Ahora bien, resulta políticamente correcto aferrarse a la idea de objetividad para mantener a las mujeres excluidas de las grandes secciones de los medios por su inherente subjetividad. Así, la clasificación de las informaciones entre *soft* y *hard* relega a las periodistas a la elaboración de noticias cercanas y de interés humano, que son minoría en los medios, sobre todo en prensa. Lo que explica también una mayor presencia femenina en radio y televisión.

Si las formas narrativas como mecanismo de exclusión son difíciles de identificar, la escasa representación de mujeres en los órganos de dirección de las empresas de comunicación resulta evidente e imposible de ocultar. Pero aquí, una vez más, el posmachismo ha buscado la manera de separar esta realidad del androcentrismo que la genera. El techo de cemento se ha extendido como la teoría central para la discriminación de género en las altas esferas y contrarrestar así la teoría del techo de cristal. Pero, como hemos comprobado a lo largo de estas líneas, ambas teorías son origen de un mismo problema, ambas son el resultado de un mundo pensado para que los hombres se desarrolle en los espacios públicos mientras las mujeres siguen considerándose las procuradoras de los espacios privados. De ahí que las empresas consideren que ellas están menos capacitadas para desarrollar trabajos que requieran una

mayor dedicación —techo de cristal—. El posmachismo ha hecho tan bien su trabajo que encontramos que algunas mujeres han considerado también que puestos de esa envergadura nos las permitirán seguir ocupando su rol de cuidadoras y generadoras de un espacio familiar y privado adecuado, por lo que renuncian —techo de cemento—. El problema de la convivencia de estas dos teorías es que el techo de cemento intenta imponerse para ocultar la existencia de un techo de cristal. Y, sobre todo, que ambas no responden ni siquiera a decisiones de las empresas o de las mujeres, sino que esas decisiones ya las tomó anteriormente un sistema patriarcal que excluye, distingue y discrimina.

Por último, encontramos que estas formas de posmachismo infiltradas en la profesión periodística tienen reflejo en unos contenidos carentes todavía hoy de perspectiva de género y sin interés por los temas feministas, cuando los medios de comunicación serían la manera inmejorable de vehicular la erradicación del sistema patriarcal y ayudarían a desenmascarar los discretos, pero de gran calado, posmachismos.

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Sui generis. Gender portrayals in the italian television advertising

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Recommended citation: PANARESE, P. (2014). “Sui generis. Gender portrayals in the Italian television advertising”. *Anàlisi. Quaderns de Comunicació i Cultura*, 50, p. 99-115. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.7238/a.v0i50.2274>

Abstract

The article reports the results of a content analysis of 815 Italian commercials and a qualitative research on some case studies.

The study aims to determine the level of sex typing in the Italian advertising and try to find some new portrayals of men and women.

If the content analysis confirms the perpetuation of old stereotypes in the Italian commercials, the qualitative research reveals a timid transgression of traditional gender representations. Sometimes, women are depicted as professionals and ambitious workers, inserted in different workplaces and not confined at home, flanked by men and not only driven by them. Occasionally, men are depicted at home, in the role of father or as a sexual object.

However, the “new” portrayals do not imply a reduction of the differences between men and women; rather they articulate the gender diversity in a more subtle form. On the one hand, the Italian commercials reassure traditional identities, pushing them towards consumptions that destabilize the gender order. On the other hand, they promote a new awareness and attention to the gender complexity, anchoring it to traditional consumptions.

Even if the new portrayals are few and do not constitute a trend, they prove that the topic is more complex than it seems, and the issues are much more nuanced than in the past.

Keywords: Gender, Advertising, Representations, Role portrayals, Italian Television

Resumen. *Sui Generis. Representaciones de género en la publicidad televisiva Italiana*

El artículo presenta los resultados de un análisis de contenido de 815 anuncios publicitarios italianos y una investigación cualitativa sobre algunos estudios de casos.

El estudio tiene como objetivo determinar el nivel de asignación del sexo en la publicidad italiana y tratar de encontrar algunos cambios en las representaciones de género.

Mientras que el análisis de contenido confirma la perpetuación de los estereotipos de edad en los anuncios italianos, la investigación cualitativa revela una transgresión tímida de los roles de género tradicionales.

Palabras clave: Género, Publicidad, Representación, representaciones de roles, la televisión italiana

1. Introduction

Advertising is a persuasive, pervasive and repetitive form of communication. Indeed, it aims to create a positive attitude towards its object, be it a product, brand, a social cause, or political party. It fits every possible space, such as TV, radio, newspapers, cinemas, trains, buses, airports, shop windows, mailboxes, shopping bags, mobile phones and a growing number of unusual places (Panarese, 2010), to catch the attention of the target audience. It is also the only form of communication that repeats the same message dozens of times, to make it familiar and easy to remember.

Because of its features, advertising is a powerful form of communication that offers the most sustained and concentrated set of images in the media system. It has not only a great economic force, but also a profound influence on culture, values and quality of life (Bogart, 1967; Pollay, 1986; Zanacchi, 2004).

Probably more than other forms of communication, advertising develops attitudes, expectations, cultural orientations and behaviours, as well as the desires of purchase (Kahlenberg, Hein, 2010).

As an important socialization agent, it contributes to shape gender (Gauntlett, 2009) intended as a product of social interaction that creates normative expectations that influence how individuals perceive both themselves and others (Goffman, 1979).

As the cultivation theory has demonstrated, media portrayals influence audiences' perceptions of social reality, mostly for heavy viewers (Gerbner, Gross, Morgan, Signorielli, Shanahan, 2002). Media constructs frames, used by audience to make sense of the world (Goffman, 1974). In particular, advertisers use framing to capture shared rituals (Rook, 1985) and allow consumers to place themselves in a recognizable and attractive social position (Soloman, 1983, Zanacchi, 2004).

In providing what looks like a typical situation, advertisers take advantage of the audience's framing capacity, showing the position of men and women in relation to the product. Thus, they do not use any portrayals, but any simple and easily recognizable image (Davis, 2003). They show not the way men and women behave, but the ways in which audience think they should behave. These portrayals are so easily recognizable that they help to build the social representation of gender and allow creating a so-called *gendered native* (Bem, 1993).

According to Bandura (1994), «many of the shared misconceptions about [...] gender roles [...] are at least partly cultivated through symbolic modeling of stereotypes» (p. 76). The perpetuation of these stereotypes can have many effects (Bretl, Cantor, 1988). Through the mechanism of vicarious learning, viewers may adopt potentially stereotypical information about appropriate and socially desirable behaviour (Bandura, 1986). Moreover, media images may affect how individuals think about themselves (Groesz, Levine, Murnen, 2002; Tiggemann, McGill, 2004). Thus, by portraying stereotypical gender roles, advertising can stimulate and perpetuate discriminatory perceptions and behaviours (Gauntlett, 2009).

2. Literature Review

Over the past forty years, a significant body of research evidence about gender and advertising has been accumulated. The first studies date back to the early Seventies, at the time of the rise of the feminist movement and the growth of commercial television. They have been conducted mainly in the United States within various disciplines, such as sociology (Goffman, 1976), mass communications (Busby, 1975), feminist theory (Barthel, 1988), critical theory (Williamson, 1978), and marketing (Belkaoui, Belkaoui, 1976; Lundstrom, Siglimplaglia, 1977).

These studies showed many differences in the advertising portrayals of men and women, particularly on television (Chafetz, 1974; Furnham, Mak, 1999; McArthur, Resko, 1975). They revealed a small number, poor quality, and limited roles afforded female characters in the media, in comparison to male characters and real women (Barthel, 1988; Belkaoui, Belkaoui, 1976; Berganza, del Hoyo, 2006; Chafetz, 1974; Courtney, Whipple, 1974; Gilly, 1988; McArthur, Resko, 1975; Rodríguez Wangüemert, Matud Aznar, Espinosa, 2008; Schneider, Schneider, 1979). They also found that men were overrepresented numerically, were well-informed about the advertised product, were used as “expert” voice-over announcer, and shown in independent roles within a professional setting (Furnham, Bitar, 1993; Marecek, Piliavin, Fitzsimmons, Krogh, Leader, Trudell, 1978). Women, instead, were depicted as less informed about the products, in secondary and dependent roles, within a domestic setting, as unemployed or in “pink collar” jobs (McArthur, Resko, 1975; Panarese, 2014b). Moreover, female characters were usually shown as young, pretty, and married (Schneider, Schneider, 1979; Furnham, Bitar, 1993).

Even when men and women were represented similarly, differences emerged in the roles they had in the commercials and the types of promoted product (Culley, Bennett, 1976; Downs, Harrison, 1985). Women were associated with health and beauty related goods (Furnham, Mak, 1999; Furnham, Paltzer, 2010, Valls-Fernández, Martínez-Vicente, 2007) or cleaning products (Ibroscheva, 2007). Men were related to leisure products, such as sports or alcohol, and technological products, such as cars and consumer electronics (Furnham, Farragher, 2000).

Moreover, some British studies reported male dominance of voice-overs in commercials (Livingstone, Green, 1986; Manstead, McCulloch, 1981), and Verna (1975) discovered that a male audio track was used in the 100% of male-oriented or neutral ads and the 55% of female-oriented commercials.

Thus, many researchers found strong and widespread gender role stereotypes in different countries, such as Australia (Mazzella, Darkin, Cerini, Burrali, 1992), Canada (Rak, McMullen, 1987), Great Britain (Furnham, Bitar, 1993; Furnham, Schofield, 1986; Livingstone, Green, 1986), Spain (Berganza, del Hoyo, 2006; García-Muñoz, Martínez, 2009; Rey Fuentes, 1994; Sánchez Aranda, 2002), and Italy (Furnham, Voli, 1989). Although some national peculiarities, there was a common international pattern in sex-typing on television advertising (Durkin, 1985).

However, after a strong initial interest in gender and advertising studies, during the Seventies and early Eighties, there has been a general decrease of attention to the research in this area. Some scholars stated that everything there was to say about gender stereotypes has already been said. Liesbet Van Zoonen (2011), for example, asked: «we did not know all there was to know about these old media already? What more could we find about the stereotypes of women in advertising?» (p. 3).

Actually, we do not know everything there is to know, for many reasons. First, the research on gender and media had an episodic character in many countries and did not give rise to a consistent trend of studies. In Italy, for example, the scientific analyses have been few and largely dominated by the reflection on the sexualisation and objectification of the female body (Sassatelli, 2006).

Moreover, in the last decades, there has been an increase in public awareness and critical consciousness of gender stereotyping in the media and some international meta-analyses have found a slow reduction in the stereotyped portrayals of men and women (Eased, 2010; Furnham, Mak, 1999; Wolin, 2003). Then, the conservative world of advertising has slightly changed gender representation (Fowles, 1996). Specifically, in Italy, a timid transgression of gender boundaries in men and women portrayals has been recently detected (Panarese, 2014a).

On these bases, a new study of the representation of gender in the Italian television advertising has been carried out. Since in Italy there has been little systematic research on men and women portrayals in commercials, we started from the study of gender representations as a first step of a bigger and deeper analysis that tried to answer the question «what else is there to say?» (Johnson, 2007: 14).

The analysis was a part of a larger study conducted by the GEMMA Observatory of Sapienza, University of Rome¹, whose general task was to investigate the way in which television accepts and encourages a change in the

1. The working group was directed by Milly Buonanno and was composed of Giovanni Ciofalo, Michaela Gavrila, Franca Faccioli, Silvia Leonzi, Anna Luci Natale, Paola Panarese, and Claudia Polo.

process of construction of identities and gender relations. The specific aims of the study relating to advertising were to determine the extent of sex typing in the Italian commercials and to look for any “new” and more realistic gender representation, because, like Horace Newcomb and Paul Hirsch, «we are more concerned with the ways in which television contributes to change than with mapping the obvious ways in which it maintains dominant viewpoints» (Newcomb, Hirsch, 1984: 70).

3. Method

«While statistics indicate large improvements in women's representation in the labour force and a more egalitarian role in the household» (Verhellen, Dens, de Pelsmacker, 2014: 3), television advertising continues to depict women in subordinate roles (Berganza, del Hoyo, 2006; Livingstone, Green, 1986; Luyt, 2011; McArthur, Resko, 1975; Sánchez Aranda, García Ortega, Grandío, Berganza, 2002) or in sexually appealing roles (Lin, 1998; García Fernández, García Reyes, 2004; Reichert, Lambiase, Morgan, Carstarphen, Zavoina, 1999).

In Italy, commercials, posters and print ads have hosted two main feminine models since the beginning of advertising: the *housewife*, a figure with a discreet beauty and loving attitude, devoted to housekeeping and family; the *sensual woman*, associated with various products and often “objectified” (as in the traditional Peroni Beer commercial *Call me Peroni. I'll Be your beer*).

Thus, our hypothesis, were:

- H1: Male characters in the Italian television commercials are depicted in major roles than the female characters.
- H2: Women are mainly represented in a parental or housekeeping role, and less frequently in a professional role.
- H3: Women are represented as beautiful and desirable more often than men

To prove the hypothesis, the study analyzed the contents of the six main Italian television networks (RAI 1, RAI 2, RAI 3, Rete 4, Canale 5 and Italia 1), recorded for a week, from Monday to Sunday², between eight in the morning and two at night. Our sample was composed by all the unique broadcasted commercials (815), excluding their repetitions (9979).

To codify and quantify significant data, we used content analysis, intended as a mix between the “classical” Berelson's approach (1952) and the analysis as investigation. Thus, we built a search tool containing an ordered sequence of questions with which the television commercials were interrogated. Each entry of the survey corresponded to a variable that constituted

2. Every day was chosen in a different week, between February and April 2011, to collect a greater variety of commercials.

the operational definition of a property. The entries were included in the following thematic areas:

- Commercial general features (network, time slot, date of registration, advertiser, product category)
- Commercial formal features (duration, presence of music, sounds or noises, claim, voice-over, spatial and temporal setting, type of shots)
- Characters' features (gender, age group, nationality, sexual orientation, profession, hair colour, eye colour, clothing style, physique, facial aesthetics, degree of exhibited emotion)
- Additional information (presence of cases to be analyzed in depth).

Two different researchers coded each commercial. About the not objective characters' features, such as the aesthetics of the face (coded as beautiful, ugly, neutral/common, and undetectable), the physiques (coded as thin, normal/neither fat nor thin, overweight, and undetectable), the exhibited emotion (coded with a scale from 1, indicating the maximum emotionalism, to 6, indicating the maximum coldness), only the coincident data were considered. In the rare cases in which the two encodings did not match, we classified the data as undetectable.

4. Results

The content analysis concerned 815 unique advertisements, out of a total of 9979 commercials, containing 1798 characters. It provided interesting results, but not entirely unexpected. So we also carried out a qualitative analysis on same case studies, selected because they offer "different" sex role portrayals. The findings of the qualitative analysis were quite impressive.

4.1 *The content analysis findings*

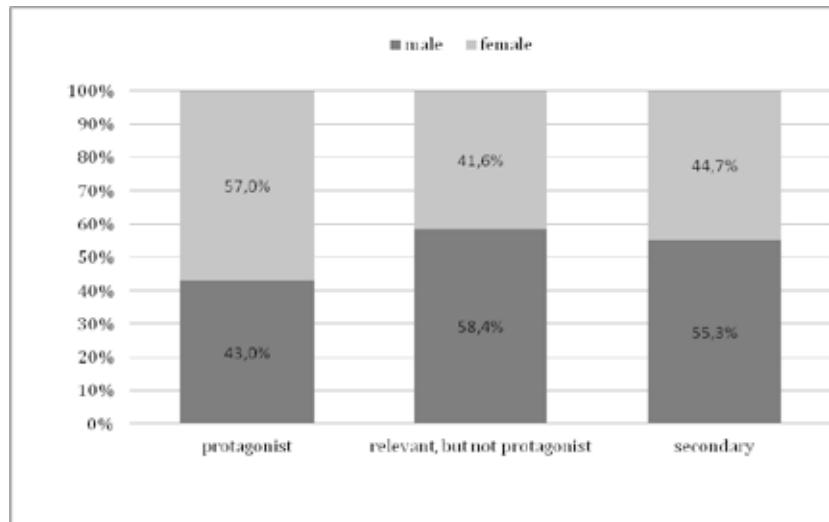
All the hypotheses were confirmed. Although female characters appeared first and were more numerous among the protagonists (Figure 1) and endorsers (Figure 2), their portrayals were quite traditional. They were mainly depicted as housewives, driven by a male voice-over³, more numerous among the common characters (buyers and housewives in which the target can be identified), but not among the experts (such as doctors, dentists, and researchers).

Moreover, women were mainly represented in a parental or housekeeping role, and less frequently in a professional role. They dominated in a domestic setting, but not in public spaces, business contexts and workplaces (Figure 3). 100% of the housewives were females, and all the workmen were male.

3. In more than 90% of the sample, there is a voice-over, and it is male in two cases out of three. This result is related to the traditional guarantee function of the advertising voice, confirmed by the age of the speaker (an adult in 8 cases out of 10).

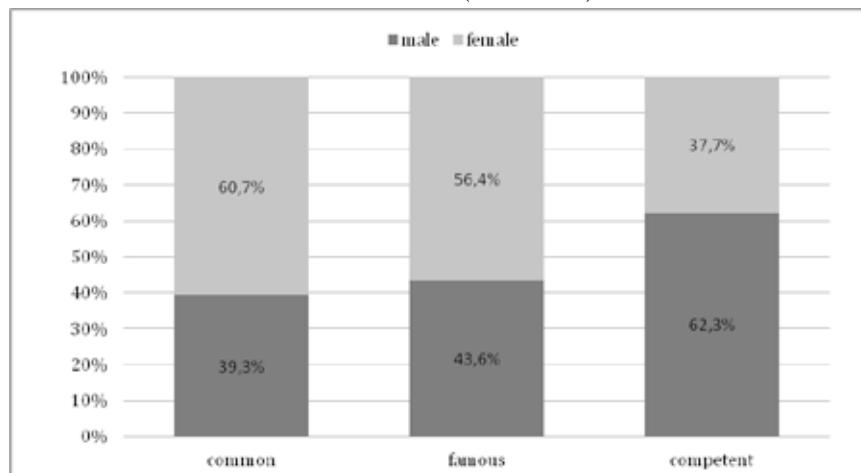
There were a few women among professionals, entrepreneurs, managers, and teachers (Figure 4) and there was the same number of male and female characters only among the retired people. Thus, the most common portrayals depicted women as housewives or at rest (both at home), rather than workers.

FIGURE 1. ROLE OF MALE AND FEMALE CHARACTERS (PERCENTAGES)



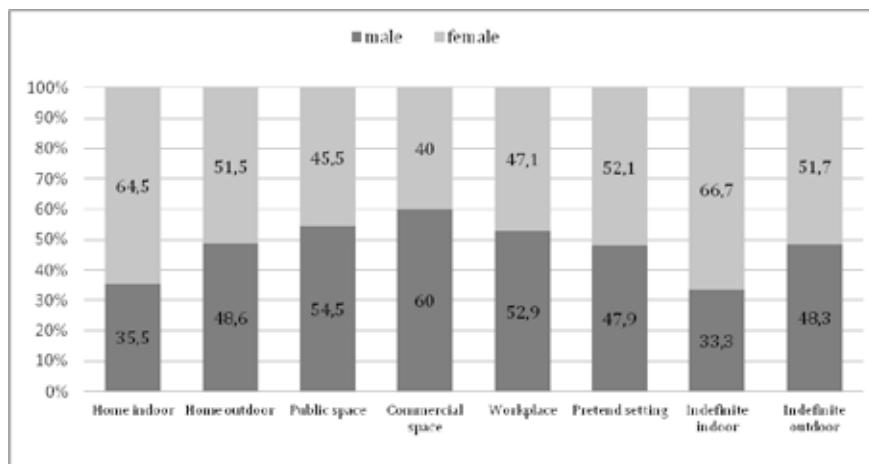
Database: 1798

FIGURE 2. TYPE OF MALE AND FEMALE CHARACTERS (PERCENTAGES)



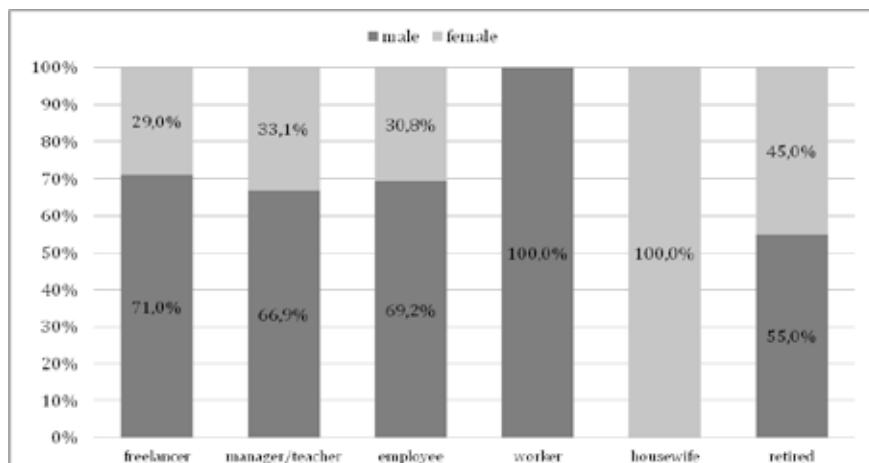
Database: 1798

FIGURE 3. SETTING AND MALE AND FEMALE CHARACTERS (PERCENTAGES)



Database: 1798

FIGURE 4. WORK OF MALE AND FEMALE CHARACTERS (PERCENTAGES)



Database: 1798

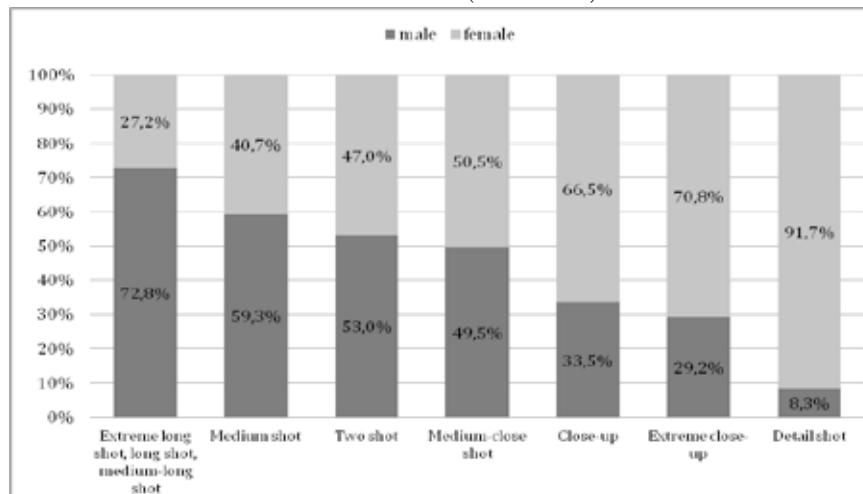
Finally, women were represented as beautiful and desirable more often than men. They were younger than men. Over 80% of the skinny figures were a female. Beautiful faces were feminine in four cases out of five. The less conventional (and probably more attractive for the Italian male) eyes or hair colours were the prerogatives of the female characters (all the red-haired people, for example, were women, as just as the 80% of the blonds). Most of

the grey, black or white hair-coloured people were men. Women also dominated among those with blue or green eyes, respectively in three cases out of four and in two out of three.

Thus, in the Italian TV advertising there were a lot of young, skinny, and exotic beauties.

In addition, the female characters were mainly shooting in close-up while medium shots or long shots predominated for men. That was an indication of the differences in the gaze on gender: the camera focused on faces, eyes, shoulders, legs or breast, probably to exalt women's beauty (especially in the cosmetics commercials) (Figure 5). One of the consequences of these shots was the emphasis on the female emotions. Not surprisingly, over 70% of the cases of a marked display of feelings concerned women. However, regardless of the expectations, the sensual woman was not a very familiar figure in the sample. This portrayal often appeared in the commercials of products, like underwear, related to seduction⁴.

FIGURE 5. SHOTS OF THE MALE AND FEMALE BODIES (PERCENTAGES)



Database: 1798

Anyway, many of the analyzed figures seemed a crystallization of the traditional advertising models. The image of the wife and the mother prevailed over the others, as in the *Quattro salti in padella* ready-to-eat meals commercial, that used the typical registers and scenarios used in the Sixties advertisements and defined the female protagonist as "mother" and "wife". Its claims were:

4. An ad of the brand Intimissimi, for example, consisted in only close-ups of the model Irina Shaykhlislamova's body, wearing panties and bra and staging that feminine touch well depicted by Goffman (1979).

“Attention wife! Do you want to go out for dinner? Do not propose this meal to your husband!”, “Attention wife! Your husband does not say a word during the dinner? Remove the dish from the table!”, “Attention moms! This meal keeps children at home beyond age 40”. According to its creators, this was an ironic campaign, because it referred to past and invited mothers and wives to not defrost the ready-to-eat meals, while having the intent to get it done. However, despite the intention, it reminded old stereotypes not completely outdated in the Italian culture.

4.2 The qualitative analysis outcomes

If the content analysis revealed many old-fashioned images, the qualitative analysis showed some glimmers of novelty. The new gender portrayals were related to women appearance in only one case, a *Dove's* commercial, populated by less young, skinny and perfect women than in the rest of advertising. The ad was part of a campaign born in the 2004, dedicated to the promotion of natural beauty and to the enhancement of feminine self-esteem. In the sample, we found the *Real Beauty Sketches* commercial, a video showing Gil Zammora, an FBI forensic sketch artist, drawing two different sketches for seven women. The first sketch was based on the personal description of each woman; the second sketch was based on the description given by a stranger she has just met. By comparing the two portraits, it is evident that women perceive and describe themselves as less attractive than they are.

More interesting were the ads where women were depicted as professionals and ambitious workers, inserted in different workplaces and not confined at home, flanked by men and not driven by them. These portrayals appeared in a *Calzedonia's* commercial, whose claim was “Sisters of Italy”. It showed different women in different moments of their lives, followed by the dedication: “To Italia, Vittoria, Laura and all the others”, accompanied by the notes of a female version of the Italian hymn.

This ad was not entirely new: it displayed beautiful and emotive women with many close-ups of their charming faces and shapely legs, but also showed various female identities.

Moreover, a really different image of the mother was found in a *Fastweb* commercial, performing a multitasking woman, described as a *heroine*, with an *extraordinary normality* because she was able to manage both family and career.

The dual role of worker and housewife, together with the rare function of guaranteeing, appeared in an ad for children's *Mellin milk*, whose claim was “I study it as a researcher, I choose it as a mom.” The figure of the scientist woman who granted the quality of a product also occurred in a *Lines è tampons* commercials that showed a team of female researchers and used the slogan “Designed by women for you”.

These two last cases were only partly innovative. Their novelty was limited by the fact that the researchers were given as guarantors of feminine or childish products, competent not only for their profession, but also for their gender.

Also the innovations related to the men's images were limited by the context. In fact, we found some commercials in which men took care of children (*Batticuori, Conad*), prepared meals (*Knorr*), gave advice about house cleaning products (*Bio Presto, Dash*) or were used as a sexual object. However, the ads where men are the guarantors of food products, for example, involved two chefs, who appeared in a domestic space, but were presented as professionals. And the sensual man appeared in a limited number of ads and repeated many of the clichés of the representation of the sensual woman, as in a *Dolce and Gabbana* men's perfume commercial, where the sculpted body of a beautiful model was shooting with extreme close-ups.

Thus, despite some exceptions, men and women continued to occupy different areas of expertise and still revealed few points of contact.

Not surprisingly, the hybrid or transgender figures were almost entirely absent from the sample. There was only one case, in a *Mercedes* commercial, that showed a gay bar, connoting it as ambiguous and threatening and describing its frequenters as abnormal and vaguely disturbing. Apart from the questionable content - which aroused much controversy - the gay identities were shown only in this case and seemed bizarre and threatening.

5. Discussion

If we consider some particular commercials - as in the qualitative analysis - it seems that something has changed in the gender representation of the Italian television advertising.

Among the novelties there are portrayals of women depicted in activities different from house cleaning or cooking. Competent professionals who try to combine work and family life. Women who appear not only in domestic spaces, but also in workplaces or on the public scene. Natural beauties less used as sensual women than expected. Likewise also men are more often represented at home, in the role of fathers, exhibiting consumption behaviour, as well as the productive ones.

Thus, there is a timid transgression or evolution of gender boundaries in the Italian television advertising.

Indeed, Italian women and men are characters in motion. A plot of more and more widespread transformations, aspirations and behaviours has contributed to redefine their biographical, educational, occupational and emotional trajectories in the last decades.

Women, in particular, live and promote a rapid change. They are probably the most dynamic component of the society, the ones that are changing more quickly their social, cultural and economic coordinates, helping to influence the development of the country.

However, the advertising representation of this movement is slow, as in *slow motion*, and still far from a realistic representation of gender.

The detected innovations are too few to permit generalizations, and the overall analysis shows still divided male and female identities, whose relation

is not in the reduction of differences, but in their representation in a new and more subtle form. Particularly, on the one hand, the images of the Italian advertising reassure traditional identities, while pushing them towards consumptions that destabilize the gender order, as in the commercial for ready-to-eat meals, promoted by an old-fashioned housewife. On the other hand, they encourage a new attention to gender complexity, anchoring it to consumption related to traditional roles, such as in the case of professional women endorsing feminine or childish products.

When advertising attempts to grapple with “different” images, it does it in a stereotypical and hyperbolic way. This is what happens in the commercials that focus on a flashy homosexuality or in those that turn men into sexual objects.

Moreover, the space for gender ambiguity or sexual orientation diversity is almost imperceptible in the sample. Beyond the only case reported, in the rare Italian commercials of the past, the transgender figures appear as anomalies and disguises, rather than as fluid and unconventional sexual identities.

Thus, despite some small novelties in the sex role portrayals, the analysis reveals that there was no truly rich and balanced perspective on masculinity and femininity in the Italian television advertising.

This result is understandable if we consider the complexity and variety of gender identity, the channel and the form of communication analyzed, and the main methodology used. Because of their multidimensional and moving identities, the female and male worlds are too difficult to be represented in few seconds. Thus, no wonder that at first sight the study returns a general static image of gender identity, mostly crystallized on old clichés and replicating the results of studies dating back to forty years ago.

For what concerns the channel, we have studied the Italian television, a medium used to achieve a large and mature audience in a short time, giving much space to the commercials of convenience goods. Hence the tendency towards caution and the preference for tradition.

Moreover, the analyzed form of communication, advertising, must be able to capture the attention of an elusive target in few moments and to convey a message that should be understandable and memorable, despite the information overload. No wonder if it uses stereotypes, clichés or hyperboles.

Regarding the research method, the main part of the study is based on the content analysis, limited to frequency counts of role portrayals that yield rather superficial and somewhat self-evident inferences (Ferguson, Kreshel, Tinkham, 1990).

6. Conclusions and implications

Thus, the research reveals that a few new advertising images are exceptions that prove the rule. It is not a surprising or innovative result, but it is a necessary basis for updating the Italian study of gender and advertising and building new and more profound analysis.

Hence, the intention to move beyond the research on the sex-role stereotypes framework, to use different methods to overcome the limitations of content analysis, to examine the persuasive implications of gender representation and the intra-gender and inter-gender dynamics.

Particularly, we think that the study of gender and media should carry out a comprehensive analysis of the representations, the public, and the media practices, considering not only the gender portrayals, but also the audience's readings, and the advertising production processes that lead to the constructions of a certain representation.

For these reasons, the presented research should be considered as the first step in a long path. A survey that can help to renew the Italian study on gender and advertising, with the awareness that the topic is more complex than it seems, and the issues are much more nuanced than in the past.

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Ser noia a l'era de les xarxes socials

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Cita recomanada: TORTAJADA, I.; ARAÜNA, N. (2014). "Ser noia en temps de Facebook". *Anàlisi. Quaderns de Comunicació i Cultura*, 50, pàg. 117-129. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.7238/a.v0i50.2233>

Resum

Les xarxes socials han esdevingut un espai privilegiat per a les interaccions dels i les adolescents. Mitjançant la creació i la gestió d'espais d'intercanvi i intimitat, i en connexió amb els contextos *offline*, els nois i les noies construeixen les seves identitats de gènere. A través d'una recerca realitzada al llarg de quatre anys ens hem apropat a les pràctiques adolescents a les xarxes socials per explorar aquests processos identitaris. Emprant tècniques quantitatives i qualitatives, hem analitzat el contingut de 400 entrades de Fotolog, 18 àlbums complets i hem recollit les veus de 32 adolescents (nois i noies) per mostrar quines són les autopresentacions que fan les noies i com són interpretades i valorades per elles mateixes i pel seu grup d'iguals. Els resultats apunten a la importància del gènere com a eix vertebrador d'aquestes autopresentacions, que són interpretades i, fins i tot, acceptades o rebutjades atenent a codis basats en el gènere. Les noies, quan es mostren a elles mateixes en aquestes xarxes, acostumen a aparèixer soles i utilitzen el seu cos com a actiu. És possible identificar un seguit de patrons de representació que són fruit de l'adopció de models provinents d'altres mitjans i de l'apropiació creativa. Ara bé, com més presència i visibilitat assoleixen les noies en aquests espais, més hi arrisquen la seva pròpia reputació, sobretot perquè aquestes autopresentacions tendeixen a mostrar una forta erotització del propi cos. Quan això succeeix, les noies reben força més crítiques de caràcter sexual que no pas els nois.

Paraules clau: Adolescents, autorepresentació, xarxes socials, gènere, etiquetatge.

Abstract. *Being a Girl in the Age of Social Networking*

Social networks have become a most favored space for interaction amongst teenagers. By creating and managing spaces for intimate exchanges, and in close connection with offline contexts, boys and girls build their own gender identities. Throughout a four-year-long research study we have looked into teenage practices and uses on social networks in order to explore such identity-building processes. We have applied both quantitative and qualitative methods to content-analyze 400 Fotolog entries, 18 entire albums and 32 teenagers' views and opinions to show how teenage girls present themselves on such networks and how these self-presentations are understood and assessed by themselves and their peers. Results suggest that gender un-

derpins such self-presentations. These are interpreted and even accepted or refused according to certain gender-based codes. When they show themselves on these networks, girls usually appear on their own and use their bodies as active assets. We can identify a few patterns of representation that result from adopting models borrowed from other media and from a sort of creative appropriation by these teenage users themselves. However, girls risk their own reputation as they achieve wider presence and visibility in these kinds of spaces, especially since their self-presentations tend to show a highly eroticized body. When this happens, girls do more frequently get criticisms with sexual overtones than boys do.

Keywords: Adolescence, Self-representation, Social Networking Sites, Gender, Labelling.

1. Introducció

La recerca que presentem a continuació parteix de la premissa que els i les adolescents dediquen molt temps a les xarxes socials, i això, per una banda, multiplica les seves trobades amb la resta d'iguals i, per una altra banda, incrementa la pressió per a la construcció i el manteniment de l'autoimatge i les relacions.

A través del treball de camp realitzat, mirarem de demostrar que les xarxes socials són espais privilegiats d'interacció que se sumen als entorns *offline* que ja existeixen i que donen continuïtat a les interaccions quotidianes i a les interpretacions que es fan d'aquestes interaccions. Malgrat que, de vegades, els i les adolescents anomenen «postureig» a bona part de les pràctiques que desenvolupen a les xarxes socials, i que es mostren conscients de les regles del joc que existeixen en les autopresentacions *online*, pateixen i es prenen molt seriosament les conseqüències d'aquestes interaccions, ja que condicionen la percepció de la seva autoimatge i la dels altres. En aquestes construccions de la identitat que es produueixen a la xarxa, i que es projecten més enllà de l'espai virtual, el gènere és un recurs clau i esdevé un dels eixos principals de l'autopresentació.

Entenem el gènere com un procés que es construeix a través de la interacció. En aquest sentit, el gènere és quelcom que es va fent (West i Zimmerman, 1987). El gènere és el correlat cultural del sexe i existeixen formes convencionalitzades de caracteritzar (en el sentit de *performance*) aquest correlat, que són *exhibicions de gènere* (Goffman, 1979). A les xarxes socials, el maneig de les impressions (Goffman, 1994) que es posa en marxa està fortament connectat amb les exhibicions de gènere, en bona part, perquè els i les adolescents acaben fent tota una tasca d'hiperritualització (Goffman, 1979), exagerant i simplificant els rituals que ja existeixen en la societat i coreografiant unes relacions de gènere determinades que contribueixen a definir la situació d'una forma concreta. Un dels nostres objectius és descobrir quina és aquesta definició de la situació que, quant al gènere, es produeix a través de les interaccions i performances a les xarxes socials.

Els nostres resultats suggereixen que els i les adolescents utilitzen la sexualització i el joc com a estratègies interconnectades per negociar les seves identitats i manejar les seves relacions que, cada cop estan més mediatitzades. Els

i les adolescents constantment s'exhibeixen posant a prova la seva imatge davant els altres, encara que això pugui comportar posar en risc la seva reputació.

2. Gènere i pràctiques adolescents a les xarxes socials

Les xarxes socials han estat àmpliament incorporades pels adolescents i els joves (Boyd, 2008; Hinduja i Patchin, 2008; Livingstone i Brake, 2010; Manago, Graham, Greenfield i Salimkhan, 2008). Estudis recents, com el de l'IN3 (Aranda, Sánchez i Tubella, 2014), ens diuen que el 100 % dels joves espanyols entre 16 i 18 anys estan ja connectats a internet. El 80 % dels joves que usen internet són actius a les xarxes socials, i més de la meitat envien i reben missatges a través de les xarxes (García, Alonso i Del Hoyo, 2013).

La recerca desenvolupada fins a l'actualitat mostra la importància de les xarxes socials en diferents àmbits: l'exploració identitària (Boyd, 2008; Manago, Graham, Greenfield i Salimkhan, 2008; Stern, 2004; Tortajada, Araúna i Martínez, 2013), la negociació d'estatus (Boyd, 2008), la comparació social (Manago, Graham, Greenfield i Salimkhan, 2008), la socialització entre iguals (Boyd, 2008) i l'increment del capital social dels joves (Ellison, Steinfield i Lampe, 2007). A més, les xarxes socials també serveixen per mesurar les opinions i la consideració que els altres tenen d'un mateix o d'una mateixa (Pemperek, Yermolayeva i Calvert, 2009).

Per als nadius digitals (Prensky, 2001) no existeix una separació entre les interaccions *online* i *offline* que mantenen amb els seus iguals i, de fet, sembla que puguem referir-nos a una mena d'identitat digital o digitalitzada (Ringrose i Eriksson, 2011) per anomenar la dificultat actual de separar aquestes identitats dins i fora de la xarxa.

L'èxit de les xarxes socials està molt lligat a la manera en què aquests espais permeten sostener la connexió amb les amistats (Boyd, 2008) i amb persones de la seva edat (Lenhart i Madden, 2007) i donen resposta al desig de construir una presentació que permeti l'autoafirmació i l'aprovació del grup d'iguals (Livingstone i Brake, 2010). Altres motivacions per participar en aquests espais tenen relació amb l'autoexploració (Valkenburg, Schouten i Peter, 2005), la generació d'espais d'intimitat en els quals compartir experiències (Livingstone, 2008) i la possibilitat de presentar-se tot controlant la forma com es fa i a qui va adreçada aquesta presentació (Oolo i Siiback, 2013).

Els i les joves tendeixen, cada cop més, a crear contingut sobre les seves vides (Stern, 2008) i a expressar-ho de forma pública (Boyd, 2008). I, per tant, si bé les xarxes socials ofereixen un espai en el qual es pot experimentar i reflexionar sobre el jo actual i el jo possible (Manago, Graham, Greenfield i Salimkhan, 2008) i aconseguir, mitjançant el que s'explica, control social (Stern, 2004), això es produeix en un context de comunicació i interacció que és públic per defecte. Això ha comportat una redefinició d'allò privat: no és tan important allò que s'exposa, sinó amb qui es decideix compartir-ho (Livingstone, 2008) i haver-se d'enfrontar a aquest canvi en les condicions en les quals es dóna allò públic i allò privat (Oolo i Siiback, 2013).

És d'esperar que a les xarxes socials, com a llocs en què l'anònimat no té cabuda, les presentacions responguin a les expectatives normatives i a la construcció d'identitats socialment desitjables (Zhao, Grasmuck i Martin, 2008). Les persones que estan connectades a través de les xarxes socials mostren patrons comuns de comportament en cercles relacionals petits i mitjans, i aquests patrons es veuen reforçats pel nombre i la intensitat dels vincles interpersonals (Steffes i Burgee, 2009). Les xarxes socials *offline* i *online* s'intensifiquen mútuament (Wellman, Haase, Witte i Hampton, 2001) pel que és de suposar que els vectors identitaris que són més valorats a les xarxes socials siguin, en bona part, els mateixos que imperen en el món *offline* i que ambdós espais van donant forma a una manera transversal d'autopresentar-se i de gestionar les relacions.

Les interaccions a les xarxes socials suposen oportunitats per a la construcció de la identitat, la intimitat i la sociabilitat però, alhora, comporten la gestió de diversos riscos com ara la manca d'entesa, la renúncia a la privacitat o el fet de trobar-se exposat o exposada a abusos (Livingstone, 2008). Els riscos a les xarxes socials tenen un biaix de gènere (Ringrose i Eriksson, 2011) ja que, per una banda, acostumen a promoure estereotips de gènere (Sveningsson, 2008; Valkenburg, Schouten i Peter, 2005) i, per una altra banda, elles tenen més pressió que ells per sexualitzar-se i objectificar-se (Ringrose i Eriksson, 2011).

3. Metodologia

La recerca que presentem a continuació s'emmarca en un estudi més ampli, desenvolupat entre 2009 i 2012, titulat *Medios de comunicación y violencia de género: ¿catalizadores o elementos de prevención?* (CSO2008-02006), que va ser finançat pel MICINN. En el marc d'aquesta investigació, i per conèixer les autopresentacions que els i les adolescents fan a la xarxa social, es van emprar tècniques quantitatives i qualitatives en tres etapes de recollida d'informació. En un primer moment es va fer una anàlisi de contingut d'una mostra de 400 pàgines de Fotolog. Les pàgines estudiades pertanyien a usuaris i usuàries espanyoles (un 28 i un 72 %, respectivament), d'11 xarxes d'amics diferents i edats compreses entre els 13 i els 18 anys. En un segon moment, i a través de l'anàlisi del discurs, es van estudiar a fons els àlbums de 18 dels comptes que configuraven la mostra de la fase prèvia (6 nois i 12 noies, els àlbums dels quals continguessin més de 100 fotografies) i, en una tercera fase, es va fer un acostament, a través de relats comunicatius de vida quotidiana i grups de discussió, a la forma en què els i les adolescents interpreten les seves pràctiques a les xarxes socials. En aquesta part del treball de camp es va comptar amb 32 participants amb edats compreses entre els 14 i els 18 anys. Aquests/es adolescents no eren els propietaris dels comptes de Fotolog, sinó noves veus incorporades a la recerca que van comentar tant les seves experiències com els resultats de les dues primeres fases de la investigació. Sempre que va ser possible, i amb el seu consentiment i el de les seves famílies, els i les adolescents van navegar i ens van mostrar les seves pàgines mentre dialogàvem sobre les seves interaccions

i la creació de contingut a les xarxes socials, per tal d'esbrinar com interpreten i donen sentit a aquestes pràctiques.

4. Resultats

A continuació presentem els resultats en funció dels principals eixos temàtics que emergeixen de l'anàlisi de les representacions, les interaccions *online* i les valoracions que en els relats comunicatius de vida quotidiana i els grups de discussió van fer els i les adolescents. Encara que ens remetrem a les pràctiques de les noies, també prendrem en consideració algunes de les valoracions que, en els grups de discussió, van comentar els nois sobre les pràctiques d'elles.

Específicament, hem dividit els resultats en les categories/eixos que els i les adolescents van destacar com a més rellevants en la seva definició identitària i també en el judici que aplicaren sobre el que fan els altres. D'aquesta manera, considerarem, en primer lloc, l'aparença física i la sexualització de les representacions i, en segon lloc, les classificacions de les autopresentacions en subgrups definits per cultures del gust (enteses com a conjunt de valors estètics). Per tots dos eixos s'exposen els resultats en relació a les xarxes socials: les autorepresentacions i les valoracions i judicis que es fan sobre les dinàmiques esmentades. A partir d'aquests nivells podem observar tant les pràctiques escollides com les valoracions positives i els judicis negatius expressats en les pròpies xarxes i fora d'aquestes, l'extrem positiu dels quals és la integració i la consecució de popularitat, i el negatiu, l'etiquetatge i la crítica.

4.1 Aspecte físic i sexualització en les adolescents

Tot i que en termes quantitatius el número de fotografies que pengen les noies és molt gran, pràcticament totes poden classificar-se a partir de 4 categories o tipus d'imatges: *a)* autoretrats, *b)* parts del cos fragmentades —el que, de fet, seria un subgènere dels autoretrats—, *c)* fotografies de parella i *d)* fotografies amb amistats. Altres tipus d'imatges, com les fotografies amb familiars, professors o d'altres persones són molt poc presents als àlbums de les adolescentes. D'entre aquestes classes d'imatges, la més habitual i freqüent és l'autoretrat, cosa que indica la importància que les noies donen, en el context de les xarxes socials, al seu aspecte físic, i que sovint s'acompanya d'una erotització notable de la imatge. Explicat en termes numèrics a partir de l'anàlisi quantitativa, ens trobem que més de la meitat de les fotografies penjades per les noies a Fotolog les presenten a elles mateixes, soles, destacant el seu aspecte físic més que no pas la seva relació amb les persones.

En l'anàlisi de les imatges que les noies pengen d'elles mateixes és fàcil localitzar-hi els patrons d'hiperritualització de la feminitat que Goffman (1979) havia detectat en les seves anàlisis de fotografies publicitàries; és a dir, que els autoretrats compartits de les adolescentes s'assemblen a les dones repre-

sentades en la publicitat dels anys 70 del segle passat. Per tant, podem localitzar una pervivència de patrons de representació de feminitat tradicionals i una activitat deliberada de les noies per adequar-hi la seva imatge. Aquest esforç d'autopresentació també s'evidencia en un treball intensiu d'edició de les fotografies. Molts dels autoretrats estan retocats mitjançant un programari d'edició d'imatges, construccions de múltiples imatges tipus *collage*, fotografies que inclouen textos, composicions estilitzades, i l'ús d'objectes amb càrrega simbòlica que (re)signifiquen la imatge.

L'anàlisi qualitativa, que ens ha permès resseguir àlbums complets de fotografies al llarg del temps, afegeix la dada que totes les noies de la mostra tenen, de fet, algun autoretrat exposat a Fotolog —si no molts—. Ara bé, encara que totes tinguin alguna d'aquestes imatges, es detecta una relativa variabilitat individual dins d'aquesta tipologia. Així, mentre que alguna de les usuàries va arribar a penjar més de 1.300 imatges d'ella mateixa tota sola i dins de casa, a un ritme de pràcticament una imatge per dia, per a d'altres el repertori és més variat i consta de fotografies d'elles mateixes amb la família, amb els amics, o en algun racó del barri o altres espais públics que els són importants.

Les imatges erotitzades d'una mateixa també són força habituals. De fet, l'anàlisi quantitativa revela que el 40 % de les noies es fotografia en una d'aquestes circumstàncies que es poden considerar erotitzades: amb poca roba, amb roba ajustada o amb transparències. A més, l'anàlisi qualitativa i diacrònica permet apuntar una relació entre esdeveniments vitals de les noies i l'erotització de les pròpies fotografies, essent més erotitzades aquelles imatges que es pengen després d'una ruptura emocional o d'un desengany amorós. També s'observa una tendència a incrementar l'erotització a mesura que les usuàries van agafant confiança a autorepresentar-se a la xarxa. Així, mentre que a les primeres fotografies dels àlbums veiem que hi ha poques imatges sexualitzades, a mesura que es consoliden a la xarxa aquest tipus d'imatges van augmentant i perfeccionant un registre més assemblat al publicitari o vinculat a d'altres representacions mediàtiques.

La nuesa, ja sigui parcial o total —considerem nuesa ensenyar en una imatge aquelles parts del cos considerades un tabú social, com els pits, el sexe o el cul—, és pràcticament inexistent i es tendeix, si de cas, a la insinuació. En els casos en què això es dóna, que són pocs, s'empren recursos com contrallums que sols permeten observar la silueta o parts del cos com les cames, que no són tabú, emergint de l'escuma de la banyera, que opaca la resta del cos. Per tant, quan aquesta nuesa velada succeeix no sol respondre tant a patrons de sexualització o codis pornogràfics com, més aviat, a una idea romàntica de la bellesa, sovint vinculada a la vulnerabilitat i a postures horitzontals, de genolls plegats o acotades; en definitiva, el que Goffman (1979) anomenaria una «ritualització de la subordinació» i que seria un dels estilemes de la hiperritualització de la feminitat en la imatge publicitària. Addicionalment, les imatges més sexualitzades sovint s'acompanyen de texts de continguts poètics, molt lligats a les emocions i fins i tot a la reflexió existencial, més que no a la sexualitat. Aquesta correspondència d'imatges sexualitzades amb continguts textuais existencialistes dibuixa un perfil de

feminitat en el qual l'exhibició eròtica sembla participar de la definició ontològica de la persona (dona).

En aquesta línia de l'autoretrat, una altra manera habitual de presentar-se és el que Goffman (1979) anomena *femenine touch*, o «*acte femení*»: en moltes fotografies les noies es toquen a elles mateixes, s'acaricien la cara o els braços, emulant els anuncis publicitaris de bellesa.

Si entrem al detall de l'anàlisi dels autoretrats, el més habitual és que siguin primers plans o fotografies de cos sencer, encara que, com indicàvem més amunt, també es troben imatges que enquadren parts fragmentades del cos. La majoria de noies tenen alguna fotografia trossejada d'aquest tipus en els seus àlbums. Són imatges sexualitzades, que es fan en espais íntims, com el lavabo o l'habitació, on les noies poden preparar la composició amb cura. Cames, llavis, el melic, els malucs, el coll, les espatlles i les galtes són, per aquest ordre, les parts més mostrades a càmera. En molts casos en què les imatges que es presenten són altament erotitzades, les noies no mostren la cara, tapant-se o retallant la imatge, com si amagar el rostre les blindés de la condemna que pot implicar la sexualització en les sancions a la conducta femenina.

Pel que fa a les imatges de cos sencer, les més habituals solen ser molt semblants a les imatges publicitàries i del món de la moda tal com les describia Goffman (1979). Un patró habitual a les fotografies és el de les noies mostrant roba estilosa, amb postures que imiten les models professionals. Aquest tipus d'autorepresentacions, com veurem a l'apartat de valoracions i judicis, són titllades de «*pijes*» per part de les joves enfront d'altres tipus d'autoretrats possibles, i amb connotacions que van més enllà del posat concret per a una fotografia i apel·len a qüestions de l'estratificació del gust.

Pel que fa a les interaccions que avaluen positivament les pràctiques (sobretot fotografies) que posen de relleu la bellesa física, les noies no només reforcen les accions i continguts penjats per noies sinó, també, aquells compartits per nois: «*Nosaltres, quan veiem alguna foto d'un noi que ens agrada, doncs cliquem al m'agrada*»¹ (GD2, noia). Per tant, s'observa que, alhora que es dóna aquest reforç positiu a l'exposició de la bellesa i fins i tot a la sexualització, l'aspecte físic és el principal punt de crítica que fan servir les noies a les xarxes.

L'estudi de les entrevistes i dels grups de discussió ens dóna informacions clau per tal de comprendre aquestes interaccions a les xarxes socials: com els individus expliquen les seves actuacions a la xarxa i com jutgen les dels altres. Si les xarxes són espais on els i les adolescents poden construir una identitat idealitzada i fins i tot destacar-hi elements del seu «*yo*» que no sempre són visibles al món *offline*, també és cert que hi són sotmesos i sotmeses, de manera amplificada, al judici públic.

Les interaccions a les xarxes també són reforçadores o inhibidores de les pràctiques *online*. En el cas de la progressió de la sexualització de les noies,

1. Alguns dels testimonis són en castellà i d'altres en català. Hem traduït aquells que estaven en català per donar uniformitat al text.

una de les explicacions que planteja l'observació ve donada pel pes que té el reforç positiu que exerceixen altres usuàries. L'anàlisi tant quantitativa com qualitativa de les interaccions a Fotolog evidencia que les imatges en format d'autoretrat, però molt especialment aquelles que són erotitzades, reben més comentaris positius que la resta, per bé que molts d'aquests comentaris siguin plantilles reiteratives amb funció de *netiquette*, interpretació que també reforcen les valoracions que fan els i les joves en els grups de discussió i les entrevistes en considerar que molts dels comentaris es fan només per quedar bé. Per tant, per bé que pugui semblar que en les xarxes socials s'expressin interaccions i suports positius a les pràctiques de les usuàries, no sempre es considera que aquestes remarques positives siguin sinceres i, fins i tot, sovint els i les joves admeten expressar opinions i actituds positives a les xarxes públiques i emetre crítiques i sancions a través de canals privats o en les trobades *offline*. D'aquesta manera, l'autoretrat erotitzat d'una noia pot esdevenir, contradictòriament, una eina per aconseguir popularitat i una excusa per a estigmatitzar-la.

Com veiem, la importància de l'aspecte físic és un element destacat per totes les noies no només en l'avaluació d'altres noies, sinó també dels nois. En aquest sentit, es reconeix la importància de la fotografia a l'hora d'escollar o acceptar amics a xarxes com Facebook, així com de presentar-se a una mateixa: «[hi ha una intencionalitat] que la gent es pensi que són guapos, que la gent tingui una imatge, una impressió de tu, i que pensi: aquesta noia és guapa, és popular» (RCVC1, noia, 18). D'aquesta manera, el que cerquen les fotografies és participar de la construcció d'un jo idealitzat que sigui validat socialment pel grup d'iguals. A més, nois i noies reconeixen que la construcció de l'atractiu visual es dóna de manera diferencial en nois i noies; així, mentre que les noies destaquen la fragilitat i disponibilitat dels seus cossos, els nois posen l'èmfasi en la força, malgrat que també s'accusa la cura de certa imatge cosmetitzada en ells: «Els nois, quan volen atraure les noies, apareixen en abdominals, sense samarreta, depilats, al mirall del seu bany» (RCVC9, noi, 16). Així mateix, les noies admeten haver pujat fotografies a la xarxa amb intencionalitat eròtica, cosa que reflecteix la dimensió estratègica d'aquest tipus de fotografies: «quan jo estava soltera, doncs em posava així, amb la samarreta una mica apujada» (GD2, noia).

Amb tot, s'atribueix que la causa principal del tipus de fotografies d'una mateixa que es pengen és, precisament, allò que fa el grup d'iguals, el que implícitament pot llegir-se com el grup aspiracional de les usuàries. Si les noies volen sentir-se part del grup de noies populars que pengen fotografies erotitzades d'elles mateixes a les xarxes, se senten empeses a fer-ho, fins i tot si no sempre gaudiran dels recursos necessaris per a què aquesta imatge sigui prou «cool» —cosa que normalment està lligada a la popularitat o capital social de què es disposa *offline*—. Elles semblen conscients de les limitacions de la popularitat *offline* per definir l'èxit de les seves autorepresentacions a les xarxes: «...no ets popular pel que fas a les xarxes socials sinó per com et veuen al carrer, quan es parla de tu; i les xarxes és més o menys en funció d'això, si es parla més de tu, la gent s'interessa més i va a veure la teva pàgina» (RCVC1, noia, 18).

Malgrat la importància que els i les joves reconeixen en la sexualització dels cossos femenins i l'atractiu que això pot generar —i, per tant, pressionar les joves per sexualitzar la pròpia imatge—, les opinions recollides tant en els relats comunicatius de vida quotidiana com als grups de discussió segueixen reflectint la presència d'un doble estàndard que jutja diferencialment les pràctiques de nois i de noies a les xarxes. Així, les noies que posen a les fotografies de manera eròtica són molt més criticades que els nois que fan el mateix. A més, les sancions que reben les noies tenen una càrrega sexual que no tenen els comentaris negatius cap als nois. Com a exemple paradigmàtic d'aquesta aplicació d'un judici diferencial, un dels nois afirmava: «quan veus que una noia puja moltes fotos així al Facebook, dius: aquesta és només per a passar una estona» (GD2, noi). Per altra banda, l'atractiu de les fotografies i, fins i tot, poder tafanejar imatges de les noies, és un motor per agregar amics: «... dius “ostí, quina noia més *maja* tu, ara miraré les fotos”. I cliques les fotos i no et deixa veure-les perquè no ets amic. Doncs, què fas? Doncs l'agregues, ella t'accepta i et diu: “qui ets?”». I tu li dius, “ah, no, ostí, no sé, que t'he agregat per tenir-ne un més”. I ja l'excusa és aquesta i ja mires les fotos» (RCVC3, noi, 18).

4.2 Classificacions segons cultures del gust

Hem vist que la construcció d'una imatge atractiva a les xarxes incorpora un conjunt d'hiperritualitzacions de gènere. Aquestes hiperritualitzacions de la feminitat, de totes maneres, prenen formalitzacions diferents en funció d'altres vectors com la *cultura del gust* (Gans, 1974), és a dir, els estàndards i valors estètics que, per diverses raons socioeconòmiques, comparteixen (o divideixen) els i les adolescents.

En aquest sentit, la representació de la feminitat pren models de representació diferencials segons les adscripcions a diferents cultures del gust. Aquests models, com veurem amb detall d'aquí en endavant, responen a patrons subculturals diferents. En relació a les imatges de Fotolog, podem detectar tres grans models diferents: la supermodel, la romàntica llàguida i la poligonera. Aquestes categories que s'havien construït des de l'observació de les xarxes (perspectiva *etic*) tenen una correspondència en les pròpies denominacions dels i les joves als grups de discussió i els relats comunicatius de vida quotidiana (perspectiva *emic*), que anomenen aquestes mateixes etiquetes, respectivament, com «*pija*», «*hipster*» i «*caní*». Per tant, ens trobem amb tres grans patrons identificables en la representació de la feminitat.

Pel que fa a les supermodels o «*pijes*», es tracta d'aquelles imatges en què les noies es mostren imitant fotografies publicitàries de roba o cosmètics. S'olen ser de cos sencer i menys sexualitzades que les fotografies caní, normalment lluint roba o accessoris recentment adquirits. S'emmarquen dins de casa i sovint els espais es condicionen per donar la impressió d'estudi —fons neutres, il·luminació clara amb llàmpades, etc.— i, de vegades, mostren no només la noia sola sinó també el seu grup d'amigues.

Les poligoneres o «canis», en canvi, llueixen accessoris i gestos associats a cultures suburbanes. Bijuteria daurada, pantalons ajustats, escots molt pronunciats, teixits estampats o cridaners caracteritzen la seva imatge. Solen mostrar-se més sexualitzades que les «pijes», de vegades fins i tot grollerament, jugant amb els codis del que és correcte mostrar. Per exemple, una noia penjava una fotografia d'ella mateixa d'esquena amb pantalons ajustats i lletres sortint del seu cul amb el text «Meteloooo».

Pel que fa a la imatge de la romàntica lànguida, que havíem detectat en les autorepresentacions de Fotolog, no ha aparegut, en canvi, a les percepcions que els i les adolescents han compartit als grups de discussió i entrevistes. Aquest patró, quant a imatges, es caracteritzava per la remissió a codis retro, sobreabundància de postures i expressions de vulnerabilitat, al·lusions a productes culturals diversos com la literatura, la música o el cinema, i ús de múltiples objectes de l'imaginari romàntic (roses, pergamins, llàgrimes, boira, etc.).

Al llarg del treball de camp, les denominacions més freqüentment emprades pels joves a l'hora de denominar els patrons de representació per gust de les noies són «cani» i «pija». La sexualització, que s'expressa de manera diferent en les imatges de noies que responen a diferents patrons subculturals, també és jutjada de manera diferencial. En aquest sentit, les «canis», que són les qui expressen conductes sexuals més transgressores pel que fa als rols tradicionals de les dones —però més en sintonia amb les tendències visuals contemporànies de pornificació—, són també les sancionades de manera més dura pels seus iguals. Les seves expressions visuals són titllades de promiscues, especialment per part d'altres noies: «Poner cosas así es muy cani. Y es que encima las que ponen cosas así suelen ser las que son más sueltecillas» (conversa G2, noies). A més, la denominació de «cani» adquireix, per si mateixa, una connotació despectiva amb implicacions de baix capital cultural i inadequaretat de les conductes sexuals: «las canis suelen hacer fotos en sujetador en el baño, con el baño de fondo, el retrete y todo de fondo, o con cigarrillos o bebiendo [...]. Cuanta más gente crea que se han acostado con chicos, cuanta más mala fama tenga, parece que más populares son» (RCVC, noia, 15).

En canvi, si bé els patrons de representació associats a les «pijes» també carreguen implícits despectius, són considerats models més adequats a les normes de la feminitat.

5. Conclusions

Si bé els patrons d'hiperritualització de la feminitat que Goffman (1979) detectava a la publicitat els anys 70 del segle passat són presents a les imatges que les noies pengen d'elles mateixes a les xarxes, no és menys cert que noves formes d'hiperritualitzar la feminitat emergeixen de manera transversal a les representacions mediàtiques i a les imatges que les joves codifiquen d'elles mateixes. Les nostres recerques en les xarxes socials ens porten a observar una sexualització creixent de les imatges en correspondència amb la pornificació de la cultura popular. Amb tot, es reproduceix encara un doble estàndard a

l'hora de jutjar les pràctiques adolescents, essent les noies més condemnades que els nois pel fet d'autorepresentar-se de manera erotitzada; a més, les sancions que reben elles tenen una càrrega sexual basada en les normes de conducta sexual *offline*.

Així mateix, el gènere no s'expressa en les identitats de manera aïllada sinó en l'encreuament amb altres variables. En el cas de les xarxes socials i de les persones joves hi hem localitzat, de manera rellevant, les cultures del gust (Gans, 1974). D'aquesta manera, la feminitat adopta expressions o hiperritualitzacions diferencials en funció del grup subcultural a partir del qual es codifiquen les autopresentacions.

La pressió per adequar les imatges d'un mateix als estàndards esmentats respon a la pressió de les representacions culturals —moltes de les quals, als mitjans de comunicació i a les xarxes d'iguals— i, si bé es percep que hiperritualitzar la pròpia imatge de manera adequada por reportar beneficis en termes de capital social (popularitat i la possibilitat de lligar), també és amplament reconegut el risc de ser ridiculitzat/da i sancionat/da en base a uns paràmetres que no s'allunyen dels de la cultura *offline*. El risc d'aquestes sancions és un element quotidià de l'activitat en les xarxes socials.

En síntesi, si als anys noranta del segle passat, durant l'expansió d'internet com a tecnologia de consum, semblava que aquest mitjà de comunicació alliberaria les persones de la severitat dels rols del gènere lligats al treball sobre els cossos (Haraway, 1991), ara podem afirmar que, contràriament, el cos generitzat i sexualitzat és cada cop més important en les comunicacions *online* adolescents.

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“Dissecting the poisoned honey”. Sexist Humor in Egypt: A linguistic analysis of sexism in Colloquial Cairene Arabic jokes

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Recommended citation: NAYEF, H.; EL-NASHAR, M. (2014). ““Dissecting the poisoned honey”. Sexist Humor in Egypt: A linguistic analysis of sexism in Colloquial Cairene Arabic jokes”. *Anàlisi. Quaderns de Comunicació i Cultura*, 50, p.131-146. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.7238/a.v0i50.2324>

Abstract

This paper attempts to shed light on sexism in Egyptian Internet jokes. It examines how language, as an institution largely controlled by men, is manipulated and used to disparage women in this discursive mode of humor. Through running a qualitative and quantitative analysis of 284 sexist internet jokes, the study addressed three points; namely, the most frequently targeted category of women in sexist jokes; the most salient physical and personal attributes and finally the way sexist jokes is used to promote violence against women. The analysis has shown that the ‘wife’ is the category most ridiculed. The data also revealed that in spite of the freedom in anonymity that the internet provides, personal attributes far outnumber the physical features. The jokes conformed to the conservative nature of the society as derision of physical features was done through the use of general terms. The analysis has shown that ‘hatefulness’ was the most highly criticised personal attribute, with ‘stupidity’ coming second. It was also shown that under the guise of benign amusement, the effect of these jokes go beyond tolerating gender inequality to actually promoting physical violence against women. We conclude that in a patriarchal social system like that of Egypt, which already disparages women as the ‘marked’ and the ‘different’, such jokes should not be dismissed lightly as ‘just jokes.’

Keywords: gender studies, linguistic sexism, sexist jokes, linguistic feminism, Egyptian jokes

Resumen. *Humor sexista en Egipto: Un análisis lingüístico del sexismo en los chistes coloquiales árabes cairotas*

Este artículo trata de arrojar luz sobre el sexismo en los chistes de Internet egipcios. Examina cómo el lenguaje, entendido como una institución controlada en gran medida por los hombres, es manipulado y utilizado para desacreditar a las mujeres en esta modalidad discursiva del humor. El estudio consta de un análisis cualitativo y cuantitativo de 284 chistes sexistas de Internet.

Palabras Clave: estudios de género, sexismo lingüístico, chistes sexistas, medios sociales, bromas egipcias.

1. Introduction

On the 19th February 2014, Youssry Fouda, a well-known programme presenter in ONTV channel, commented, in his political talk show '*aker Kalam*' (or, final words), on the serious debate on what the people want from the next president, which by then had been going for 59 minutes between him and three female guests by smilingly saying « It is I who brought this to myself by engulfing myself in a ‘vortex’ of women.” He then laughed, taking a break. The comment was supposed to be a joke to which none of his three guests laughed. Fouda, unlike Don Imus who apologised for a similar sexist joke on April 4 radio talk, found no need to apologise as the incident went unnoticed. The only thing that was done is that the minute in which the joke was said when uploading the programme on the Youtube was deleted. The fact that Fouda has reduced three renowned female political figures; namely, Farida El-Shoubashy (a renowned writer and political figure), Hala Shukrallah (the head of *Distour* political party) and Ikraam Youssef (a journalist) to be a bunch of ‘*sitat*’ (women) and joked about it seemed very natural. Fouda’s sexist joke has foregrounded gender when it had no place in the discussion.

In the above-mentioned example, Fouda diverted from operating in the serious mode of discourse to the humor mode, making use of the advantages of this subordinate mode of discourse (Mulkey, 1988) to convey messages that can be easily denied. In being both indirect and allusive, this mode of discourse protects its sayer from bearing the consequences of his message if said in the direct serious mode (Crawford, 2003). After all, it is ‘just a joke’ (Bemiller & Schneider, 2010; Ford, 2013). In the Egyptian patriarchal society, even denial and apology were not deemed necessary as the target of such sexist joke was women.

This study aims at investigating one type of sexist humor in the Arab societies; verbal internet comic jokes in Colloquial Cairene Arabic (CCA), the most popular and widely spoken Arabic variation in the Arab world. The paper runs both a qualitative and quantitative analysis of sexist jokes found in the internet. It attempts to examine how language is used in this subordinate mode of discourse to disparage women and represent them negatively. The fact that Egypt has long served as the capital of culture in the Middle East, that Egyptians are found to be the most mirthful among Arab countries and that CCA is widely used and understood by all Arab societies lend significance to the importance of studying how women are represented in this subordinate mode of discourse.

2. Theoretical Background

2.1 *Sexist jokes and language*

Scholars have argued that language, as an institution and apparatus via which concepts, values, judgments are conveyed, does not belong equally to everyone. It is again that a small class of elites is in control of it (Cameron, 1985, van Dijk, 2001). In our modern patriarchal culture, it is the men who have control over language among other legitimate areas of power (Irigaray, 1985).

As Gay argues, sexist language is a type of covert institutionalised violence against women, in what he terms as ‘linguistic violence’ that occurs across a continuum that stretches from subtle forms such as children’s jokes to grievous forms such as totalitarian and genocidal language (Gay, 1997:1)

Sexist humor negatively portrays women or promotes negative behaviour against them. Based on sexist beliefs about the inferiority of women, it focuses on women’s personal attributes (Shifman & Lemish, 2010) that stress the fact that women belong to the private sphere, and that use of violence against women can be tolerated (Bemiller & Schneider 2010). It is the type of humour that demeans the personal and professional abilities of women. Jokes that support a patriarchal culture continue to oppress and subordinate women (Wesely 2002), regard them as “second-class citizens, neither seen nor heard, eternal sex-objects, and personifications of evil»(Cameron, 1985:4). These jokes represent the powerful language that legitimises prejudice in society and thus should be viewed through a critical lens (Ford, 2000). Such disparaging humor provides a seemingly benign channel for the expression of prejudice or malicious attitudes (Zillmann & Cantor, 1996). Under the guise of play and fun, this sexist humor promotes inequality between women and men (Sev’er & Ungar, 1997; Mills 2008). What is told as a joke is not really a joke at all, but rather a form of power that is used to oppress and subordinate entire groups of people (Bemiller & Schneider, 2010:463).

Such humour is found everywhere, in every-day conversations, at home, in the work place and in the media. It has been part and parcel of many patriarchal cultures for centuries. Such sexist humor, which target women and represent them negatively, go far beyond being benign amusement or ‘just jokes’ that can be dismissed as silly or funny (Sunderland, 2007). They form another type of discursive discrimination against women (Mills, 2008).

The effects of this prejudiced language use goes far beyond promoting gender inequality, maintaining as well as strengthening the status quo and masculine hegemony in patriarchal societies. They were found to promote physical violence and abuse against women (See Thomas & Esses 2004; Viki, Thomae, and Hamid, 2006, Ford 2000, 2008, 2013)

2.2 Sexist jokes in Egypt

More than any patriarchal society in the Middle East, the Egyptians are known for their love of jokes and humor. This was noted by the great 14th-century Arab social theorist, Ibn Khaldun. He observed that Egyptians are an unusually mirthful people (Messiri, 1978). In modern days, the common phrase Arabs use to describe an Egyptian is '*'ibn nokta*' (lit. 'son of a joke'; 'jokey' or 'joke cracker') testifies to this nature characteristic of the Egyptians (Shehata, 1992).

Egyptians have employed humor to fight imperialism, dictatorship and all sorts of oppression (of, for instance, ex-presidents Hosni Mubarak and Mohamed Morsy who were both frequently ridiculed during massive demonstrations against them that ended up with their ouster). They also used it to make fun of themselves and all their problems. Thus, the Egyptian culture is abundant with a huge literature of jokes that is used on all sorts of occasions. For Egyptians, jokes are not merely jokes. Despite their profound significance in understanding the various types of relations that govern the Egyptian society, modern jokes in the Arab world in general and in Egypt in particular have received very little scholarly attention. And even the few studies conducted have been almost exclusively investigations of political jokes (Shehata, 1992; Laineste, 2013).

Though important, politics and its related jokes are not the only salient theme in the literature of Egyptian jokes. In present-day Egypt, one conspicuous object of jokes is women whether they are girls, wives, mothers-in-laws, professionals, or even those women partaking in public-sphere activities.

Recently, there has been an increase in the number of jokes being exchanged and circulated in the Egyptian society. There are two major factors that contributed to the increase of jokes in Egypt in general and those targeting women in particular. The first is the increasing use of the internet and the role it plays in the rapid dissemination of information. The second is the growing popularity of the comic character *asabby* on the other. This comic character was introduced to the Egyptian Internet users by Egypt Sarcasm Society in 2013. It made women a target of a significant part of its jokes. Almost two thirds of the 284 jokes that constitute the data of this study were attributed to *asabby*, recording a significant increase in the jokes targeting women via the social media.

This tendency to deride women, however, was not the case in ancient Egypt. In ancient Egypt, issues of social status and foreigners, rather than women, were the main objects of humour (Sweeney, 1997). And when made the object of humour women were depicted as witty and strong, as in the blind women joke found in a letter in the Late Ramesside period, that dates back to the period between (1099-1069 BCE) during the reign of Ramesses XI. The joke runs that a husband after twenty years of marriage wanted to divorce his wife and told her that this is because she was blind in one eye. The wife responded by saying that it took him twenty years to see this. There is also the humorous ostracaon (sketch on a bit of stone or potsherd) that

is believed to date back to the early 11th century or late 12th century B.C., depicting a queen and king in chariots firing arrows at each other. Some scholars argue that though the drawing might have looked funny to ancient Egyptians in the nineteenth dynasty with women acting as men but still the fact remains that the drawing depicts her as a powerful competent warrior (Sweeney, 1997).

3. Methodology and Research Questions

This study employs qualitative and quantitative methods of analysis to investigate linguistic sexism in colloquial Egyptian jokes. The details of data collection and sampling as well as the research questions posed by the study are discussed in the subsections below.

3.1 Data collection and sampling

The first step of data collection and sampling was to search the internet using search terms ‘jokes involving women, Egyptian women, wives, mothers, mothers-in-law, working women.’ Also the search term ‘*Asabby* jokes’ on women was used. Data was then examined separately by each of us to dispense with any joke which we did not deem sexist, then results were compared.

The data was then organised and classified on the two major categories: General Sexist Jokes (GSJs) and Specific Sexist Jokes (SSJs) which will be explained in Section (4.1). Further sub-classifications were then carried out which will be discussed further in Section (4.2).

3.2 Research questions and tools of analysis

The study aims at shedding some light on how language is employed through this mode of indirect discourse; humor, and manipulated to serve maintaining the status quo of gender inequality and masculine hegemony in the patriarchal Arab societies in general and the Egyptian society in particular. Thus it addresses three research questions:

Question 1

Are women in general more frequently targeted by the jokes under investigation or is there a category of women that is more exposed to being ridiculed? In other words, are sexist jokes general in nature, covering all women, or do they fall into specific sexist jokes covering specific types of women? Or both?

To try to answer this question, data will be further classified according to the ‘lexical nominals’ (e.g. women, wives, mothers-in-law, girls, etc.) pertinent to female entities targeted.

Question 2

What are the most salient personal/physical attributes of women mentioned in the data?

In an attempt to find a reliable answer to this question, we ran a qualitative content analysis of each joke followed by a quantitative one for the data as a whole, in terms of the 'lexical collocations' of adjectives, nouns, assigned to the females in the jokes as well as their connotations.

The data is classified into two major categories as adapted from Bemiller and Schneider's (2010) 'devaluation of personal characteristics' classification; namely:

- A. Physical appearance
- B. Personality traits

Question 3

How is language in sexist jokes used to promote violence against women?

Attempting to answer this question, we conducted a qualitative content analysis of the data to filter jokes that contain verbal or nominal choices that denote violence against women. The data is further analysed to determine which category of women is more frequently targeted in violence sexist jokes.

4. Findings

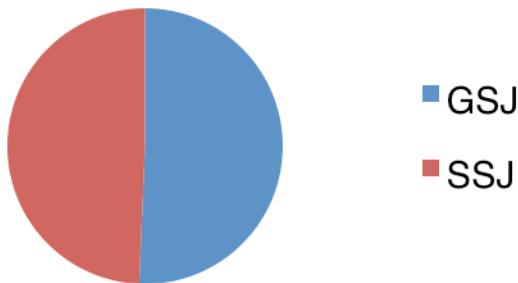
The data retrieved from the internet yielded 284 jokes that met the criterion of being sexist in that they disparage women through any of the following: devaluating the personal characteristics of women; focusing on the physical beauty of women or lack thereof; instigating violence against women and confining women to the private sphere.

The data was tested qualitatively and quantitatively in an attempt to answer the research questions and draw an image of how women are represented in the data. The results of these two types of analyses are discussed in the following section.

4.1 General vs. Specific jokes

The data was examined and classified under the two major taxonomies: General Sexist Jokes (GSJs) and Specific Sexist Jokes (SSJs) in an attempt to find whether women and girls are being the target of the jokes in general or is there a specific category of women which is being the subject of ridicule? And in the latter case which category? GSJs category includes jokes that refer to women in a general sense while SSJs refer to those jokes that specify a category of women as subject of the jokes. The latter category includes wives, mothers, mothers-in-law, sisters, professionals (doctors, nurses, maids, etc.). Figure (1) below illustrates this point of analysis.

Figure (1) General vs. Specific Sexist Jokes



Of the 284 jokes that constituted the data under investigation, (involving 294 occurrences), 149 fell under the GSJ category (50.68%), while 145 were SSJ (49.31 %). Examples 1-5 below illustrate these two categories.

Example (1)

Imagine life without women

Markets are quiet.

economic stagnation

Empty streets

Telecommunication companies suffer a great loss.

Car market breaks down.

The devil will be out of job.

Hypertension treatment will be out of use.

All men will go to heaven.

Example (1) falls into the GSJ category. The subject of ridicule in both cases is women in the former and girls in general in the latter. The joke implicitly focuses on certain attributes stereotypically associated with women: craving for shopping and possessing expensive things, being the reason of men's troubles and sins. Thus, if the world were void of women, there would be economic stagnation (referring to women's love of shopping); men will not suffer of hypertension (blaming women for being the direct reason behind this) and no man will go to hell (blaming women for the sins of men).

Example (2)

Once a man took his wife to the zoo

He took a picture of her next to the monkeys cage, hang it in the salon and wrote the following caption:

A picture of my wife with the monkeys. N.B. My wife is the third to right.

Example (2) illustrates the category in which the target of the joke is the wife. In this example, the wife is likened to monkeys in an implicit reference to ugliness and triviality.

In further examining the SSJ, it was shown that wives appear to be the most salient target of humour. Wives were subject to 109 jokes of the 145 SSJs, with the mother-in-law (of the husband) as next (21 occurrences). It is worth noting here that it was not mother-in-laws in general who were subject to jokes, but rather the wife's mother. The wife's mother-in-law scored only one occurrence. This finding gives support to what has been noted by scholars that language does not belong to everyone equally and that those in control of this tool - in our case, jokes - determine what and who to be depicted in a favorable light and who to be criticised (van Dijk, 2001).

Table (I) illustrates the number of occurrences and percentage of the various classes of women in SSJ.

TABLE (I) CATEGORIES OF WOMEN IN SSJ

SSJ Subtypes	No. of occurrences
Wife	109 (75.17%)
Mother-in-law	21 (14.48%)
Fiancée	9 (6.20%)
Mother	3 (2.06%)
Husband's mother	1 (0.68%)
Sister	1 (0.68%)
Old age woman	1 (0.68%)
TOTAL	145

4.2 Personality vs. physical attributes

The data was examined in terms of the most salient feature of ridicule: Personal vs. physical attributes. Table (II) below draws a comparison in terms of the number of occurrences of personal and physical attributes.

TABLE (II) PERSONAL VS. PHYSICAL ATTRIBUTES

CATEGORY TYPE	Personal attributes	Physical attributes
Specific	126	19
General	113	26
TOTAL	239 (84.15%)	45 (15.84%)

As the table shows, jokes dealing with personal attributes of women far outnumber those dealing with physical features, with the former scoring a total number of occurrences of (239) against (45) for the latter. An explanation for such a huge difference in the number of jokes associated with personality traits compared to that dealing with physical features can be sought in the conservative nature of the society. The Egyptian society, like many other Middle Eastern cultures, is governed by a set of strict taboos the root of which can be traced to the Islamic oriental ideology. For most people, a women’s body is a taboo and talk about the physical features of a women in a joke will not serve the main recognised function of the joke which is laughter. It will also hamper its dissemination by others who might feel embarrassed or even ashamed of repeating it. The shock of breaking a taboo, whether by praising or criticizing a women’s body, will have an adverse effect on stirring laughter. This notion may account for such a result and is further supported in Section (4.2.2) below when the physical feature jokes are put under scrutiny.

4.2.1 Personal attributes

An examination of the 239 jokes dealing with personal attributes reveal that the most salient personality feature targeted in the data was ‘hateful’, occurring 33 times with ‘stupid’ coming next, recording 23 occurrences and ‘domineering’ and ‘revengeful’ coming third with 16 occurrences each (See examples (3-5) below).

Example (3)

A girl complains to her mother-in-law: Help me mother-in-law, each time I cook, your son throws the food to the dog. The mother-in-law replied by saying: And what did the dog do to deserve this?

Example (4)

A girl phoned an airline company and asked: “How long does the trip take from Cairo to China?”

They replied: “One moment...”

She said: “Thank you.”

Example (3) is the one and only occurrence of the husband’s mother in the data. In this example, which belongs to the SSJ category, while the wife is shown to be helpless and subordinate through the words ‘help’, ‘cook’ and ‘throw to the dog’, the husband’s mother is depicted as ‘hateful’. The mother-in-law responds sarcastically, implying that the wife’s food is a torture to the dog – let alone her son. In example (4), the girl is depicted to be too stupid to understand that the phone operator was only excusing her for ‘one moment’ to find an answer to her question. She is thus ridiculed for believing that a long journey from Cairo to China would only take one moment.

Example (5)

A man whose wife has died walks in the funeral laughing while everyone round him was crying. A clergyman stopped the procession and said: “I will not allow them to proceed until you tell me the reason behind your laughter.”

The man said: “I have been married to her for 20 years and it is the only time I know where she will be going (her whereabouts).”

The joke in (5) is about a wife being ‘domineering’ but some background is needed to explain it. In patriarchal Middle Eastern societies, it is a commonly accepted custom that a wife takes the permission of a husband before she leaves the house or goes anywhere. A husband must be fully aware of her whereabouts. It is also an inveterate custom in the Islamic tradition that a wife should obey her husband. Thus, even among the educated class, a wife is expected to follow this behavior. In the Egyptian patriarchal social system, it is believed that it is only the domineering wives who switch roles with the husbands and not take their permission to leave the house or inform their husbands of their whereabouts. Example (7) illustrates this case where a domineering wife has never told her husband of where she went. Thus, it was only when she died that he was sure where she was going for the first time. The use of ‘died’, ‘funeral’, ‘cry’ on the one hand and the word ‘laugh’ on the other pinpoints the man’s relief of his wife’s ‘domineeringness’. Table (III) illustrates the most salient personality features in the data under investigation.

TABLE (III) MOST SALIENT PERSONAL ATTRIBUTES IN GSJ & SSJ

Attribute	No. of occurrences
Hateful/mean/dispensable	33
Stupid, naïve, foolish	23
Revengeful; lethal, truculent, evil; bitter	16
Domineering, commanding, overimposing	16
Greedy; demanding, materialistic	12
Nagging, making man’s life hell	11
Aggressive, violent	10
Emotionally insecure	8

4.2.2 Physical attributes

The internet is believed to offer a considerable degree of freedom to disseminate material that may be judged inappropriate under the cover of anonymity (Gossett and Byrne, 2002). This notion of freedom in anonymity would give members of the most conservative of societies a means to break taboos. Yet when the data was examined in light of the most frequently mentioned physical features of women in Egyptian Internet jokes, it revealed, as mentio-

ned earlier, substantially fewer occurrences of physical attributes (15.84%) if compared to those of personal attributes (84.15%). A closer examination of the physical feature jokes showed two consistent characteristics: the absence of positive physical features and the almost zero reference of body parts (only one mention).

When the data is examined in terms of the lexical choices and word collocations involved in the physical feature jokes, it was shown that out of the 284 jokes under investigation, there was one joke that included lexical nominals denoting physical parts of women as illustrated in example (6) below.

Example (6)

The qualifications of a successful female secretary according to some people:

In the past: Good experience and good conduct certificate.

Now: blonde hair, plump lips and blue eyes.

Example (6) makes fun of the present qualifications of a secretary. The female secretary is no longer required to have secretarial experience but rather to possess sexy physical features according to beauty standards in Egyptian culture ‘blonde hair’ ‘plump lips’ and ‘blue eyes’. This comes in accordance with the conservative nature of the society even under the guise of anonymity. The data also reveals that there was only one occurrence of a positive feature in the physical attribute jokes as illustrated in example (7).

Example (7)

An American woman, a French woman, and an Egyptian woman are trying the echo of their voices:

The American said: Hello.

The echo said: Hello

The French said: Bonjour.

The echo said: Bonjour.

The Egyptian said: heee, heee, heee (i.e. seductive laughter)

The echo said: Oh, sexy girl!

Example (7) is the only joke in the data that implicitly depicts Egyptian women as better (here sexier) than their American and French counterparts. While the American and the French women’s greetings are ‘Hello’ and ‘Bonjour’ said in a normal voice tone, it was the seductive voice and tone of the Egyptian woman which made the ‘echo’ respond, praising her sensuality.

This can again be explained in light of the conservativeness of the society. It is also shown that the negative features being ridiculed tend to be of a ‘general’ sense in that they do not concentrate on a particular part of the body, e.g. the nose, the cheeks, the hair, etc. Instead, emphasis was on adjectives like ‘ugly’, ‘fake’, ‘fat’, ‘tall’ , ‘short’ , etc. Examples (8) illustrates the most common physical feature found in the data under scrutiny.

Example (8)

The wife says to the husband: Don't you think I look like Hend Rostom (A seductive actress).

The husband: You look like her in the last her last scene in '*Rud Qalby*' (film) (i.e. where she is burnt and deformed).

In this example, the woman is ridiculed for being 'ugly'. The wife is linked to a beautiful seductive actress in a scene where she appears burnt and completely deformed. There is contradiction between the beauty of the actress, which the wife was referring to, and the ugliness of the wife, as seen by her husband.

TABLE (IV) PHYSICAL ATTRIBUTES IN GSJ & SSJ

Attribute	No. of occurrences
Ugly	31
Fake, wearing too much makeup	7
Fat	5
Tall	3
Short (dwarfish)	2
Black	2
Thin, bony	1
TOTAL	49

It is also worth noting that in the SSJ category, physical appearance jokes were limited to wives only. It is also clear that 'ugly' was by far the most recurrent physical attribute in the data under scrutiny, both in GSJ and SSJ.

4.3 Violence against women

As it was previously shown in Section (2.1) above, the effects of sexist humour go far beyond giving abstract advantage to men and promoting gender inequality. As studies have shown, this seemingly benign type of amusement may lead to physical violence against women (Ford, 2000, 2008, 2010). The data of the current study included 29 jokes that implicitly or explicitly expressed a type of physical violence against women that varied from a slap in the face, a morbid wish to get rid of the woman or an act of gloating her death. Table (V) below illustrates the findings in this point of investigation.

TABLE (V) VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Category	Lexical entry	No. of occurrences
GSJ	-	3 (10.34%)
SSJ	Wife	15 (51.72%)
	Mother-in-law	11 (37.93%)
TOTAL		29

The majority of the violence jokes fell under the SSJ category (89.65%) and were mainly directed towards the nominal entry ‘wife’ (scoring 51.72%) against (37.93%) for mother-in-law, while the GSJ scored (10.34%). This can have an interpretation in the Islamic culture. One controversial issue is the widely accepted interpretation of a Quranic verse that allows the husband to physically ‘hit’ the wife if she does not obey him. This practice of excessive violence against the wife makes using lexical items that express violence in jokes tolerated, accepted and even a source of amusement.

Example (9)

Shakespeare says: Women’s tears if frozen can make the most beautiful of gems.

Asahby: A *slap in the face* in the morning and another in the evening and you become one of the richest jewellers, my friend.

Example (10)

What is the similarity between a girl and a nail? Both would not ‘walk’ except by *being hitting on the head*.

Examples (9) and (10) belong to the GSJ category which makes fun of the physical abuse of girls and women. On the linguistic level, the two examples involve verbal and nominal choices that entail the use of physical violence against women. They also reflect common societal beliefs that tolerate physical violence against women. In example (9), a man repeatedly slapping a woman in the face is condoned. Thus, the man in the joke is advised to instigate the ‘tears’ of a woman by ‘slapping’ her twice on a daily basis, making fun of the idea that women’s tears are as beautiful as gems. In example (10), the joke explicitly reflects a common belief that girls need to be ‘hit on the head’, meaning to be oppressed and coerced to be of any use. In Colloquial Cairene Arabic, the phrase ‘hit on the head’ involves all sorts of oppression, physical as well as psychological, while the verb ‘walk’ is used in the sense of ‘proceed’ or ‘function’. The use of the Arabic ‘exception structure’, represented in ‘would not... except by...’ consolidates the belief that masculine hegemony and superiority can be secured by not only psychological oppression but physical abuse as well.

Example (11)

A fool was asked: *Would you like to see your wife die?*

He replied: No.

He was asked: Why?

He replied: I am afraid *I might die of happiness after her (death).*

Example (11) goes beyond the idea of physical abuse to secure women's subordination, to finding mirth in domestic homicide. These SSJ jokes entail a wish to get rid of women. The man in the joke is reluctant to wish the death of his wife because he thinks the news of her death would be too exhilarating for him to live thereafter. So, the only reason why his wife deserves to live is to secure his own life – the ultimate reflection of wives' unworthiness.

5. Conclusion

In this final section of the paper, we attempt to answer the three research questions posed earlier on the basis on the findings of the analysis. As far as the category of women which is most frequently targeted in the jokes at issue (Question 1), the data revealed that half of the jokes came under the GSJ category while the other half fell under the SSJ category. Within the latter class, the lexical entry 'wife' was the category most ridiculed, followed by the husband's 'mother-in-law'.

As for the most salient attributes being mocked (Question 2), the data showed that personal attributes far outnumber the physical features. It also revealed that in spite of the freedom in anonymity that the internet provides, the jokes conformed to the conservative nature of the society. That was manifested in the occurrence of one joke only that involved body parts. Derision of physical features was done through the use of general terms, such as 'ugly', 'tall', 'fat' etc. The analysis has shown that 'hatefulness' was the most highly criticised personal attribute, with 'stupidity' coming second.

The analysis has also shown that out of the 284 jokes, (10%) support physical violence against women (Question 3). The violence ranged from a slap in the face to wishing the woman dead, and ends in jokes where the man is directly or indirectly involved in killing the woman.

This paper aimed at examining how language, as an institution largely controlled by men, is manipulated and used as a tool to disparage women under the veil of benign amusement. By drawing negative images of women, this widely popular 'not-so-innocent' discursive mode promotes gender inequality in a patriarchal society that regards men as the 'unmarked', the 'normal' while women are labeled the 'marked', the 'different'. This paper attempted to show that such 'seemingly harmless' jokes should not be dismissed lightly as being 'just jokes'.

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