

INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION TO THE DOSSIER JOURNALISM AND GENDER:

yes, this is subversive

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SBPjor / Associação
Brasileira de
Pesquisadores em
Jornalismo

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Feminism, in its numerous facets and perspectives, is reputed as one of the more powerful and changing social movements of the twentieth century. And if we no longer refer to feminism in the singular because we question the contradictory definitions of the universal man and woman, if we question the standards (heterosexuals, binaries, etc), if we incorporate the concept of gender and recognize people separated by a wide range of inequalities (for example, race, ethnicity, social class and others), it is also thanks to these movements that we are able to place ourselves in other poles. These poles reclaim other equal worlds, but also demand other knowledge, using new epistemologies which are no longer based under the auspices of the Western, white, heterosexual man. In contrast with these epistemologies and values that naturalize inequalities, the field of Gender Studies has developed studies that

provide important diagnoses of the gender world offering other ways of looking at it that help guide social movements against inequalities of sex, gender and identity. These studies subvert hegemonic logics and also stimulate actions that try to maintain the established orders.

Until recently, this multidisciplinary field (which has had a long history in Brazil) did not work closely with journalism studies, despite some noticeably restrictive measures here and there. Therefore, a large part of the production between the field and media systems in Brazil, which is essential towards understanding contemporary gender construction, has been primarily done by researchers in the fields of Anthropology, Sociology, Cultural Studies, Linguistics, and Education.

This has started to change a little in Brazil: there is more interest in developing gender studies and in adding alternative media to large vehicles (especially feminist blogs and sites, feminists and LGBT). There is also an upsurge of movements (mainly against harassment) across social networks and within media companies, something which has been happening internationally for some time.

This change has been felt and implemented in the field of communication, especially in journalism studies. The Brazilian Association of Journalism Researchers (SBPjor) has been adopting these changes since 2016; the last two conferences were held on gender issues. The need for further studies in the field on gender and journalism has also been felt in international institutions like the Journalism Studies Work Group from the Latin-American Association of Communication Studies which follows the increase of works on journalism and gender, which has recently become a permanent issue in one of their group sessions. A similar situation can be seen with the Journalism Research and Education Section of the International Association of Media and Communication Research which, since 2015, has dedicated at least two of their almost 20 annual sessions to studies on gender issues.

Our dossier, Gender and Journalism, is another important inclusion to these initiatives. It was developed in 2016 in conjunction with this institutions.

It is based on the premise that journalism, despite its cultural and sociogeographic differences, is a powerful “technology for gender” which strengthens and naturalizes, as well as disseminates, a world which naturalizes privileges and the ways of life of minorities. On the other hand, journalism should not be thought of as a homogenous

block, but as a system with contradictions and gaps in which new perspectives can be built and circulated.

Our dossier included papers written about journalism and gender, not only on mainstream and alternative media vehicle coverage of the issue but also on relationships inside newsrooms and the contributions that the theoretical perspective can bring to the field.

The response was impressive. We received almost 40 articles, showing how important gender studies are in the field of communication, particularly in journalism.

After a lengthy selection process, we chose 12 articles to be published in the Gender and Journalism special issue. Two other articles were selected to be published later in 2018, including a few texts which are still being written and might be included in **BJR** at a future date. This is the first time that an edition has been compiled exclusively of texts from a dossier.

The texts that were selected cover a range of themes, methodological approaches and theoretical perspectives. Some are directly related to the field of gender studies and others are more related to journalism. Yet all of them, in their own way, contribute towards understanding journalism as a space for building meaning about gender. Another important feature is that most of the texts were research papers written in research centers and for post-graduation programs, which confirms what we believed: the consolidation of gender studies in communication comes from the driving force of new generations of researchers who identify with this issue.

The dossier starts with papers that reflect on the possibilities that a new journalism offers by questioning the gender arguments. This is the case for Barbosa and Varão whose article “Error, Doubt and Gendered Journalism: A Look at the Rape Coverage in the Feature ‘A Rape on Campus’” focuses on Western journalism and feminist theories. The text is more extreme in the sense that it goes in-depth in its coverage. They analyze the *Rolling Stone* article ‘A Rape on Campus’, which was shortly retracted after being published for its erroneous reporting, and compare feminist journalism to hegemonic journalism and its claims of objectivity and neutrality. Along these same lines we have Marocco and Veiga whose article “The Feminine in the ‘Reporter Book’: An Epistemological View on Gender and Journalistic Practices” focuses on journalists and their practices in authorship of books, offering alternatives to masculine

journalism based on “objective modes” which they refer to as “post-modern, complex, feminine journalism”.

Reporter books are also the focus of Gonçalves and Medina in their article “The Sign of Relation and the Challenges of Journalistic Narratives on the LGBT Community” which analyzes the possibilities and challenges of a practice that is sensitive enough to be able to narrate on the lives and relationships of LGBT people, establishing a “sign of relation” that allows for a complex narrative of these subjects.

Continuing with LGBT issues we have the article by Feitosa called “Sui Generis” Journalism? Visibility, Identities and Journalistic Practices in a 1990s Brazilian Gay Magazine. This paper analyzes the magazine, *Sui Generis*, and how it was built on the valorization of gay “acceptance” and negotiation strategies between “gender identities, sexual orientation, sexuality, etc.” In her article, “The Dispersion of Senses about the “Anti-Homophobia Law” in Brazilian Newspapers: An Investigation Based on Membership Categorization Analysis”, Guimarães describes journalism as a “media scene in which interests from diverse social fields establish a game of conflicts and negotiations” and how newspapers, despite working with editorials on bills (filed), “have a more conservative and homogenous stance when preparing agendas and selecting interviews”.

Simões continues the theme of analyzing media coverage with her article, “News Media Power and Public Policy: The Mediatized Construction of Women Trafficking for Sexual Exploitation”, in which she focuses on the trafficking of women reported on in the Portuguese press which at the same time does not give a voice or place to other subjects, especially women, “in a discursive arena inseparable from a criminal or nationalist context” which is therefore reductionist and disconnected from any liberating power.

The limits of coverage are explored in Cardoso, Lima and Rocha’s in « Reproductive Rights and Journalism : teh case of Brazilian Women ´s Spring », in a paper which analyzes the “Women’s Spring”, a movement in which Brazilian women took to the streets in protest against a legislative bill which represented a major setback to reproductive rights. These researchers identified leading magazines that covered this issue, but whose coverage was limited in terms of who was interviewed and what sources were used, including the fact that there was not much discussion on the issue of abortion, which is the major talking point.

Medrado and Muller look beyond mainstream vehicles in their article “Maternal Rights, Digital Activism and Intersectional Feminism:

an Analysis of the Independent Media Platform ‘Cientista Que Virou Mãe’”, where they do not only look at the relation between maternal activism and netnography on an independent media platform, but also use the perspective of intersectionality to question how other voices need to be included in these spaces.

Maternity is also the theme of the following article from Silva and Gonçalves, “The Discourse of Female Photojournalists: The Imbalance between Remunerated Labor and Maternity as a Professional Calling” which offers a discursive analysis of interviews with professionals in photojournalism, highlighting the practical challenges posed by a professional field which is dominated by a masculine perspective.

Professional relationships are also the focus of the next text entitled “Respect The Girls! A Discursive Analysis on the Developments of the Story “The Intern/Little Melissa’s First Day of Work” by *Correio Braziliense*” in which Guazina, Moura, Calazans, Martinelle and Machado analyze discourses on the chauvinistic story printed in an important newspaper in the country’s capital. They compare the wording used by the newspaper, by professional corporations and by activists in newsrooms, highlighting the lack of voice, the reports of chauvinism in newsrooms and the confrontations in discourses in circulation.

We round off the dossier with important articles on meanings, which ask the opinion of the public and other actors. The article from Stocker and Dalmaso, “The Culture of Rape is Debated: The Discord of Meaning between Journalism and *Diário Gaúcho* Readers” which analyzes reader comments in a report focusing on urban harassment, identifying how meanings are built around blaming the victim, around the naturalization of harassment as a male’s right, and around the relativization of harassment and disqualifying reports as being “leftist”, “ideological”, etc.

Castilho and Romancini go down an interesting methodological path in their article “The Struggle of Girls in the Media: Framing and Perceptions of School Occupations in São Paulo” in which they analyze how large and independent media vehicles frame the student occupations of public schools in São Paulo. They then conduct focus groups with students in order to understand their points of view about the movement and especially how their images are constructed in the media, taking an in-depth look at visibility and invisibility in the media as it pertains to gender.

All the texts collected for this dossier discuss their issues in their own ways. What is most important here, though, is how

all these texts, in some form, pose a challenge to the practice of homogenous journalism. And therefore, they might be considered inconvenient to some because they question the incompleteness of the foundations of customs themselves by labelling them as gendered, conforming and erasing differences, and consequently, leaving them subversive.

We hope this dossier provides a more in-depth view of journalism and, in particular, helps towards breaking and rebuilding the barriers to this gender technology.