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Editorial: Media Discourses on 'Race' and Gender

Studies in agenda-setting have been demonstrating since 1962 that media influence attitude formation and what issues people perceive as relevant (McCombs and Shaw, 1972; McCombs, 2004; 2014). However, for decades scholars have been warning about inequalities in the media system, especially with regards to the media coverage of issues such as politics and gender and racial equality, which have been seen as enforcing stereotypes and expected roles. For example, when it comes to 'race', black Britons have become synonymous with knife crime and gang culture and these images and dominant representations work to influence media consumers and perpetuate systemic oppression (Kilvington and Saeed, 2014). Other work focused on British Asians and British Muslims and how their representation of being socio-cultural pariahs has fuelled racialised hostility and violence (Poole and Richardson, 2006). Other studies have shown how media coverage often draw on simplified representations of race thereby reproducing racial bias and hegemonic discourses surrounding race and ethnicity in society at large (e.g. Drew, 2011; Nishikawa, Towner, Clawson, and Waltenburg, 2009). Campbell, Leduff and Brown (2012) showed, for instance, how US media coverage tends to represent Black people in a dichotomous way, as either fully assimilated or as criminals, thus cultivating simplified representations of 'race' that may impact people's racial perceptions (Gerbner, Gross, Morgan, Signorielli and Shanahan, 2002; Sommier, Van Sterkenburg and Hofhuis, 2019).

In regards to gender, media portray and enforce expected roles of women and, thus, when the coverage of important issues is analysed, the hard news approach still dominates in newsrooms despite the exponential growth of women in journalism (Lofgren-Nilsson, 2010; Ross, 2001; Lobo et al, 2017; North, 2016; Franks, 2013; Christmas, 1997; Lonsdale, 2013). Stories that matter to women tend to be confined to the so-called soft pages such as health, food, beauty and lifestyle, however, some studies also reported that when a traditional feminine area, such as health, entered the agenda then it is men who write about the issue, thus pushing women out of 'their' area (Topić, 2018). What is more, many studies have shown how media create expected roles and perpetuate inequality through the (re)production of discourses on women's place being at home and women being portrayed through sexist lenses of the weaker sex (Van Zoonen, 1994). In addition to that, the media and advertising industries have historically

engaged in creating and reproducing the expected gender roles and the beauty myth. Naomi Wolf (1991) argued that beauty is the system of beliefs that keeps male dominance pervasive and unchallenged in society because the idea that women have to be beautiful means women are expected to look in a certain way. The beauty myth, which is culturally conditioned, thus means that women have to aim to be thin, youthful, have smooth skin, small noses, silky hair, etc. If women do not meet these requirements, Wolf (1991) argues that women feel ugly and old most of their lives and this enables keeping them 'in their place', thus socially controlling them through undermining their self-confidence. The beauty myth discourse results, for example, in women obsessing with anti-ageing creams and older women facing discrimination, as has been documented in previous research (Walker, 2007; Polić, 2021). The cultural (re)production of the beauty myth results in perpetuating gendered discrimination and expected sex roles.

Although earlier studies have contributed to our knowledge base on how 'race' and gender are reproduced in and through media, relatively little is know about how these discourses come about and are being produced. Therefore, in this special issue, we want to move away from just looking at the media coverage of gender and 'race' and (also) look at the production and (re)production of discourses that perpetuate gender and racial inequality. In that, the issue offers, on the one hand, a variety of theoretical papers that offer a critical reflection on existing literature and offer suggestions for future research, as well as empirical papers that analyse the (re)production of discourses surrounding 'race' and gender (and their intersections) and media's enforcement of expected roles.

Against the backdrop above, in an opening article, Arne van Lienden, Carmen Longas Luque and Jacco van Sterkenburg discuss racial/ethnic diversity through a critical discussion of the literature on sports, media 'race' and gender. The authors suggest that media coverage of football has reproduced a variety of racial/ethnic stereotypes and that future research needs to look at how these discourses are (re)constructed and produced. The authors identify a research gap in 'empirical production studies in sport media' and additionally suggest more research into audience receptions of 'race' and gender in media. Such research should ideally focus more on how intersectionality operates in meaning-making processes and take a more internationally comparative perspective going beyond an Anglo-American focus. Directly responding to this gap in empirical production studies, in the second article, Daniel Kilvington examines the BBC Radio Derby affair in which sports presenter, Craig Ramage, as part of an

all-white presenting team, stated that black footballers are lazy and have attitude problems. Astonishingly, Ramage was unchallenged while making this comment but has since been sacked. This article critically examines these comments, analyses the reporting of this incident, and explores listeners' reactions on football forums. Similarly, Matthew Kirk, argues that the news media act as gatekeepers in the construction of particular forms of (gendered) discourse and thus create a distorted reality, knowledge and 'truths'. Kirk addresses this issue by analysing the representation of female suicide bombers on ITV and BBC and argues that news media create forms of knowledge for public consumption, in this case by "delegitimizing the non-West or 'Orient' as culturally lesser to the West for consumption by Western audiences". With this, journalists also construct femininity and what is expected from women, thus enforcing expected roles. Kirk focuses also on the distinction between male and female coverage of these stories and argues that "female journalistic voices act as visible representations of a non-deviant femininity allows for the manufacturing of Orientalist discourse which creates an "us"-versus-"them" framework surrounding Palestinian females needing to be rescued culturally by the West", thus also pointing towards the direction that women journalists have merged into the masculine culture and perpetuate the same discourses as men journalists have historically done (Mills, 2014; 2017; Ross, 2001; North, 2009, 2009b; 2016; 2016a; Lobo et al, 2017; Alvesson, 2013; 1998; Acker, 1990; Bourdieu, 2007; Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992; Topić, 2018; Topić and Bruegmann, 2021). Ashleigh McFetters, similarly, deconstructs the gendering of peace in the news arguing that this process is problematic because gendering has a corporeal impact on the social order, which is evidenced in the way media influence individual perceptions of social reality. Her analysis of the Irish press and the role of women in peace processes shows that the portrayal of women and peace in the news media can be said to nurture gender role stereotyping and in so doing disseminate and preserve women's underrepresentation in politics and public life. The representations connect women with domesticity or depict them mainly with community-level peace-building. The link with the home casts in stone women's role in peace-building as a domestic issue only. Peace is built in the public and private sphere, however, the author mentions the private smacks of the female domain of the household and family which is not a progressive outlook for women and peace. Nikolina Borčić and Sara Glavač also analyse the media construction of discourses through the analysis of women politicians and their statements on the migration crisis in Croatia and, in this, they address the problem of expected gender roles. The authors argue that the media used certain master myths in their discourses on women politicians and they reveal the connection between mythical narratives and stereotypical notions of women politicians.

Analysis of narratives concerning the belonging master myth and the context in which they appear served further as an exploration of whether a politician's image can be linked to attitudes consistent with inclusiveness and care, equally for migrants but also for Croatian society or to a patriarchal-defensive perspective. The research also showed that the dominant myth in all analysed statements is a good mother's myth. In doing so, the use of lexemes indicates a stereotyped and idealised social role of a woman who cares for, cares for and protects "her family". Marija Geiger Zeman and Zdenko Zeman similarly analysed the production of discourses by using an extensive literature review and critical reflection of of a narrative produced by Cindy Crawford and Katherine O'Leary in their auto/biography *Becoming*. In their contribution, Zeman & Zeman particularly focus on ageing as a discourse that has been popularized in the modelling profession. They reflect on ageing as something that has been popularized and imposed on women. This can be considered undesirable, it has prompted the rise of plastic surgery and instigated debates on the so-called beauty myth (Wolf, 1991). By analysing the auto/biography *Becoming* by Cindy Crawford and Katherine O´Leary, their reflection on ageing issues proves to be particularly stimulating. Tatjana Milivojević, Ljiljana Manić and Nataša Simeunović Bajić address a similar issue as Geiger Zeman and Zeman and critically analyse the literature on ageing with a focus on the lack of research in this area in Serbia. The authors argue that women face double discrimination in the media sphere; Whilst some believe that gender inequality and stereotypes end with age, which is in itself a basis for discrimination, and that gender differences are equalized, others believe that gender differences are particularly pronounced in old age, especially when considering marginalized elderly populations such as elderly people belonging to the Roma nationality, people with disabilities, LGBT people, or HIV positive people. The authors argue that a paradoxical gap exists between a longer and better quality of life nowadays compared to the past, on the one hand, and outdated biased media representations of old age, especially of elderly women, on the other. Similar to the other papers in this special issue, the article provides a powerful illustration of how media representations (and the production process behind it) can (re)produce hegemonic discourses that further strengthen existing privilege and (dis)vantage based on social dimensions such as gender and 'race'.

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