

# Journalism and Gender

## *Toward a Multidimensional Approach*

Iiris Ruoho & Sinikka Torkkola

### Abstract

In this article, we raise some methodological questions regarding the study of journalism and gender. We start with the idea that in many studies, researchers tend to think that the relationship between gender and journalism is external, that is, gender and journalism are considered essentially separate phenomena. In such a scenario, journalism appears to be gender neutral. Instead of theoretically keeping journalism and gender apart, we suggest that it is worth studying journalism as a gendered institution with its own history, culture, and social roles. We ask how the understanding of the relationship between journalism and gender may change if different social, cultural, and conventional dimensions of journalism are examined. Our main argument is that journalism and its relationship to gender can be investigated systematically as a multidimensional object that highlights various aspects of both concepts, depending on the specific research focus. Based on our former study, we aim to develop a model for examining these diverse facets of journalism.

**Key words:** Journalism critique, gender, methodology, multidimensionality, feminism

### Introduction

The belief that journalism is somehow beyond gender power relations stems from a tendency to consider gender differences in terms of a female-male dichotomy, and accordingly, a belief that sexism in media will disappear by changing the gender of agency. In this article, we wish to openly criticise journalism (one of the key institutions of social life; see Acker 1992) as a gendered institution. Here, the term “gendered” means that gender is present in the processes, practices, images and ideologies of journalism – and its power distributions. We regard the relationship between the institution of journalism, culture and gender as a methodologically complex phenomenon.

We first argue that journalism and its relationship to gender can be investigated systematically as a multidimensional object; depending on the specific research focus, varying aspects may be highlighted. Second, we seek to go further by suggesting that the gendered institution of journalism can be seen either as an externally or internally constructed object. Instead of keeping gender and journalism on separate islands, and only brought together externally, we suggest that it is important to highlight the historical and institutional intertwining of journalism and gender.

---

Ruoho, Iiris & Torkkola, Sinikka (2018). Journalism and Gender. Toward a Multidimensional Approach in *Nordicom Review* 39 (2018) 1, pp. 67-79. doi:10.2478/nor-2018-0002.

Based on our own studies, we aim to develop a model that allows journalism to be studied from several perspectives – without losing sight of the fact that these viewpoints cannot be considered in isolation. Entitled *Subscribing a Woman Editor-in-Chief? Female and Male Editors' Views on the Impact of Gender on Career* (Torkkola & Ruoho 2009), our original project was carried out at the request of the Helsingin Sanomat Foundation, named after Finland's largest newspaper. The foundation sought to clarify why so few women held top executive positions in the journalism sector. Quite early in the study, we realised that it would be extremely difficult to cite a single reason why women had not progressed to top leadership positions in their careers in the same way that men had. Instead, it would be necessary to emphasise many different reasons and how they interact.<sup>1</sup>

We start by considering the limitations and possibilities of the two concepts of journalism and gender. We review the research conducted from different perspectives on both concepts, examining it in the context of our own methodological standpoint. After investigating the complex links between the two notions in the context of our original study, we continue to reflect on the different theories of journalism (or “journalisms”) as constructed by our previous study's research question. Finally, we return to the discussion on the mutual links between journalism and gender, links that can be observed as working both externally and internally.

As a point of departure, we build our theoretical discussion based on the fact that previous studies on journalism have overlooked journalism as a gendered institution – even studies about journalism practices and cultures (see Chambers, Steiner & Fleming 2004; Fröhlich & Lafky 2008; North 2009; Byerly 2011; Hanitzsch & Hanusch 2012). With this point, we do not mean to deny the importance of the studies to which we are indebted (Zoonen 1998a and 1998b; de Bruin & Ross 2004; Djerf-Pierre & Löfgren-Nilsson 2004; Holland 2004; Ross 2004; Melin 2008; Djerf-Pierre 2011; Jenkins & Finneman 2017), rather our desire is to continue the discussion.

## **A critical gaze at journalism and gender**

For more extensive systematic and comparative analyses of the relationship between journalism and gender, it is important to focus on the socio-historical role of journalism as a gendered institution. The institutional role of journalism has been a mainstay of journalism culture (Hanitzsch 2007; see also Örnebring 2013), and this institutional role has many links to gender. In general, journalism relies on the binary two-gender system upon which the majority of modern societies have built their cultures. From this perspective, we suggest that journalism as an institution is not as gender-neutral as supposed; on the contrary, this viewpoint leads to questions concerning the institutional history of journalism and its role in the formation of gendered citizenship. The study of women's magazines represents trail-blazing work in this sense because it has highlighted divisions within journalism and politics (Ferguson 1991; Winship 1987; Ballaster et al. 1991; Gough-Yates 2003; Töyry 2005; Ytre-Arne 2011; Saarenmaa & Ruoho 2014).

Djerf-Pierre (2011) and others (e.g., Melin 2008) have pointed out that the institutional core of journalism has closely paralleled the formation of modern societies and their different philosophical-normative traditions, political public spheres, and concepts of democracy (see Christians et al. 2009). For example, in Finland, the formation of the nation-state required political publicity and citizenship building. This process led to a

concept of specifically female citizenship to counter the idea of male citizenship, which, in turn, influenced women's positioning in Finnish journalism culture (Ruoho & Torkkola 2010). This specific culture remains apparent in the way that Finnish journalists think and act, as well as in the specific kinds of journalism they value the most. As a concept, journalism culture thus can be defined "as a particular set of ideas and practices by which journalists, consciously or unconsciously, legitimate their role in society and render their work meaningful for themselves and others" (Hanitzsch 2007: 370).

However, there is no consensus regarding the strength of the bond between journalism as an institution and culture and gender. Indeed, methodological starting points and interpretations are influenced not only by how journalism is understood, but also by our understanding of gender. For example, our ways of interpreting gender have changed significantly since the 1960s. Here, we briefly survey the research on gendered journalism. We first focus on how journalism has been examined from the feminist perspective before considering how these studies have conceptualised gender.

### *Journalism*

Gender criticism has often been directed towards journalistic texts and genres; these criticisms include commentary on the incomplete images of women in the media as well as defining the news as a masculine text (Janus 1977; Perkins 1979; Rakow 1986; van Zoonen 1994). Early researchers overlooked the power of framing (Tuchman 1979) and the fact that female journalists would not necessarily produce more progressive portrayals of women than their male colleagues.

The increasing proportion of Western women in the journalism profession has drawn interest to the woman's status in media organisations and newsroom agendas (e.g. Gallagher 2001). Additionally, the number of studies on the place of female journalists in newspapers, women's magazines, and on television has risen significantly (e.g. van Zoonen 1992; Bruin & Ross 2004; Carter & Steiner 2004; Chambers, Steiner & Fleming 2004). Concerns about gendered news practices have extended to the analysis of news content. While news journalism might recognise women's increased economic independence and consumer status, researchers have observed that this status does not necessarily make the news friendlier to women or allow equal distribution of social power between women and men (Holland 2004).

The growing interest in journalism as a masculine profession has given rise to accusations of a glass ceiling facing female journalists worldwide (de Bruin & Ross 2004; Morna 2007; Fröhlich & Lafky 2008; Vochocová 2008). According to many studies, there are obvious differences between women and men in both their experiences and practices of professional work (Savolainen & Zilliacus-Tikkanen 1992; Steiner 1998; van Zoonen 1998a; McKay 2000; Chambers, Steiner & Fleming 2004; Zilliacus-Tikkanen 2008). In recent years, the study of gendered professions has emphasised the practices of media organisations, as well as organisational and professional identity (Carter, Branston & Allan 1998; Bruin & Ross 2004). Among other aspects, these studies highlight the need for multiple perspectives or a variety of combined factors. Rather than focusing on a single facet of a phenomenon, it is necessary to study the linkages between various aspects, such as organisations, professions and gender, as well as the social, cultural and individual experiences of both female and male journalists.

## *Gender*

Relevant concepts and perspectives point in different directions when it comes to theorising about journalism as texts, media professions and practices. Nonetheless, it is important that the critical gaze focus on the concept of gender and its limitations (Steiner 2012). It remains regrettable that gender as a category tends to be based on a dichotomy, comprehending the division between women and men as natural and self-evident. We do not deny that this division offers relevant information about certain societies and cultures. Indeed, this kind of conceptualisation is useful when approaching equal opportunities for men and women in the journalism profession. Especially in the theory of *patriarchy*, which focuses the early stage of gender studies and biological sex manifests itself as a congenital bodily characteristic. In contrast, social gender identity is thought to be learned through socialisation, which modifies biological sex into standardised human behaviour. This division, which discriminates against women, does not happen naturally; rather, it results from the relationships structuring the system, such as the gendered division of labour in both family and work life (Rubin 1975).

In feminist criticism, it is almost axiomatic to grant what we understand as *gender* to be a result of a continuous process of doings and repetitions – there is no being behind doing (Butler 1990). Accordingly, it is possible to argue that journalism is not a noun but a verb. For example, an individual journalist *does* her or his gender in everyday routines by using certain gestures, manners and language, all of which form a person socially and culturally as a woman or a man. In recent years, the debate on *intersectionality* (e.g. Davis 2009) has directed the critical gaze to class, race, age, and sexuality, among other topics. However, none of the gender theorists seem to have posed the question of whether journalism builds a system of gender within itself. This perspective goes beyond recognising journalism as a set of ideologies and practices that produce and reproduce understandings of gender as an essential part of human existence. The issue at stake is whether journalism itself can be perceived not only as a “difference engine” but also as a “gender machine” *par excellence* (Djerf-Pierre 2011: 44). We contend that we need to understand journalism as a socio-culturally constructed institution with its own protean ideologies, practices and norms, resulting in the materialisation of the gender system (Butler 1993; see also Jenkins & Finneman 2017).

Taken to the extreme, the idea of journalism as a gendered institution challenges the gender-neutral illusion, a situation that could be remedied in some ways by allowing women or other subordinate groups to occupy leadership positions. We thus consider it important to view journalism as an object of criticism. Otherwise, it is allowed to represent itself as a gender-neutral institution with only positive missions – to act as a monitor in society and to offer a platform for public debate – as if all undesirable elements (such as a gendered system) are external to this model. The foundations of this model, including the concept of objectivity, are sometimes challenged without journalism itself really being questioned. This methodological situation has many consequences for feminist media studies. In the next section, we give examples based on our own methodological observations: we realise that research on journalism and gender is more problematic than previously thought. Therefore, we examined this complex process in order to understand the meaning of some cultural and structural explanations and the importance of action in producing and reproducing the gender of journalism. In considering this complexity,

we apply the multidimensional approach, allowing us to shed light on various aspects and combinations of gendered journalism.

### **The multidimensional approach**

The idea of multidimensionality owes much to earlier studies. Inspired by social identity theory, de Bruin (2004) distinguishes between the three categories of gender, and professional and organisational identities. According to de Bruin (2004), organisational identity involves an understanding that is collectively constructed and continuously renegotiated among members of an organisation. In contrast, professional identity does not stem from a particular media group but from the journalism community and its understanding of professional roles, functions, and values. Professional identity is dynamic, an evolving process through which practices connected to beliefs, values, and feelings are constructed (de Bruin 2000). Thus, increasing the number of women in top positions does not necessarily lead to the dismantling of “gendered journalism cultures”, to use Melin’s (2008) terminology.

As presented in our research, our idea of multidimensionality is based on thematic interviews with journalists (Torkkola & Ruoho 2009; Ruoho & Torkkola 2010). We aim to create a model that facilitates an analysis of differences between female and male journalists, not as a static dichotomy but as a process connected to cultures, structures, and practices. For example, in interpreting journalists’ views on their career development, we do not rely too heavily on one or two explanatory models. We take a broader approach because the interviewees’ genders do not directly explain their careers as female and male professionals. Furthermore, perceiving journalism simply as a male-dominated, patriarchal institution fails to explain why some male interviewees want to break gender expectations by refusing offers of management positions in favour of women. Because of the problems associated with interpreting professional careers from an overly narrow perspective, we developed a multidimensional model for comprehending interviews with emerging conflicts, contradictions, and inconsistencies. Table 1 presents each type of the model and provides a specific perspective on journalism as a gendered practice and field.

There are alternative ways to highlight gendered practices in journalism. These practices include organisational practices that hinder women’s career advancement, the prejudices and attitudes that women encounter, women’s reluctance to participate in organisational games, and problems in balancing family and career (Indvik & Northouse 2004). We also pay attention to the cultural and symbolic explanations of the under-representation of women in top positions. With case examples and references to sociological and media studies, we present the way in which human agency can be observed and practised in different conditions. We also show how these conditions can be interpreted together and separately when considering journalism as a gendered culture, professional practice, human agency, and institution.

In understanding journalism as a field and as a profession, the multidimensional approach led us to questions about organisational symbols (1), professional ideals (2), and gender expectations (3). A rather different story emerges from the study of media management (4), professional practices (5), and social conventions (6). Multidimensionality also induces reflection on the significance of organisational specialisation (7), daily routines (8), and individual reflectivity (9) in studying journalism agency. As Table

1 shows, each of these complementary types opens a certain intersectional perspective regarding the fundamental question of *how to understand the gender of journalism*.

**Table 1.** *Nine ways of approaching questions of journalism and gender – a typology*

Terms and conditions	Organisational	Professional	Individual
Cultural terms and conditions	(1) Symbols	(2) Ideals	(3) Expectations
Structural terms and conditions	(4) Management	(5) Practices	(6) Conventions
Practical agency	(7) Specialisations	(8) Routines	(9) Reflexivity

Although the narratives of the interviewed editorial chiefs in our study reflect real-life experiences, they should not be understood as descriptions of everyday life in editorial offices that accurately correspond with reality. For example, the impression that gender is insignificant in journalism does not necessarily represent the reality of the interviewee. Rather, the interviewee is more likely describing the cultural understanding of the gender of journalism in the context of individual media organisations, editorial offices, and within Finnish society. When discussing journalism, the interviewees talk about both their individual definition of it and the shared meanings in journalism cultures. In media houses and editorial offices, an individual's opportunity to perform journalism is constructed by the interactions between structures and persistent cultural values. Gender easily becomes a mere classification or label describing the interviewees' attitudes and behaviours. Consequently, the interviewees' stories cannot be reduced to mere female and male narratives. Even so, these stories provide an understanding of how journalism practices depend on the cultural expectations of women and men.

### **Cultural, structural, and practical dimensions**

In this section, we introduce nine ways of examining the relationship between journalism and gender by considering examples from our study (Torkkola & Ruoho 2009; Ruoho & Torkkola 2010) and by citing analogous research. We emphasise that these nine ways can be distinguished only analytically; most of them both overlap and supplement each other. The diversity of journalism as a gendered institution can be understood fully only by keeping in mind that every type provides just a single perspective on journalism. Our original study dealt specifically with the *gendered careers* of journalists, so the following examples highlight the multidimensionality of studying the careers of the interviewed Finnish journalists. By considering the dimensions through these nine types, we try to demonstrate that gender has been attached to journalism in many cultural, structural, and practical ways; meanwhile, the larger society and culture is based on the idea of a two-sex/gender system.

1. *Symbols*. The term “media organisation” refers to the symbolic and concrete cultures, structures, and practices from which the organisation and its potentially gendered nature are constructed. Media organisations are not stable structures but should be viewed as evolving processes in which practices are connected to beliefs, values, and feelings (de Bruin 2000). Similar to the metaphors of the media organisation that make this subculture visible, these symbols indicate the mostly invisible and unconscious ways of understanding organisations (Morgan 1986; Mangham 1996).

Understanding a media organisation for example, through the *house* metaphor, constructs it as a specific space. The culture of a single media house establishes symbolic walls, entrances, and windows that allow certain elements while making others difficult to implement (Ruoho & Torkkola 2010). Such spatialisation of organisations becomes concretised as a place with rooms and corners, a space where one is inside or outside the centre or further out in the margins. This spatial binarity is also connected with the assumption of a gender dichotomy that positions women and men as basic divisions sharing similar experiences and natures (Leonard 2002). In our study, interviewees described the media houses using military, family, and team sports metaphors. The military and sports metaphors connect leadership and management to traditional masculinity.

2. *Ideals*. Understanding the social and cultural roles of journalism involves comprehending beliefs about its goals and means. Deuze (2005) sums up journalists' prevailing professional ideology in five values. First, a journalist's starting point for action is a public service mission; they follow news events, disseminate information, and monitor society. Second, journalists are objective, neutral, honest, and credible. Third, they are free and independent at work. Fourth, their operations pursue the news with timeliness and rapid response. Fifth, a journalist's activities are based on ethical regulations that ensure the validity and legitimacy of their work (Deuze 2005). These professional values mirror the prevailing Western belief that journalism is an objective actor (Tuchman 1972; McQuail 1987; Zelizer 2004; Melin 2008).

In our interviews with the Finnish editorial chiefs, journalism seemed to be constructed as both an institutional relationship and a relationship with the audience. The institutional relationship emphasises the illusion of being able to follow and monitor other social actors while the audience relationship entails the ability to meet shifting demands. However, it is most interesting to consider how journalists understand their mission and scope of accreditation in society. In most of the Western world, the institutional relationship relies heavily on the view of journalism as a neutral, unbiased, and objective monitor of society. However, there are contradictions in the interviewees' beliefs about gender-neutral ideals and journalism practices. On one hand, it seems that many top editors believe that certain areas of journalism are gender neutral, such as facts and news. On the other hand, when the meaning of gender is connected to practical situations, the idea of neutrality is diluted, and gender becomes at least one of the characteristics that defines a journalist and his or her work.

3. *Expectations*. Gender expectations are strongly linked to how the journalism profession is appreciated and how journalists identify themselves in their work within a specific cultural context. The female journalists stated that, above all, they want to be journalists and to write stories, a statement that can be understood as both a strategy and a need to identify with journalistic culture. This view is supported by a recent historical study on gender and journalism in Finland during the 1960s and 1970s (Kurvinen 2013). Social identity is also a central concept for de Bruin (2004), who analyses the journalism organisation as a cultural phenomenon. She approaches her interviewees' statements as different social identities. Meanwhile, professional identities are created and experienced individually while also reflecting strong social constructions.

Of course, gender identity also involves socialisation. In most instances, both women and men are aware of social expectations: gender expectations thus become realised

in hundreds of small episodes that tell us how to do gender without violating cultural norms. However, views on the impact of gender are difficult to recognise, as our research shows. The majority of both female and male interviewees perceive gender as able to affect career advancement; or at least it was in the past. Opinions are more varied regarding the current situation. For example, there are growing calls for women managers in media houses in Finland. However, this phenomenon is rooted in the Nordic policy of equality (Svensson, Pylkkänen & Niemi-Kiesiläinen 2004; Svensson 2006; Torkkola & Ruoho 2009). Although the leadership models are changing, they are still linked to traditional gender expectations.

4. *Management.* As Acker (1998) states, gender substructures in organisations tend to reproduce gender divisions and inequalities, even against the best intentions of some employees. Additionally, media management takes tangible form in the written and unwritten norms of decision-making, requirements, and work distribution. In our data, interviewees often described the editorial office as a *family* in which the male chief is the father. In this sense, our data indicates that organisational culture and management involves leadership ideals that direct recruiting operations. On the other hand, requests for female chiefs provides evidence of intensifying competition in the media market and increasing expectations of female leaders in terms of their competence in crisis management. Research has shown that female leaders are viewed to be more suitable when an organisation is in crisis (Ryan, Haslam & Postmes 2007; Haslam & Ryan 2008). Although the myth of female leadership might help to change journalism organisations and management practices in the long term, it is nevertheless based on a traditional concept of gender, one constructed on a belief in the natural and static differences between women and men (see Billing & Alvesson 2000).

5. *Practices.* Journalism may be regarded to be reinforcing its own gendering logic, as described by Djerf-Pierre (2007). Women have shown their capability to produce real journalism. Despite general changes, each woman is still able to individually demonstrate that she can overcome the presumed stereotypical gender restrictions and that she is simply a journalist, and not a female journalist. When journalism manifests itself as a masculine-friendly field, women in a sense should rise above their femininity to gain access to the core of journalism. In concrete terms, the gendering of journalism often appears in how topics are divided into those suitable for men and those for women. Some journalistic themes are still delegated to the female realm, such as home, family and human-interest stories. Meanwhile, matters of power, elites, structures, and news and facts are branded as male journalism. In our study, editorial offices are acutely aware of the division of topics into male and female categories. As many other studies have shown, daily professional life is based on gender differences connected to other dichotomies – private and public, soft and hard, intimate and distant, feeling and fact, subjective and objective, and serious and popular. Women journalists seem to largely share the same values as their male colleagues. However, based on research, it is justifiable to assume that a woman's experience of journalism differs from that of their male peers (see Zilliacus-Tikkanen 1997; Steiner 1998; McKay 2000; Chambers, Steiner & Fleming 2004).

6. *Conventions.* The fact that women do not seek senior editorial posts has often been attributed to their greater family responsibilities. However, the situation varies in dif-

ferent societies and cultures. According to our research, which focuses on a Nordic country, this situation is changing because young male journalists emphasise gender equality and combine family and work demands. In Finland, fathers are eligible for paternity leave. If either a mother or a father uses parental leave, it may be considered a *gendered choice* (Torkkola & Ruoho 2009). Although men's attitudes and behaviours towards the family are changing, our research suggests that gender practices in the organisational or journalism culture are not being revised. Men are not automatically encouraged to reflect critically on masculinity as a culturally produced gender discourse. Some interviewed editorial chiefs, mostly from older generations, stand by the ideal of gender neutrality, yet several are aware of the gender order dictating the practices and daily routines in the editorial office. However, gender conventions seem to be changing as our research showed generational differences in responses to questions about family life. For the 40-something generation in Finland, responsibility for the home and family is not self-evidently delegated to women. Demands for equality have influenced journalism practices, making the field more family friendly. Excelling as a journalist no longer means that work comes first (at least not automatically).

7. *Specialisations.* The journalism profession seems to follow the traditional understanding of journalism as rooted in its institutional status and role as the fourth estate monitoring other sectors, such as politics and the economy (Christians et al. 2009). There are no signs that serious news journalism has lost its status. Instead, it seems that polarisation is beginning to occur within the field. One segment of the media has become more entertaining, while the other emphasises the media's intermediary role between civil society and the state. The commercialisation and popularisation of news journalism and its increasing combination of information and entertainment have paradoxically been connected to the feminisation of journalism (Djerf-Pierre & Löfgren-Nilsson 2004). The feminisation has not necessarily been regarded as negative. Many assert that the trend will open avenues for issues that women have traditionally believed to be important. This point of view is contradictory in nature; if any area is considered to be natural for women, the assumption can also be regarded as essentialism. Based on our study, there are differences between not only genders but also generations. To those who entered the profession in the 1980s and later, the question of whether a woman can be a competent journalist is absurd. However, at least until the 1990s, career paths were gendered in the Finnish context, meaning that women and men advanced differently. For example, one interviewee recognised that she was not being perceived as suitable for career advancement; consequently, she changed jobs. It seems that some forward-moving female journalists have switched to magazine writing because of poor career prospects (Ruoho & Torkkola 2010).

8. *Routines.* Work routines consist of unconscious acts or behaviours, partly involving so-called tactical knowledge that helps employees cope with daily work. According to many studies, there are clear differences in women's and men's experiences and routines of daily editorial work (Savolainen & Zilliacus-Tikkanen 1992; Steiner 1998; Zoonen 1998a; McKay 2000; Chambers, Steiner & Fleming 2004; Zilliacus-Tikkanen 2008). For example, Zilliacus-Tikkanen (1997) noted many areas where Finnish female journalists and their male counterparts differ. Female journalists appear to prioritise so-called soft news and prefer to contextualise a factual event; they are interested in pointing out its

causes and consequences. They avoid hiding behind objectivity and favour both shared projects and non-hierarchical news organisations. It also seems that female journalists use various tactics to navigate daily routines. For example, adapting to the “lad” culture often means putting up with or being indifferent to it; women do not let sexist talk or being referred to as “girls” bother them. Moving into an editorial office labelled as male might also mean hiding their femininity. Other tactics have involved recognising the male label, stopping attempts at assimilation, and leaving this work for a media or a media organisation that does not require metamorphosing into a man (e.g. Torkkola & Ruoho 2009). These tactical practices can be either conscious or unconscious and do not require special individual reflection or conscious choices.

9. *Reflexivity*. An individual’s own actions also constitutes an important part of research. The structures, cultures, and practices of media organisations and journalism guide practitioners to implement methods that conform to the gender order of journalism. Sometimes, individual journalists quite consciously reflect these visible and invisible guidelines of the gender order. Melin-Higgins (2004) has identified three strategies or tactics typical of female journalists, the first two of which do not challenge the existing concept of journalism. The first strategy is to build a women’s-only place in journalism. Its proponents recognise the specificity of women’s journalism but do not challenge the journalism order. In the second strategy, women act within mainstream journalism without questioning the gender hierarchy. In the third strategy, female journalists challenge the hegemonic concept of journalism. Opportunities that belong to the first (exclusively women’s) category include positions in women’s magazines, dedicated pages in newspapers and female-oriented programmes. In our study, individual female journalists seemed to adapt to the status quo of the editorial office culture in a variety of ways. They may try to act more masculine or move to more women-friendly media houses. Ross (2004: 146) calls the first strategy “tamed feminism”: women journalists attempt to achieve equal footing with their male colleagues within the existing organisation without challenging its organising principles. As we have attempted to show, cultural and structural conditions are gendered, and the gender of journalism is also actively produced through gendered *individual subjects*. However, there is no need to disconnect this agency from the structural conditions and cultural expectations that provide the preconditions for reflexivity (Adkins 2004).

## Discussion

In this article, we have argued that understanding journalism as a gendered institution requires more research. We suggest that it is worth studying journalism as a gendered field with its own history, culture, and social roles instead of keeping gender and journalism theoretically separate while thinking of journalism as a semiotic technology or institution that (among many others) reproduces representations of gender. In the most radical sense, the relationship between journalism and gender could be understood as *internal*, where the analysis primarily focuses on their intertwining and mutual dependency. This way of thinking also opens avenues for locating the actual changes when the power arrangement is perhaps breaking apart or being disturbed.

As discussed, gender has been re-conceptualised over time, but not in the case of core journalistic concepts. This situation makes it quite difficult to explain women’s career

development from a single starting point (organisational, professional, or individual). As shown in many studies, journalism is a nebulous concept, which nonetheless has historical roots as a modern institution. This ideology is changing, but change itself does not make journalism less gendered. The phenomena with which we associate journalism appear to emphasise its general virtues, such as integrity, honesty, and transparency – even if it is in altered forms. We argue that this great confidence in journalism makes it challenging to fully observe its role as a gendered power institution. To demonstrate our standpoint, we have used our study on Finnish journalists and their career development as an example. By applying this context, we have identified nine different ways of examining the relationship between journalism and gender.

We propose that gender criticism would benefit tremendously from using the multidimensionality of journalism as a methodological standard. As described, multidimensionality has guided us, as media scholars, to highlight the gender conventions that female or male journalists adopt when they specialise in certain areas, consider their individual career options, or perform their daily duties. Additionally, this multifaceted approach has assisted us in recognising how individual journalists' careers are not restricted but conditioned by various attributes, cultural symbols, and ways of thinking about ideal leadership and gender roles. Most importantly, this method has allowed us to observe the social nature of journalism and the need to investigate gender and journalism as historically intertwined on many levels, thus shaping a different perspective on journalism. Gender is not just a variable that is external to the field; rather, it is formed in and by journalism. With all of its professional practices, ideals, and agencies, journalism produces its own kind of gendered institution.

## Note

1. The interviewees represented the highest management levels in 11 daily newspapers, six magazines and four television news and current affairs departments.

## References

- Acker, Joan (1992). From Sex Roles to Gendered Institutions. *Contemporary Sociology*, 21(5): 565-569.
- Acker, Joan (1998). The Future of 'Gender and Organizations': Connections and Boundaries. *Gender, Work and Organization*, 5(4): 195-206.
- Adkins, Lisa (2004). Reflexivity: Freedom of Habit of Gender. *Sociological Review*, 25(2): 191-210.
- Ballaster Ros; Beetham Margaret; Frazer Elizabeth & Hebron Sandra (1991). *Women's Worlds: Ideology, Femininity and the Woman's Magazine*. London: Palgrave.
- Billing Yvonne D. & Mats Alvesson (2000). Questioning the Notion of Feminine Leadership: A Critical Perspective on the Gender Labelling of Leadership. *Gender, Work and Organization*, 7(3): 144-157.
- Bruin, Marjan de (2000). Gender, Organizational and Professional Identities in Journalism. *Journalism*, 1(2): 217-238.
- Bruin, Marjan de (2004). Organizational, Professional, and Gender Identities – Overlapping. Coinciding and Contradicting Realities in Caribbean Media Practices, pp. 1-16 in de Bruin, Marjan & Ross, Karen (eds.) *Gender and Newsroom Cultures. Identities at Work*. Cresskill: Hampton Press, Inc.
- Butler, Judith (1990). *Gender Trouble. Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. New York and London: Routledge.
- Butler, Judith (1993). *Bodies that Matter. On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"*. New York: Routledge.
- Byerly, Carolyn M. (2011). Behind the Scenes of Women's Broadcast Ownership. *The Howard Journal of Communications*, 22: 24-42.
- Carter, Cynthia; Branston, Gill & Allan, Stuart (1998). *News, Gender and Power*. London: Routledge.
- Carter, Cynthia & Steiner, Linda (2004). *Critical Readings: Media and Gender*. Maidenhead: Open University Press.

- Chambers, Deborah; Steiner, Linda & Fleming, Carole (2004). *Women and Journalism*. London: Routledge.
- Christians, Glifford; Glasser, Theodore; McQuail, Denis; Nordenstreng, Kaarle & White, Robert A. (2009). *Normative Theories of the Media: Journalism in Democratic Societies*. Illinois: University of Illinois Press.
- Davis, Kathy (2009). Intersectionality as Buzzword. A Sociology of Science Perspective on What Makes Feminist Theory Successful. *Feminist Theory*, 9(1): 67-85.
- Deuze, Mark (2005). What is Journalism? Professional Identity and Ideology of Journalists Reconsidered. *Journalism*, 6(4): 442-464.
- Djerf-Pierre, Monika & Löfgren-Nilsson Monica (2004). Gender-Typing in the Newsroom: The Feminization of Swedish Television News Production 1958–2000, pp. 81-104 in de Bruin, Marjan & Ross, Karen (eds.) *Gender and Newsroom Cultures*. Cresskill: Hampton Press, Inc.
- Djerf-Pierre, Monika (2007). The Gender of Journalism. The Structure and Logic of the Field in the Twentieth Century. *Nordicom Review*. Jubilee Issue, 2007: 81-104.
- Djerf-Pierre, Monika (2011). The Difference Engine. Gender Equality, Journalism and the Good Society. *Feminist Media Studies*, 11(1): 43-51.
- Ferguson, Kathy (1991). Interpretation and Genealogy in Feminism. *Sign*, 16(1): 322-339.
- Fröhlich, Romy & Lafky, Sue A. (2008). *Women Journalists in the Western World: Equal Opportunities and What Surveys Tell Us*. London: Hampton Press.
- Gallagher, Margaret (2001). *Gender Setting: New Agendas for Media Monitoring and Advocacy*. London: Zed Books and WACC.
- Gough-Yates, Anna (2003). *Understanding Women's Magazines. Publishing, Markets and Readership*. London: Routledge.
- Hanitzsch, Thomas (2007). Deconstructing Journalism Culture: Toward a Universal Theory. *Communication Theory*, 17(4): 367-385.
- Hanitzsch, Thomas & Hanusch, Folker (2012). Does Gender Determinate Journalists' Professional Views? A Reassessment Based on Cross-National Evidence. *European Journal of Communication*, 27(3): 257-277.
- Haslam, Alexander & Ryan, Michelle (2008). The Road to the Glass Cliff: Differences in the Perceived Suitability of Men and Women for Leadership Positions in Succeeding and Failing Organizations. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 19(5): 530-546.
- Holland, Patricia (2004). The Politics of Smile: 'Soft News' and the Sexualisation of the Popular Press, pp. 68-86 in Carter, Cynthia & Steiner, Linda (eds.) *Critical Readings: Media and Gender*. Maidenhead: Open University Press.
- Indvik, Julie & Northouse, Peter (2004). Women and Leadership, pp. 265-299 in Northouse, Peter G. (ed.) *Leadership, Theory and Practice*. London: Sage.
- Janus, Noreene Z. (1977). Research on Sex Roles in the Mass Media: Toward a Critical Approach. *The Insurgent Sociologist*, 7: 19-32.
- Jenkins, Joy, & Finneman, Teri (2017). Gender Trouble in the Workplace: Applying Judith Butler's Theory of Performativity to News Organizations. *Feminist Media Studies* [online]. Available at <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/14680777.2017.1308412> [Accessed 7 August, 2017].
- Kurvinen, Heidi (2013). *En mä oo mies enkä nainen. Mä oon toimittaja. Sukupuoli ja suomalainen toimittajakunta 1960- ja 1970-luvuilla* [I am not a man nor a woman. I am a reporter. Gender and the profession of reporters in the 1960s and 1970s Finland]. Oulu: The University of Oulu, Faculty of Humanities, History Doctoral dissertation.
- Mangham, Iain (1996). Some Consequences of Taking Gareth Morgan Seriously, pp. 21-36 in Grant, David & Osrick, Cliff (eds.) *Metaphor and Organizations*. London: Sage.
- Melin-Higgins, Margareta (2004). Coping with Journalism: Gendered Newsroom Culture, pp. 195-220 in de Bruin, Marjan & Ross, Karen (eds.) *Gender and Newsroom Cultures. Identities at Work*. Cresskill: Hampton Press, Inc.
- Melin, Margareta (2008). *Gendered Journalism Culture. Strategies and Tactics in the Fields of Journalism in Britain and Sweden*. Gothenburg: JMG.
- Morgan, Gareth (1986). *Images of Organization*. London: Sage.
- Morna, Colleen Lowe (2007). *Class Ceiling Two: An Audit of Women and Men in South African Newsrooms*. South African National Editors' Forum (SANEF). Johannesburg. SANEF & GL [online]. Available at [http://www.sanef.org.za/images/uploads/Glass\\_Ceiling\\_Two.pdf](http://www.sanef.org.za/images/uploads/Glass_Ceiling_Two.pdf) [Accessed 7 January, 2017].
- North, Louise (2009). *The Gendered Newsroom: How Journalists Experience the Changing World of Media*. New York: Hampton Press.
- Perkins, T. E. (1979). Rethinking Stereotypes, pp. 135-159 in Corrigan, Philip; Kuhn, Annette; Wolf, Janet & Barrett, Michele (eds.) *Ideology and Cultural Production*. London: Croom Helm.
- Rakow, Lana F. (1986). Rethinking Gender Research in Communication. *Journal of Communication*, 36(4): 11-26.

- Ross, Karen (2004). Sex at Work: Gender Politics and Newsroom Culture, pp. 143-160 in de Bruin, Marian & Ross, Karen (eds.) *Gender and Newsroom Cultures*. Cresskill: Hampton Press, Inc.
- Rubin, Gayle (1975). The Traffic in Women: Notes on Political Economy of Sex, pp. 157-210 in Reiter, Rayna R. (ed.) *Toward an Anthropology of Women*. New York & London: Monthly Review Press.
- Ruoho, Iris & Sinikka, Torkkola (2010). *Journalismin sukupuoli* [Gender of Journalism]. Tampere: Vastapaino.
- Ryan, Michelle; Haslam, Alexander & Postmes, Tom (2007). Reactions to the Glass Cliff: Gender Differences in the Explanations for the Precariousness of Women's Leadership Positions. *Journal of Organizational Change Management*, 20(2): 182-197.
- Saarenmaa, Laura & Ruoho, Iris (2014). Women's Magazines in the Nordic Style: Politics, Politicians and the Welfare. *European Journal of Communication*, 29(3): 1-15.
- Savolainen, Tarja & Zilliacus-Tikkanen, Henrika (1992). *Women in Finnish Broadcasting*. Helsinki: Finnish National Commission for Unesco.
- Steiner, Linda (1998). Newsroom Accounts of Power at Work, pp. 145-159 in Carter, Cythia; Branston, Gill & Allan, Stuart (eds.) *News, Gender and Power*. London: Routledge.
- Steiner, Linda (2012). Failed Theories: Explaining Gender Difference in Journalism. *The Review of Communication*, 12(3): 201-223.
- Svensson, Eva-Maria; Pylkkänen, Anu & Niemi-Kiesiläinen, Johanna (2004). *Nordic Equality at a Crossroads: Feminist Legal Studies Coping with Difference*. Aldershot and Burlington: Ashgate.
- Svensson, Eva-Maria (2006). Contemporary Challenges in Nordic Gender Equality Policy and Law, Equality and Diversity in Europe. *International Interdisciplinary Conference*, Helsinki 12-13 January 2006 [online]. Available at [http://www.academia.edu/211201/Contemporary\\_challenges\\_in\\_Nordic\\_gender\\_equality\\_policy\\_and\\_law](http://www.academia.edu/211201/Contemporary_challenges_in_Nordic_gender_equality_policy_and_law) [Accessed 7 January, 2017].
- Torkkola, Sinikka & Ruoho, Iris (2009). *Subscribing a Woman Editor-in-Chief? Female and Male Editors' Views on the Impact of Gender on Careers*. Tampere: University of Tampere.
- Torkkola, Sinikka & Ruoho, Iris (2010). Looking for Gender Equality in Journalism, pp. 203-220 in Krijnen, Tonny, Alvares, Claudia & Van Bauwel, Sofie (eds.) *Gender in Transformations – Theory and Practice on Gender and Media*. Bristol: Intellect.
- Tuchman, Gaye (1972). Objectivity as Strategic Ritual: An Examination of Newsmen's Notions of Objectivity. *The American Journal of Sociology*, 77(4): 660-679.
- Tuchman, Gaye (1979). Women's Depiction by the Mass Media. *Sign*, 4(3): 528-542.
- Töyry, Maija (2005). *Varhaiset naistenlehdet ja naisten elämän ristiriidat. Neuvotteluja sukupuolisopimuksesta* [Early Women's Magazines and the Contradictions in Women's Lives. Negotiating the Readership Vcontract]. Helsinki: University of Helsinki.
- Vochocová, Lenka (2008). Women in Newsrooms: Idle Hopes for the Conquest of the Masculine Fortress. *Media Studies*, 3: 231-256.
- Winship, Janice (1987). *Inside Women's Magazines*. London: Pandora.
- Ytre-Arne, Brita (2011). Women's Magazines and Their Readers: The relationship Between Textual Features and Practices of Reading. *European Journal of Cultural Studies*, 14(2): 213-228.
- Zelizer, Barbie (2004). *Taking Journalism Seriously. News and the Academy*. London: Sage Publications.
- Zilliacus-Tikkanen, Henrika (1997). *Journalistikens essens i ett könsperspektiv* [The Essence of Journalism in a Gender Perspective]. Helsinki: The Finnish Broadcastig Company, Equality Committee.
- Zilliacus-Tikkanen, Henrika (2008). Women Journalists and the Gender Gap in Finland's News Culture, pp. 139-155 in Fröhlich Romy & Lafky, Due (eds.) *Women Journalists in the Western World: Equal Opportunities and What Surveys Tell Us*. London: Hampton Press.
- Zoonen, Liesbet van (1992). The Women's Movement and the Media: Constructing a Public Identity. *European Journal of Communication*, 7(2): 453-476.
- Zoonen, Liesbet van (1994). *Feminist Media Studies*. London, Sage Publications.
- Zoonen, Liesbet van (1998a). One of the Girls? The changing Gender of Journalism, pp. 33-46 in Carter, Cynthia (ed.) *News, Gender and Power*. London: Routledge
- Zoonen, Liesbet van (1998b). A Professional, Unreliable, Heroic Marionette. (M/F). Structure, Agency and Subjectivity in Contemporary Journalism. *European Journal of Cultural Studies*, 1(1): 123-142.
- Örnebring, Henrik (2013). Journalism as Institution and Work in Europe, Circa 1860. *Media History*, 19(4): 393-407.

---

IIRIS RUOHO, Adjunct Professor, Faculty of Communication Sciences, University of Tampere, [iiris.ruoho@uta.fi](mailto:iiris.ruoho@uta.fi)

SINIKKA TORKKOLA, Senior Researcher, Faculty of Communication Sciences, University of Tampere, [sinikka.torkkola@uta.fi](mailto:sinikka.torkkola@uta.fi)