

Editorial

Gender, Television, and Digital Media: Representations and Practices in a Platformized Public Landscape—An Introduction

Rita Basílio Simões ^{1,2,*}, Joanna Vovou ³ and Fabiana Piccinin ⁴

¹ Department of Philosophy, Communication and Information, Faculty of Arts and Humanities, University of Coimbra, 3004-530 Coimbra, Portugal

² Centre for Social Studies, University of Coimbra, 3000-995 Coimbra, Portugal

³ Department of Communication, Media and Culture, Panteion University of Social and Political Sciences, 17671 Athens, Greece; vovou@panteion.gr

⁴ Department of Journalism, Centre of Communication and Expression, Federal University of Santa Catarina, Florianópolis 88058580, SC, Brazil; fabianaquatinpiccinin@gmail.com

* Correspondence: rbasilio@fl.uc.pt

Since the development of the scientific field of gender studies starting in the late 1960s, both as an unexplored scientific area of interest and as a social, cultural, and political request, a lot of “ink” (and web content) has flowed. The role played by the media in the configuration of gender imaginaries, perceptions, and stereotypes has never ceased to engage scholars and society across different dimensions. Whether in the study of news production, journalism patterns, television content, or—more recently, within the tradition of cultural, media, and gender studies—cross-media content, social media, and digital platforms, questions of gender can be discerned across multiple intersecting levels.

The gender perspective regarding the analysis of media content, representations, and uses passes through the negotiation of both femininities and masculinities, one going together with the other. While their intertwining as normative constructions has already been discussed in the work of scholars from various fields, such as psychoanalysis (see Chodorow, 1994) or sociology and philosophy (Butler, 1990, 2024), emergent femininities and masculinities in media and popular culture¹ constitute a rich scientific field to be explored in a constantly evolving, global, and platformized media environment. This is especially true following social movements such as #MeToo and the call for greater diversity at many levels of social and political life, which have expanded intensively via social media. The complex entanglement of popular feminism and popular misogyny across diverse media contexts has also been widely addressed in academic scholarship (Banet-Weiser, 2018; Ging & Siapera, 2018; Simões & Silveirinha, 2019). The relevance and urgency of the research in these fields must, therefore, be acknowledged, especially in relation to contemporary political developments affecting fundamental human rights and achievements that appear to be under threat, such as the renewed public contestation of abortion rights.

Against this theoretical and socio-political backdrop, this Special Issue aims to explore the intersections between gender, television, and digital media. With the advent of digital platforms and media convergence, gender representations and media consumption practices have evolved in complex and interconnected ways. How do television and digital media reshape gender constructions? How are power relations negotiated in the production, circulation, and consumption of media content? And what are the socio-cultural implications of transmedia representations and practices? These questions lie at the heart of the contemporary scholarly debates addressing the challenges of a rapidly evolving media landscape within international academia.



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Building on these core questions, gender is approached in this Special Issue as an important paradigm for examining media content, representations, and practices in close articulation with television and digital media. These two media areas are not addressed as strictly separate or bounded fields of operation but rather as interconnected and overlapping environments shaped by processes of convergence, circulation, and platformization. By extending the scope of television content beyond its conventional boundaries, this Special Issue acknowledges and explores the dynamics of intermedial logics that have been reconfiguring the so-called “traditional” media as well as digital media in recent decades. These transformations challenge simplistic claims regarding the “death of television” and instead point to the emergence of a hybrid public sphere (Chambat-Houillon & Vovou, 2018; Dwyer, 2010; Hay & Couldry, 2011; Jenkins, 2006; Natale, 2016). This foundational premise is taken up and empirically examined in the scholarly contributions gathered in this Special Issue of *Journalism and Media*.

An overview of the nine papers included in this Special Issue highlights five main features emerging from the contributions that, together, give this thematic issue on *Gender, Television, and Digital Media* a distinct profile.

First, the emphasis is placed on the permanent negotiation and intersection between television, digital platforms, and social media. The prominence given to this dynamic as early as McLuhan (1964, p. 23), when he pointed out that “the ‘content’ of any medium is always another medium”, could not be more relevant in contemporary media production and practices. From a different perspective, Bolter and Grusin (2000) have observed how “remediation” practices reuse properties of older media in newer ones, reinforcing processes of media interweaving rather than linear media replacement. The blurring of boundaries between media, especially in contemporary transmedia industries, has indeed been widely acknowledged by academic scholarship (Natale, 2016; Parikka, 2012; Uricchio, 2009). Once we look beyond the misleading dichotomy between old/traditional and new media/social media, we begin to acknowledge a constant interweaving within media content and practices. This feature is notably evident in Anna Maria Kontolatou’s paper, where gendered behaviors across various media categories and platforms are analyzed, as well as in the paper by Alem Febri Sonni, Vinanda Cinta Cendekia Putri, Muhammad Akbar, and Irwanto, which addresses gendered representation in Indonesian reality shows on television and digital media.

Second, and closely related to the first feature, the contributions gathered in this Special Issue consistently foreground the relational negotiation between femininities and masculinities, understood not as isolated or opposing categories but as mutually constitutive and dynamically co-produced formations. Across different media genres, platforms, and national contexts, gendered representations and practices are examined through their interdependencies, tensions, and asymmetries. While several articles address the reconfiguration of femininities—whether in telenovelas and television writing practices in Portugal and Brazil, as in the paper by Haphisa Souza Mugnaini and Inês Salvador, or in feminist digital activism on social media platforms, as explored by Inês Amaral and Disakala Ventura—others focus explicitly on the construction, circulation, and contestation of masculinities. This is the case with the paper on the discursive construction of masculinities in popular culture by Zhouyan Wu and Zhaoxun Song and the paper on the expansion of misogynistic digital cultures within the manosphere by Angeliki Alipranti.

Third, this Special Issue foregrounds the examination of a wide range of areas and topics. Indeed, the fields of study explored cover a broad diversity of research objects and thematic concerns. From television advertising and fiction to reality shows circulating across broadcast and digital platforms, from social media environments to audience engagement and the music industry, the contributions brought together in this Special

Issue encompass a wide span of media, genres, and thematic areas. It addresses gender in television advertising and commercial culture, as in the article by Himika Akram and Alicia Mason; gender inequalities in the music industry, as examined by Cande Sánchez-Olmos; and gendered patterns of interpersonal communication shaped by social media use in specific cultural contexts, as explored by Aseel Zibin, Yara Al-Sabatin, and Abdel Rahman Mitib Altakhaineh. Together, these contributions illustrate the breadth of areas and topics through which gendered media representations and practices are currently being investigated.

Fourth, the contributions selected for this thematic issue are grounded in a wide range of national and cultural contexts, reflecting an international and comparative scope. The case studies examined span countries such as India, Indonesia, Portugal, Brazil, Greece, Jordan, Spain, and the United States, thus decentering dominant Anglo-American perspectives on gender and media.

Finally, the diversity of case studies from different national contexts is complemented by a diversity and combination of multiple methods for analyzing the research objects. The authors contributing to the Special Issue combine, merge, and adapt methodologies and analytical tools in order to conceptualize and explain the evolution of gendered representations and practices in the contemporary, complex media landscape. For instance, across the papers, one can notice the use of mixed methods, bringing together traditional content analysis, quantitative methods in audience research—such as questionnaires—as well as qualitative methods, including focus group research, critical discourse analysis, textual analysis, and netnography methods (Kozinets, 2010, 2015).

Map of the Issue

This section provides an overview of the articles brought together in this Special Issue, situating them within the broader thematic framework of the issue.

In “Recasting Gender Roles: A Study of Indian Television Commercials (2011–2020)”, Himika Akram and Alicia Mason analyze how television commercials contribute to the normalization of traditional gender roles. Indian commercials are shown to feature more pronounced gender stereotypes than their Western counterparts. In the case of India—the world’s second most populous country, with over 1.4 billion inhabitants and marked by significant cultural diversity—television and its content exert a substantial influence on social perceptions and everyday life. Drawing on cultivation theory and framing theory, the authors examine how representations shaped by selective emphasis in television advertising influence audience interpretation, particularly with regard to portrayals of women and men. Using content analysis, they find that women are underrepresented in advertisements in leading roles and voice-overs, as well as in outdoor and professional settings. By contrast, women are more frequently depicted in domestic environments and associated with health-related products, while men dominate sectors such as banking, technology, and transportation. The study also highlights the surprising scarcity of this type of research, given the scale and significance of the Indian media landscape.

Focusing on gender in media production, the article “Portuguese–Brazilian market: Quantitative analysis of the ratio between men and women writing soap operas in Brazil and Portugal, from 1951 to 2025” by Haphisa Souza Mugnaini and Inês Salvador investigates the proportion of female professionals involved in writing Portuguese and Brazilian soap operas and the possible repercussions of this imbalance for character composition and narrative construction. Drawing on the shared language and cultural ties between Portugal and Brazil—which have shaped the influence and consumption of Brazilian soap operas in Portugal—the article focuses in particular on the period in which Portugal began to produce works within this genre. The research shows that, despite a long-standing

tradition of studies on television uses and gratifications, there remains a significant gap in the literature regarding Portuguese–Brazilian professionals responsible for the creation of cultural products, especially soap operas. The findings indicate that, over almost 75 years of production and broadcasting, Brazil has aired six times more telenovelas than Portugal, reflecting the scale and development of its fictional production market. Although both national contexts are predominantly characterized by male-authored productions, Brazil displays a more pronounced gender imbalance than Portugal, suggesting a stronger contribution to the reinforcement of gender stereotypes and the perpetuation of dominant masculinities.

The paper “Digital Youth Activism on Instagram: Racial Justice, Black Feminism, and Literary Mobilization in the Case of Marley Dias” by Inês Amaral and Disakala Ventura examines digital youth activism on social media, focusing on Marley Dias’ participation on Instagram. Through this case study and a mixed-method analysis of Instagram posts, the authors explain how Dias’ Instagram account “serves as a dynamic platform for youth-led Black feminist resistance, where cultural production, civic education, and emotional impact converge”. The input of youth-driven digital activism in reshaping contemporary public discourse is underlined, as well as the political potential of digital literacies. The paper argues that Dias’ Instagram account serves as a dynamic platform for youth-led Black feminist resistance, with a significant function related to civic education.

In “Gender Differences in Audience Engagement and Interpretation of Global Media Content”, Anna Maria Kontolatou examines the gender perspective in global media consumption habits, platform preferences, and engagement types. Kontolatou provides updated data regarding media preferences in correlation with the variable of gender. Based on quantitative research, her findings show that men are more likely to consume news, video games, and discussion-based media. On the other hand, women show higher engagement with entertainment content, music, and listening-based media. Despite the persistence of traditional gendered media patterns, Kontolatou’s research also identifies some areas in which digital platforms seem to be becoming more gender-neutral, such as streaming services and social media use.

The paper “The Greek Manosphere: The Case of the ‘No, You Are Not a Misogynist’ Facebook Page” by Angeliki Alipranti addresses the expansion of the so-called manosphere network in the last decade. Her study examines the case of the popular, anonymous, and publicly accessible Greek Facebook page of “‘Όχι, Δεν Είσαι Μισογύνης” (No, you are not a misogynist), as a local expression of the Men’s Rights Activists subculture of the manosphere. The study underlines that beyond the reproduction of traditional gender stereotypes, the Facebook page proceeds to an inversion of reality through the misinterpretation and falsification of data, depicting “women as privileged, socially dominant and violent”, while men are described as “victims”. The paper shows how misogynist perceptions and stereotypes could, therefore, (re)gain popularity in a context of an increasingly reactionary terrain whose goal is to eliminate the possibility of collective political resistance, as argued by [Banet-Weiser and Kay \(2025\)](#).

The issue of gender in a platformized public landscape is further addressed in the article “Social Media’s Influence on Gendered Interpersonal Communication: Insights from Jordan”, in which Aseel Zibin, Yara Al-Sabatin, and Abdel Rahman Mitib Altakhaineh examine the impact of social media on patterns of interpersonal communication between men and women in Jordan, a society often described as socially conservative. The study conceptualizes gender as a significant factor shaping communicative behaviors in digital environments. Based on data collected from Facebook users through a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods, the authors show that while traditional gender-based communication styles persist, these differences tend to diminish as users are increasingly

exposed to global influences through social media. The most salient gender differences are found in forms of interaction relying on non-verbal cues, in which women consistently demonstrate greater proficiency—an outcome associated in the study with empathetic communication styles and a stronger orientation towards relational harmony.

In “Platform-Specific Masculinities: Gender Representation in Indonesian Reality Shows Across TV and Digital Media”, Alem Febri Sonni, Vinanda Cinta Cendekia Putri, Muhammad Akbar, and Irwanto examine how representations of masculinity evolve across television and digital platforms within Indonesian reality shows. Drawing on a mixed-methods approach, the authors show that different media environments promote distinct masculine ideals, shaped by platform-specific affordances, audience expectations, and modes of circulation. The study highlights “significant generational and geographic patterns in content reception” and stresses how masculinities are reconfigured through processes of remediation and platformization, demonstrating that gender representation is closely tied to the technological and cultural logics of each medium.

Turning to a qualitative approach and drawing on critical perspectives from gender studies and critical discourse analysis, Zhouyan Wu and Zhaoxun Song explore the construction of masculinities in the Japanese manga and anime series Doraemon. Grounded in a social constructivist understanding of gender, the study examines how masculinities are discursively produced, negotiated, and normalized through narrative, characterization, and visual representation. Through a critical discourse analysis, the authors identify multiple and sometimes contradictory masculine models embodied by male characters, revealing tensions between traditional gender norms and more alternative or non-hegemonic forms of masculinity. “Masculinities in Doraemon: A Critical Discourse Analysis” thus underscores the role of popular culture aimed at younger audiences in shaping processes of gender socialization and in naturalizing specific understandings of masculinity.

Finally, in “Gender Inequality in Spain’s Official Music Charts: Neither Representation nor Success for Female Artists (2008–2020)”, Cande Sánchez-Olmos investigates gender disparities within the Spanish music industry. Through a quantitative analysis of official music charts over a twelve-year period, the study draws on feminist political economy and gender inequality frameworks to examine patterns of visibility, access, and recognition within the music industry. The findings reveal a persistent under-representation of female artists and lower levels of commercial success compared to their male counterparts, pointing to structural inequalities within cultural industries. The study contributes to broader debates on gender, visibility, and power in media industries, highlighting how entrenched gender imbalances continue to shape access to recognition and success despite the growing influence of digital platforms.

Collectively, these studies demonstrate that gendered representations and practices remain deeply embedded in media structures, narratives, and industries, even as they are continually reconfigured through processes of convergence and platformization. Overall, this Special Issue recalls the urgency of critically examining gender as a relational and contested dimension of contemporary media production, representation, and consumption.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Note

- ¹ See, for instance, the International Conference on Emergent Femininities and Masculinities at 21st Century Media and Popular Culture, held at the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens in 2022, which gathered scholars from international academia.

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