ALiGN

Advancing Learning and Innovation on Gender Norms

Broadcast media and gender norms

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Contents

Acknowledgements

Abbreviations

DHS   Demographic and health surveys

FGC   Female genital cutting

EE   Education Entertainment

GBV   Gender-based violence

KOF   *Konjunkturforschungsstelle*

ICTs   Information and communication technologies

MCA   Membership categorisation analysis

NHFS   National health and family survey

RMA   Rape myth acceptance theory

Glossary

Counter-publics
These are the 'publics', or communities, that organise themselves against the dominant or mainstream culture ([Warner, 2002](#)).

Hegemonic masculinity
Refers to the practices that legitimise men's dominant position in societal order, which are defined in opposition to both women and other forms of masculinity considered to be closer to a feminine subject ([Connell, 2005](#)).

Liminal space
The word 'liminal' refers to the Latin world *limens*, meaning threshold or boundary. Liminal space 'refers to spaces and places that are betwixt and between, spaces that are familiar, and spaces that are unknown, controversial or novel' ([Turner, 1969](#)).

Male gaze
Refers to the concept that men are perceived as the primary viewers of media. Therefore, media professionals gear the narratives and images in the media toward their tastes, attitudes, and opinions ([Mulvey, 1975](#)).

Membership categorisation analysis (MCA)
A sociological method that studies how people 'achieve, use, and orient membership categories in the process of performing some social action' ([Fitzgerald and Au-Yeung, 2019](#)).

Sexual contract
'The original pact is a sexual as well as social contract: it is sexual in the sense of patriarchal – that is, the contract establishes men's political right over women – and also sexual in the sense of establishing orderly access by men to women's bodies' ([Pateman, 1988](#)).

Subject-position
A subject position is one's individual worldview, dependent on factors like gender, class, nationality, race/ethnicity and sexuality, to name a few; 'a person inevitably sees the world from the vantage point of that position and in terms of the particular images, metaphors, storylines and concepts which are made relevant within the particular discursive practice in which they are positioned' ([Davies and Harré, 1990](#)).

Symbolic violence
Refers to the imposition of ideologies that legitimise and naturalise the subordination of certain groups or identities (Bourdieu, 2001). It also refers to the representation of physical violence in any representational medium to assert dominance, order and control ([Gerbner and Gross, 1976](#)).

Introduction

In September 1995, the Platform for Action developed at the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, China, affirmed the centrality of the media in advancing gender equality. After diagnosing a rapidly emerging global technological and communications sphere, the writers of the Beijing platform proposed two strategic objectives. First, increase women's participation in and access to expression and decision-making in and through media. Second, promote a balanced and non-stereotypical portrayal of women in the media.

Now, more than 25 years later, scholars report that women and girls are still both under-represented in the media and portrayed by the media in stereotypical ways. In 2015, for example, women accounted for only 24% of the 'persons heard, read about or seen in newspaper, television and radio news' worldwide – a percentage that had not increased since 2010, according to the 2015 Global Media Monitoring Project.

In commercial media, male characters outnumber their female counterparts: 60% of advertisements feature men, while only 40% feature women; male characters are twice as likely as women to be shown working and as leaders, according to a study of advertisements in the United States (US) by the Geena Davis Institute (2020). As a result, broadcast media reproduce pre-existing, traditional gender norms (e.g.: Middleton et al., 2020; Organista and Mazur, 2020; Zaslow, 2018; Rudloff, 2020; Barker, 2019; Salamandra, 2012).

Two traditional theories from media and communications studies – cultivation theory and social cognitive theory – point to the influence of the media on belief systems and attitudes. The most cited, cultivation theory, as generated by Gerbner and Gross (1976), suggests that repeated media exposure leads viewers to foster an altered sense of reality, adopt analogous beliefs, and, therefore, thus exhibit analogous behaviours. One assumption of this theory is that television has coherent and homogenous messaging across different types of genres and content and that, as a result, the type of television consumed has a negligible, or at least, neutral impact on norms. What matters most is the *amount* of television consumed.

The second most cited theory is social cognitive theory, developed by Bandura (1986). This argues that consumers of television and media learn from these sources just as they would learn from real-world models of behaviour. This theory differs from cultivation theory in that it does not assume coherent and homogenous messaging across mediums and suggests that particular types of messages (and by extension, types of content and genres of media) can have an individual impact on social and gender norms.

Both theories point to the central role of the media in shaping individual and collective attitudes and beliefs on gender. Cultivation theory, however, implies that the media (as an aggregate or a system) is more likely to reinforce the status quo, while social cognitive theory posits that the media can be used as a tool to shape new norms.

An additional theory challenges the framing of the consumers of broadcast media as a passive audience and instead frames them as a 'public', or a cohesive group that not only receives information from the media but also takes an active role in shaping it, as explained by Silverstone (2002). He states:

> 'Mediation is dialectical because while it is perfectly possible to privilege those mass media as defining and perhaps even determining social meanings, such privileging would miss the continuous and often creative engagement that listeners and viewers have with the products

of mass communication. And it is uneven, precisely because the power to work with, or against, the dominant or deeply entrenched meanings that the media provide is unevenly distributed across and within societies…. It is also increasingly pervasive, as social actors become progressively dependent on the supply of public meanings and accounts of the world in attempting to make sense of their own.' (Silverstone, 2002, 762).

Put another way, consumers, viewers, individuals do not come to consume media as blank slates; they already have their own ideologies, beliefs and attitudes, and these have a direct influence on how they engage with media. The messages communicated by broadcast media are, therefore, *negotiated* between the programme and the individual. These messages will be perceived differently by every individual, depending on their subject-position: a worldview that is often influenced by gender, class, nationality, race/ethnicity and sexuality, among other factors. Community radio broadcasters, for example, come from the very community that is their audience; this generates a dynamic that differs to cultivation and social cognitive theory in terms of the relationship between broadcaster and audience: an individual may be more receptive to norm change if the push for change comes from within the community than if it comes from a multinational conglomerate. In sum, the impact of norm change via broadcast media is determined by two factors: the content of the media and by the context of the audience (Silverstone 2002).

This means that broadcast media (television and radio) has the potential to generate new norms. And there is evidence that it is doing just that. First, broadcast media can shape new norms through access to information, such as information about jobs or family planning and contraceptives. As well as being a fundamental human right[1], access to information can give individuals new skills or knowledge, enabling them to make empowered and informed choices. More importantly, it can offer individuals a new community in which they can participate, facilitating their entry into public life. This combination of information and aspiration can encourage individuals to reflect on their perception of their own lived reality, as well as their own attitudes and behaviour, which are shaped by their social communities – whether those communities are physical and local or channelled via broadcast media (Dahal, 2013).

Second, broadcast media can shape audience perceptions of what is normal. By showing people acting outside existing norms – in both progressive and regressive ways – entertainment, news and factual content and advertising materials can help to mould accepted attitudes and, by extension, expected behaviour around gender. Entertainment and advertising materials, for example, can expand the limits of existing norms and set new narratives of acceptable gendered behaviour and roles. News and factual content, however, can go further to both expand the perceptions of what is possible and accepted in terms of gendered behaviours and roles and help to drive agendas about who has the authority and trust to speak in general and on specific issues, and on which stories. This matters for gendered differences in who is represented and on what issues, as representation can either cement or challenge norms around the authority and leadership of women (and other groups), and the importance of their stories and experiences.

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[1] Under the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 19 (www.un.org/en/about-us/universal-declaration-of-human-rights).

About this annotated bibliography

This annotated bibliography brings together literature on broadcast media and gender norms. It outlines key studies that address:

- the way in which women and girls are represented in all their diversity on broadcast media
- the factors that either contribute to or hinder the role of broadcast media in driving gender norm change
- evidence of gender norms that have changed as a result of broadcast media and the way in which broadcast media help to shape gender norms.

Guided by these research questions, this bibliography describes and compares the trends between television and radio and across various media genres: advertising, entertainment programming, and news and factual content . It pulls out key themes and flags gaps in the literature. It also includes studies on education entertainment ('edutainment' or EE). EE has been described by Singhal and Rogers (2004) as 'the process of purposely designing and implementing a media message to both entertain and educate, in order to increase audience members' knowledge about an issue, create favourable attitudes, shift social norms, and change the overt behaviour of individuals and communities'. It accounts for a significant portion of the broadcast media in low- and middle-income countries that have been evaluated directly in terms of impact on norm change (Singhal and Rogers 2004, 5). Through its in-depth focus on these different types of media content, this annotated bibliography builds on and extends earlier work by ODI on communications and gender norm change (Marcus and Page, 2014).

Methods and approach

This study focused primarily on open-access academic and grey literature written since 2000. Literature was gathered through a rapid search of materials in English, carried out via social science databases like ProQuest Social Science Premium, Web of Science, and Google Scholar from February to May 2021. Search taxonomies aimed to identify key terms that would garner literature using norms-framing and proxies for norms within communication and media studies. Because communication and media studies do not frame gender norm change in this precise framework, this study also searched for material framed in terms of gender representation, stereotyping, roles, and frames/frameworks. Studies were then prioritised on the basis of their relevance to key themes (broadcast media, gender norms, representation), mediums of study (television, radio), geographic scope (global or comparative), and popularity/influence.

Literature was selected purposely for review to address various facets of gender norms (i.e., gender-based violence (GBV), objectification, body image, political or career ambition, and fertility or family planning aspirations, to name a few) that are tested or gathered outside the context of the controlled or laboratory setting. In addition, literature was selected if it addressed other key axes of analysis, namely race, age, geography, and sexual orientation, to ensure a more comprehensive and intersectional review. Other documents, such as reports and policy papers, were identified by searching relevant websites and were also prioritised on the basis of their relevance and geographic scope.

Main emphases in the literature

Studies on broadcast media originated in high-income countries in the 1980s, and the region continues to dominate the focus for scholars and investigators. This study includes the most recent and most influential studies of North America and Europe, but also focuses on Africa, Asia and Latin America. Within the this set of literature, the majority focused on – in descending order – South Asia, the Middle East, Latin America, Asia (East) and Africa.

As noted by Garretson (2015), most of the research on the relationship between media and social norms, and particularly those norms related to gender, 'fits into one of the following methodologies: (1) qualitative studies of a single or small amount of portrayals [of women], (2) qualitative studies of portrayals over time with editorial comments about changes in stereotypes, frames, or demographics (3) quantitative studies that code portrayals with respect to demographics and stereotypes within a single time frame such as a week or three-day period and (4) quantitative studies that compare repeated cross-sectional measures of media portrayals in two or more time periods often years or decades apart' (Garretson 2015, 621).

Overall, the search for the items that appear in this annotated bibliography confirmed Garretson's conclusions, revealing that while the link between broadcast media and gender norms had been established, it was done so largely through laboratory settings, where media were studied in aggregate (e.g., Ward, 2016). Most of the 138 studies in Ward's review were 'experimental designs that exposed participants to specific media content', usually related to the objectification and sexualisation of women in the media (Ward 2016, 564). The media content to which participants were exposed consisted primarily of still images, with very few (22 studies) focused on video media. The studies measured any short-term attitude change following exposure to the media content.

Studies that focus on the objectification of women in the media of high-income countries suggest that higher levels of exposure to dominant representations in the mainstream media are associated with higher levels of 'body dissatisfaction, greater self-objectification, greater support of sexist beliefs and of adversarial sexual beliefs, and greater tolerance of sexual violence toward women' because women are portrayed predominantly in sexualising motifs. This type of exposure also leads both men and women to hold a 'diminished view of women's competence, morality, and humanity' (Ward 2016, 560).

As noted by Ward, however, these studies tend to be extremely limited as they have no external validity and cannot make use of longitudinal data. Furthermore, participants in their samples tend to be Western, educated and industrialised, rich and democratic ('WEIRD'), as well as being white and young, as the samples are drawn from university campuses in the United States. None of the studies Ward reviewed paid significant attention to intersectionality (e.g., race/ethnicity or sexuality).

Such studies also overlook the ways the negotiation of media consumption: the dialectical relationship between media and consumers. While some literature suggests that women and girls incorporate potentially liberalising broadcast media into their everyday lives and negotiate their pre-existing identities in ways that may reinforce gender norms (e.g., Gustafsson, 2018; and Bouhout, 2020), other literature suggests that consumers may 'actively engage in the (de)legitimation of gender ideals' portrayed in the media (e.g., Zayer et al. 2019, 252). These perhaps conflicting conclusions highlight the importance of audience subject-position and media content in understanding the specificities of norm change.

Studies conducted predominantly in high-income countries diverged from those of low- and middle-income in their thematic focus and proxy variables for gender norms. While studies in high-income countries investigate proxies for norms such as self-esteem as related to media objectification or sexualisation, or participation in public life (including sports, politics and the labour force), studies on low- and middle-income countries focus on other proxies for norms that are related primarily to women's perceived role in the 'private sphere', or in the home, with GBV emerging as the most frequent proxy.

The most prominent set of literature focused on low- and middle-income countries attempts to establish a link between broadcast media consumption and positive gender norm change by using general data from the National Family and Health Surveys and National Health Surveys in South Asia to probe for a direct relationship between media exposure or usage and specific attitudes to gender norms (e.g., Westoff and Koffman, 2011; Bhushan and Singh, 2014; Jesmin and Amin, 2017; Dasgupta, 2019; and Chatterjee and Pillai, 2018).[2]

Dasgupta (2019) uses data from the most recent round of the National Family and Health Survey in 2015-2016 to reveal a positive effect of exposure to mass media on attitudes to women's empowerment. She theorises that this is because of the media's ability to disseminate information about public services and employment opportunities and portray alternative lifestyles. However, the link between media exposure and norm change is fairly weak throughout the studies. Jesmin and Amin (2017) argue that the link between mass media and norm change could be the result of the media's social context, rather than the norms portrayed in the media itself. For example, watching television is a social activity in many countries, and gender norm change may not be instigated by simply viewing new norms or taboo subjects on television but through the conversations that take place afterwards between families and friends. These studies are, therefore limited; they could not provide a qualitative assessment of the way in which broadcast media drove norm change to determine whether this was the result of the content of the media consumed or because of other factors.

There is significant evidence that media culture – like the economy – is increasingly globalised (University of Minnesota Libraries Publishing, 2010). This is, after all, an economic industry, and it seem natural that the spread of media follows similar patterns of trade and consumption. Western media (and American media in particular), dominate the broadcast waves: accounting for 33% of the total media and entertainment market worldwide – the largest market share (Nead, n.d.). Western media have a particular set of values, including a 'consumerist bent' that promotes the consumption of goods as a virtue or as a path to economic ascendency.

Some scholars are concerned that the globalisation of media will 'contribute to a one-way transmission of ideas and values that result in the displacement of indigenous cultures' (Santos, 2001). Lim and Furnham (2016) for example, compared television adverts between the United Kingdom (UK) and Malaysia and found similar gender stereotypes despite the cultural gap between the two countries, suggesting the universality of gender roles, stereotypes and norms. This reflects evidence that gender stereotypes are becoming increasingly homogenised and deployed as shortcuts by advertisers and broadcasters to access a globalised body of knowledge and behavioural expectations (other examples include Middleton et al., 2020; and Organista and

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[2] The National Family and Health Surveys and National Health Surveys are 'large-scale, multi-round survey conducted in a representative sample of households. […]The surveys provide data on fertility, infant and child mortality, the practice of family planning, maternal and child health, reproductive health, nutrition, anemia, utilization and quality of health and family planning services' (http://rchiips.org/nfhs/).

Mazur, 2014). Even for public broadcasters, whose mission is to inform, educate and entertain the public in an unbiased manner, Knoll et al. (2011) found that highly stereotyped images of women were used as shorthand for culturally understood messages and narratives.

Despite processes of globalisation and the hegemony of media from high-income countries, the content of media in low- and middle-income countries retains a national dimension even as media content from high-income countries is introduced. Studies on advertising are particularly revealing for a comparative analysis: Matthes et al. (2016) have studied gender-role portrayals in Austria, Brazil, China, France, Germany, Japan, Netherlands, Romania, Slovakia, South Korea, Spain, the UK, and the US), finding significant differences in the various counter-stereotypical portrayals in advertisements. They find that advertisements from the UK and the US were more likely to portray a counter-stereotype in their adverts than those from the other countries studied. That being said, there was *no relationship* between a country's level of gender equality and the portrayal of stereotypical gender roles.

Regional studies on entertainment drama series and radio programmes highlight the culturally-specific context in which gender norms – both progressive and otherwise – are articulated. For example, one study on Spanish-language dramas and dramas from Latin America, *telenovelas,* revealed equal representation of gender on-screen, which has not yet been achieved in other broadcast genres or in other regions. The same study found that the content of such gendered representation, even though numerically equal, was deeply embedded in historical and cultural norms that differed from those depicted on English-language television (Rivadeneyra, 2011). In this sense, regional variation must be considered on its own terms, rather than in comparison to a pre-determined standard bearer or marker.

Overall, the literature pointed to an increase in representations of gender in all its diversity, while the pace of progress has been slow. While there is significant evidence of the portrayal of gender stereotyping and traditional gender roles in broadcast media across advertising, entertainment, and news and factual content, there are also notable exceptions.

Three main trends emerge from recent literature that probes specific media content and genres: the rise of 'femvertising'; the increased role of commercial television programmes; and the impact of community radio.

'Femvertising', or advertising that employs 'pro-female' talent, messages and motifs, has emerged as a strategy deployed in the advertising industry to combat antiquated and harmful gender norms. Varghese and Kumar (2020), for example, tested the effect of femvertising on adolescent self-esteem in India. They found that femvertising does indeed help to improve the self-esteem of all adolescents – male or female –by 'broadening the outlook of adolescents towards what a man or woman could do' (Varghese and Kumar 2020, 5). While both femvertising and studies of the practice are fairly new, it has the potential to induce positive reactions to advertisements and identification with the gender roles portrayed. To date, however, formal studies of 'femvertising' have, with the exception of Varghese and Kumar (2020), been limited to understanding consumer reaction to advertisements and suggesting best practices for media professionals.

Similarly, in the entertainment industry, commercial television programmes – particularly soap operas or *telenovelas* – have emerged as a key space for catalysing gender-norm change. The most comprehensive study on this trend is La Ferrara et al. (2012), which studies the link between *novelas* in Brazil and fertility rates, demonstrating how the genre itself contributes to new attitudes toward gender and family. Similarly, Coombe

and Davis (2013) and Swigger (2017) demonstrate the liberalising effect of commercial entertainment media on attitudes towards working women, as well as abortion and contraception, in the United States. Yalkin and Veer (2018) reinforce these findings by studying the socialising aspects of broadcast media consumption and proposing that soap operas in Turkey generate a 'liminal' space for the discussion of taboo subjects, which allows viewers to challenge traditional gender and religious norms. In all, this study, which used an interdisciplinary methodology (economics, sociology, etc.) demonstrates not only the linkage between broadcast media and change, but the ways in which audiences dialogue with broadcast media broadcast media is dialogued with and embed it and its content into the fabric of everyday life.

While commercial television dominated the literature reviewed, scholars who did focus on radio, they looked primarily at community radio in different contexts across low- and middle-income countries and other forms of local and regional initiatives.

Dahal (2013), for example, who studied an all-women community radio in Nepal, finds that such initiatives bring women into an alternative public sphere, or 'counter-public'. Their active participation enhances their knowledge, abilities, capacities and skills and, ultimately, empowers them to make informed decisions. Dahal (2013) looks at the impact of community radio on norms linked to GBV and finds that women who listened to and called in to the radio were more likely to speak out against GBV and take actions to deal with their own personal situations. Dahal drew on case studies of women who testified that they spoke out after hearing empowering legal information on the programmes, which indicates a causal relationship between listening to community radio and norm change. Similar studies include: Rawshon and Syed, 2021; and Fombad and Veli, 2019.

Bouhout (2020) finds that radio phone-in programmes in Morocco reinforced pre-existing gender norms. When callers rang into the programme, they did so with their own cultural expectations, which were deployed to present and negotiate the personal situations on which they wanted advice in specific ways. Callers would, for example, deploy the terms 'mother' and 'father' – which have culturally specific meanings – to signal specific expectations in terms of their personal dilemmas: communicating their traditional conception of gender norms by stressing their identities as gendered parental figures. Radio hosts would rarely challenge this, and would often reinforce gendered expectations (for a similar study that analyses the use of humour in Malaysia, see Yoong, 2016).

The literature on radio programming points to the essential role of mediators: the host, the scale or the design of the radio station (i.e. community radio versus larger media houses). For example, the design of many radio programmes was participatory, meaning that individual members of the audience were active agents instead of passive listeners; the host could facilitate or inhibit norm change; and community-led radio could lead to greater acceptance of norms, given that norm change comes from within. The more varied format and design of the radio programmes studied revealed the way in which mediators shape the degree of acceptance for new norms.

Gaps in the literature and suggestions for future research

Most of the studies focus on the general link between consumption of (any) form of media and its correlation with changes in gender norms or behaviour. A smaller, but significant, number of studies centre on the content of broadcast media, its reception and the way in which the production, design and context of broadcast programmes relate to gender-norm change. A few key studies that do speak to these are: Gustafsson (2018); Wang (2017); Roces (2012); Zayer et al. (2019); Alidou (2013); Matar (2007); and Salamandra (2012) – all reviewed in the final section of this annotated bibliography.

Aspects like intersectionality, men and masculinities, and differences between media genres are addressed in literature on high-income countries but not on low- and middle-income countries — this is not surprising, given the imbalance in academia between the two regions, which is reflected in this review (e.g. Medie and Kang, 2018). As for genre, most notably, Scharrer and Blackburn (2018) tested 420 emerging adults (i.e., older adolescents and young adults) of all genders in the United States to explore the association between amount of time spent watching television and views about masculine ideals. They included genre as a primary lens and found a significant association between viewing sitcoms, police and detective programmes, sports, and reality television and scores on the Male Roles Norms Inventory–Revised scale, first developed by Levant et al. (1992) and updated by Levant and Richmond (2007). In this study, gender moderated the results, with men endorsing masculinity at higher rates than women.

In general, other studies explore genres singularly, and do not yield such conclusions. One study on sitcoms, Swigger (2017) looks specifically at political attitudes to gendered topics, such as abortion and contraception, finding a positive correlation between more conservative political attitudes and regressive gender norms portrayed in the sitcoms. In a study of dating game shows in China, Wang (2017) takes a longitudinal approach to track the changes in game-show format and societal norms surrounding relationships and marriage. Wang finds that game shows in the 21st century have been modified significantly to reflect modern attitudes toward marriage and dating, and that they spur conversation on once taboo subjects, such as LGBTQ+ relationships and class differences. Both Swigger (2017) and Wang (2017) incorporate analyses of the format of the genre itself (humour, participatory activities, etc.) that reveal how individual viewers and the collective audience both interpret and interact with media.

Most of the studies reviewed focus on women and girls as the primary agents of change. The role of men and LGBTQ+ individuals as agents of change is still an emerging field of study, especially in low- and middle-income countries. GLAAD and Proctor & Gamble (2019) have reported on the status of masculine and LGBTQ+ representation in the media but are exclusively focused on North America. Furthermore, most of the studies related to men and masculinities examined the reproduction of hegemonic masculinity and harmful gender norms in broadcast media, while a significant number scrutinised the patterns of sports broadcasting and GBV and the relationship between objectifying and sexualising media and attitudes that are supportive of GBV (e.g. Wright and Tokunaga, 2016; Brimicombe and Café, 2012; and Kirby et al., 2014). Fewer studies focus on the portrayal of counter-stereotypes in advertising and entertainment media, and none focus on the representation of counter-stereotypes in news and factual content, although there is some evidence of trends toward counter-stereotypes regarding men and masculinities in advertising, in particular (e.g. Jaggi and Manohar, 2019; Baxter et al., 2016).

Studies on LGBTQ+ identities in broadcast media have found positive trends in broadcast and cable media, but persistent and widespread under-representation. One study on pro-LGBTQ+ attitudes in Africa by

Winkler (2021), focused on the relationship between norm change and censorship – an important issue given the continued challenges to LBGTQ+ acceptance worldwide. This study found that while broadcast media were highly censored by governments across the African continent, 'counter-publics' emerged in print and digital media for the expression of LGBTQ+ identities and dissemination of information about LGBTQ+ issues. Winkler suggests that these counter-publics are encouraging for LGBTQ+ advocates and activists, as they demonstrate the resilience of norm and attitude change despite formal governmental or institutional resistance.

Few studies address genders other than women and girls as agents of change or explore mediums other than mainstream commercial entertainment and advertising. There is a pressing need for research that has a more nuanced understanding of gender, that uses an intersectional lens and that reflects the way in which individuals use broadcast media in their daily lives. Changing norms related to masculinity, sexuality, and so forth requires the holistic study of gender-norm change; gender does not only affect women and girls but is imbued throughout all aspects of society and in all individuals.

It is clear that more research is needed on gender-norm change in four specific types of media: news and factual, radio (beyond 'edutainment'), religious programming, and digital and streaming services. Research on the news and factual sector focuses primarily on the quantity of representation and on print media. DellaVigna and La Ferrera (2015) surmise that this is because news and factual content is normally understood as 'political' rather than 'social'. While news and factual content plays a key role in the dissemination and reinforcement of various social norms related to health, education, family and more, this content is analysed primarily for its political bias, messages and/or implications.

In 2006, a thesis by Fatima Mernissi, a Moroccan sociologist, 'digital Scheherazades', described the ways in which the advent of female reporters and presenters on *Al Jazeera* across the Middle East and North Africa had spurred new gender norms around the acceptability of women in the workforce and in public spaces (Mernissi, 2006). Since then, little research has followed up on such developments in contexts across Africa, the Middle East & North Africa, Asia, and Latin America. More research on the ways in which audiences react to broadcast news professionals, like reporters and announcers, and how they are portrayed on television, would enhance understanding of how new norms present themselves and how widely they are received.

Radio is also under-researched, even though it is the predominant form of broadcast media in parts of low- and middle-income countries because of its 'flexibility, low cost, and oral nature' (Diabah, 2019, 262). A 2013 report from UNESCO, for example, suggests that radio is widespread in Africa, Latin America, and Southeast Asia and remains the most accessible and used medium (UNESCO, 2013). Audiences in these regions listen on their mobile phones: 33% of mobile phone users said they listen to radio on their phone every week, while 25% listen every day (spread evenly across urban and rural areas). The UNESCO study also reported the dramatic and rapid expansion of community radio, in particular, across Africa: 'in 11 countries surveyed across Africa, local commercial radio grew by an average of 360 percent between 2000 and 2006, whereas community radio grew by a striking 1,386 percent, on average, over the same period' (UNESCO, 2013). In Latin America, there were around 10,000 community radio stations at that time, and a similar number waiting for their licenses.

In Southeast Asia, Thailand has 5,000 community radio stations, and while Indonesia had only with a few hundred, UNESCO argues it had a burgeoning radio culture. Radio was also seen as the most reliable channel for the distribution of information in the Philippines, reaching 85% of households in contrast to television, which reaches under 60%.[3]

While literature like Bouhout (2020), Dahal (2013), and Akhter and Syed (2021) is starting to look at the impact of radio beyond 'edutainment', there is a need to diversify the geographic spread of studies and explore the rapid spread of community radio, as this would better reflect actual media usage and potential norm change across different socioeconomic and cultural contexts outside the context of development. In particular, a stronger focus on radio would shed light on its impact in sub-Saharan Africa – an understudied region where the use of radio is particularly widespread.

Another untapped avenue of research concerns religion, media and gender norms. Only one study in this bibliography focused on religious media: Alidou's 2013 examination of a women's radio programme on an Islamic-oriented radio channel in Mombasa, Kenya. Alidou finds that women use the programme to discuss taboo subjects like sexual assault and have created 'a space for an alternative women's understanding of Islam and Islamic discourses regarding gender identity' to take hold (Alidou, 2013: 146). The radio programme brings women's voices to the fore and, in doing so, challenges mainstream nationalist Kenyan discourses around gender and the trans-national Islamic discourses that had left women 'doubly oppressed'. As this study indicates, secular, Western discourses about feminism and gender norms are not the only ones deployed by women across low- and middle-income countries. Religious broadcasting is also highly prevalent beyond the specific context of women. This suggests that it is important to identify and study the diversity of discourses, such as religious programming, that are mobilised in low- and middle-income countries to achieve gender norm change.

Finally, the recent rise in digital and streaming content adds to the complexity of questions about media programming. The content of digital media and streaming services is still curated, but individuals self-select the content they watch to a greater degree. In addition, traditional broadcasters are using digital platforms and social media in new ways to push their content. While digital and broadcast media are different spheres, they are intersecting in more ways that change the way in which individual people and wider audiences engage with them. Individuals may, for example, respond to broadcast content online, as in the case of advertisements by Gillette, as studied by Bogen et al., 2021).

That said, this bibliography found no studies on digital and streaming content. Future research should consider the new ways in which individuals access media content, staying up-to-date with media trends, patterns and practices. Similarly, the factors that mediate the relationship between broadcast media and norm change in another area for future research, particularly in contexts across Africa, Asia, Latin America, and the Middle East and North Africa.

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[3] For a more detailed analysis of regional radio trends see: https://www.britannica.com/topic/radio/Radios-digital-future.

Gender representation

This section will explore the representation of gender in all its diversity in broadcast media. It will examine representation in advertising, entertainment and news and factual before looking at aspects of gender representation specifically in radio. In terms of the scope and focus on the scholarship: the majority of the studies identified focused on private broadcasting (8); television (9); and either multi-country (4) or low- and middle-income countries (5).

Key takeaways

- A study of 13 countries found that advertisements feature a higher percentage of men than of women worldwide: 61.6% compared to 38.4%.
- There is suggestive evidence that gender stereotyping remains prevalent in advertising, with men twice as likely to be shown working or in an occupation than women.
- Data from the Global Media Monitoring Project show:
    - Men are more likely to be shown in positions of power and authority in the news than women.
    - The overall presence of women in the news media has not increased since 2015, despite a six-percentage point increase from 2000 to 2010
    - News stories reported by female journalists are more likely to focus on women than stories by their male colleagues (14% compared to 9%)
    - Women's expert voices are often unheard in high-profile news genres such as politics and the economy, while they are more equitably represented in the areas of science and health.
- There is suggestive evidence from individual studies that television channels aimed at male audiences were more likely to feature male characters and portray traditional gender stereotypes than channels targeting women; entertainment programmes with female writers were far less gender stereotypical; and depictions of women activists and protestors vary widely across the globe

Advertising

1. **Grau, S. L. and Zotos, Y. C. (2016) 'Gender Stereotypes in Advertising: A Review of Current Research'** *International Journal of Advertising* **35, no. 5 (2016): 761–770.**

Key topics: review study; multi-country; television; private broadcaster; gender representation; gender stereotypes

This review explores the research on gender stereotypes in television advertising from 2010 to 2016, highlights literature gaps, and provides recommendations for future studies.

First, the review delves into the 'mirror versus mould' debate. In the 'mirror' theory, advertising only reflects dominant norms in society, while the 'mould' view is that advertising reflects a society that actively moulds those norms. The study then lays out its own premise: it accepts advertising as 'a system of visual

representation, which creates meaning within the framework of culture', leaning towards the 'mould' theory (p. 763).

Most of the studies in this review by Grau and Zotos showed that gender stereotyping was still prevalent worldwide. In general, women were presented in traditional roles (family- oriented, objectified, etc.) – but data within the studies does indicate a slow shift toward positive role portrayal. More progress has been seen in the portrayal of men, who are beginning to be depicted in counter-stereotypical roles, such as interacting with children.

Four important studies, in particular, emerged in the review:

> Eisend (2010) explored the degree of gender stereotyping in advertising longitudinally through a quantitative review of 64 studies (meta-analysis). Stereotyping of women, in particular, was related to their occupational status (when they were portrayed working, they were shown doing jobs that tend to be coded as feminine, like teaching or nursing) despite changes in their education and socioeconomic status in recent years. However, Eisend also found that the extent of stereotypes had decreased.

> Eisend, Plagemann, and Sollwedel (2014) focused on consumers' perceptions of stereotyped content. Examining the role of humour in advertising they found that consumers perceived gender-role portrayals as less serious when they were used in a humorous context. Their study found that gender stereotyping of men was used more often used in a humorous context, while that of women occurred more often in a non-humorous context.

> Fowler and Thomas (2015) analysed television advertisements during primetime (5 pm to 8 pm) from 2003 to 2008 and demonstrated few changes in the portrayal of men's roles within this timeframe. The trends were positive, however, with fewer men in the lead (which may suggest that adverts are changing to reflect society's changing gender norms) and an increased portrayal of men as fathers.

> Baxter et al. (2016) studied consumer reactions to counter-stereotypical portrayals of men (e.g., as caregivers) and found that consumer reactions depending on their previously held gender attitudes. The study aimed to produce recommendations for advertising professionals, and concluded that counter-stereotypes make adverts more memorable – an aspect that was seen as important for marketing purposes.

Recommendations for the future research emerging from the review include a greater focus on online and new media, 'femvertising' and LGBTQ+ roles, as the advertising landscape has expanded beyond traditional print and television.

2. [**Matthes, J., Prieler, M., Adam, K. (2016) 'Gender-Role Portrayals in Television Advertising Across the Globe' Sex Roles 75, (2016): 314–327**](#)

Key topics: multi-country; Austria; Brazil; China; France; Germany; Japan; Netherlands; Romania; Slovakia; South Korea; Spain; UK; US; television; private broadcaster; gender roles

This study compares gender-role portrayal and stereotypes in television advertising, using content from 13 countries (Austria, Brazil, China, France, Germany, Japan, Netherlands, Romania, Slovakia, South Korea, Spain, UK and US). In total, it covers 1,755 advertisements collected in May 2014. Referencing previous literature on gender roles portrayal in advertising, the study calls attention to a key gap in the literature: whether differences in gender-role portrayal across different countries can be attributed to cultural differences, or to other factors like time, advertising intention, etc.

Countries were selected purposefully to include a wide variety: countries with a high score on Hofstede's masculinity index[4] (Austria, Japan, Slovakia); those with a low score on that index (Netherlands); countries with a high score on GLOBE's gender egalitarianism index (France, Netherlands, UK); countries with a low score on GLOBE's gender egalitarianism index (South Korea); and countries that had often been sampled in previous studies (UK and US). Selection was also guided by practicality and accessibility.

The advertisements selected were drawn from the primetime slots of the *private* broadcast channels with the largest shares of viewers in their respective countries (Austria and China are exceptions, where the public channels were included in the study). The factors considered in measuring the portrayal of gender roles and stereotypes were the gender of the primary character and voiceover, their age, associated product categories, the setting (home or at work) and the occupation of the primary character.

As for parity in representation, 50.7% of primary characters were women, signalling that there was no substantial male predominance. In fact, in every country except Brazil and Korea, the share of female characters was higher than that of male characters. On average, women were depicted as being younger than men in Austria, Germany, France, Spain, Slovakia, Japan and the United States. Voiceovers featured men more often than women (61.8% compared to 32%).

Regarding the content of such representation, there was an association in every country except Japan between female primary characters and toiletries, beauty products, personal care and cleaning products – stereotypically feminine categories. In Brazil, China, Germany, the Netherlands, Romania, South Korea and Spain, there was also a strong association between female characters and the home or domestic setting.

In contrast, there was a strong association between male primary characters and technology and cars in Brazil, Germany, the Netherlands, Spain and the UK – categories normally coded as being more masculine. In addition, male primary characters were more likely to be depicted working or in a work-related setting than female primary characters in Austria, France, Japan, the Netherlands, Slovakia and the UK. Even though

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[4] Hofstede's developed a theory on how workplace values and environments are influenced by national culture. In the theory, there are six dimensions to national culture, one of which is 'masculinity vs. femininity'. According to Hofstede, 'this dimension represents a preference in society for achievement, heroism, assertiveness, and material rewards for success. Society at large is more competitive. Its opposite, Femininity, stands for a preference for cooperation, modesty, caring for the weak and quality of life. Society at large is more consensus-oriented'. (https://hi.hofstede-insights.com/national-culture).

there were more female characters than male characters, the content of representation reflected traditional gender norms, with women limited to the domestic setting and domestic duties while men are shown in the public sphere and at work.

Although the advertisements in every country portrayed traditional gender roles across all categories, there was some variation. Some countries, such as the UK and the US, showed non-traditional gender roles. These differences, however, cannot be attributed to the country's greater level of gender equality, as explained below.

The second part of the study measures these findings against multiple gender indices: Hofstede's Masculinity Index, GLOBE's Gender Egalitarianism Index, the Gender-related Development Index, the Gender Inequality Index and the Global Gender Gap Index – to investigate whether or not adherence to stereotypes is related to a country's level of gender equality. A relationship between the two factors was indicated, suggesting that the role of culture in shaping gender-role portrayals in television advertising is smaller than presumed.

The study ends with a discussion of best practices. It calls on advertisers to raise their awareness on gender stereotypes in advertising and to develop recommendations on the presentation of gender. The authors suggest that 'advertising educators should students about gender role depictions in commercials, how they are observed using scientific methods, and what effects they may have on women and men' (p. 325).

For an additional study that compares advertisements on public and private channels see:
Knoll, S., Eisend, M., Steinhagen, J. (2011) 'Gender Roles in Advertising: Measuring and Comparing Gender Stereotyping on Public and Private TV Channels in Germany' *International Journal of Advertising* 30, no. 5 (January 2011): 867–888.

Entertainment

3. **Daalmans, S., Kleemans, M., Sadza, A. (2017) 'Gender Representation on Gender-Targeted Television Channels: A Comparison of Female- and Male-Targeted TV Channels in the Netherlands' Sex Roles 77, no. 5–6 (September 2017): 366–378.**

Key topics: Europe; The Netherlands; television; private broadcaster; gender representation; gender roles

This study addresses the claim that genres targeted toward women and girls (soap operas and adolescent dramas) showcase a more equal distribution of men and women and are less stereotypical in their portrayal of gender roles. It does so by conducting a content-analysis of two different television channels in the Netherlands.

The practice of 'narrowcasting', or organising the audience into specific categories, has become standard in the media industry since the 1980s, particularly in terms of narrowcasting around gender. This study analyses whether narrowcasting around gender, or 'gender-targeted channels', and genre influence the portrayal of gender on-screen. It draws on a total of 1,091 characters in 115 television programmes aired during

primetime on four gender- specific television channels in the Netherlands in 2014: RTL7 (64% male viewership) and Veronica (55.1%) as men's channels, and RTL8 (64.2% female viewership) and Net5 (63.5%) as women's channels. These channels were chosen on the basis of their broadcasting of explicit marketing statements and slogans during commercials. All of the channels studied are commercial broadcasters because Dutch legislation states that public channels cannot have target-audiences, rendering them irrelevant for the study.

Focusing on the quantity and quality of representation, this study finds that the channels targeting men portrayed a more traditional image of gender than that portrayed by the women's channels. On men's channels, for example, over half of all women (56.8%) were portrayed as young adults – a far higher proportion than seen on women's channels (42.1%), reflecting gendered ageism. This finding held regardless of the genre of the programme or the programme's country of origin.

Conversely, there was a relatively more equitable representation on the women's channels, where women comprised 48.6% of the total case in contrast to the 22% seen on men's channels. Furthermore, women and men were more often presented in counter-stereotypical terms: men were more likely to be seen performing household or caregiving tasks more (7.9%) than on the men's channels (1.5%); a larger percentage of women were portrayed as having an occupation (57.1%) compared to men's channels (43.2%); women were far more often explicitly childless on women's channels (5.4%) than on men's channels (0.8%); and men were more often represented as fathers (15.4%) than on men's channels (5.4%).

Daalmans et al. debunk the hypothesis that the relatively more equal representation of women could be because audiences prefer to watch their own genders. If that were true, women would be over-represented on women's channels. Instead, the authors conclude that it is men's channels that under-represent women and portray them in negative terms.

The fact that women's channels were more likely than men's channels to represent men as performing household and caregiving tasks and being parents could be attributed to two phenomena: (1) that the focus on the home and family on women's channels is a 'post-feminist resurgence of the focus on gender differences and stereotypical feminine values on women's channels', or (2) because 'the private domain [is] itself increasingly gaining respect on these channels'. Either way, the negative portrayals and lack of presence of women on men's channels are potential roadblocks to gender equality (p. 374).

4. **Kharroub, T. and Weaver, A. J. (2014) 'Portrayals of Women in Transnational Arab Television Drama Series' Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media 58, no. 2 (April 2014): 179–195.**

Key topics: Middle East and North Africa; television; public broadcaster; gender representation; gender roles; gender stereotypes

Addressing the dearth of comprehensive studies of entertainment media in Arab countries, this study looks at the portrayal of gender roles in 15 Arabic and 3 Turkish drama serials on transnational Arab television. It deploys two concepts: 'recognition' and 'respect',

In total, it looks at 743 characters from the most popular channels that show Arabic language drama serials (MBC1, MBC4, LBC, Future, Dubai TV, Abu Dhabi 1, and Syria TV). The programmes sampled were shown during the second week of July 2011. Historical drama series were excluded from the sample as they had the potential to skew results. In all, the percentage of male characters was greater than that for female characters (56.8% to 43.2% respectively).

The study found that women were under-represented, less likely to have recognisable jobs, and more likely than men to be portrayed in stereotypical occupations, activities and settings. Only 26.2% of female characters had recognisable jobs compared to 49.3% of male characters. Of the female characters who had recognisable jobs, 42.7% of them had jobs that were stereotypically gendered as feminine compared to 2.8% of male characters; 64.1% of married female characters were shown as homemakers, compared to 6.3% of single female characters; 43.6% of male characters were shown working at their jobs compared to 21.5% of female characters; 37.1% of female characters were shown only in a home setting compared to 14.7% of male characters; and women were more likely to be shown doing housekeeping tasks than men (13.4% to 1.4%).

The study looks not only at Arab entertainment media as an aggregate, but also breaks down the intra-regional differences that emerge. Differences were found among the Arab countries that produced the content in terms of the portrayals of women; countries the authors categorised as more conservative regarding gender had more stereotyped portrayals than those the authors deemed as having liberal attitudes towards gender, while Turkish programmes, which are popular across Arab countries, had similar gender portrayals to those shown in Arabic programmes produced in the more liberal states. For example, programmes from Syria (48.0%), Lebanon (48.5%) and Kuwait (49.4%) all had more female characters than the average, while programmes from Saudi Arabia (26.7%), Turkey (34.1%) and Egypt (40.3%) had a lower percentage of female characters than the average.

In terms of the recognition of women, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait had the highest percentages of female characters in stereotypical occupations (66.7% and 55.2%, respectively) and were more likely to show women as homemakers (50.0% and 47.1%, respectively) or in the domestic setting (50.0% and 51.7%, respectively). Only 16.7% of female characters in Saudi programmes, 10.3% of female characters in Kuwaiti programmes, and 17.3% in Egyptian programmes were shown working. By contrast, Turkey displayed a substantial percentage (15.2%) of female characters working in stereotypically 'male' jobs. These findings suggest that the gender ideologies of producing countries have an influence on content, as shown by the large market share and influence of Saudi Arabia on pan-Arab serials.

The results also revealed that programmes with female writers were significantly less gender stereotypical. In the 37% of the episodes that had female writers, there was one female co-producer, one female co-producer, one female co-director, 152 female characters (48.3%) and 163 (51.7%) male characters. In contrast, shows with male writers had 146 (37.0%) female characters and 249 (63.0%) male characters.

In terms of 'respect', shows with female writers showed 30.9% of female characters as homemakers (compared to 41.1% on shows with male writers); 27.6% of male characters only at home (compared to 6.8% on shows with male writers); and 34.2% of women performing work-related tasks (compared to 10.3% on shows with male writers). As a result, Kharroub and Weaver urge Arab media-production companies to employ more women.

These results lead them to conclude that 'portrayals of women in Arabic fictional narrative programs are not very different from portrayals of women in the media worldwide', despite common misconceptions about Arab and Muslim women. Nevertheless, these patterns are problematic (p. 191).

5. **Rivadeneyra, R., (2011) 'Gender and Race Portrayals on Spanish-Language Television' Sex Roles 65, no. 3–4 (August 2011): 208–222.**

Key topics: US; Latin America; television; private broadcaster; gender representation; gender stereotypes; gender roles

This study of non-English language media looks at the gender portrayal on Spanish-language television, specifically soap operas, or *telenovelas,* aired in Los Angeles. Noting how Spanish-language television is both popular and accessible in the US (with Univisión reaching 95% of the US Latino audience, and Telemundo reaching approximately 84%), the study aims to explore where the genre may hold more creditability and have more influence on gender norms among the US Latinx[5] population than English-language programming.

The study includes not only the wide audiences of *telenovelas* in Latin America but also the Spanish-speaking US population. It hypothesises that the gender portrayal will differ from English-language television as a result of the cultural context in which the *telenovelas* are created.

The study first gives an overview of the existing literature on gender stereotypes in the US, which is summarised in other parts of the report. Then, using an intersectional lens, it explains how stereotypes of racial minorities are 'based on the notion of having less status/power and being portrayed as sexual objects' (p. 210). On English-language programmes, for example, Latinx characters are more likely to be shown performing low-status occupations.

As for Spanish-language television, the cultural context of Latin America influences the portrayal of both gender and race. Specifically, it shapes portrayals around the way in which the gender ideals of *machismo* (the concept that men are encouraged to be dominant, strong, rational, virile and controlling) and *marianismo* (the concept that women are to be submissive, obedient, self-sacrificing and chaste) translate to media. The historical and cultural ideals of gender point to key differences in the gender and racial ideology of both the creators and audiences of *telenovelas.*

In total, the study analysed 19 episodes from 2002 to explore common gender and racial stereotypes that exist in the US and in Latin America for men and women (and for individuals with darker skin). It examined how these characters were portrayed in terms of sexual objectification, relational and nurturing roles, and status and power. Overall, there was relatively equal representation for men and women (51% and 49% respectively), but there was a high presence of stereotypes.

While there was no difference in relational and parental status between men and women, women were more likely to be stereotyped according to gender norms that associate them with the home and present them as

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[5] 'Latinx' is a gender-neutral term used to refer to people of Latin American cultural or ethnic identity in the US.

objects or as hypersexualised. For example, 22.9% of women were depicted in clothes that were 'somewhat sexy', and 4.8% were depicted in clothes that were considered 'very sexy', compared to 4.7% and 2.1% for men, respectively.

Male characters were more likely to place importance on money and power than female characters: 58.4% of men were depicted as employed compared to 36% of women. By contrast, 5.2% of women were depicted as homemakers, while no men were. Women were also more likely to be shown on screen with children than men, and were more likely to be shown as emotional.

In all, the study found that Spanish-language television did, at least, represent women on-screen in equal numbers to men. However, gender stereotypes regarding age, sexualisation and occupational status were still present.
In sum, there are significant differences between the portrayals of gender on Spanish-language television and the portrayals on English-language television. Rivadeneyra cites her earlier study, Rivadeneyra and Ward (2005), to support the claim that Latinx people who watch both English-language and Spanish-language programmes hold more traditional gender attitudes. However, this study does not account for the messaging of each individual program; watching both forms of programming may compound gendered messaging found in both genres of television. Therefore, the study calls for more research on how this media discourse impacts Latinx populations in the US.

News and factual

6. Macharia, S. (lead author) (2015) Global Media Monitoring Project 2015 Report. London: The World Association for Christian Communication.

Key topics: multi-country; global; print; television; radio; private broadcasters; public broadcasters; gender representation; gender portrayal

The fifth edition of the Global Media Monitoring Project (GMMP) analyses gender in the global news media since 1995, exploring changes over the previous two decades in 114 countries. The study looks at multiple factors of gender in the news, from the presence of women as subjects and the share of women reporters and presenters, to the frameworks used when reporting on gender and women.

This review focuses on the findings from Chapter 3A, which covers print, television and radio news, and Chapter 4, which discussed the quality of news content regarding gender stereotypes, the absence or presence of a focus on rights, the centrality of women in the stories and trends in highlighting gender equality or concerns around inequality.

People in the news

GMMP found an increase in the overall presence of women in the media from 2000 to 2010, rising by six percentage points over the decade. This trend stalled from 2010 to 2015, with women constituting 24% of the people heard, read about, or seen in the news in both years. In television women's presence has increased by three percentage points over the past 20 years, but remained static, at 24%, from 2010 to 2015. Women's

presence in radio news programmes increased 6 percentage points over 20 years, from 15% in 1995 to 21% in 2015 (with a slight decrease from 22% in 2010).

The study revealed regional differences, as well as differences by medium. In Latin America, women's overall presence in news media had increased by 13 percentage points in the previous 20 years, followed by a 9-percentage point increase in Europe and North America. The study found 7 percentage point increase in the Caribbean, 6-percentage point increases in Asia and in the Pacific, a 4-percentage point increase in the Middle East, and zero net change in Africa.

Women's presence also varied by news topic, with the narrowest gender gap seen in science and health stories, where women comprised 35% of the people in the news; however, the report notes that this topic is of 'lowest importance on the news agenda, occupying only 8% of the overall news space' (p. 8). The gap was widest in stories about politics and government, where women accounted for only 16% of the people in the stories – a gap that had also widened over the previous five years (3-percentage point decrease in the presence of women).

GMMP identifies six function types (the role in which people appear in the news): personal experience, popular opinion, eyewitness, subject, spokesperson and expert or commentator. The largest increase had been in the percentage of women interviewed to provide their personal experience, who accounted for 38% of the total in 2015, compared to 31% in 2005. Within these function types, men outnumbered women in every occupational category with the exception of sex work (50%), students (59%) and parents or 'no occupation given' (67%).

As subjects, spokespersons and experts in the news, both women and men are described as senior government officials and politicians. However, men in all function types follow this pattern, where women in the other function types are more likely to be portrayed as parents and homemakers, residents and villagers, and as students.

In whatever capacity they appear, therefore, men are more likely to be portrayed as people in positions of power. The journalistic gender lens in source selection is not only male centred, but it is also skewed to a certain kind of masculinity when selecting interviewees for all types of views. Males who provide opinions, or who share personal experiences and eyewitness testimony tend to be political power holders and government figures, and their authority is made clear in the reporting.

The gender lens is skewed to men when selecting interviewees in general, but in the one in four chance that a woman is selected, the tendency is to portray her as the embodiment of a typical femininity characterised by subordination and powerlessness, even in cases where the woman holds senior public office, as media monitoring studies on the portrayal of political women have demonstrated.

The study also examines age, victimhood and survivorhood, family status, direct quotes and photos. The results reveal that journalistic practices are 'informed by patriarchy and how patriarchy organizes the world, in particular, power relations between women and men. Journalistic ethics through a gender lens and attention to freedom of expression concerns could rupture these patterns and subvert the cultural (re)production of gender inequalities in material realities' (p. 40).

Reporters and presenters

In total, only 37% of the stories in newspapers, television and radio newscasts during the timeframe of the study were reported by women – a percentage that had not changed in the previous 10 years. Regionally, however, there was some variation. In Africa, for example, this increased seven percentage points, and in Asia, it decreased six percentage points.

There was also variation by medium. Female presenters outnumbered their male colleagues in television (accounting for 57% of the total), but the proportion of female radio presenters fell to 41%. There was also variation in the proportion of female presenters in television by region: Asia (58%), the Middle East (57%) and the Pacific regions (52%), while the percentages in other regions approached or were just below parity, with the exception of North America. Over the 15-year reporting period that began in 2000, the numbers held more or less steady for most regions with some fluctuations. Latin America stood out for its 15-percentage point reduction of the gender gap in 15 years, from 29% female presenters in 2000 to 44% in 2015.

Women as news reporters are most present on radio (41%), but their share had decreased over the previous 10 years by four percentage points in both television and radio. The proportion of women reporters in news stories fell below parity with the exception of stories on science and health, and stories on politics and crime are the areas least reported by women in most regions, with the exception of Asia and Latin America.

News stories reported by female journalists were more likely to focus on women than stories reported by their male colleagues (14% compared to 9%). There was also a notable gender difference in source selection: 29% of the news subjects in stories reported by female journalists were women, compared to 26% of subject in stories covered by male reporters in 2015. From the report, it is unclear to what degree female journalists had control over their assignments and sources. It may be that female journalists chose to cover issues that pertain to women and, therefore, made more use of women as sources, but it is just as likely that this statistic reflected the nature of the stories to which they had been assigned.

Quality of the news

The overall proportion of stories focusing on women had held relatively steady at 10% since 2000. In all, 14% of stories by female reporters focused on women, in contrast to 9% of stories by their male counterparts. In 2015, 9% of stories highlighted issues of gender inequality, more than double the percentage documented in 2005, and only 4% of stories challenged gender stereotypes. News in Africa had the highest overall proportion of stories highlighting gender equality concerns: between 1 and 2.5 of every 10 stories in each major topic raised equality issues. Almost 4 out of 10 of social/legal stories in the Caribbean region underlined gender equality concerns; as did 3 out of 10 social/legal stories in North America. In North America and the Middle East, stories by female reporters were between 2 and 2.5 times more likely to be related to gender equality than stories by men.

The report ends with general targets and recommendations for multiple agents of change (media regulatory agencies, media houses, civil society, media professional training institutions, funding agencies, and researchers) for the following five years with the ultimate goal to 'end news media sexism by 2020' (p. 98). Targets included: newsrooms that support gender equality (100% of national public media and 40% of private media in each country); an overall global presence of women in the news of 50%; a global average target of

30% for news that challenges gender stereotypes; a 30% target for news that highlights issues of gender equality and inequality; and a 30% target for news reporting that is anchored in the critical human rights perspective of women and other marginalised groups.

7. **[Kassova, L. (2020) The Missing Perspectives of Women in News. International Women's Media Foundation, November 2020.](#)**

Key topics: multi-country; India; Kenya; Nigeria; South Africa; UK; US; print; television; radio; public broadcasters; private broadcasters; gender representation; gender portrayal

This report, commissioned by Generation Equality Forum and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, explores the performance of gender equality in news media, based on a set of indicators and benchmarks for improvement. Although multi-country, the study does not focus on gender through an intersectional lens that factors in the impact of race/ethnicity, class, and so forth on gender, which the study itself acknowledges as a major limitation.

The four indicators are: gender diversity in the workplace and in leadership (organisational resources); women as sources of news expertise (newsgathering); news stories leading with women protagonists (news outputs); and coverage of gender equality issues (news outputs). The study focuses on six countries: India, Kenya, Nigeria, South Africa, the UK and the US. The content reviewed is interdisciplinary and is comprised of the analysis of 2,286 articles and 3 case studies; 11,913 publications and 56.9 million stories; 74 primary surveys; Google Trends and multi-country surveys; gender-related indices; and reports by key journalistic and international organisations.

The examined evidence reveals that women are under-represented in the news and that the situation is not improving. Interestingly, the study finds that increased awareness and support for gender equality among the public leads to *less* motivation on the part of decision-makers and opinion formers to achieve gender equality.

Women continue to be marginalised in governance and leadership roles in news organisations across the six countries studied; less than 1% of news stories covered gender equality issues; and women accounted for 14% and 30% of quoted experts or sources in the news across the studied countries. The study identifies patriarchal norms as the key problem, as these generate invisible barriers to adequate representation: 'These norms inhibit the impact of gender equality legislation in news organizations; enable the continuing dominance of men's perspectives in news-making; amplify these perspectives through men's news consumption; and limit women's presence in news stories as news protagonists and experts' (p. 25).

Overall, the study found that men still dominate in the news industry. South Africa leads in terms of gender parity in its newsrooms with women comprising 49% of journalists, followed by the UK (47%) and the US (42-45%). There has been some improvement in Kenya and India, but the numbers still stand at 42% and 28%, respectively. In Nigeria the percentage fell from 38% in 2011 to 24% in 2015.

The study asks, 'Does improved gender diversity in the newsroom lead to women being more visible in the news?' and finds that existing academic evidence is inconclusive (p. 27). Even in newsrooms that almost achieve a gender balance, as seen in South Africa, the UK and the US, there is a lack of gender-balanced

coverage. One reason could be the prevailing masculine culture in newsroom, which is adhered to by both men and women.[6]

Three key themes emerge from the study: women as sources of authority, women as protagonists, and the coverage of gender equality.

As sources of authority, women are highly under-represented. In 2015, 19% of experts or commentators were women, a marginal decrease from 20% in 2010. Women's expertise was also heavily skewed towards lower-profile news specialisms (e.g., science and health) rather than higher-profile news (e.g., politics) and towards the sphere of the private, emotional and subjective rather than the public, rational and objective. In news stories about politics, in particular, male experts are between 3 and 7 times more likely to be quoted or referenced than female experts. In stories on the economy, male experts are between 2 and 31 times more likely to be represented than women experts. This reflects the general undervaluation of women's education, experience and intelligence and the marginalisation of women in positions of power.

As protagonists, women have been substantially under-represented in news media coverage in this century, at a male-to-female ratio of 5:1. The UK performed the best in terms of the proportion of women protagonists headlining the news in 2019, at 30%. In Kenya (23%), India (21%), the US (21%) and South Africa (20%), approximately one in five protagonists in online news headlines were women. Nigeria lagged far behind the other countries studied, with women comprising only 15% of protagonists. When women appear as the protagonists of news stories, it tends to be in relation to lower-profile genres, such as crime/violence and celebrity stories. In Nigeria, for example, women were eight times more likely to appear as protagonists in news headlines about arts and the media than in stories about the economy in 2019. In South Africa this ratio was 5:1, in Kenya 4:1, in the US it was 3:1 and in the UK and India it was 2:1.

Regarding coverage of gender equality, less than 1% of all stories covered this issue in 2019. Within the gender equality stories that did appear, men accounted for the majority of story protagonists: 56% in Kenya, 60% in the UK and the US, 72% in South Africa, 80% in India and 84% in Nigeria. Even in stories about gender, therefore, women were largely absent.

In general, social norms correlated with the extent of women's presence in the news media: the more regressive the social norms, the more limited the share of women in the news as protagonists and experts. However, journalists in low- and middle-income countries were more likely to perceive themselves as agents of change. In particular, journalists in South Africa, Kenya and India were more likely than journalists in the other countries studied to think that it was important and part of their role to promote tolerance and diversity, advocate for social change and influence public opinion.

The study then examines three case studies of improved gender balance, two from the UK (BBC 50:50 and FollowBias) and one from South Africa (T-Systems, a broadcaster and network provider). In response to the National Development Plan, T-Systems South Africa produced a Nation Building Diversity Strategy, which committed it to ensure a minimum of 30% of women in the workforce, membership of the 30% Club to promote 30% representation of women at board level, and the introduction of various forums and working

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[6] For more on the gendered culture of newsrooms see: De Bruin (2014).

groups to support women. The strategy resulted in high levels of women's participation at all levels of the T-Systems organisation, as 35% of all employees and 60% of all board members.

Next, it offers strategies for change, which include shifting the narrative frameworks of journalistic ethics, promoting rights-based journalism and the need to change social norms and more. In addition, the study finds that wording matters when it comes to cultivating public support for gender equality. Specifically, when gender equality is framed as a comparison between men and women rather than an absolute, the public is more critical of the status quo and, therefore, more receptive to change.

The study ends with a list of 50 recommendations for journalists, editors and other news professionals to improve women's representation in newsrooms, newsgathering, and news coverage. Although too extensive to summarise here, the recommendations are focused on individual actions for media professionals and large-scale reform in the sector.[7]

For additional information on the status of women in the news industry in other countries see:
IWMF (2011) *Global Report on the Status of Women in the News Media*. Washington, D.C.: International Women's Media Foundation.

8. **Dastgeer, S., and Gade, Peter J. "Visual Framing of Muslim Women in the Arab Spring: Prominent, Active, and Visible." The International Communication Gazette 78, no. 5 (2016): 432–450.**

Key topics: Middle East and North Africa; television; private broadcasters; public broadcasters; gender representation; gender portrayal

This study compares images of Muslim and Arab women shared by CNN and Al Jazeera (English) during the Arab Spring in 2013. It aims to understand 'how and to what extent these changing roles of Muslim women were still documented in still visual images published by two leading international media' (p. 433). As this study compares a Western international news source with an Arab international news source, it stands out among the literature on the portrayal of women activists and women in protest, which tends to examine the portrayal of women from low- and middle-income countries by Western news sources only.

The main assumption of the authors is that news is socially constructed: it is constructed by people and, is therefore, informed by the journalist's ideology, external media forces, organisational factors, routines of journal work and individual characteristics. The journalist's ideology or belief-system matters and their conception of gender norms may influence their public work product.

As such, the study aims to compare and contrast how feminism, 'an ideology that differs significantly in Western and Arab cultures', influences the portrayal of women in the news (p. 433). In the West, feminism tends to mean the struggle for full gender equality in public life based on secular principles. In Arab countries and the wider Middle East, the history of feminism is more complex as there are two lines of feminism: secular and Islamic. Islamic feminism bases its claim to rights in religion and the authors take this as the norm.

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[7] Recommendations found on pp. 153–161.

The main method of analysis was the 'visual framing' of a specific news story. While news frames 'assign attributes to issues and people in the news, making these attributes more salient by highlighting and connecting them 'so as to promote a particular interpretation, evaluation and/or solution' primarily through word and tone, in visual images this is achieved through the choice of lens distance, placement of subject in the frame, camera angles, lighting and other forms of digital editing. These techniques guide the viewer toward a certain focal point and 'create a hierarchy that guides viewers through a visual narrative' (pp. 437–8).

While Dastgeer and Gade hypothesise that Western media would frame Muslim and Arab women more dominantly (meaning in positions of power: leading, controlling, helping others, ordering, etc.) and more significantly as the primary focal point than Arab media, they actually find mixed results. Analysing a sample of 419 (of a total of 1,460) images, they find that both media portrayed Arab women in dominant images 70% of the time, indicating no difference as a result of cultural norms or beliefs about women. As for the primary focal point, the study did find a significant difference, with CNN framing images of Arab women as the primary focal point in 67% of the sampled images compared to Al Jazeera, which framed women as the primary focal point in 57% of the images. The authors note that when images included both Arab men and women, men were less likely to be the primary focal point than women (26.2 % for Al Jazeera and 22% for CNN).

In addition, Dastgeer and Gade found that CNN framed Arab women more passively (inactive, motionless, receiving assistance or looking away from the camera) than Al Jazeera, which may stem from the historic trope of Eastern women as being oppressed by their cultures and religion and in need of Western intervention. Lastly, when Dastgeer and Gade looked at women in hijabs they found a significant difference in the portrayal of Arab women, with Al Jazeera more likely to include images of women in hijabs than CNN (63.7% of images in Al Jazeera; 48.4% for CNN).

In all, this study 'notes a shift of frames in a majority of images: Muslim women were framed as active by both CNN and Al Jazeera' (p. 444). They note that the change in the portrayal or framing of women in Al Jazeera is likely to be the result of norms changes and the increased acceptability of women's active political participation. In order words, 'this finding suggests that Al-Jazeera has a more progressive view of Muslim women's activism' (p. 445).

For a more in-depth study of the portrayal of women in Arab media see:
Al-Malki, A.(2012) *Arab Women in Arab News: Old Stereotypes and New Media.* Doha: Bloomsbury; Qatar Foundation.

9. **Mokkil, N. (2018) 'Visual Practices, Affect, and the Body' Women's Studies Quarterly 46, no. 3 & 4 (2018): 158–174.**

Key topics: South Asia; India; print; television; gender portrayal; gender representation

In this study Mokkil narrates the media coverage and response to a night-vigil in Kerala, India, in 2008. The vigil, held outside the government building of the state capital of Kerala, supported the Chengara land struggle, a protest movement of Dalits, a caste group, and Adivasis, an ethnic group, who were fighting for

their right to own cultivatable land. The media recorded the night-vigil without the consent from or knowledge of the protestors. Afterwards, the major newspapers and broadcast stations showed both video footage and photographs of the event as breaking news, labelling it as 'immoral' and 'obscene' (p. 159).

Mokkil focuses on the media discourse surrounding the bodies of the women at the vigil, which were, she argues, rendered 'sensational'. In doing so, she complicates the existing feminist demands for visibility, observing that movements in the public space (like Take Back the Night) while important, perpetuate 'the conception of a feminine subject whose sexuality is an aspect of her enclosed and safeguarded interiority' (p. 160). The media response to protests like the one in Kerala, for example, demonstrates the public nature of the body.

The media focused on the middle-class women who took part in the vigil, given that a woman 'is supposed to carry her sexuality as a 'deeply personal' possession', according to cultural norms (p. 165). In this case, their 'privileged bodies' were brought into the public sphere without their knowledge or intention. One newspaper, for example, described the night-vigil as 'more steamy than scenes from masala films', another caricatured the night-vigil by framing it as a popular cult pornographic film. By labelling the women as 'unruly and out of place', the Indian mass media 'dislodged' the body from its place of privacy, safety, and autonomy. They represented or framed the participants' bodies in non-consensual and sexist ways.

Mokkil also explores the specificity of media technology transmission. She describes how the video and images of the protest were culturally coded as being 'pornographic', which in this context means content that signals irrational and uncontrolled 'excess' (which can therefore be branded as improper and unseemly) (p. 167). The quality of the video and the blurring of the participants' identities both referenced pornographic films, and the films, when transmitted, were therefore coded within this frame.

By exploring the ways in which the mass media in Kerala, India delegitimised and ostracised the middle-class women protestors at a night-vigil, Mokkil questions the ways in which visibility in the public space is presented as path by which women can claim agency. She demonstrates that the public gaze is not a 'rational and controlled act', but is rather filled with sociocultural anxieties about normative class hierarchies and gender roles.

For more on the media representation of women's bodies during protest see:
- Shandilya, K. (2017) 'Nirbhaya's Body: The Politics of Protest in the Aftermath of the 2012 Delhi Gang Rape' *Gender & History* 27 (2017): 465–486.
- Hafez, S. (2014) 'Bodies That Protest: The Girl in the Blue Bra, Sexuality, and State Violence in Revolutionary Egypt' *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 40, no. 1 (2014): 20–28.
- Eileraas, K. (2014) 'Sex(t)ing Revolution, Femen-izing the Public Square: Aliaa Magda Elmahdy, Nude Protest, and Transnational Feminist Body Politics' *Signs 40,* no. 1 (2014): 40–52.
- Zychowicz, J. (2015) 'Performing protest: Femen, nation, and the marketing of resistance' *Journal of Ukrainian Politics and Society* 1, no. 1 (2015): 79–104.

Radio

Unlike other sectors of broadcast media, radio has not had significant scholarly attention in terms of gender-equitable representation. What has been studied is limited to sub-Saharan Africa, where radio remains a popular form of media due to its accessibility. The following studies focus on gender representations (masculine and feminine) in Zimbabwe and Ghana.

10. [Mudavanhu, S. L. (2017) 'Dominant Representations of Girls and Women on Radio Zimbabwe' African Identities 15, no. 1 (February 2017): 29–40.](#)

Key topics: Africa; Zimbabwe; radio; public broadcaster; gender representation; gender portrayal; gender roles;

The literature on media representations of women and girls focuses largely on print media and television broadcasting. As a result of this skewed focus, representations of gender are understudied in Africa, where radio remains the most widely used means of mass communication. This study aims to address this gap by conducting a textual analysis of the radio broadcasts on a state-owned radio station, Radio Zimbabwe between March and April 2011. The paper not only aims to understand how women and girls are represented on Radio Zimbabwe, but also the implications or effects of these representations.

Radio Zimbabwe occupies a peculiar place in the radio landscape of Zimbabwe, which was fully controlled by the state until 2012. Despite increased market competition since then, the station still holds a 41% market share – well above other stations. The station is influenced by and reinforces conservative Christian and African values (although this ideological position is not exclusive to Radio Zimbabwe). In consideration of this, the paper aims to deconstruct radio as a socialising agent and understand the emphasis around the construction of the gender ideal of the 'good' girl and woman in Zimbabwean society.

> The place of girls during wooing
> One idea that was often repeated on Radio Zimbabwe during the month was the notion that a 'good' or 'proper' girl (*musikana chaiye*) was one who was passive. The idea that boys should relentlessly pursue girls was also valued. The view that women and girls should be passive is problematic, because those who challenge it may be exposed to ridicule, stigmatisation, and exclusion. It also has the potential to expose women and girls to forms of GBV as a result of male pressure and power imbalances in romantic and sexual relationships.
>
> One announcer, for example, expressed her discomfort with the idea that girls should be active in the process of wooing: 'If you talk to our young people, they tell you that today it does not matter who asks who out. They say that if you like the person, just tell him … not knowing how a proper boy would take it. Boys … don't hesitate if you like a girl … tell her' (p. 33). Another announcer claimed that 'the problem is men nowadays give up easily. If he approaches a girl to tell her he loves her … if the girl says … no … he gives up and looks for another girl' (p. 34).

A counter narrative: girls can initiate love relationships

One dating show, *Ida Anokudawo,* is formatted so that both men and women are active in the wooing ritual. The programme could be a space to traverse or challenge gender norms, however even when women and girls subverted gender norms by participating in dating programmes where they initiated contact, there was still conformity to norms.

Callers participating in the show, for example, described their ideal partners in traditional terms. One caller sent in a message stating that she is looking for a man 'who is business minded'; another stated that she is looking for a man 'who works hard and fears the Lord' (p. 34).

Normalising the idea of women as wives, mothers and nurturers

Both female politicians and female radio announcers who participate in the public spheres were labelled by marital status: 'women were referred to as *Amai* (depending on context, the word can mean 'mother', or it can be a title prefixed to the surname of a woman's husband to indicate that she is married to that particular man) or *Muzvare* (a title prefixed to the surname of an unmarried woman)' (p. 36). Female announcers also took on personas that cemented their status as mothers and nurturers. One announcer referred to herself as '*Mhamha Tari*' (Mother Tari), another as 'Matron.' In addition, many of programmes on Radio Zimbabwe about care work or housework were presented by women.

The ways in which Radio Zimbabwe positions women's roles as nurturers and caregivers celebrates these subject-positions over others. This has the potential to 'rob young girls of alternative ideas of ways of being women that are not embedded in the private sphere', and pushes girls to conform to a singular gender ideal of motherhood and womanhood, one that reflects the discourse of motherhood used by missionaries in Africa during the colonial period (p. 38). However, there were small instances of divergence: woman began to assert their active presence in the public sphere and in social life through the dating programme, revealing the potential for equal participation.

11. **Diabah, G. (2015) 'From 'recharger' to 'Gidi-Power': The Representation of Male Sexual Power in Ghanaian Radio Commercials' Critical Discourse Studies 12, no. 4 (October 2015): 377–397.**

12. **Diabah, G. (2019) 'The Representation of Women in Ghanaian Radio Commercials: Sustaining or Challenging Gender Stereotypes?' Language in Society 48, no. 2 (April 2019): 261–283.**

Key topics: Africa; Ghana; radio; private broadcaster; gender representation; gender roles; gender portrayal

These two studies by Diabah are sections of a larger study on gender roles in Ghanaian media. The first looks at how Ghanaian radio advertisers represent men in sexual stereotypes and the role of women in these representations. The second examines how women are represented in radio advertisements and how these representations influence gender norms. Although some studies have shown a decrease in gender stereotypes and traditional gender norms portrayed in broadcast media, this may be because advertising practices generate stereotypes and norms in more subtle ways.

As of 2017, Ghana had 471 authorised radio stations, of which 376 were active. Radio stations broadcast in both English and local languages, in contrast to print media, which publishes exclusively in English. Radio is, therefore, a more accessible medium for non-literate or non-English speaking populations.

The first study highlights the predominant paradigm in radio adverts that link ideal masculinity to sexual potency or prowess. The data come from one radio station, Peace FM, which broadcasts in Akan, Ghana's dominant indigenous language (47.5% of the population are native speakers). Data were collected during the morning-show programme (6 a.m. to 10 a.m.) which airs from Monday to Friday, and was selected for its varied content and audience. The study found 23 adverts on Peace FM that promoted medicine to boost the sexual power of men.

The findings are as follows.

'Manliness' equals sexual power

As masculinity is socially and culturally constructed, it is defined in Ghana by breadwinning competencies, bravery, the ability to procreate and sexual power or strength, among other traits. The common message throughout the sample is that the measure of a real man is his sexual power, specifically his ability to perform well in bed. One advert for 'recharger' for example, suggests 'a refilling or refuelling of sexual power', which sustains the stereotype that men are expected to be strong and powerful. The advert uses additional linguistic practices to transgress the sexual practice taboo in Ghana: namely, metaphor and metonymy. It uses terms like 'standing straight on one's feet' and 'stand firm' to mean having an erection. The advert also states that recharger will make 'you rise up as a man'—an example of metonymy, which exchanges the male organ for the whole of the male body. In feminist critical discourse analysis, this implies that the whole man is expected to be powerful (pp. 381–383).

Men as masters

In Akan, women are expected to respond to their husbands with the phrase, '*me Wura*', which translates as 'my Lord/Master/Owner'. Adverts often allude to this socio-cultural practice, and then further suggest that men, in order to be powerful, must display dominance and leadership over their families. For example, in an advert for 'Gidi Power', the speaker argues that what makes someone a man is his ability to '*wurawura*' or to 'enter or penetrate the woman' in such a way that the woman will refer to him as 'my Lord/Master'. This advert makes use of a pun, as the word for 'to enter' is the same as 'Lord/Master/Owner'. The pun produces a specific gendered effect, where it is suggested that a man's sexual prowess is what enables him to occupy a dominant position over women (pp. 385–386).

The power of men subverted?

Some adverts, however, portray a situation where a man's power has to be approved or heralded by women. In an advert for Tinattet Herbal Medicines, for example, the testimony of women is given in quotations. The inclusion and representation of women as holding some degree of power challenges, or at least brings into question, the paradigm of complete male dominance (pp. 386–387).

The study points out that such media representations have real consequences. For example, there have been cases of men committing suicide in Ghana because of their fear of or actual impotency. There is, therefore, a danger in projecting singular and fixed gender norms in broadcast media that do not reflect lived reality in an accurate way.

The data for the second study come from commercials aired between 2013 on both Peace FM and Joy FM (which broadcasts primarily in English) – a total of 112 adverts with 37 that were specifically gender related. This study also used feminist poststructuralist discourse analysis (FPDA) to analyse how speakers construct, negotiate, challenge, conform or resist their multiple identities. In all, 13 themes emerged that were related to gender and women emerge: sex objects, homemakers, beauty-conscious, materialistic, nurturers/carers, dependents, relationship builders and attention seekers, chatterboxes, assertive, career-oriented, innovative, and empowered.

The findings for four of these themes are as follows.

Women as homemakers
A number of adverts (for Gino Tomato Paste, BF Soap, Onga Spices, Ɛna Pa Mackerel, Heaven Foods, PMS Mushroom, Microgynon Fe [food]) represent women as homemakers, and involve cooking, in particular. For example, an Onga Shrimp Powder advert tagline reads, 'Onga, Mama's helping hand!', which reinforces the association between the domestic space and women (p. 270).

Women as beauty-conscious
Women's focus on beauty is commonly framed as empowering in the adverts (Taxina Lotion, First Lady, Advanced Body-Sculpt Centre, Aloe-Plus Ointment, Soft Hair Relaxer, Joy Ointment, Joy Ointment and Medicated Soap, Princess Beauty Products, Mighty Power Beauty Cream, Ernest Ointment, Storm Ginger Spice). The Taxina Lotion advert, for example, read, 'part of a person's glory is derived from her skin', and 'Taxina Lotion, it gives you skin confidence!' (p. 273). Taglines like these suggest that physical beauty and appearance is an ideal for women to achieve. They also delineate what these ideals are through the promotion of their products.

Empowered through the stereotype
Some adverts (Pepsodent Toothpaste, Microgynon Fe (food), Geisha Germi-Guard Soap) highlight women's power within the family, as opposed to their weak, vulnerable, passive or supporting roles in society. An advert for Geisha Germi-Guard Soap, for example, highlights the products' ability to help a mother care for her family. This discourse reinforces women's domesticity as it deploys the women through the 'nurturers and carers' stereotype. However, the concept of 'protection' that the advert uses is traditionally masculine coded. Therefore, this advert, while reinforcing the traditional stereotype of women as linked to the home, also challenges the stereotypical representation of men as the primary protectors of the family and women as vulnerable and weak.

    <u>Women as career-oriented or career-conscious</u>
    Reflecting the changing status of women in Ghanaian society, the Bank of Africa's
    educational loan challenges traditional depictions of women. In its advert, women are
    presented as career-oriented, as the main character is pursuing a Master's in Business
    Administration. Furthermore, her reference point in the advert is a new male manager who
    has finished his chartered accountancy courses and has been given a nice car; she aims to
    reach this status level. Therefore, the advert depicts her as competitive and focused – traits
    normally coded as masculine.

As 9 of the 13 themes identified in the study reinforce regressive gender norms (women as sex objects, beauty-conscious, nurturers or carers and homemakers, for example), by and large the media still represents women in stereotyped ways. These adverts imply that there are no alternatives for women and that femininity is a fixed identity.

That being said, there is potential for a more nuanced and complex representation of women as seen through the 'career-conscious, assertive and innovative' themes (p. 279). While women have more opportunities to participate in the public sphere, as noted through the representations that challenge regressive gender norms, they must still negotiate their 'fixed identities' (as seen through the 'empowered through the stereotype' adverts). The contradictory nature of these themes reflects the complex lives of contemporary Ghanaian women. Diabah concludes that a change in gender attitudes will require 'extensive education about the potentials of women vis-à-vis the delimitations of certain entrenched societal views', which can be achieved through increased media portrayal of complex and nuanced women (p. 279).

Limitations on norm change: What aspects of broadcast media hinder gender norm change? And can they be mitigated?

This section addresses two areas – the media industry and the government – and how they could limit the potential for broadcast media to instigate gender-norm change. The media industry is further broken down into advertising and entertainment, and news and factual, to separate commercial and journalistic practices.

Key takeaways

- Studies suggest that advertising and entertainment media professionals continue to use gender stereotyped characters or sexist plotlines because they convey abbreviated or shorthand messages to audiences.
- They also indicated that industry professionals' awareness of gender within their respective cultural contexts enables them to utilize more specific gendered symbols and messages.
- In the news media, the absence of male voices on violence against women reinforces the presentation of gender and gendered subjects as 'women's issues'.
- Studies also demonstrate how standard journalistic practices, both those of reporting and of hosting news shows, continue to reinforce hegemonic gender norms.
- A comprehensive review of laws and regulations on gender discrimination that target that media industry concludes that these are currently too vague for adequately enforcement and that self-regulatory bodies in the media industry are too weak to enforce gender-equitable practices or instigate change.

Industry practices

Advertising and entertainment

13. [**Middleton, K., Turnbull, S., and de Oliveira, M. J. (2020) 'Female role portrayals in Brazilian advertising: are outdated cultural stereotypes preventing change?' International Journal of Advertising 39, no. 5 (2020): 679–698.**](#)

Key topics: Latin America; Brazil; television; private broadcaster; gender portrayals; gender stereotypes

This study begins with the examination of *why* gender role stereotypes are used so commonly in advertising. In theory, it is because advertising professionals consider gender-role stereotyping as a simplified form of communication that consumers will identify with both easily and readily and that this, in turn, will enable consumers to focus on the brand message.

Using qualitative semi-structured interviews with advertising creative practitioners, Middleton et al. investigate how local cultural norms about women dominate the decision-making process of the advertising industry. The study uses the 'mental models theory' to identify the way in which the representations on screen are constructed by the individual behind the screen. This theory suggests that an individual's 'concentrated, personally constructed, internal conception of external phenomena or experience…affects how a person acts' (Rook 2013, as quoted on p. 683).

A total of 22 interviews were conducted with professionals from a range of cities (São Paulo, Belo Horizonte, Rio de Janeiro), with at least five years of experience, and of all genders. A smaller sample size was chosen deliberately to better engage with the 'complex nature of creatives' mental models' (p. 684).

Six distinct stereotypes emerged: housewife, trophy, sexual object, sexually powerful, professional and object of beauty.

> Housewife
> Mental models of domestic duties (running a home and family) that feature only women are prevalent in advertising, even though professionals recognised changing norms around domestic responsibilities. One practitioner said: 'We represent the family in this way. There is the wife and kids, and the husband, and the dog, the really conservative family. It's not just the woman, it's a population, an entire population stereotyped'.

> Trophy
> This stereotype features women as an accessory for men – a form of 'status symbol'. The storytelling device is that the women are 'merchandising' that the man can win over by using the product being advertised.

> Sexual object
> Mental models of this stereotype feature nudity, women in suggestive or revealing poses, protagonists in physical contact that has sexual undertones, sexually explicit narratives and sexual conquests.

Practitioners attributed their use of this stereotype to cultural norms. As one said: 'I think anthropologically we are a society that likes to expose the body. There is a cultural heritage of generations of body exposure, sexuality, sensuality…' In addition, many practitioners stated that their use of women as sexual objects was intended to communicate certain values about the brand, namely 'excitement, fun, pleasure, hedonism.'

<u>Sexually powerful</u>
In this mental model, the woman 'gets what she wants as a result of being sexually attractive'. A more recent development, this stereotype was often used to appeal more to women.

<u>Professional</u>
Practitioners stated that they will more often portray women in professional roles that once excluded them, reflecting their changed status in society. However, these roles, such as teaching and nursing, are still coded as feminine.

<u>Object of beauty</u>
Similar to the sexual object mental model, practitioners described an 'obsession' with women's beauty and the female body in Brazil: 'Beauty is very important in Brazil, worshipping the beautiful is a sort of pattern in our society'. Practitioners described how they were using women for 'aesthetics' in their advertisements. In addition, beauty was measured in terms of European standards, communicating messages about socio-economic status and values, as well as social ascension.

The interviews revealed that 'trophy' and 'sexually powerful' are distinct stereotypes for advertising professionals as they produce specific messages and, therefore, play specific functions in advertising. This revelation demonstrates the endurance, and even the evolution, of the practice of stereotyping in the advertising industry; gender role stereotypes as a form of messaging shorthand are becoming even more specific to match the 'sexual nuances' in Brazilian culture.

'Cultural literacy' is a critical determinant in the decision-making process of advertising professionals. Their ability to dissect (and their awareness of) the nuances of discourses on gender enable them to generate symbols or metaphors for use in advertising. Because creative practitioners in Brazil continue to opt for gender-role stereotypes as the easier route to communicate brand messages, the study demonstrates the cultural specificity of gender role stereotypes in advertising.

For a similar study see:
Shao, Y., Desmarais, F., Weaver, C. K. (2014) 'Chinese advertising practitioners' conceptualisation of gender representation' *International Journal of Advertising* 33, no. 2 (2014): 329–350.

14. **Şehriban, K. (2019) 'Gender and Violence: Rape as a Spectacle on Prime-Time Television' Social Science Information 58, no. 4 (December 2019): 681–700.**

Key topics: Middle East and North Africa; Turkey; television; private broadcaster; GBV; gender stereotypes

The study begins by explaining that rape is learned behaviour, and that it will 'demonstrate how this learned behaviour is packaged and marketed by the TV serials that center their narrative around rape, as well as how these serials could allow embedded gender relations to continue and change' (p. 683).

The female rape trope is a staple of prime-time television serials in Turkey, starting with *Fatmagül'ün Suçu Ne?,* a Turkish serial where the gang rape of the character Fatmagül was a central event in the narrative. This show had the highest ratings between 2010 and 2012 (almost 1 in 2 television viewers watched it during its run).

After its success, other shows began to follow the same narrative structure, featuring rape as either the central or secondary storyline. Episodes often feature rape scenes, and those that do are usually the most watched episodes of the series. Rape scenes turn women's sexual suffering into a 'spectacle', or a product to be consumed by the audience. In other words, 'it is an exploitation of the violence against women for the purposes of entertainment'. The scene of gang rape in *Fatmagül'ün Suçu Ne*?, for example, aimed to attract larger audiences in the initial marketing of the show. After the success of the show, textile and alcohol companies began to sell underwear and liquor, using the gang rape scene of *Fatmagül'ün Suçu Ne?* as a selling point. Whole media scripts and economic industries are now based on the exploitation and promotion of this narrative.

Not only do these shows glamorise violence against women by aestheticising rape for the camera (and by extension for the male gaze), but they also reproduce harmful gender and social norms in the narratives that ensue, as follows.

> The 'ideal victim' trope
> Analysis of the storylines of three popular Turkish serials – *Fatmagül'ün Suçu Ne?, İffet,* and *Hayat Devam Ediyor* – found that the rape survivors were all 'extremely beautiful and young, non-working girls of poor families', which reproduces the idea of the 'ideal sympathetic victim'. For example, all three shows construct storylines that equate women and their sexuality and 'an image of a not-so-guilty rapist who is 'trapped' by the victim's beauty'. In every storyline, the survivors begin to work after their rape, which 'makes the victim 'less marriageable', because she becomes 'dirty' and need not to be preserved at home for a good marriage' (p. 687). These narratives reinforce messages that survivors are complicit in their own rape and that women are valued only for their chastity.

> Hegemonic masculinity
> Rape scenes in the three shows studied are constructed in a way that means each of the men 'performs the rape as a fulfilment required to exist as a man' (p. 690). Furthermore, it is the women – the survivors – who face consequences or problems after the rape, which is a narrative form of victim-blaming. Victim-blaming reinforces hegemonic masculinity, since 'it offers an explanation that focuses on individual deficiencies', rather than the actions of the perpetrators (p. 691).It also characterises guilt or innocence based on a sexualised dichotomy. Lastly, it accommodates other power hierarchies, like class, race and ethnicity.

> Rape as a violation of a contract between men
> Building on Pateman's (1988) gendered analysis social contract, the analysis finds that these shows reinforce notions of patriarchal ownership of women through honour and marriage. For example,

after he character Fatmagul was raped, her fiancé and his family broke the engagement, and her family arranged her marriage to Kerim (a witness) by the rapists' lawyer, Fatmagül's brother and Kerim. Fatmagül had to comply to uphold her honour and that of her family, reinforcing her status as an object for 'mediation, transaction, transition, transference' (p. 692).

Despite the negative consequences of the depiction of rape and sexual assault on screen, it may have the potential to instigate norm change. In particular, *Fatmagül'ün Suçu Ne?* followed Fatmagül as a survivor seeking justice – a quest in which she ultimately succeeds, sending her rapists to jail and supporting women's organisations. The show could be used as a form of consciousness-raising, prompting viewers to reflect on their own realities or to challenge existing norms, as they did when *Hayat Devam Ediyor* aired content related to child marriage.[8]

For another study on Turkish soap operas see:
Yalkin, C. and Veer, E. (2018) 'Taboo on TV: Gender, Religion, and Sexual Taboos in Transnationally Marketed Turkish Soap Operas' *Journal of Marketing Management* 34, no. 13–14 (October 2018): 1149–1171.

News and factual

15. **Jorge Alonso, A., de la Maya Retamar, R., García López, M. (2016) 'Information Treatment of Gender-Based Violence in Andalusian Public Television. Breach of the Code of Ethics by Canal Sur' Revista Latina de Comunicación Social, no. 71 (2016): 994-1006.**

Key topics: Europe; Spain; television; public broadcaster; GBV

Alonso et al. begin their study by describing the 'dilemma' of the broadcast media industry and practitioners: on one hand, they are supposed to act as journalists and opinion-makers; on the other, they are a business that needs to cater their product to achieve the highest achievable audience consumption.

Violence depicted in the media is significant, since it is a form of 'symbolic violence', and has the potential to reinforce existing patriarchal gender norms. For example, journalistic reporting that frames gender-based violence as a 'crime of passion' entrenches a discourse that excuses or justifies the perpetrators of violence and naturalises violence in gendered relations.

This study focuses on Radio and Television of Andalusia (RTVA), a public channel with a large audience that is 'responsible for the application of the policies that promote equality and prohibit discrimination' (p. 996). It uses critical discourse analysis to dissect 192 news items from *Canal Sur Televisión* from November 2013 to January 2014 to compare real practices to the code adopted by the channel in 2010 to address violence: the *Codigo Contra La Violencia Machista*. The analysis considered language and images, the context in which it is

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[8] 'The AKP government came up with a proposal that could defer punishment for sexual assault in cases where there was no use of physical force and when the victim and perpetrator were married. The AKP argued that this proposal was meant to protect those who were too young to marry legally, whereas it was to justify child marriage. The government faced real resistance from various parts of society, including the pro-AKP women's organization, KADEM' (Sehriban 2019, 697).

located, sources used, representation of the victim/aggressor (construction of their stereotypes), and finally, the presence of public authorities.

The following three themes emerge from the 192 case studies (with examples taken from three emblematic stories).

> <u>The homogenization of the treatment of macho violence that promotes an anodyne discourse that is distant from the criteria for newsworthiness and media relevance</u>
> All the news stories analysed follow the same structure, which 'generates disinterest in viewers and reinforces the idea that this is just 'another case'' (p. 1004). The homogenisation refers to both the structure of reporting (which relies heavily on statistical contextualisation and displays macabre imagery that is against the Code) and the language used by the experts, public authorities or non-governmental organisations interviewed.

> <u>The absence of male voices among the experts and social agents in news stories on violence against women</u>
> The story 'Fourth victim of gender-based violence in the province this year. Garden City (Malaga)', broadcast by CSN1 Malaga on 06 November 2013, describes both the crime itself and the police presence at successive protests. The crime is described partially through a statement by Estefanía Martín (Provincial Coordinator of the Andalusian Women's Institute) to describe the crime itself, the perpetrator and the survivor. These descriptions focus heavily on the brutality of death, which violates CSTV's code ('dismiss audio-visual material that promotes morbidity, sensationalism and spectacle, and to avoid explicit images of the victims, in order to preserve their dignity'; p. 1001). This trend held throughout expert opinions. The only male expert voice came from the Association of Men for Equality. The lack of male voices suggests that violence against women is a problem for women only, and the greater inclusion of men could increase the receptivity of new stories for all audiences.

> <u>The abuse and/or political instrumentalisation of violence against women through the media</u>
> While the evidence for the political instrumentalisation of GBV was not strong, there was an 'excessive presence of public authorities to the detriment of other types of social organizations, associations and even the victims themselves' (p. 1002). The presence of public officials in these news stories may serve as a way to promote themselves at the expense of the subject.

This study highlights the ways in which commonplace journalistic practices reinforce hegemonic discourses on GBV and patriarchal gender norms. Despite the formulation of a code of ethics by *Canal Sur* to ensure that reporting does not promote, sensationalise or trivialise GBV, there is still some way to go in reconfiguring the fundamentals regarding the value of different forms of knowledge, particularly expert and witness opinion.

For a similar study on the Indian context, see:
Fadnis, D. (2018) 'Uncovering Rape Culture: Patriarchal Values Guide Indian Media's Rape-Related Reporting' *Journalism Studies* 19, no. 12 (2018): 1750–1766.

16. **Organista, N. and Mazur, Z. (2020) ' 'I've Never Really Thought about It': The Process of News Construction and Perception of Underrepresentation of Women's Sport Media Coverage by Editors-in-Chief in Mainstream Polish Media' ' Sport in Society.**

Key topics: Europe; Poland; television; private broadcaster; gender representation; gender stereotypes

It is well-documented that women have been, and still are, consistently under-represented in sports media worldwide. The lack of coverage indicates a lack of value or respect for women's sports, in accordance with two theories: gatekeeping theory and social construction of news theory.

The latter theory argues that news is not a reflection of reality, but a product of media organisations and journalists – the main assumption guiding the analysis in this study. Gatekeeping theory supports this assumption, as it posits that 'the overall process through which social reality transmitted by the news media is constructed' is influenced on five levels (p. 2):
- individual (e.g., individual features of journalists and their professional prestige)
- routines (repeated sets of practice pursued at work, e.g., related to assessing newsworthiness), organisational (editorial policies, and the influence of media owners)
- institutional (interest groups, government, media markets, and economic forces)
- the social system (acceptability and importance of various topics in different cultures), according to Shoemaker et al. (2001).

A feminist media perspective on this theory highlights how the male perspective, which is culturally coded as neutral and universal, is transferred implicitly into media content.

Similar to the study by Middleton et al. (2020), this study uses 11 in-depth interviews with sports media professionals in Poland. Participants included decision-makers from TV stations, newspapers, sports news websites and radio stations. All participants were aged between 33 and 56 and had been sports journalists for 10 to 35 years. At the time of writing, no female sports journalist in Polish sports media had been an editor-in-chief.

There were two research questions . First, what criteria are the most important in the process of selecting content and making decisions in the Polish sports media, in the opinion of the interviewees? Second, does the process of selecting media content and decision-making affect the under-representation of media coverage of women's sports, in the opinion of the interviewed editors-in-chief, and if so, how?

The interviews show that professionals assumed that 'the superiority of men's sport was a given', and did not feel obligated to promote women's sports.

> Selection criteria and interests of sports media
> The interviewees identified sports discipline popularity and audience interest as the primary factors for determining content. When asked about demographic profiles, however, 9 of the 11 did not know any specific and recent data and instead relied on their preconceptions about the sports that are popular within various audiences. When asked about women's interest in sports, they referred to their own experiences within their social communities.

When pressed about discrepancies in the representation of women's sports specifically, the interviewees stressed that the 'gender of sports people had nothing to do with their decision-making'(p. 7). Instead, they took into consideration competition results and the skills presented, categories that are inherently biased to male athletes. This meritocratic view undermines the ability to see the difference between women's and men's sports and represent both categories equitably.

Objectivity and impartiality as the principles of journalists' work
The participants were opposed to the deliberate promotion of women's sports. Instead, they advocated for women's sports to be treated in the same way as men's sports and be dictated by the logic of markets and audience interests. In other words, interest must come about 'naturally'. This 'impartiality made it difficult to see the unequal position of women's sports in sports media' (p. 10).

When asked who could promote women's sports, all participants noted the role of sports unions; the press editors identified the role of TV; commercial TV editors pointed to public TV (with the promotion of women's sports included in its missions) and stated that commercial TV 'does not have room to realise a task of this kind' (p. 10).

The production of audience interests and the sense of mission
Despite their reluctance to intervene to promote women's sports, the editors noted that they were capable of creating audience tastes and did have a mission to promote quality in Polish sports. 'The respondents did not see the dissonance between their previous statements and the postulated value of objectivity in the profession of a sports journalist, and their role as co-creators in forming tastes of audience' (p. 12).

The interviews revealed that women's sports were 'hierarchised' in a way that made it impossible for editors to intervene to create audience taste for it. In other words, the personal belief system of the editors was a significant factor in the news-making process.

17. **[Zaslow, E. (2018) 'Pink Toenails and Princess Boys: Contemporary Discourses of Boys' Gender-Fluidity in U.S. Television News' Journal of Children and Media 12, no. 3 (2018): 243–257.](#)**

Key topics: North America; US; television; private broadcaster; gender representation; gender roles

This study, analyses three case studies of the discussion of boys' gender-fluidity in US broadcast media. It argues that although boys' gender-fluidity received explicit rhetorical support, the broadcasters' '(un)scripted or pseudo-spontaneous banter', or performance reinforced traditional gender norms and the gender binary construct (p. 244).

First, Zaslow explains that the gender binary is 'a socially constructed organizational system that structures social interactions, institutions, and power relationships by creating value systems and ideologies about men/women and masculinity/femininity'; and 'a system that presumes a dichotomous relationship between two absolutely distinct and unequal genders, each of which corresponds to an anatomical sex' (p. 244). She

then explains how masculinity within the gender binary is restricted to a certain expression, also known as hegemonic masculinity. This form of masculinity is characterised by 'toughness, violence, and power-over others', and rejects femininity and homosexuality in men (p. 245).

These two theoretical models are then applied to the content of 30 broadcast news segments from ABC, CBS, CNN, and FOX in the US from 2010 to 2012, a time described by *Time Magazine* as the 'transgender tipping point'. During this period, when challenges to the gender binary began to break into mainstream discourse, small 'transgressions' were reported in news stories and were attached to deeper messages about gender and sexuality. Four major themes emerge from the study.

Avowal of gender-fluid expression as acceptable only when child's play
Experts on the broadcast segments framed non-conformity as part of early childhood play, which reinforces the gender binary because it implicitly describes the gender-fluid expressions of older male children or men as worrisome. In addition, by describing gender-fluidity as 'play', this discourse also implies that the children concerned may be reoriented or directed to perform normative masculinities.

Another argument used by the experts was that of a double-standard, where girl children are allowed to adopt 'tomboy' tendencies, but boy children are not permitted to 'wear nail polish or wear dresses' without being considered atypical. However, this language did not extend to any critical engagement with homophobia, sexist double standards or trans-misogyny.

Presentation of boys' mothers as supporting the violation of social norms:
The news sources studied presented parental support of gender-fluidity as a social problem. Journalists reoriented their stories to become 'referendums' on mothers who accept the fluid gender expressions of their children and their failure to protect them from social humiliation.

Positioning of parental acceptance as an act of reluctant resignation
Newscasters who were parents sometimes shared their own parenting methods. Kiran Chetry of CNN, for example, said that when her son wanted to paint his nails like his sister does, she and her husband compromised with him to persuade him to have only one nail painted either blue or green. She then said, 'what are you going to do? To each their own'. Implicit in this is a suggestion of the suppression of gender-fluid expression and acceptance 'because they felt they had no choice'. Importantly, the newscasters themselves are framed as an authority, and as 'trusted reports whose parenting may be a model for the viewer's own' (p. 252).

Assertion of the traditional masculinity and heterosexuality of male news reporters
Newscasters also reproduced hegemonic forms of masculinity by using humour and banter. One example could be seen in segments about the campaign by a 13-year-old to persuade Hasbro to make Easy Bake ovens in gender-neutral colours, so that her brother could 'know that it's not 'wrong' for him to want to be a chef, that it's okay to go against what society believes to be appropriate'. Reports naturalised boys' cooking by alluding to celebrity chefs, their own childhood play, their cooking skills or their sons' play. While seemingly positive, this discourse reinforced traditional masculine roles in subtle ways when the newscasters emphasised their own masculinity. For example, John Berman of CNN said, 'Someone's got to cook, but it ain't going to be me'. In contrast, Tony Sayegh of Fox

Business said he owned and learned to cook from an Easy Bake oven, which is 'why I'm happily married', reasserting his heterosexuality.

The study concludes that soft broadcast news segments present two contradicting discourses on gender-fluidity. On one hand, there is a layer of gender-fluid and trans-acceptance in the reporters' explicit dialogue. On the other, the same discourses reject gender-fluidity beyond childhood. In particular, this study highlights the role of the 'pseudo-family atmosphere of soft news television to rearticulate and naturalize gender ideologies'; the way in which news is delivered is a discourse in itself (p. 255). This opens up space for gender and sexuality to be negotiated both in the content and in the form of broadcast news.

Governmental and/or legislative practices

18. **Fondazione Giacomo Brodolini, Giomi, E., Sansonetti, S., Tota, A. L. (2013) Women and Girls as Subjects of Media's Attention and Advertisement Campaigns: The Situation in Europe, Best Practices and Legislations. Brussels: European Parliament.**

Key topics: Europe; Latin America; television; public broadcaster; private broadcaster; gender equality; gender representation

This study, commissioned by European Parliament's Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality, evaluates the effectiveness of regulatory laws and codes in advancing the non-discriminatory representation of women and girls in broadcast media. It investigates the state of gender representation in the media (defined as television, advertising, news, and 'new media') and the mechanisms or practices that hamper the achievement of gender equality. While the study is focused primarily on key European Union Member States, it draws on examples of legislation from Latin America to explore best practices for key stakeholders – government, media industries, etc.

More relevant for this bibliography, however, is the evaluation of laws on the media portrayal of women in Argentina and Mexico. In Latin America, Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, El Salvador, Mexico, Peru, and Uruguay all have 'organisms of self-regulation' for advertisements that are organised into a network, CONARED (p. 40). The main feature of this network is that the codes of ethics of its members prohibit discrimination on the basis of gender, but do not mention or regulate gender-norm representation in audio-visual material (with the exception of El Salvador).[9]

> Argentina
> The code of ethics of the association of advertisers. the *Consejo de Autorregulación Publicitaria* (CONARP) states that all advertisements must be in accordance with the Law of Integral Protection of Women, which states that the Ministry of Communication has the

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[9] 'The participation of women in advertising announcements in general, must respect her integrity. The respectful use of sensuality in advertising is allowed. However, it will be not allowed the use of women, taking advantage of her body with the sole purpose of connecting her sexuality with products and services not related to it' (Chapter 3, Article 9 of the Code of Ethics as quoted in the study, translation by Fondazione Giacomo Brodolini et al.)

responsibility to fight violence against women through media campaigns and provide media training to professionals about media sexism.

<u>Mexico</u>

The *Ley General de Acceso de las Mujeres a una Vida Libre de Violencia*, includes a provision that states that mass media should 'avoid promoting violence against women and instead favour the eradication of every kind of violence, to strengthen the respect of human rights and women dignity', and that the government (through the Ministry of the Interior) can and should promote norms to 'favour the eradication of all kinds of violence and to strengthen the dignity and respect towards women' (p. 40–41). This Law has been updated to give the Ministry of the Interior the power to sanction mass media companies that do not comply with it. The Law has spurred many mass media companies to develop their own codes of ethics. For example, Television Azteca, a major media conglomerate, has adopted a code that commits it to gender equality by avoiding stereotypes of women, depictions of violence and machismo, both within the company and on-screen.

This study finds that gender regulatory acts and policies are typically media-related, but most are not legally-binding, nor well-enforced. At present, the only binding regulation in place is the 2010 Audiovisual Media Service Directive adopted by the European Parliament. This means that failure to comply with regulations can result in the broadcaster losing their broadcasting privileges and/or fines.

The study concludes that these sectoral regulations, or laws that target the media industry, have great potential to counter gender stereotyping and discrimination, but are currently too vague in their definitions of gender-discrimination. In the EU, although the legislation is binding, the responsibility for enforcement falls on self-regulatory bodies that tend to be weak, as they fail to follow-up on many complaints, and subjective, as adverts 'often express representations that are humiliating, degrading or offensive to women on the basis of their sex in an ironic and humoristic fashion that is likely to 'hide' sexism or make it socially acceptable' (p. 7). In sum, this study provides key insights into the dissonance between legislation to regulate gender representation in the media and actual media practice.

For a similar study see:
Rudloff, M. (2020) 'Legitimizing Sexist Advertising: A Critical Focus on the Danish Consumer Ombudsman's Guidelines and Adjudications of Complaints of Gender Discrimination' *Nordic Journal of Feminist and Gender Research* 28, no. 4 (2020): 329–343.

19. Winkler, S. (2021) 'Media's Influence on LGBTQ Support Across Africa' British Journal of Political Science 51, no. 2 (April 2021): 807–826.

Key topics: Africa; television; radio; print; new media; public broadcaster; LGBTQ+

This study begins by explaining that many governments across the African continent claim that foreign, pro-LGBTQ+ norms are spreading through the media, which is the basis for their censorship. Winkler points out that governments censor broadcast media (television and radio) often and easily because media are usually dominated by a single cable company spanning several markets. At the same time, LGBTQ+ activists across

Africa use alternative sources of media (newspapers, the Internet, etc.) to advocate for same-sex rights, to campaign against GBV, and more.

Considering the diverging trends, Winkler asks how media consumption influences individual support for homosexuality in 33 African countries. He uses cross-national data from the Afrobarometer Survey[10] in 2014–2015, which was the first year with questions on attitudes toward LGBTQ+ identities. The survey, which is conducted via face-to-face interviews in local languages, is 'designed with a sampling technique that allows inferences to all voting-age citizens in a given country' (p. 814). The study finds a baseline of 78% of respondents who report negative attitudes towards LGBTQ+ identities and individuals.

The survey asks how the respondent would feel about having a 'homosexual' as a neighbour, which is limiting, given the narrow definition of the word homosexual in comparison to the diversity of queer practices and non-standardised phrases across indigenous languages (p. 814). The recorded responses to the question include: strongly dislike, somewhat dislike, would not care, somewhat like and strongly like. It also asks how often the respondents get their news from five different sources: radio, television, newspaper, the Internet and social media. The recorded responses include: never, less than once a month, a few times a month, a few times a week or every day. Similar to other studies using regional and national survey data, control variables are designed for age, gender, income, home setting, religiosity, education, etc.

The findings indicate that the media's impact on attitudes toward LGBTQ+ support is linked to the content on each medium, specifically broadcast versus print and new media. As newspapers and social media are more difficult to censor than broadcast media, LGBTQ+ content is more easily available.

Overall, individuals who consume more media are 4% to 8% more likely to express pro-LGBTQ+ beliefs. On the one hand, broadcast media had either no or a negative effect on pro-LGBTQ+ attitudes. On the other hand, individuals who consume more newspapers, Internet, and social media content are 2% to 4% more likely to hold pro-LGBTQ+ attitudes.

Variation by country indicates that the effect of increased media consumption on support for LGBTQ+ people is greater in countries with higher levels of social globalisation (KOF score)[11] than it is in countries with low levels. In other words, 'in countries where queer content is more easily diffused and less likely to be banned (that is, high social globalization), consumption of traditional media (radio, TV, newspaper) increases support for LGBTQ+ people more than it would in countries with low social globalization' (p. 819).

The following findings emerged from a rapid investigation into the content of radio, newspapers and the Internet.

Radio
While the study does not cover all media content, it does give a snapshot into radio culture. Radio Kikuyu tweets English translations of news shows on 25 Kikuyu-language radio stations. Between 23

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[10] Afrobarometer is a 'non-partisan, pan-African research institution conducting public attitude surveys on democracy, governance, the economy and society in 30+ countries'. (https://afrobarometer.org/).

[11] *Konjunkturforschungsstelle* or KOF is an 'index of social globalisation to run a set of models that include a country-level measure of press freedom and norm diffusion' (Winkler, 2021: 815).

January to 15 October 2017, there was only one mention of same-sex relations: on CORO FM radio on 11 April and it was negative: 'Now that men have taken up with men and women with women, where will future generations come from? God said that men should marry women and yet these things are happening even in church.'.

Newspaper
Radio content was compared to newspaper content from the same time period in Kenya. Searches from *the Daily Nation*, the newspaper with the largest circulation in Kenya, found fifty domestic and international stories related to LGBTQ+ issues – both positive and negative. This suggests an overall tone that is more neutral in newspaper content.

Internet
The most popular search terms paired with the term 'gay' was 'black' in Kenya. Other search terms included 'Wattpad' (an online storytelling platform where users can post fiction and non-fiction stories) and 'Pride', suggesting that individuals are searching for information. Notably, 'none of the top topics searched alongside 'gay' in Kenya suggest that internet users are seeking negative content about LGBTQs' (p. 822).

In addition, many individuals were searching for content on popular cultural figures who had recently come out: Jussie Smollett, Sam Smith, and Wentworth Miller were popular searches.

These results suggest that overall media consumption enhances support for pro-LGBTQ+ attitudes. Upon further investigation, however, the mechanism that drives this support is the consumption of newspaper, internet and social media content, rather than the broadcast media that are censored by the government). This active censorship may actually increase pro-LGBTQ+ content on alternative mediums. In all, access to information may be difficult but it is not impossible and the Internet, in particular, is a promising medium for the delivery of freely accessible information across Africa.

Avenues of change: Is there evidence of gender norm change?

This section will first discuss studies that focus on establishing a correlation between general media consumption and norm change, drawing on data mainly from South Asia and the United States.

The section will then review studies on the content of the media consumed and its potential effect on norm change. The literature is divided into three themes: providing access to information, promoting new attitudes and behaviours, and, demonstrating new norms. These themes reflect the mechanisms by which broadcast media may facilitate or instigate norm change.

Key takeaways

☐ Studies find a correlation between more television consumption and a lower acceptance of both GBV and a preference for male children, while the likelihood of intending FGC increased with more television consumption.

☐ Women-led radio share information about women's rights and drive positive change, including women's rejection of GBV and traditional norms around marriage and family in their personal lives

☐ Women-led television and radio provide a forum where women can express their views and discuss taboo issues like sexuality, women's health and working outside the home. This can lead to profound norm change in communities where traditional gender norms have stopped women speaking out.

☐ 'Femvertising' in commercial broadcast media enhances self-esteem in both male and female adolescents, while adverts with counter-stereotypical representations of men face significant backlash.

☐ Individuals do not internalise every message from broadcast adverts: they rationalise the messages in line with their own experiences and beliefs.

☐ Entertainment media, particularly soap operas and other dramas, can drive significant gender norm change as individuals strive to emulate the ideals they see on screen.

☐ Edutainment – an area that has been extensively studied and often aims for norm change — is most effective when it uses role modelling in areas with a stronger culture of television and radio.

☐ The increasing globalisation of media increased body dissatisfaction among adolescent women in low- and middle-income countries, indicating a spread of gendered images and ideals that are not positive from the West.

Establishing a connection: correlational studies

Several studies suggest a correlational relationship between media exposure or usage and positive gender norm change. This set of literature uses data from various National Health and Family Surveys (NHFS) from South Asia and investigates women's attitudes toward GBV. The surveys are large-scale, multi-round, and are conducted in a representative sample of households approximately every five years; therefore, they provide a snapshot of attitudes over time, making it possible to gauge any shifts in norms between survey rounds. The surveys, which began in 1992, provide data on fertility, infant and child mortality, the practice of family planning, maternal and child health, reproductive health, nutrition, anaemia, and the use and quality of health and family planning services. In addition, the survey asks about media usage.[12] For the purposes of this annotated bibliography, the two most significant studies that have drawn on NHFS data are Bhushan and Singh (2014) and Chatterjee and Pillai (2018), which are discussed here.

20. **Bhushan, K. and Singh, P. (2014) 'The Effect of Media on Domestic Violence Norms: Evidence from India' Economics of Peace and Security Journal 9, no. 1 (April 2014): 58–63.**

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[12] According to the National Family and Health Survey of India (http://rchiips.org/nfhs/).

Key topics: South Asia; India; television; radio; GBV

Bhushan and Singh (2014) use data drawn from two rounds of the NHFS, conducted by India's International Institute for Population Sciences for 1998-1999 and for 2005-2006. It tests for any impact of mass media on norms related to domestic violence.

The 1998-1999 survey collected information from about 90,000 married women aged 15 to 49, while the 2005-2006 survey expanded and collected information from 124,000 women of the same age range (whether married and not), as well as 109,000 households, and 74,000 men. In both rounds, women were asked if they believed that it is justified for their husbands to beat them for one or more of the following reasons: if she leaves the household without telling him; if she neglects the household or children; if she does not cook food properly; or if he suspects her of being unfaithful. The survey also provides information on household access to media and frequency of use.

The data analysis, controlled for other variables, such as education level, place of residence, religion, socioeconomic status and more, reveasl that regularly accessing both television and radio leads to a small but statistically significant reduction (by 3.6%) in the probability of women accepting domestic violence. The most critical finding from the study was the *complementary* relationship between radio and television: watching television or listening to radio alone had no direct effect on attitudes toward domestic violence, but consuming both did have an impact.

While the data do not probe the change mechanism itself, the authors present two theories for any changes. The first is that media access has a positive influence on norms about women's status in society and, therefore, reduces their acceptance of violence. The second is that media consumption cuts into the time women spend on household chores and child care, which may make it more likely for women to experience (and hence accept) violence.

They find that consuming TV and radio reduces women's acceptance of violence significantly if they leave the house without telling their husband or are suspected of being unfaithful, but has only a limited effect on acceptance of violence if they neglect their children or cooking. This suggests that any changes in women's perceptions of violence are not driven primarily by any changes in their time use.

The study also explores the relationship between consuming broadcast media and experiencing domestic violence and finds no correlation between listening only to the radio and experiencing such violence. However, for women who only watched television, the likelihood of having experienced domestic violence was 5.6% higher, which could indicate 'some substitution between household duties and watching television that increases the probability of experiencing violence' (p. 62). In contrast, both watching television and listening to radio indicated a 4.9% decrease in the probability of having experienced domestic violence. This could be the result of either a change in gender norms or a different allocation of time by women who consume both media.

The weakness of this and similar studies is that they do not explore how much time women spend consuming each type of media in detail. There is a negative correlational but complex relationship between broadcast

media and gender norms. This reinforces the need for further research on the type and quantity of media consumed, its content, audience demographics, and specific measures of gender norms.

Other studies share similar frameworks and findings. Dasgupta (2019) finds 'a strong positive effect of exposure to mass media on women's status in India' (p. 243). Jesmin and Amin (2018), using NHFS data from Bangladesh, find a weak association between media consumption and gender equitable norm acceptance. Bhattacharya (2016), which finds that exposure to radio has a statistically weak association with the attitudes of both women and men towards domestic violence, while exposure to television had no significant association for women and only mixed results for men in India (reflecting the mixed findings in the study above).

Bhattacharya (2016) found that television exposure was associated with a lower likelihood of men justifying domestic violence on the basis of sex refusal but, overall, men with no television exposure were less likely reject justifications for domestic violence than men who watched television. These studies offer the most directly accessible indication of a relationship between broadcast media and gender norms. However, they are limited in scope to the statistical, correlational relationship because of the limited nature of the data used. As a result, they do not offer a comprehensive conceptual framework for the understanding of this relationship.

21. **Chatterjee, K. and Pillai, V. K. (2018) 'Media Effects on Gender Child Preference in India' Journal of Research in Gender Studies 8, no. 1 (2018): 108–132.**

Key topics: South Asia; India; television; radio; gender child preference

The other significant study in this set of literature is Chatterjee and Pillai (2018), which, in contrast to other studies, tests the relationship between broadcast media consumption and child gender preference in India. The authors use data from 84,609 participants (aged 15 to 49) of the NHFS in India (2005-2006).

Chatterjee and Pillai suggest that, apart from in relation to community radio, 'systematic media interventions have not been implemented in the 2000s to address gender equality and son preference'. Their study, therefore, focuses on the content of commercial broadcasting without a specific gender equality emphasis (p. 115).

They ask two research questions. First, what is the association between consumption of television/radio and equal son preference, strong son preference, and weak son preference? Second, how does the interaction between television and region affect equal son preference, strong son preference, and weak son preference?

Results indicate a link between general media consumption and a weakening of child gender preference.

Television
  ⬜ 39% increase in the odds of equal son preference among those who watch TV less than once a week compared with those who do not watch TV.

Radio

 27% increase in the odds of equal son preference among those who listen to radio less than once a week compared to those who do not listen to radio

 32% increase in the odds of strong son preference among those who listen to radio less than once a week compared to those who do not listen to radio

 no significant relationship between radio and weak son preference.

Overall, watching television every day lowered the odds of a *strong* son preference by 18%. This did vary by region: the interaction between television and region in reducing the odds of strong son preference was significant for the North of India, but not the South. The odds of equal son preference in the North were 28% lower than in the rest of the regions studied. This finding indicates that while the media has the potential to have an impact on strong gender norms – either egalitarian or discriminatory – it may not necessarily have the same impact on norms that are moderately-held.

The study suggests that new mediums, such as television, are related to social progress and norm change. However, frequency is key. Those who had minimal consumption of television (and radio) experienced an increase in the odds of strong son preference, while those who often or habitually consumed television experienced a reduction in the odds of holding a strong preference for sons. Furthermore, media consumption reduces the odds of agreeing with certain gender norms, rather than modifying the gender norm itself. Similar to other studies using NHFS data, this study's limitation was that it could not undertake content analysis.

22. [Westoff, C. F. and Koffman, D. A. (2011) 'The Association of Television and Radio with Reproductive Behaviour' Population and Development Review 37, no. 4 (December 2011): 749–759.](#)

Key topics: multi-region; Asia; sub-Saharan Africa; North Africa; Latin America and the Caribbean; radio; television; sexual & reproductive behaviour

In this study, Westoff and Koffman build on the seminal findings of [Jensen and Oster (2007)](#)[13] to analyse the correlation between television and radio consumption and reproductive behaviour across 48 countries, divided into four broad regions (Asia, sub-Saharan Africa, North Africa, and Latin America and the Caribbean). They examine the relationship between the frequency of watching television and listening to radio and the use of modern contraception, the number of children desired, and the number of recent births through interview data collected from 512,260 women (married women aged 15 to 49 and some never-married women aged 15 to 24) from Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS).

The specific DHS interview question used to quantify television and radio consumption is: Do you watch television almost every day, at least once a week less than once a week, or not at all? As with other DHS-based studies, this study does not take into consideration the content of television programmes and radio broadcasts.

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[13] Jensen and Oster (2007) find that the introduction of cable television in India lowered rates of fertility. They note that 'television may affect fertility by providing information on family planning services or changing the value of women's time' and that 'television exposes rural households to urban lifestyles, values and behaviours that are radically different than their own', consistent with social cognitive theory.

Westoff and Koffman find that all three measures of reproductive behaviour are influenced by mass media exposure when controlling for other variables such as education, wealth, urban residence and age.

<u>Media and contraceptive use</u>
Women who watch TV are 1.6 times more likely to use modern contraception than women who watch no television. This increases to 2.4 times for daily television consumption.

<u>Media and the number of children desired</u>
Television exposure reduces the mean number of children desired. For women who do not watch television, the average number of children desired is 5.2, falling to 3.2 children for women who are daily viewers.

<u>Media and recent fertility</u>
The study measured impacts on recent fertility, proxied by the number of children born in the previous five years (rather than the number of children ever born) and found a consistent decrease: 'For all countries combined, 52% of women who watch TV every day report no births in the past 5 years compared with 30% who do not watch TV. A similar but weaker association appears in each of the four regions' (p. 3).

Listening to the radio had a weaker relationship to fertility and contraception than watching television.

There were some regional variations in their findings. For example, there was no association between radio listening and contraceptive usage in Latin American and the Caribbean. And in Asia and North Africa, watching television was directly associated with the number of children desired, meaning the more a woman watched television, the more children she desired (when the variable 'school' was added, the relationship between television and number of children desired become inversely correlated).

Data from never-married women, which explore media impact on women's intended reproductive behaviour) demonstrate that the range is from 2.8 children among daily viewers to 4.0 for women who watch no TV for all countries combined. 'With the exception of radio exposure outside of sub-Saharan Africa, the average number of children desired declines with the amount of media exposure' (p. 5).

While this study uses correlational data only and does not capture content-level analysis, it establishes a relationship between indirect measures of gender norms and the consumption of broadcast media. Consistent with other DHS-based studies, this study replicates findings that indicate a weaker relationship between radio and gender norm change as compared to television, with the exception of sub-Saharan Africa, where radio listenership is more common.

23. [Coombe, J. and Davis, S. M. (2013) 'Gender Difference in the Influence of Television on Gender Ideology? TV hours and attitudes toward employed mothers 1988 – 2008' International Review of Modern Sociology 39, no. 2 (Autumn 2013): 205–223.](#)

Key topics: North America; US; television; gender roles; economic empowerment

Coombe and Davis investigate the relationship between television and 'gender ideology', or 'the beliefs and attitudes that individuals internalize from their society, where the individual views different behaviours and responsibilities as appropriate for either men or women'. They look specifically at attitudes toward employed mothers (p. 206), focusing on the US context, and use data from the 1988, 1998 and 2008 General Social Surveys. Similarly to the DHS- and NFHS-based studies, this study focuses on the number of hours spent watching television as the main independent variable.

The data used are pooled responses across the three survey years, generating a total of 3,880 observations, comprised of 929 from 1988, 1,690 from 1998, and 1,261 from 2008. In all, 55% of respondents were female, and the average respondent was 45.6 years old, had 13.2 years of education, and reported having 1.9 children. While the study included a diverse set of participants of varied racial/ethnic origins, marital status and religion, the participants were overwhelmingly white in comparison to US demographics. Importantly, the majority (53.1%) were in full-time employment.

The main assumption of this study is of the 'traditional American' gender ideology, which is based on the notion of separate public and private spheres; the latter being designated as the space where a woman fulfils her presumed gendered duties of attending to the home and raising children. Attitudes toward maternal employment indicate 'gender ideology' by proxy.

The results, however, suggest that attitudes among both women and men have become more egalitarian over time: for women, increased television consumption is correlated with more egalitarian views towards working mothers. This did not hold true for men: television consumption did not change their attitudes.

Both television consumption quantity and egalitarian views toward maternal employment converged for women and men after 1988. For example, women watched significantly more TV than men did in 1988, but there was no difference in consumption in 1998. Therefore, 'the theoretical mechanism through which television consumption influences attitudes toward maternal employment has likely changed. The proliferation of television channels with specialized content may have led to a changed relationship between television content and attitudes toward maternal employment' (p. 217).

The authors note that other literature has established that women and men watch different television programmes, and so the question of television content comes to the fore, like [Ward and Freidman (2006)](#) and [Holbert et al. (2003).](#) Both of which argue that gender-related beliefs may be reinforced through television consumption, since individuals may choose to watch content that is consistent with their beliefs systems.

Building on this, Coombe and Davis note that the proliferation of specialised content consumption 'has become more of a reflection of viewers' everyday experiences and therefore does not have the same type of influence on attitudes as it did prior to the 1980s' (p. 218). Therefore, the lack of changes in gender norms found in their study could be because individuals who have egalitarian beliefs may seek out particular kinds of

programming that reaffirms their pre-existing beliefs. These results point to the divergent affect that broadcast media may have on different audiences, and the necessity of content-analysis for a deeper understanding of the mechanisms by which norm change is achieved for the different genders.

24. [**Barker, H. (2019) 'Media and Community Influences on Female Genital Cutting in Egypt' The Journal of Development Communication 30, no. 2 (2019): 1–15.**](#)

Key topics: Middle East and North Africa; Egypt; television; radio; FGC

This study examines how media exposure influences the intent of Egyptian mothers for their daughters to undergo female genital cutting (FGC), and whether community discussions of FGC dampen the effects of mass media – television, radio, newspaper, and internet. Using data from the Egyptian Demographic and Health Surveys, Barker examines whether women who discussed FGC in their social networks and who were exposed to media are more or less likely to intend FGC for their daughters. She takes a longitudinal perspective, considering data from 2005 (before Egypt's ban on FGC), 2008 (the year of the ban), and 2014 (after the ban). The analysis focuses on the responses of ever-married women aged 15 to 49 who have at least one daughter aged 0 to 19 who has not yet been cut. A total of 23,925 women are included in this data set from all three years.

Barker begins with the assumption that a mother's preferences for FGC are embedded within her social context, and that her actions, therefore, reflect the influences of her family, her community and larger politico-cultural discourses. Building on this, she hypothesises that media exposure allows mothers to step 'out of the bounds of their immediate community, changing the social context in which decisions are made', and that this is expected to lower support for FGC. However, she also questions 'whether normative conversations about FGC within immediate communities constrains the influence of external norms' (pp. 4, 2). 'External norms' refers to rhetoric campaigning against FGC, for example, which is portrayed as the imposition of Western values in Egypt.

FGC is widely practisedin Egypt, but urban residence, wealth and education all diminish women's intentions to have their daughters cut. Social convention theory (which posits that norms are practiced because of community expectations) suggests that FGC only declines when parents see that other parents in their own *community* have abandoned the practice – not when FGC is denounced by a religious leader or criminalised by the state. Media exposure extends this community to encompass 'windows to the outside world'" which include anti-FGC perspectives and information (Westoff and Koffman, 2011).

Overall, the study found a fall in the percentage of women who intended to cut their daughters from 71% of women in 2005, to 58% in 2008, and 53% in 2014. This decrease could reflect 'women's fear of expressing intent after FGC's criminalization'. However, this is unlikely as 'parents and providers have received almost no legal repercussions for cutting girls, and additionally, if a mother is afraid to express her intent to cut a daughter, she is likely also afraid to actually have her daughter cut' (p. 7).

Exploring the effects of media exposure, the study finds that mothers who watched television were more likely to intend to practise FGC, while mothers who read the newspaper and used the Internet were less likely to do so. In a context such as Egypt, where FGC was, until recently, nearly universal, and where watching

TV is ubiquitous, 'Egyptian television programming from 2005 to 2014 may have served to strengthen conventional Egyptian identity and traditions rather than attempt any challenge to existing norms' (p. 12). This may reflect limited coverage of FGC on television during this period: 'If television viewers emulate the lifestyles they see on TV, they would not necessarily change their FGC behaviour to conform in the same way they could change their desired fertility, for example' (p. 12). By contrast, newspapers, both physical and online, may expose women to new sources of information.

Women who listened to the radio were less likely to intend to cut their daughters, but radio listening was only a significant predictor in the 2014 model, and the results were not, therefore, statistically significant. The percentage of radio listeners declined significantly in this period (from 68% to 15%), meaning that radio is unlikely to be an effective vehicle for widespread norm change.

Lastly, discussing FGC with friends and family amplified the negative effect of watching television and minimised the positive effect of reading the newspaper and using the Internet. In both 2005 and 2014, for example, 'when mothers both discussed FGC and read the newspaper, the effects of reading the newspaper were neutralized when mothers also discussed FGC in their communities' (p. 13). This suggests the continued strength of pro-FGC norms, even in the presence of media.

Other relevant literature includes a set on reproductive behaviour for young adults and women in sub-Saharan Africa.

- Miller, A. N., Kinnally, W., Maleche, H., Achieng' Booker, N. (2017) 'The Relationship between Nairobi Adolescents' Media Use and Their Sexual Beliefs and Attitudes' *Ajar-African Journal of Aids Research* 16, no. 2 (2017): 129–136.
- Bajoga, U. A., Atagame, K. L., Okigbo, C. C. (2015) 'Media Influence on Sexual Activity and Contraceptive Use: A Cross Sectional Survey among Young Women in Urban Nigeria' *African Journal of Reproductive Health 19*, no. 3 (September 2015): 100-110.
- Etana, D. and Gurmu, E. (2018) 'The Effect of Mass Media on Women's Reproductive Health Behaviour in Ethiopia' *Eastern Africa Social Science Research Review* 34, no. 2 (June 2018): 37–58.
- Olumide, A. O. and Ojengbede, O. A. (2016) 'The Media as a Critical Determinant of the Sexual and Reproductive Health of Adolescents in Ibadan, Nigeria' *Sexual & Reproductive Healthcare* 8 (June 2016): 63–74.
- Igbinoba, A. O., Soola, E. O., Omojola, O., Odukoya, J. et al. (2020) 'Women's Mass Media Exposure and Maternal Health Awareness in Ota, Nigeria' *Cogent Social Sciences* 6, no. 1 (January 2020): n.p.

Access to information

25. Dahal, S. (2013) 'Power, Empowerment and Community Radio: Media by and for Women in Nepal' Women's Studies International Forum 40 (October 2013): 44–55.

Key topics: South Asia; Nepal; radio; community broadcaster; GBV; gender equality; rights

By studying Radio Mukti, an all-women community radio in Nepal, this study highlights how bringing GBV 'into the alternative public sphere contributes towards women's empowerment' (p. 44). Radio Mukti aims to empower women through their active participation in the radio sphere.

Empowerment is defined as 'being vocal and having a right to 'voice.' Voice is defined as representation in both formal and informational institutions to enhance participation' (p. 45). Empowerment can lie in the participation in formal institutions of governance. Community radio is, therefore, a 'counter-hegemonic project' that 'creates political agents of just, equitable, and moral change, who are trained in the arts of resistance, mobilization, and self-governance' (p. 45). The empowerment of women, specifically, entails building the ability, capacity and skills of women to make informed decisions. Communications and community-organising activities are vital spaces for the transfer of this skillset and knowledge.

The main research question is: How can women make a difference by making their voices heard in the context of reporting and advocacy on issues affecting women, backed by evidence, information, and communication strategies?

Through focus group discussions, in-depth interviews with women working at the radio station and those who do not (a total of 30 women in all), background studies and media text analysis, community-radio is revealed to be a 'self-created alternative public space' (p. 48). Radio communities extend the social communities and networks of listeners, and this can, in turn, either push the boundaries of pre-existing social discourse or generate new ones. For example, Radio Mukti, the first all-woman community radio station in South Asia, is considering the launch of a special programme that would offer counselling to women callers in addition to the regular programming that provides news and information on community-level issues.

The impact can be significant. In the case of GBV, for example, it may give women a space to make public their suffering. Radio Mukti's daily programme on GBV issues, *Hamro Abhiyan* (Our Initiative) has helped to secure justice for many GBV survivors, including in one case where the perpetrator was a high-profile university professor. In this case, Dr. Sarita, the survivor, who had previously stayed silent about the abuse she had endured for many years, found that by sharing her story on *Hamro Abhiyan,* she could reclaim agency from a judicial system that was blocking her efforts to achieve justice. 'Once it [her story] became public through the radio, the court could not also afford to ignore it. Finally, she got justice and compensation as the victim of domestic violence from the past 17 years' (p. 51).

Community-based radio challenges the traditional power hegemony of the media, where 'audiences are considered as passive and subdued receivers of message – who hardly get any opportunities to act concurrently as a true and free emitter of information'. Community radio stations help 'to re-establish rights and identities of various marginalized communities' (pp. 52–53) as they target existing social networks and promote social discourses outside the mainstream.

Social discourse that is generated as opinions and emotions in community radio is transferred in knowledge and information. As seen in the above example, community radio, in particular, offers an accessible social discourse that can inform people about their rights and empower women.

This case study runs counter to the findings presented in Bouhout (2020), also reviewed in this bibliography, where interactive radio programmes serve to reinforce pre-existing norms. Both case studies, however, highlight the relationships between the listener and the producer; the audience and the medium, and the importance of the process of socialisation and the agency of the listener. There is, however, space for further research on the dialectic relationship between pre-existing social discourse, broadcast media and new knowledge and norms.

For similar studies see:

- Akhter, Rawshon and Md Azalanshah Md Syed (2021) 'Women's empowerment through strategic disobedience: A study of community radio in rural Bangladesh' *Asian Journal of Women's Studies* 27, no. 1 (2021): 46–65.
- Fombad, M. C. and Glenrose Veli, J. (2019) 'The Role of Community Radios in Information Dissemination to Rural Women in South Africa' *Journal of Librarianship and Information Science* 51, no. 1 (2019): 47–58.
- Rimmer, A. (2021) 'Breaking the silence: community radio, women, and empowerment' Community Development Journal 56, no. 2 (April 2021): 338–355.
- Herath, T., Guruge, D., Fernando, M., Jayarathna, S. et al.(2018) 'The effect of a community based health promotion intervention to change gender norms among women in a rural community in Sri Lanka' *BMC Public Health* 18.

26. Gustafsson, J. (2018) 'Domestic Connectivity: Media, Gender, and the Domestic Sphere in Kenya' Media and Communication 6, no. 2 (2018): 188–198.

Key topics: Africa; Kenya; television; radio; gender equality; economic empowerment; rights

This sociological study analyses 30 semi-structured interviews with women in Uasin Gishu County, Kenya, between January and June 2015. It asks: How does increased access and use of media influence Kenyan women's daily life in the domestic sphere and in what ways does it challenge gender inequalities and prevailing gender roles?

Popular development discourse emphasises the adoption of information and communications technology (ICTs) as an avenue for the achievement of gender equity. Importantly, ICTs can 'disrupt' or 'reshape' the boundaries of the private and public social spheres by introducing new information into or demonstrating new norms in the home. Gustafsson draws on Appadurai's (1990) important thesis, which argues that media offer audiences new ways to see their present reality. This study, however, stresses the need to locate women's usage of ICTs in their social, economic and cultural contexts. Similar to Barker (2019) — as discussed above— Gustafsson recognises the power of ICTs to connect women with a community beyond that of their immediate geographic surroundings and acknowledges the limiting presence of local influences on norm change.

The sample of women interviewed, while not representative, is diverse; they spanned rural, suburban, and urban residences, age, financial status and education level, among other factors. They have incorporated newly gained media into their daily lives and routines, and this has, in turn, 'opened up the home and turned the domestic sphere from a secluded place into a connected space where women can receive input from, connect with, and interact with the world, whilst also fulfilling their traditional gender roles' (p. 188) In this case, media access has actually reinforced the connection to the domestic sphere and the gendered division of labour.

Various women, for example, described how various forms of media – mobile phones, social media, television and radio – have introduced them to information that has changed their perception of the world.

Most notably, Eli, a 23-year-old single mother, learned of her rights as a woman after listening to a radio programme. Through this programme, she could draw parallels with and reflect on her own life. Similarly, Ivy, a 25-year-old married mother, became aware that women can own their own businesses after listening to a programme on Citizen Radio. Other women used soap operas as a way to learn life lessons (on, for example, financial support from the government for single mothers or measures to help them gain custody of their children). With findings similar to studies those by La Ferrara et al. (2012) and Yalkin and Veer (2018), this example demonstrates how entertainment content allows women to draw parallels between media content and their own lives.

While the usage of radio in the home enabled women to gain more information about their rights, their exposure to and ability to use broadcast media remained severely limited by prevailing cultural norms. None of the women in the study said that they had ever watched television in public as a result of the cultural norms against it. Furthermore, after the Kenyan government switched off the analogue signal in 2015, a decoder was required to pick up the digital signal, which many women could not afford. As a result, many rural women had only watched television a few times in their lives.

This study argues that the presence of ICTs and broadcast media has become embedded into women's daily routines, and that this has reinforced their ties to the private or domestic sphere. As women's physical mobility is still restricted in Kenya, ICTs and broadcast media offer them a way to 'better cope with their immobility' (p. 195).

27. **Stephen, L. (2013) 'The Women's Takeover of Media in Oaxaca: Gendered Rights 'to Speak' and 'to Be Heard' in We Are the Face of Oaxaca: Testimony and Social Movements. Chapel Hill: Duke University Press.**

Key topics: Latin America; Mexico; television; radio; community broadcaster; rights; mobilization; gender roles; civic/political engagement

In August 2006, between 2,500 and 5,000 women took part in *La Marcha de las Cacerolas* (the March of Pots and Pans) in Oaxaca, Mexico. They carried pots and pans to make *ruido de mujer* (women's noise) to protest against the state governor and to call for justice for those who had been arrested as part of the APPO[14] and Sección 22 demonstrations earlier that year.

The events of the march quickly escalated into a full-scale takeover of the state and commercial media by several hundred women, lasting around six months. At first, the women only wanted airtime on COR-TV (the equivalent to state-run public broadcasting) but when the station denied them this airtime they decided to stage a sit-in, hold the employees in the building and demand that they be heard on the air. They were assisted by the company technicians and work brigades sent in by the APPO, Sección 22 and Mal de Ojo TV, an independent media group in Oaxaca. The women ended up renaming the station *Televisión para el Pueblo Oaxaqueño* and its corresponding radio station *Radio Cacerola.* They held on to its airwaves for three weeks before its antennas were shut down and they were forced to move to other locations to continue broadcasting.

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[14] Popular Assembly of the Peoples of Oaxaca.

The women-led television and radio stations served two purposes. First, they were a tool for the social movements, and second, they became a method of testimonials or self-expression. Regarding the former, radio station emerged as the key medium for communication of news and the coordination of protest: it broadcast the locations of the local police to alert protestors and urged them 'not to lose faith' and keep protesting (p. 151). In one instance, *Radio Cacerola* announced that a protestor had been shot by the police but urged protestors not to be afraid and to continue to march towards a building that had already been taken over by the APPO. In another, it broadcast the kind of vehicle that was being used by the police after APPO leaders were detained without warrants, enabling the protestors to search for the cars. As such, women's control of the airwaves was an important factor in the endurance of this social movement until November 2006.

As a method of testimonials or self-expression, the radio station served as a forum for the discussion of issues that affected the residents of Oaxaca directly, like the local protests, femicide, etc. Local residents – particularly women – came to the station and called in to speak about their grievances. The radio station became 'a reclamation of public space' by women who were marginalised on multiple levels, as 'Zapotec, Mixtec, brown, short, fat, female and as a teacher or educator' (p. 159, 158).

The women who took over the television and radio stations articulated a 'gendered right' to speak and be heard. According to Lynn, conventional gender norms in Oaxaca had rendered women 'silent or soft-spoken' in their homes and in the teacher's movements. For many, their control of the radio and television broadcasts was the first time they had been able to speak freely without the pressures of the government censorship or local/community gender norms.

In addition, their representation in the mainstream media became part of their reclamation of public space: 'Deliberately projecting the racial and class identities that many Oaxacans were not accustomed to seeing and hearing on television was one of the most effective ways that the women's occupation began to challenge who belongs in the city' (p. 159). In doing so, the women who took over the station became public leaders and conceptualised their new rights to speak and be heard in the framework of their rights as citizens.

Some of the women recounted many changes in their lives as a result of the takeover. For many of the female participants, the march and the takeover of the radio was the first time that they had been away from their homes for any significant amount of time. Many had to call their husbands to tell them that they were not coming home and ask them to bring them food, clothing, etc. Afterward, some even became announcers on radio stations.

This level of positive change and support was not experienced by all, however. Some women said that they had been 'castigated by mothers-in-law for abandoning their families and responsibilities to marriages' (p. 152). In addition, the women also faced backlash on a wider community-level: some members of the APPO and Sección 22 thought the takeover was a mistake, called the women *'pendejas estupidas',* and did not support them.

Stephen argues that the women's takeover of state and commercial media was integral in the development of a gendered articulation of the right to speak and be heard. She considers this articulation 'venularization of human rights discourse' because it emerged during the social movement as a result of local conditions

characterised by both traditional gender norms and government repression that had doubly silenced the women of Oaxaca.

28. **Roces, M. (2012) 'Women's Studies on the Air: Radio, television, and women's movements' in Women's Movements and "the Filipina," 1986–2008. Honolulu, HA: University of Hawaii Press**.

Key topics: Southeast Asia; the Philippines; television; radio; community broadcaster; rights; gender roles; GBV; civic/political engagement; gender equality

This chapter analyses 'how women's organizations used radio and television to represent and fashion the Filipino woman' through the study of two television shows (*Womenwatch* and *XYZ Young Women's Television*) and five radio shows (*Okay Ka Mare!; Babae Ka, May Say Ka!; Tinig ng Nursia; XYZone;* and *Kape at Chika*) developed by three women's organisations: GABRIELLA, WMC and Nursia (p. 128). In total, the author reviewed 40 tapes of radio programmes and a number of television episodes; indexed the topics, guest speakers and anchors of the radio programmes and *Womanwatch;* interviewed the anchors and producers of the shows; and examined both the scripts from the television shows and records of audience questions. Episodes from the television shows were selected for their coverage of either high priority issues (trafficking, prostitution, women's labour, rape, domestic violence and sexual harassment) or for their coverage of controversial issues (reproductive health, abortion, and infidelity).

The author found that the television and radio shows were used in three ways: as an educational tool, as a medium to display 'alternative' role models, and as an advocacy tool. As an educational tool, radio and television programmes were like 'classrooms' and disseminated information to women in the Philippines about their basic civic and human rights and about feminist issues. The television and radio shows took the format of talk shows, where an expert (usually someone from a women's organisation) would discuss their area of expertise with the host and occasionally with women who had personal experience of the issue. The expert served, primarily, to direct women to resources such as crisis centres or lawyers.

In addition, Roces notes that one radio programme, *Tinig*, 'was almost an exact replica of a university women's studies subject' (p. 131). While other programmes raised feminist consciousness in more subtle ways, this programme shared not only practical information with audiences, but also 'feminist positions', or 'the new vocabularies of the women's movements' (p. 132). For example, each episode would begin by providing a definition of an unfamiliar (or even previously) taboo term, such as lesbianism or sexuality, with these words then defined from the perspective of the expert for that week. The format of the programmes was intended to deliver 'as much information as possible on a topic or issue to allow women to make choices based on available data' (p. 135).

In terms of displaying alternative role models, when women came on to the shows to share their personal stories, the focus remained on 'redefining the heroine' (p. 137). GBV survivors, for example, were hailed for their rejection of victimisation. This was particularly important in the Filipino context, where prevailing gender norms lead women to 'endure suffering quietly' (p. 138). By lauding those who spoke out, the radio and television programmes shifted the notion of the ideal woman as quiet and submissive and rejected the trope of the 'feisty (*mataray*)' woman as deviant or undesired (p. 138).

Examining the use of radio and television programmes as advocacy tools, the author notes that advocacy is tertiary to education and role modelling: 'Advocacy was introduced more subtlety in terms of criticisms against government policy or in the discussion of political and legislative lobbying' (p. 135). The programmes included advocacy only on issues where all the women's organisations were united in their stance, such as prostitution, rape and domestic violence. This advocacy was limited where women's organisations did not have a united position on a certain issue, including abortion, LGBTQ+ rights and infidelity. The programmes exercised considerable restraint regarding their critique of the government or the Catholic Church on topics seen as controversial.

The women's radio and television programmes did not have any records of their ratings. Their goal was 'sheer repetition of feminist messages' in the hope that this would ultimately normalize feminism and women's rights (p. 139). Their impact was most notable in breaking cultural taboos by, for example, featuring the first 'comfort woman' to speak out and tell her story; introducing topics on sex and female sexuality; and by problematising cultural norms like virginity. They also provided an alternative feminist perspective to the hegemonic discourses of the Catholic Church in the Philippines on women's issues.

For additional examples of television and visual activism in social movements see:

- Sutton, B. and Vacarezza, N. L. (2020) 'Abortion Rights in Images: Visual Interventions by Activist Organizations in Argentina' *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 45, no. 3 (2020): 731–757.
- Howe, C. (2008) 'Spectacles of Sexuality: Televisionary Activism in Nicaragua' *Cultural* Anthropology 23, no. 1 (2008): 48–84.
- Kwok, E. (2021) 'Women to the Front: Women's Participation and Visual Activism in Hong Kong's Protest Movement 2019' in Sliwinska, B. (Ed.) *Feminist Visual Activism and the Body,* pp. 165–181. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Alidou, O. D. (2013) 'Muslim Women and the Use of New Media: Inscribing their voices in the rights discourse' in *Muslim Women in Postcolonial Kenya: Leadership, Representation, and Social Change.* Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press.

Promoting new ideas, attitudes and behaviours

29. Varghese, N. and Kumar, N (2020) 'Femvertising as a Media Strategy to Increase Self-Esteem of Adolescents: An Experiment in India' Children and Youth Services Review 113 (June 2020): 1–7.

Key topics: South Asia; India; television; private broadcaster; gender portrayal

This study analyses the effects of femvertising on the self-esteem of adolescents. New public scholarship defines femvertising as 'advertising that challenges traditional advertising stereotypes' and that is commonly 'shared on new media' (p. 1). A femvertising campaign might, for example, portray characters like a 'baby caring dad, a lady boss, a boxing mom, a stay-at-home husband or a taxi driving woman' (p. 5).

Self-esteem acts as a variable proxy for attitudinal change in the study because it is linked to girls' future achievement, and their present-day capacity and ability. Lower self-esteem may, for example, lead girls to

disengage from courses in STEM subjects[15], which are coded as masculine. Self-esteem is measured through the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES),[16] a widely utilised and cited method, in which participants answer 10 questions on a 4-point scale related to their self-esteem.

The study covered 191 boys and girls aged 17 to 19 who were studying psychology at a private university in Tamil-Nadu, India. In a controlled, laboratory experiment, the participants were randomly exposed to stereotypical, neutral or 'femvertising' advertisements, chosen on the basis of whether they stereotyped women as passive in occupational, domestic, or physical roles; as sexualised women; as women in traditional roles coded as feminine; or portrayed women and men in the same setting with equal screen time.

Varghese and Kumar find that adolescents who viewed the femvertising advertisements exhibited more positive effects in terms of their self-esteem than those who viewed the stereotyped advertisements. Gender did not have any effect on the degree to which femvertising had a positive impact on their self-esteem. These results indicate that femvertising and counter-stereotyping can help to stimulate positive changes in gender norms, particularly in young people.

Femvertising 'reflects ideals of inclusion, and of modern societies where women take up diversified roles and responsibilities outside homes while also portraying as normal for men to be involved in domestic roles such as home making and child or elderly care, broadening the outlook of adolescents towards what a man or women could do' (p. 4). In other words, this study demonstrates the potential for femvertising to counter prevailing gender-inequitable practices in broadcast media.

For other studies on the reception of femvertising by different audiences see:

- Åkestam, N., Rosengren, S., Dahlen, M. (2017) 'Advertising 'like a Girl': Toward a Better Understanding of 'Femvertising' and Its Effects' *Psychology & Marketing* 34, no. 8 (August 2017): 795–806.
- Drake, V. E. (2017) 'The Impact of Female Empowerment in Advertising (Femvertising)' *Journal of Research in Marketing* 7 (2017): 593–599.
- Elhajjar, S. (2021) 'Attitudes toward Femvertising in the Middle East: The Case of Lebanon' *Journal of Islamic Marketing*.
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[15] Science, technology, engineering and mathematics.

[16] Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES) measures self-worth on a 10-point scale ranging from positive to negative feelings about the self (Rosenberg 1965).

30. [**Feng, Y., Chen, H., He, L. (2019) 'Consumer Responses to Femvertising: A Data-Mining Case of Dove's "Campaign for Real Beauty" on YouTube' Journal of Advertising 48, no. 3 (2019): 292–301.**](#)

Key topics: global; television; new media; private broadcaster; gender portrayal

Social media has opened up audience participation in traditional broadcast media by providing a forum, an alternative space, where individuals can react to and engage with media content. Participatory technologies, like social media, have the potential to either enhance or diminish the effects of advertising messages as a result of content that is, increasingly, user-generated.

Using their proposed analytical methodology, Yang et al. searched 20,419 unique YouTube comments under Dove's femvertising 'Campaign for 'Real Beauty'. This campaign is considered to be a pioneering case in femvertising, which has ambiguous effects, according to the literature.

On the one hand, Dove's campaign uses models who look like ordinary women. Exposure to these 'ordinary' images can reduce the perceived discrepancy between viewers and the models, and this can enhance positive attitudes toward the self (and toward the brand). On the other hand, femvertising encourages individuals to support feminist ideals by consuming Dove products, an idea considered to be the commercialisation of feminist empowerment.

The research questions are: based on the proposed analysis procedure, what topics do consumers discuss around Dove's 'Campaign for Real Beauty'? And is there any relationship between the topics of top-ranked comments and those of the overall viewer comments?

The primary framework is reception theory, which emphasises the audience's active role in interpreting messages. According to Hall (1980), consumers can interpret messages in three ways –preferred, negotiated and oppositional – which all depend on their reference codes.

Yang et al. set out examples that demonstrate what each of the three modes of interpretation look like.

> Preferred
> 'Thank you to [D]ove for delivering this important message: You don't have to be young or thin to be beautiful.'
>
> Negotiated
> 'I love Dove's campaign for real beauty, but not much this one … bodies of most elder women just DON'T look like these in the commercial.'

Oppositional

'Dove is owned by Unilever. Unilever also owns Axe. Now try to tell me they're pro-women.'

The five major themes that emerged in 953 randomly selected comments are: advertising scepticism, definition of beauty, praise of advertising, discussion of broad issues, and other. The results are as follows.

- The two most frequent topics of discussion are beauty (35.71%) and praise of the ad (35.33%), followed by other (15.43%) and ad scepticism (10.53%). The least frequent topic was discussion of broad issues (2.99%).
- In the top six comments listed below each of the nine videos that were part of the Dove 'Real Beauty' campaign (because of their overwhelming visibility and resulting influence in the discussion forum), the definition of beauty was discussed most often, followed by praise of ad, a finding that is similar to the pattern seen across the aggregate percentages.

The study presents its methodology using femvertising as a relevant case study. While the impact on gender norms is not discussed directly, it is visible and can be extrapolated from the classification system, the examples given, and further analysis that is not specific to broadcast media.

For another study on consumer response to femvertising outside the lens of marketing and advertising best practices see:

Rodrigues, R. A. (2016) '#Femvertising: Empowering women through the hashtag? A comparative analysis of consumers' reaction to feminist advertising on Twitter'. M.A. Thesis. Lisbon: Lisbon School of Economics and Management, University of Lisbon.

31. **Bogen, K. W., Williams, S. L., Reidy, D. E., Orchowski, L. M. (2021) 'We (Want To) Believe in the Best of Men: A Qualitative Analysis of Reactions to #Gillette on Twitter' Psychology of Men & Masculinities 22, no. 1 (January 2021): 101–1.**

Key topics: global; television; new media; private broadcaster; gender portrayal; GBV; masculinities

This study highlights the importance not only of gender norms but the perception of these norms in driving personal attitudes and behaviours. In particular, it explores the reaction to portrayals of counter-stereotypes in broadcast advertising through a qualitative study of social media data on public sentiment following the 2019 Gillette advertisement, 'We Believe'.

'We Believe' featured men intervening to end bullying, sexual harassment and violence. This portrayal of masculinity was a counter-stereotype to the typical portrayal of masculinity as 'achieving social dominance through the acquisition of wealth and status, behaving in aggressive ways to assert interpersonal control, appearing physically strong, displaying emotional 'toughness,' and avoiding behaviours regarded as stereotypically feminine' (p. 101).

While the advertisement did portray a counter-stereotype, it also evoked a long-standing norm of men as the protector and defender of women and children. The reaction to this campaign in the US was mixed: while

some lauded the advertisement for its progressive stance, others called for a boycott of all Gillette products – evidence of the varied reception to the subjective interpretation of new norms.

The two potential reasons for the high degree of backlash are linked to norms of masculine socialisation, and the wider political context (including the #MeToo movement). First, theories of masculinity suggest that it 'is only temporally achieved and may be easily and immediately revoked', with the need for masculine performance exerting a constant pressure on men (p. 102). Men are socialised into this paradigm, as they are taught from a young age to prove their masculinity, to 'be a man' or face consequences. Bogen et al. cite Vandello and Bosson (2013), who argue that this results in 'masculine gender role stress', which is described as the anxiety caused by the anticipation of any accidental violation of masculine norms. In addition, the changing norms around women and femininity are viewed as threats to this masculine paradigm. As a result, many men may exhibit hypermasculinity and engage in violence and aggression to overcome their own anxieties about their losing their masculine status.

Second, the advert aired during the #MeToo movement and a public discourse that emphasised 'gender transformative' policies. As other literature has suggested, advancements toward gender equality may be seen as a threat to men's social power, resulting in backlash.

The video of the advertisement was viewed 15 million times in the five days following its release. Bogen et al. used 497 tweets as the data for this study which appeared under the hashtag #Gillette (which trended during this period). Five major themes emerged.

Commentary about the brand and corporate social responsibility
About half of the tweets in the sample addressed Proctor & Gamble, Gillette's parent brand. Most shared a judgement on whether the corporation's decision to produce this advertisement was positive or negative. Around 18% of the tweets in the data set commented on the corporation's ethical responsibility to address social issues, while 8% called for a boycott of Gillette products.

Several tweets accused Proctor & Gamble of hypocrisy and exploiting a social issue for monetary gains. Proctor & Gamble's practices, such as animal testing, irresponsible waste disposal, the 'pink tax' on women's razors, and advertisements showing sexualised portrayals of women were brought up to highlight the discrepancy between the messaging in the advertisement and the practices of the corporation. Others questioned the efficacy of the advertisement, which could be received as insulting men.

Commentary on masculine norms regarding aggression
One third of the tweets referenced the intersection of masculine norms and aggression. There was a clear divide in how different users defined masculinity. One group, which characterised the ad as an attack on men, held traditional gender norms regarding masculinity: they valued dominance, stoicism and power over women, and regarded these traits as natural for men based on their biological sex.

Interestingly, however, even those who supported the advertisements for its subversion reinforced traditional norms of masculinity. For example, one user said: 'You are getting up

in arms on social media about a commercial 'attacking masculinity' just shows how less of a man you really are #TruthHurts #Gillette', which reinforced the norm of stoicism and lack of emotional expression in masculinity.

Calling upon men to challenge problematic norms

Among tweets favourable to the advertisement, many called for men to be held accountable for actions that were derivative of traditional or hegemonic masculinity. For example, one user stated, 'To anyone who is trashing the new Gillette commercial . . . it's because you see yourself in it. Take a stand and make a change. #MeToo #Gillette'.

Resistance to advertisement: deflection and antifeminist sentiment

Among the tweets that we not favourable to the ad, around 9% included comments that harmful behaviour is not limited to men and that the ad did not represent all men – arguments that are typical of the men's rights and anti-gender movements. For example, tweets referenced a double standard and claimed that the ads targeted men unfairly: 'I am sick and tired of the media and the PC police shaming and running men down for being a man. We can't even look or say something nice about a lady's appearance without being called pigs. Even though they dress so men will stare at them #GilletteBoycott'.

Nationalism, racial animus and political affiliation

In all, 9% of the tweets studied included prejudices based on group membership, nationalism, racial animus or political affiliation. Groupings included Americans versus non-Americans, conservatives versus liberals and racial majorities versus racial minorities. Some 5% of tweets associated masculinity with nationalism, specifically American nationalism: 'Encourage all your buddies to maintain their manhood. America is in dire need of this!!!! #Gillette'. Other tweets expressed racial animus: 'The problem with the #Gillette ad is that it was wilfully ignorant of sexual assault statistics. They have black men stopping white men from catcalling or sexual assaulting, yet black men are much more likely to do both. Quit with the fantasy land shit #Gillette'.

In sum, this study offers data on the challenges in attempting to change norms of masculinity via advertising. However, the study could not analyse findings in an intersectional way because of the limits of Twitter data, and further research, including factors such as socioeconomic status and race and/or ethnicity, could provide a more nuanced discussion of the interaction of hegemonic and subordinate masculinities. In addition, other literature has noted how the Internet and web-based activism produce group narrative and identity, and future research could also consider the interaction between individual and group attitudes toward masculinity. We can glean from this study large-scale backlash to the presentation of new gender norms in a global campaign, particularly in relation to masculinity (e.g. Segal, 1993).

32. Zayer L. T., McGrath, M. A., Castro-González, P. (2019) 'Men and Masculinities in a Changing World: (De)Legitimizing Gender Ideals in Advertising' European Journal of Marketing 54, no. 1 (January 2019): 238–260.

Key topics: multi-country; US; China; Spain; television; private broadcaster; masculinities; gender portrayal

Zayer et al. begin by citing legitimisation theory as developed by Suchman (1995), which examines how, norms, values, and beliefs came to be seen as legitimate. Since the inception of this theory, however, the way in which individuals resist established institutional codes has nuanced it: consumers may not passively accept the messages present in adverts and may actually resist them.

Zayer et al. contribute to the scholarship on the impact of advertising on consumer gender ideals by stipulating that 'while institutions shape consumers' lives through discourses that legitimize certain goals consumers play an integral part in shaping and reiterating what is legitimate or 'desirable, proper or appropriate'' (p. 239). Their model gives a greater degree of agency to the individual as an agent of change.

By studying the experiences of consumers in the US, China and Spain, this study aims to 'illuminate the ways in which consumers engage in (de)legitimizing gendered messages in advertising', and asks what strategies consumers use to legitimise and delegitimise gender in advertising (p. 239). These three countries were chosen specifically to illustrate regional differences and because they have experienced rapid change in gender norms.

The method included semi-structured interviews with 48 men, ranging in age from 18 to 34 years. Younger individuals were chosen specifically because they tend to hold more gender fluid ideals.

Institutionalised gender ideals

Respondents reflected the notion that gender ideals are not static and are, instead, quite fluid, contradictory and fragmented. An American respondent, for example, said: 'guys can feel a little more free to do their own thing', in comparison to women. Another respondent said: 'it does get confusing' when he tries to decode what is ideal or appropriate masculinity.

The study identifies three forces that uphold traditional ideals of masculinity: normative force, cultural-cognitive force and regulative force. The first, normative force, ascribed by men to deeply entrenched norms, was shown when three Spanish respondents highlighted the importance of men caring for the family as part of ideal masculinity (adhering to the traditional model of family that is deeply entrenched in Spanish society.) The second, cultural-cognitive force, meant that respondents ascribed gender norms to cultural codes: they often mimicked the traditional expected behaviour of men and noted that these messages were repeated in advertising.

In addition, the study finds that some respondents adhered to traditional notions of masculinity not because of cultural codes but because of regulative force, i.e. 'they felt it was in their best interest to do so' (p. 248). They did not want to modify or change their behaviour, because they felt it was too risky to deviate from the mainstream. For example: , 'one Chinese man discusses his exploration of different ideals, settling on an ideology that provides the most incentives for him in the eyes of his family and in his work life . . . 'everyone

around was looking to the pop stars, who were dressed a little feminine. I thought that was fashionable and adopted it as an ideal.' However, he explains he could not enact this ideal because 'my parents would not let me. And, now I have started to work, I want to be more like those successful businesspeople, confident and optimistic [. . .] rather than appearing like middlesex" (meaning gender non-binary or non-traditionally masculine, in this context) (p. 249).

Consumer strategies of (de)legitimisation

Reiteration

Some respondents easily locate and adhere to scripts of masculinity presented in advertising. One Chinese participant, for example, said that he associated Johnny Walker with his sense of ideal masculinity based on the advertisement: 'So I have this alcohol. I only knew this was foreign liquor, but as to what it is or what meaning it has, I had no idea. But after the ad, [my father] put this bottle at a special place'. He said that the ad was 'inspiring', and 'if I go out and have a drink, I might order this first because of the advertisement'. In other words, the respondent consumed Johnny Walker because he associated it with his gender ideal. Although there are other forces at play in this example, particularly family and peer norms, he still operated within the message of the advertisement, or the 'dominant code'.

Reframing

Some participants delegitimised gendered messages in advertising by reframing them to match their own experiences and needs. For example, participants from all three cultural contexts said that masculinity nowadays is more individualised, thus resisting the 'marketized forms of masculinity' spurred by the turn of the century (p. 250). One Chinese respondent rejected the notion that men need to be 'packaged to perfection', and two American respondents stated that the advertisements did not erode their sense of self. In addition, one Spanish respondent reframed the messages in advertisements based on his sense of increasing globalisation, stating that they reflect the changing times and, therefore, present ideals that differ from those of previous generations.

Ascribing to an alternative logic of authority

Respondents displayed an awareness of the forces of marketing, advertising and commercialisation that underpin gendered messages in adverts, and based on that, rejected the messages that they perceived as 'inauthentic'. Instead, they reverted to gender ideals from other sources, such as family and peers. For example, one respondent from the US stated that '"metrosexuality," as presented in advertising, "turns me off," because he is not sure if this guy is completely masculine or somewhat feminine'. Instead, he wanted to achieve a more 'real' ideal of gender, which was based, in part, on more traditional American ideals of masculinity.

Prioritising personal norms

Respondents also chose 'to prioritize their personal norms, setting boundaries of what they find morally acceptable and appealing' (p. 252). For example, one respondent from Spain (like another in the US.) discussed his repulsion or rejection of an ad that depicted the male gaze and men as womanisers or playboys.

These forces are not mutually exclusive, but are interwoven. The (de)legitimisation of gender ideals presented in advertising work both progressively, as demonstrated by the rejection of the playboy or womaniser trope, and regressively, as demonstrated by the rejection of 'metrosexuality', leading to the conclusion that gender norms and ideals are formed by a constellation of media and interpersonal forces that are fragmented, contradictory and fluid. In sum, this study demonstrates the ways in which individuals can bring about change in social discourses on gender over time through the rejection of stereotypical, mainstream or dominant gender portrayals.

33. [La Ferrara, E. (2016) 'Media as a Tool for Institutional Change in Development' EDI-RA1 Presentation](.)

34. [La Ferrara, E. (2016) 'Mass Media and Social Change: Can We Use Television to Fight Poverty?' Journal of the European Economic Association 14, no. 4 (August 2016): 791–827.](.)

Key topics: theoretical review; review study; television; radio; private broadcaster; EE; economic empowerment; gender portrayal; sexual & reproductive behaviour

These two studies are discussed jointly as the latter is a more comprehensive version of the former. The second study includes a more in-depth discussion of individual country studies from Africa, as well as cross-regional comparison using DHS survey data to consider the potential of education entertainment in norm change programmes.

La Ferrara summarises the main frameworks regarding media, influence, and social outcomes. She argues that mass media have the potential to induce changes in people's preferences, attitudes, and behaviours by either providing information, by providing role modelling, and by increasing time use, often via multiple mechanisms simultaneously. Each framework is supplemented by recent case studies about social norms in general, some related directly to gender norms.

Access to information

La Ferrara cites [Berg and Zia (2013)](.), who study a narrative on over-borrowing and financial education on the mainstream soap opera in South Africa, *Scandal!*. The plot featured 'a woman who was overborrowing through hire purchase contracts, then gambling in an attempt to recover money, and falling into a debt trap. Eventually the character sought help from NDMA and learnt how to manage her finances in a responsible way' (p. 813). The aim of the plot was to 'role model' and provide information on the consequences of behaviour that was financially irresponsible and on how to get out of debt.

The financial knowledge of audiences improved (although this was limited to those incentivised to watch the programme): their use of hire purchase fell by 20% and their gambling by 17%, with larger effects for respondents with low financial literary and education exposure before the programme. In the short run, calls to the National Debt Mediation Association (NDMA) increased, but this effect disappeared after four months. Focus group interviews revealed that this was because of the lack of emotional connection with the character acting as the NDMA agent in the soap opera.

Role modelling

Edutainment, or EE, uses a 'differential modelling' format with three types of characters (positive, negative, and transitional to trigger social learning. Transitional characters, or characters who have a developmental narrative arc, are the most important because they offer an inspirational frame of reference and trigger self-reflection. In addition, EE includes strategies of *identification* and *exemplification* to decrease resistance to the messages and offer accessible examples.

La Ferrara also cites Paluck (2009) and Paluck and Green (2009), who evaluate the impact of the radio soap opera *Musekeweya* (New Dawn). This soap opera 'contained messages on the risks of blindly obeying authority and the importance of maintaining one's independent judgment, as well as content on the origins of violence and how to avoid it' (p. 817). Prescriptive norms changed: listeners were more likely to say that intermarriage between ethnic groups should be allowed, that one should feel free to dissent, talk about trauma, and trust others; but descriptive norms did not change: 'the perceived incidence of mistrust remained the same as in the control communities' (p. 818).

Time use

When people spend time consuming media, they allocate that time away from other activities. As a result, therefore, the 'net effect of exposure depends on the activities that are 'crowded out' by media consumption' (p. 728).

EE is most effective in 'contexts where other sources of information are relative less diffuse' and where its content is considered innovative. In other words, it is most effective in: 'poor countries with low literacy rates clearly constitute an environment where the easily accessible 'language' of television and radio gives them a comparative advantage over other means of communication and exposure to new lifestyles' (p. 793).

Various mechanical and ethical issues may limit the impact of EE, however, including the ethical dimensions of programmed content. In addition to the potential for harmful state intervention on the grounds of education or development, the viewer's own awareness of content manipulation may lead them to seek out other outlets, limiting the effectiveness of these campaigns. Additional limitations include: the interplay between media content and deeply rooted social norms (EE may change preferences but not intended behaviour); the 'optimal degree of challenging the status quo' ("a message that is too mild may not induce the desired change, but a message that is too far from the existing norm may discourage behavioural change if the new behaviour is perceived as too threatening); and globalisation (what media do, what individuals have access to, and what messages they are receiving) (p. 728).

Lastly, La Ferrara emphasises key aspects of norm change that should be included in the development and evaluation of future EE programmes: targeting individual versus group behaviour; and peers' expected behaviour. Another study La Ferrara draws on is Banerjee et al. (2015), which evaluates a TV series produced by MTV in Nigeria (*Shuga 3*) to reduce risky sexual behaviour and domestic violence. Their design accounts for the spill-over or social effects associated with EE – an understudied dimension – and finds that even though GBV was not a main theme of the TV programme, men's attitudes toward GBV had improved markedly eight months after exposure. Other understudied aspects include: the long-term effects of EE (which only run from one to six months); resistance or counter-arguing; and the legitimacy or authority of messages.

35. [Haylock, L., Cornelius, R., Malunga, A., Mbandazayo, K. (2016) 'Shifting Negative Social Norms Rooted in Unequal Gender and Power Relationships to Prevent Violence against Women and Girls' Gender & Development 24, no. 2 (May 2016): 231–244.](#)

Key topics: theoretical review; review study; television; radio; private broadcaster; EE; GBV

This piece reviews Oxfam's EE initiative, the 'Knowledge Hub', which is a database supports practitioners in improving the quality of their programmes from design to implementation, monitoring, learning and influence. The knowledge hub also aims to diversify evidence on what works in GBV programme interventions, given that the majority of the evidence comes from high-income countries and from programmes that respond to GBV rather than programmes focused on prevention.

Oxfam's Knowledge Hub aims to gather literature that uses the Knowledge-Attitudes-Practice (KAP) framework, which suggests that 'improved knowledge shifts negative attitudes and then eventually shifts and changes behaviour' (p. 234). However, research has shown that this process is not always straightforward, and that it is hampered by what is referred to as the 'KAP gap'.

Three strategies commonly used in norm change are: social movements, role modelling, and modelling positive behaviour.

Social movements

Social movement strategies are larger in scope than role modelling and positive behavior modelling and seek collective action as the basis of norm change. In El Salvador, for example, Oxfam developed a long-term media campaign targeting government officials, police, the judiciary, service provides and the school system to generate opportunities to put GBV on the political agenda.

Another example given is the 'We are Revolting' campaign in South Africa that aims to disseminate progressive gender norms through the media. The hashtag #Our Revolt is a space where women can share their stories of disempowerment, discrimination and violence, as well as healing and connecting.

Role modelling

The main premise behind role modelling is that regressive and harmful behaviour is learned, and that it can, therefore, be unlearned. In this format, influential individuals such as celebrities, religious leaders and community leaders persuade people to adopt new attitudes and norms. For example, civil society leaders were the role models in the media campaigns in an anti-violence Oxfam programme in Bolivia; in Uganda, it was local religious and political leaders.

There is some apprehension, however, about role modelling in literature that evaluates programmes. Haylock et al. cite [Jewkes et al. (2015)](#), who warn against presenting role models that flip hegemonic gender norms (particularly masculinities) in efforts to combat GBV. In other words, programmes that use masculinised language like 'strong, warrior, leaders' to describe what it means to be a man who supports non-violence may end up reinforcing the existing gendered power relations (p. 235).

Modelling positive behaviour

Tied to role monitoring is modelling positive behaviour or using a wide variety or real and fictional personas to convey messages. This model is used in Oxfam's EE programmes in El Salvador, Bangladesh, China and Nigeria. The programme in El Salvador, for example, dramatised the story of Red Riding Hood to draw out narratives of girls' empowerment and integrate them into the school curriculum (*Movimiento Salvadoreño de Mujeres*).

The authors highlight the need for social norm change programmes to be partner-led and community-based to be most effective. This is essential if they are to be truly subject-centric and transformative.

36. **Grady, C., Iannantuoni, A., Winters, M. S. (2021) 'Influencing the Means but Not the Ends: The Role of Entertainment-Education Interventions in Development' World Development 138 (February 2021).**

Key topics: theoretical review; review study; television; radio; private broadcaster; EE; gender equality; sexual & reproductive behaviour; GBV

With Bandura's social learning theory as the foundation, Grady et al. review the existing studies on EE and argue that the type of behaviour it portrays has an impact on programme success and that successive EE programmes model behaviour that individuals believe will help them to achieve their goals (whether related to their social status, individual health, etc.) This suggests that programmes are less likely to succeed when they encourage individuals to adopt completely new behaviours than when they target specific behaviour and link it to a pre-existing goal.

Grady et al. cite previous research that found that the impact of EE viewership on women's empowerment and gender-norm change correlated with support for gender equality but did not increase 'awareness of gender equality or family planning' (for example, Brown, 1990 and Brown and Cody, 1991) (p. 8). However, another EE programme in India studied by Singhal et al. (1998) spurred action in a village: residents signed a pledge that opposed dowries and child marriage and supported the education of girls (Papa et al., 2000).

Most of the existing studies on women's empowerment, which found EE to be effective, 'were more likely to revolve around a change in the overall media environment' (p. 9). The results over the past 20 years also indicate that 'edutainment programs appealing to audiences' desire for material outcomes, like improved livelihoods and personal health, show strong and consistent impacts on behaviour', and are, therefore, considered successful or effective (p. 8).

In addition, EE programmes can be linked to changes in audience perceptions of social norms and several seek to change perceived norms around GBV, for example: 'such updated perceptions can affect the behaviours individuals adopt in order to achieve their goals, as social norms indicate to them what behaviours are normal, expected, and desirable' (p. 9). Grady et al. cite four important studies to support their claims:

> Usdin et al. (2005) finds large changes in perceptions of social norms in South Africa. A scene in the EE programme *Soul City*, for example, showed a group of neighbours banging pots and pans at the door of an abuser to admonish him. Similar behaviour has been observed in pubs after a man abuses

his girlfriend: the patrons bang their bottles to admonish him. This study suggests that the campaign was pivotal in the struggle to pass the Domestic Violence Act.

Yue et al. (2019) show that an EE television drama serial in China improved awareness about GBV, helped survivors recover from violence, encouraged bystanders to intervene, and increased support for anti-domestic violence legislation.

Green et al., (2020) find that an EE programme in Uganda increased reporting of domestic violence and also decreased instances of violence against women. After watching the programme, women were more likely to think that they would not face social stigma for reporting GBV, and both men and women were more likely to think that the men would face consequences from the rest of the community for committing such violence.

Yet another study, Arias (2019), showed that an EE radio drama transmitted in Mexico through communal loudspeakers instead of in private or alone led to changes in individual's perceptions about gender norms related to GBV, attitudes about GBV, and intended behaviour (audience members were more likely to sign a petition for support group for survivors). Clearly, the role of perceived peer and community attitudes and actions is vital.

After citing literature on EE programming to promote public health and to counter violent extremism, where the 'fundamental attitudes' of the audiences were unmoved, Grady et al. return to their central argument that while EE programming has changed the perception of social norms, as shown by the efficacy of programmes on GBV, divorce, birth control and women's economic independence, there is little evidence of EE modifying behaviour related to peacebuilding, intergroup relations or violent extremism.

There are, the authors conclude, two pathways by which media programmes change norms: changing an individual's end goal, or changing the means by which an individual achieves that goal. Both of these pathways can be accomplished through EE that focuses on changing an individual's perceptions of social norms. In addition, the literature suggests that EE affects attitudes and behaviours primarily through informational, not persuasive, methods. The authors recommend, therefore, that programmes seek to inform audiences about perceived norms.

37. **Khalid, M. Z. and Ahmed, A. (2014) 'Entertainment Education Strategy' Review of Journalism and Mass Communication 2, no. 1 (June 2014): 69–89.**

Key topics: theoretical review; review study; television; radio; private broadcaster; EE; gender child preference; gender portrayal; literacy/education

Khalid and Ahmed define 'ideation' and 'social interaction' as two important mechanisms in changing social norms through EE. Ideation refers to the idea that communication has a direct influence on some members of the total audience to change their behaviour. Social interaction, in this context, is the idea that the social and marketing spheres are fused.

In this way, EE can contribute to social norm change in two ways:

1. It can influence audience awareness, attitudes and behaviours to a certain end.

2. It can influence the audience's external environment to help create the necessary conditions for social change at the group or system level. (See Papa et al., 2000 for how EE can serve as a 'social mobilizer, an advocate, or an agenda setter' that influences the public to a certain end.)

After clearly defining EE and its characteristics and reviewing early examples of EE in India and Latin America, Khalid and Ahmed cite Miguel Sabido's 'three-step process' ([Singhal et al., 2004](#)) to reinforce pro-social values: first, depict social problems and the value conflicts associated with such problems; second motivate the audience towards pro-social values; and third, create role models through soap operas characters who represent specific value orientations symbolically.

The underlying premise is that of *identification*. Audiences learn from characters with whom they can identify, as social learning theory posits. Take, for example, two EE dramas from India, *Amanat and Aashirwaad* and *Humlog*. The main positive character in *Amanat* inspired viewers to take care of and have a positive attitude toward their daughters, according to [Gokulsing (2004),](#) the study that Khalid and Ahmed cite. As for *Humlog,* 80% of women viewers regarded the mother as a positive role model and one that followed the traditional values of Indian society, while 16% of women thought that two other characters were positive role models for women's equality and the freedom to work outside the home, according to Brown and Cody (1991).

The next premise is *para-social interaction,* or the interaction between the characters, content and the audience. In particular, this is about the idea that the audience forms a relationship with the character that is similar to actual social relationships. In *Humlog,* para-social interaction was demonstrated by the fact that many young women went to the home of one of the actresses and sent personal telegrams and cards to advise her on her character's situation. Both identification and para-social interaction work to achieve role modelling.

EE can also reinforce personal and social values. For example, Mexico's EE *telenovelas* have changed viewers' beliefs on health education, literacy, family planning and family relationships. *Ven Conmigo,* a telenovela that promoted adult literacy resulted in one million new registrations for adult education classes in the days following a specific plot during which an older man became emotional after successfully reading letters from his granddaughter. As television is one of the main ways to access information in development settings, pro-development messages work; 'Television dependency occurs when the people believe they need to watch television to obtain information for the interaction with others and to understand the physical and social environment' (p. 81).

As seen in studies on commercial entertainment media, research on EE suggests that programmes trigger communication, which leads to changes in social discourse. As such, the effects of EE are achieved primarily through role modelling and para-social interaction and the interactions of audience members with both positive *and* negative characters.

38. **Wang, P. (2017) 'Inventing Traditions: Television Dating Shows in the People's Republic of China' Media, Culture & Society 39, no. 4 (May 2017): 504–519.**

Key topics: East Asia; China; television; private broadcaster; sexual & reproductive behaviour

This study looks at the emergence of dating shows in China from the late 1980s to the present-day, arguing that this media space reflects the changing preferences of television viewers, media regulations and social and gender relations. Specifically, dating shows both advance the marriage matchmaking culture and challenge traditional belief systems through the (re)invention of new traditions and the mobilisation of the audience in discussing gender relations.

Wang's primary framework is Hobsbawm's 'invented traditions', which refers to the 'regulated practices of a ritual or symbolic nature seeking to 'inculcate certain values and norms of behaviours by repetition'' (Hobsbawm, 1983). In turn, these function to establish identities and norms. Television dating show have, therefore, created a new matchmaking culture and established a new traditional of media consumption in China.

The pilot episode of the dating show in China in 1988 reflects the climate of political censorship at the time. The show, *Television Red Bride*, featured widowed men of lower socio-economic status who lived in remote areas attempting to find a wife. When on the show, they only answered questions about their family background, which is more akin to an extended marriage advertisement.

After the initial episode, when women appeared on the show they were stigmatised – despite efforts by the Government to promote gender equality. In another instance, however, the show helped to promote the acceptance of LGBTQ+ relationships and marriage by hosting a discussion on what were considered previously taboo topics (albeit only after a change in government policy).[17]

There were two stages of the development programme in the period of political, economic and social liberalisation of government oversight of the media: a second-generation (1990s) of shows that used the group matchmaking format, where participants were selected on the basis of their appearance and talent, and where they enjoyed the process of speed-dating and matchmaking through games and activities; and a third-generation of shows (2010s) that were accused of promoting 'bad' values and were, therefore, (re-)regulated by the State Administrative of Radio, Film and Television to adhere to mainstream social discourse on gender relations. One such show is *If You Are The One*.

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[17] The shift was the result of revisions to the marriage laws that began in the 1980s: 'In 1980, the PRC [People's Republic of China] government revised its 1950 marriage law and promulgated a new law which re-emphasized the concepts of marriage freedom, monogamy, and gender equality. The 1980 marriage law firstly made 'alienation of mutual affection' (ganqing polie) grounds for divorce upon failure of mediation by the People's court (No. 25, Ch4, National People's Congress, 1980). The 2001 marriage law further outlined details of conditions for 'alienation of mutual affection' (No. 32, Ch4, National People's Congress, 2001). The amendments of the marriage laws reflected an emphasis on individual feelings in marriage that was supported by the PRC government. Hence, freedom of love and marriage and expression of personal feelings, which were previously considered 'capitalist' and suppressed by the PRC government, began to form into a new ideology and shape public discourse in modern China" (pp. 507–508).

The television dating programme provides a forum for men (who constitute the majority of the Chinese population), and single 30- to 40-year-old women of urban, middle-class, well-educated, financially independent backgrounds (known as 'surplus women') to not only find a spouse but also to navigate taboo social and moral issues. Some of the topics discussed on the show include: prejudice against obese people, marriage freedom, the meaning of love, conjugal relations, domestic violence, the growing divorce rate, filial piety, inter-generational disputes, social and gender inequality, social responsibility, materialism and consumerism, racism and environmental issues.

In addition, the show presents 'neoliberal' values toward love, marriage and family that contest traditional gender relations. Many women on the show are, for example, of higher socio-economic status than their potential partners. This practice runs against the traditional notion of marriage where women tend to pursue upward mobility and challenges 'the traditional male-dominated power dynamic in intimate relationships' (p. 514). Another example is the number of contestants on the show who exhibit a preference for experienced partners, which goes against the traditional values of chastity.

As the reality television programme is participatory in nature, using people from the so-called real world, its content reflects that of wider society. As such, the change in the values represented on-screen on the dating shows reflects an increasingly liberalising, capitalising and globalising urban Chinese population. However, the continued popularity of these reality programmes may open up public space to discuss taboo issues and reinforce cosmopolitan attitudes toward gender relations (*If You Are The One* maintained a high audience rating of above 3.5% a month from the second half of 2010, second only to the evening news and weather forecast; in 2014, the show received a total of 36 million viewers).

39. **Matar, D. (2007) 'Heya TV: A Feminist Counterpublic for Arab Women?' Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa, and the Middle East 27, no. 3 (2007): 513–524.**

Key topics: Middle East and North Africa; television; private broadcaster; gender portrayal; GBV; gender equality; LGBTQ+; rights; civic/political engagement; gender equality

This study explores how the Lebanese satellite broadcaster, Heya TV, forms a counter-public in the pan-Arab broadcast and digital space. Heya (which is Arabic for 'she') is the first pan-Arab television station to target a female viewership specifically. It was launched in 2002 'to address the position of Arab women through its various programs catering to diverse tastes among diverse women, from career to the stay-at-home woman, from the old to the young, and from the religious to the secular' (p. 513). Around 70% of its staff members and all of its top managers are women. Its content ranges from talk shows to educational programmes to soap operas and fashion and beauty shows. However, the broadcaster is still small compared to others, like *Al Jazeera;* Heya TV's audience is only around 2% of the total share of the Arab population, or around 4 million people.

The programming on Heya TV, particularly its talk shows, challenges cultural taboo subjects and introduces alternative role models. For example, *Jari`jiddan (Too Daring)* focuses on the lives of 'unusual Lebanese personalities', most of them women *Minyoum la-youm (From Day to Day),* although more varied in its content, usually covers global news in the format of discussion between the programme's anchors and guests. *Al*

Makshouf (In the Open), the most popular talk show, discusses culturally taboo topics. The topics to be discussed are suggested by viewers.

Studying three episodes of *Al Makshouf*, Matar argues that Heya's success as a counter-public for women is largely the result of the activism and agency of the broadcaster's producers and presenters, who shape the discourse on-screen to reflect a feminist agenda. This agenda is 'wide', meaning that it aims to improve women's position in Arab society by including gender in societal questions. In other words, the topics engaged with on screen are not limited to 'women's questions'. In *Al Makshouf,* for example, the topics range from domestic violence and homosexuality to extremism in Arab society.

The host of *Al Makshouf* is a well-known Lebanese journalist, Mathilde Farajallah. She begins each segment with an introduction to the chosen topic, followed by 'vox pops', or short audio clips from interviews with randomly-selected Lebanese people in the street about the topics at hand. These vox pops are one way to include public participation in addition to the testimonials submitted by the studio audience. Together, the vox pops and testimonials act as the discussion openers for the host and the invited expert panellists for that programme. The panellists are of all genders, which speaks to the programme's vision of gender and feminism, which includes male allies.

The panellists are selected by the producers for their alternative viewpoints. Matar notes that in the episodes reviewed 'there was a level of agreement among all participants and the presenter that allowed them to build on one another's contributions' and that 'most of the panelists invited had progressive and activist agendas for the advancement of women in Arab societies' (p. 521). For example, the panellists for the episode on homosexuality included: a scholar specialising in gender issues who wrote a book about homosexuality that was previously banned by the Arab Gulf states; a psychiatrist; a journalist; and a gay man whose identity was obscured because of safety concerns.

Farajallah's dual role as a host/journalist and as a feminist is key to the programme's format because she 'steered the discussions to talk about gender inequalities and other hegemonic practices in the Arab world' (p. 522). Not only did she foster an environment where alternative viewpoints could be presented, but Farajallah acted as an outspoken and progressive role model, as did other female panellists. Her style of journalism, informed by Western practices, 'allows for a critique-countercritique format that serves to draw attention to the constraining social norms in society. However, it is her questioning and prodding that opens the space for contestations of Arab women's subjugation and domination' (p. 523).

Heya TV's producers, who are 'bound together by their shared goal of advancing Arab women's status', insert a feminist agenda into their programming (p. 523). Heya TV's talk shows break cultural taboos by discussing controversial, yet critical, social issues. Their format serves not only to open discussion but also to make visible progressive models of gender and incorporate Arab women's voices in public debate. In this sense, Heya TV 'can be seen as a grassroots women-generated medium aimed at fostering the right to communicate for various marginalized groups'" (p. 523)

Demonstrating and/or normalising new norms

40. **La Ferrara, E., Chong, A., Duryea, S. (2012) 'Soap Operas and Fertility: Evidence from Brazil' American Economic Journal: Applied Economics 4, no. 4 (October 1, 2012): 1–31.**

Key topics: Latin America; Brazil; television; private broadcaster; sexual & reproductive behaviour

Brazil's fertility rate declined from 6.3 in 1960 to 2.3 in 2000 in the absence of any formal government policies, campaigns or programmes for population control and despite a ban on the advertising of contraceptives. La Ferrara et al. ask how television, as a vehicle for shaping individual preferences, may have contributed to fewer births and smaller families.

The presupposition for the analytical findings of the study is that Brazilian *novelas*, including those broadcast by Globo TV, are 'one of the most pervasive forms of cultural communication in Brazilian society', as the majority of Brazilians of every class have watched the eight o'clock show – the timeslot reserved for the show that is the most popular (p. 2). *Novelas* are also loaded with content that disseminates norms related to family size.

In the 115 *novelas* that aired from 1965 and 1999, 72% of the main female characters (age 50 and under) had no children, while 21% had only one child. The norm perpetuated by this is that of 'a very specific model of family – small, beautiful, white, healthy, urban, middle and upper-middle class consumerist family' (p. 7). Furthermore, the content of *novelas is* 'framed in a way that makes it easy for the viewers to directly relate to the situations portrayed' (p. 4).

The authors first measure fertility using individual level data from the 1991 census and build a history of births from the period 1979 to 1991 for women aged 15 to 49. The independent variable is whether or not an area receives the Globo TV signal.

Globo coverage is associated with a decrease in the probability of giving birth of 0.5 percentage points. This result is stronger for households with lower levels of education and wealth, which could be because these households are less likely to get their messaging from other print sources. This effect is stronger for women aged 25–34 than for those aged 15–24 and 35–44.

Because *Novela* names are 'idiosyncratic', it was simple to determine that parents living in areas that are reached by Globo are more likely to name their children after the main characters of *novelas* aired in the year in which the children are born, which demonstrates the effect of *novela* content on family planning decisions. The probability is 33% if the area where parents lived received the Globo signal and only 8.5% if it did not. The second piece of evidence relates to narrative variations: there was a decrease in fertility in years in which the *novelas* portrayed messages of upward socioeconomic mobility. Interestingly, this effect was stronger for women whose age was closer to that of the character in the storyline, presumably because the viewer could identify more easily with the character and, by extension, reflect on her own reality and desires (a theory called 'frame salience').

For additional studies on drama, soap operas and telenovelas see:

- Jin, B. and Jeong, S. (2010) 'The impact of Korean television drama viewership on the social perceptions of single life and having fewer children in married life' *Asian Journal of Communication* (2010): 17–32.
- Boenisch, P. and Hyll, W. (2015) 'Television Role Models and Fertility Evidence from a Natural Experiment' *SSRN Electronic Journal,* no. 752 (2015): 1–34.

41. Salamandra, C. (2012) 'The Muhannad Effect: Media Panic, Melodrama, and the Arab Female Gaze' Anthropological Quarterly 85, no. 1 (January 2012): 45–77.

Key topics: Middle East and North Africa; television; private broadcaster; sexual & reproductive behaviour; masculinities

This study looks at the reception of the soap opera, *Noor*, an Arabised version of a Turkish soap opera entitled *Güsmüş*. In particular, it examines the media outrage and the increase in domestic violence that followed the premiere of the show.

Noor was broadcast three times a day on the Saudi-owned private satellite channel, MBC4, a youth-oriented station that usually airs English-language programmes. The soap opera was a regional sensation and had a fan culture called 'Noormania', with fans visiting the locations where *Noor* was shot in Istanbul, street vendors producing related merchandise, and audiences flocked to see the stars of the show at airports.

Women accounted for a huge share of this sub-culture , and as a result, a conversation began in the mainstream media about the alleged moral degradation and cultural dissolution the show caused among women. Of particular concern in the mainstream media was the attraction of the female audience to the male lead, Muhannad, and the gender norms portrayed in the show, which depicted the male lead romancing the female lead, Noor.

The show depicted independent career women, equitable marital relationships, extramarital sex, drinking, and abortion – topics normally associated with modernity, westernisation and globalisation. In a reading of the soap opera, however, the show did not feature major political issues or heavy moral subjects. Instead, the show was mostly light-hearted in content, produced a discourse of 'family values', and never endorsed instances of sexual transgression, whether explicitly or implicitly. Salamandra asks: what caused the widespread media panic? Her study addresses the 'social discomfort' generated by women's sexual expression and erotic spectatorship. It addresses the media discourse, draws on fieldwork interviews with media professionals, and investigates Internet comments to analyse the impact of the show on gender norms, as well as the subsequent backlash.

Noor opened a space for Arab women to express their desires via online communities. This gave them anonymity and a safe space for controversial opinions, criticisms and desires. A *Noor* Facebook fan page lists 118, 774 fans. Viewers comment on the articles posted on the page with their 'longings and fears': some dedicate love poems to Muhannad and Noor and some express desire for the character Muhannad and Kivanç Tatlitug, the actor who plays him. For example, one comment addressed directly to the actor said, 'u are the sexist guy but that girl dont suit u coz ur hotter'. In doing so, women inverted the notion of the 'male

gaze' that is seen as deeply disturbing in cultural and religious conversations and as a threat to patriarchal socio-cultural order (p. 52).

The study describes the backlash the show generated in the mainstream media, recounting how news commentaries blamed Noormania for traffic gridlocks (suggesting this was caused by viewers rushing home to watch the show) and medical malpractice (suggesting that nurses were distracted by the show during their shifts). Furthermore, popular media discourse blamed the rise in domestic violence and 'marital unrest' on the male protagonist. Mainstream media discourse framed the presence of Muhannad as a threat to the Arab men or a challenge to Arab masculinity. For example, news cartoons caricatured the way in which Arab men compared their appearance to that of the character/actor, who is a 'fine-boned, blue-eyed, fair-haired heartthrob'. These cartoons Orientalise the Arab men, portraying them as 'dark-skinned' and 'grotesquely large' (p. 50).

This threat is informed by other historical anxieties, namely East versus West, Islam versus secularism, and tradition versus modernity. The main character, Muhannad portrayed by Tatlitug, does not adhere to the conventions of masculinity in Arab society, and is, therefore, associated with deviancy. The historical memory of Ottoman rule in the Middle East is evoked, as well as the suspicion that Turkey is an agent of the West. In other words, the androgynous male protagonist evoked 'an occidental neo-colonial decadence', and provoked 'a mix of Islamist, anticolonial and Arab nationalist sentiment' (p. 69).

Noor became the centre of tensions during a time of changing gender roles and relations in Arab society, when women were increasingly present in the public sphere. The show sparked a discourse about the male body and female sexuality, and the convergence of satellite television with the Internet generated new online communities for women. No matter how ow progressive the show was for women, the backlash to the show amongst the more conservative sectors of Arab society represents an anxiety over shifting norms of masculinity, which are intertwined with issues of political and historical importance.

42. **Bouhout, N. (2020) 'The construction of gendered identities in Moroccan radio phone-in programmes' The Journal of North African Studies 25, no. 4 (July 2020): 641–664.**

Key topics: Middle East and North Africa; Morocco; radio; private broadcaster; gender roles

This study explores the co-construction of gender on call-in radio programmes in Morocco. Focusing specifically on two episodes from *Kif Lhal?,* Bouhout uses the framework of membership categorisation analysis (MCA)[18] to study the ways in which callers mobilised the categories of wife, mother, father and husband to construct specific gender identities. A caller to the radio programme may, for example, use the cultural connotations of the identity 'father' to manage social and interpersonal situations; using such categories to distance themselves, or to attribute blame or responsibility in certain situations. Callers do not

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[18] Membership Categorization Analysis, or MCA, is a sociological method that studies how people 'achieve, use, and orient membership categories in the process of performing some social action', according to Fitzgerald and Au-Yeung (2019).

only reference pre-existing cultural categories, but also contextualise and shape these categories to perform specific functions in the discussion.

Kif Lhal? is an audio adaptation of a television programme with the same title on Channel 2M TV. The programme's purpose is to discuss 'issues related to housewifery and the problems wives encounter in the modern world, be them in the form of social hardships, legal difficulties or psychological problems' (p. 648). The majority of the calls involve gender relations issues and the format is a discussion between the callers, the host and an invited expert (legal, medical, counselling, etc., depending on the theme of the episode). The radio show version also offers a chance to focus on the dialogue, rather than visuals that may contribute to the formation of norms in the eyes of the audience.

The nature of the call-in programme transforms the audience member into a participant. They are able to tell their stories using various narrative devices. As a result, each caller's story is a series of constructed events that may not necessarily reflect their social world very closely. The reliance of callers on identities like mother or father enables them to construct easily identifiable characters for their story. A gender category orients the gender relations in the story and enables callers to pursue specific goals in the context of the radio programme. It is in this framework that the call transcripts from two episodes of *Kif Lhal?* are analysed, both of which aired on 2 November 2015.

In a programme where a caller wants advice about balancing her family and work, the caller deploys the categories 'family' and 'workforce', while the expert deploys the category 'father'. The expert asks the woman about the father's participation in childcare, which 'is predicated on his not doing something else' [i.e., working], tentative and justified by him being educated (p. 655). Interestingly, the socio-economic category, 'educated', mitigates the traditionally organised gender roles.

In another example, a father is seeking advice about his son. His problem is that his child 'refuses to get off the PC at all when his mom asks him to'. The way in which the problem is constructed is not the child's play itself, but the potential consequences for and because of the mother. Implicit in this statement is the notion that it is the responsibility of the mother to discipline the child's behaviour, leading to the construction of a traditionally organised gender relation. In the larger dialogue, the caller both 'finds excuses for the mother's [initial] condoning of video games' and 'reflexively constructs her action as blame-worthy' (p. 658). This norm is taken to be 'common sense', and as such, the woman is perceived to be 'the cause of the problem itself' (p. 657).

In these examples, categories like 'mother' and 'father' are shortcuts to a vast body of cultural knowledge. These calls to radio phone-in programmes demonstrate the replication of hegemonic patriarchal norms and modes of discourse, and of norms related to women as the person responsible for children and the home and to men as breadwinners.

For another study on phone-in programs and resistance see:
Yoong, M. (2016) 'Men and Women on Air: Gender Stereotypes in Humour Sequences in a Malaysian Radio Phone-in Programme' *Gender and Language* 11, no. 1 (December 2016): 30–50.

43. **Jill Thompson, A., Poyrazli, S., Miller, E. (2020) 'Western Media and Body Image Dissatisfaction in Young Women in Developing Nations' Eurasian Journal of Educational Research, no. 90 (2020): 45–66.**

Key topics: multi-country; Belize; China; Fiji; India; Iran; Malaysia; Oman; South Africa; Turkey; Zimbabwe; television; gender portrayal; body image

This is a review piece that uses multiple databases to search for literature related to body image dissatisfaction (BID), eating disorders, Western media and experiences of young women in Belize, China, Fiji, India, Iran, Malaysia, Oman, South Africa, Turkey, and Zimbabwe.

There is evidence that beauty ideals in Asia, Africa, Latin America, and the Middle East & North Africa are pivoting increasingly toward a focus on thinness or smaller body-mass-index (BMI).While the effect of Western media on BID in the West has already been well documented, its effect on women and girls' beauty norms in low- and middle-income countries has yet to be studied cumulatively, despite the evidence of a growing shift towards more Western ideals about beauty.

The review found that in 9 of the 10 countries studied, exposure to Western media (defined as television shows, commercials or advertisements, magazines, newspapers and digital media from the West) correlated with increased level of BID (weight, body shape, body size) related eating disorders. Three case studies are outlined in the review.[19]

> China
> Citing Xu et al. (2010) and Swami et al. (2014), the authors note that Chinese women experienced higher levels of BID than men and reported receiving direct messages from the media that encouraged weight loss. Nearly all of the women surveyed by Swami et al. (2014) reported a desire to either lose weight or be thinner.
>
> Zimbabwe
> A study of Zimbabwean migrant women in Britain compared migrant women to women who had never left Zimbabwe, which has strict media regulations, finding a positive correlation between Western media exposure and a discrepancy between actual and desired weight. It also revealed a negative correlation between increased Western media exposure and lower levels of body appreciation. Furthermore, migrant women in Britain had higher levels of negative body image (Swami et al., 2012).
>
> Fiji
> In a study of young women in Fiji, Gerbasi et al. (2014) find that exposure to Western media was similarly associated with negative body image, although this was mitigated by socioeconomic status. Among the girls surveyed (aged 15 to 20), 'older adolescents', (with the precise aged bracket undefined), were less influenced by their peers and more influenced by Western media, pointing to a higher degree of media internalisation as they age. Therefore, 'the developmental implications of

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[19] The case studies cited are those that were published or that use data from the time period under review in this bibliography. Literature cited in Jill Thompson et al. from before 2010 is not included.

learning about another culture primarily through television could lead to distorted perception, promoting misconceptions about the normality of thinness in Western cultures' (p. 56). These findings point to the essential role of socialisation and peer-interaction in the process of norm acquisition and acceptance, even in the presence of media influences.

<u>India</u>
This review on media in India cannot isolate the effects of Western media on women and girls' self-perception, given that the country has a strong media industry of its own. Nevertheless, it is possible to determine that women in India do internalise the West's messages. For example, Dhillon and Priti (2011) conducted a survey of young women in India and found that they wanted to lose weight so that they could fit into Western style clothes; because they wanted to emulate characters on television; and because they wanted to be the same weight as certain Western actresses.

Citing Wassenaar et al. (2000), this review also found that regional and racial differences emerged in South Africa and Malaysia. In South Africa, white women had higher levels of BID, but Black women had a higher drive for thinness and perfectionism than white women and Asian women, differences that could be a result of the racial prejudices present in Western media. In another study, women of a lower socio-economic status and rural residence selected a heavier figure as the most attractive body, which supports the hypothesis that women in urban areas hold different gender norms as a result of their increased media exposure (Swami et al., 2010). The latter findings also hold true for a study in Malaysia (Swami, 2006). The most striking similarity was the association between thinness and economic advancement found in Fiji and Belize.

While this review was limited in that it could not account for the amount of media consumed nor its content, it did establish a correlational relationship between the consumption of Western media and increased levels of BID in low and middle-income countries, with young women and girls wanting to adopt the beauty standards and norms shown by the characters they see on television. Furthermore, many young women and girls change their behaviour to achieve these new norms. The increasing similarity in patterns of BID between high-income countries and low- and middle-income countries may well suggest the globalisation of gender norms.

The following three studies focus on high-income countries, specifically the US. However, they offer three interesting case studies (not found in literature that examines low- and middle-income contexts) of the demonstration and normalisation of counter-stereotypes in the entertainment media, specifically regarding the intersection between gender norms, political attitudes and intersectionality.

44. **Hoewe, J. and Sherrill, L. A. (2019) 'The Influence of Female Lead Characters in Political TV Shows: Links to Political Engagement' Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media 63, no. 1 (2019): 59–76.**

Key topics: North America; US; television; private broadcaster; gender portrayal; civic/political engagement

The first study analyses the impact of the advent of political drama programmes: *The Good Wife, Madam Secretary* and *Scandal.* These were chosen on the basis of their counter-stereotypical portrayals of women and strong viewership on women's political engagement. It asks if feelings of identification with the lead

characters lead to any real-world 'political self-efficacy, political interest, and eventually political participation' (p. 60).

The proposed conceptual hypothesis is two-fold. First, entertainment and narrative programmes may impact social norms more than news and factual content because of the amount of time people spend watching them. Exposure to a certain message or image may be more intense in entertainment media because of its episodic and long format, which contrasts with the 24/7, rapid news cycle. The theory surrounding this is that of 'narrative transportation', which suggests that the viewer enters the world of the narrative and is less likely to counter messages presented within that context. In other words, 'the more a narrative engrossed viewers, the more persuasive its message became' (p. 63).

Second, these shows cultivate 'parasocial relationships' between audiences and the female leads, who are represented in counter-stereotypical fashions. This is the more critical theory, as it suggests that parasocial relationships involve the same cognitive processes as interpersonal communication, highlighting the dialectical relationship between viewers and programming. Viewers do not accept messages blindly but ask themselves how they would place or locate themselves within certain narrative situations (also called 'anomalous replotting'). One study cited by Hoewe and Sherill is [Rubin and Perse (1987)](#), which even suggests that this cognitive process may be just as strong as that with a real person, pointing to the potentially countering effect of narrative broadcast media on the impact of local community or even national norms.

Participants were recruited from sub-Reddit pages dedicated to each particular TV show to ensure that they were actively engaging with the shows, which in turn increased the external validity of the study. A total of 218 respondents completed the survey. Of those, 71% were women (29% were men), and the respondents' ages ranged from 18 to 73. Most of the respondents had earned at least a four-year college degree (65%). The survey asked participants how often they watched each the three shows, followed by questions related to transportation, parasocial relationships, political interest, political self-efficacy and political participation.

It is possible that viewers who are *already* politically engaged could be tuning into these shows. However, the findings indicate that political participation was not correlated with viewing of any of these three political TV shows, suggesting that politically motivated individuals are not simply turning to political dramas. Instead, viewing of the political televisions dramas is associated with increased levels of political participation, as depicted overleaf (p. 70):

Standardized coefficients are reported, $N = 218$
$*p < .05; **p < .01; ***p < .001$
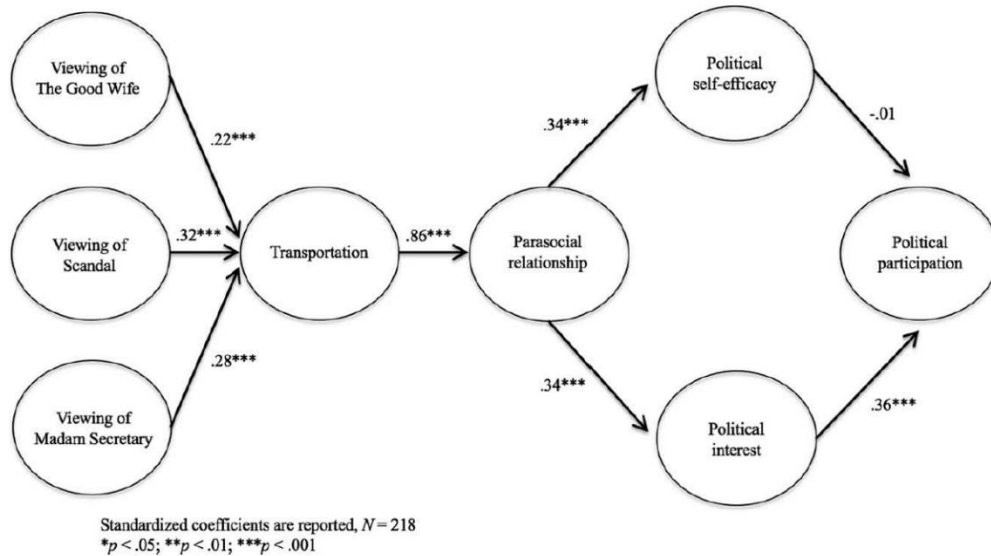
45. Swigger, N. (2017) 'The Effect of Gender Norms in Sitcoms on Support for Access to Abortion and Contraception' American Politics Research 45, no. 1 (January 2017): 109–127.

Key topics: North America; US; television; private broadcaster; sexual and reproductive behaviour

The next study, by Swigger, begins by examining the existing literature on entertainment broadcast television programming, stating that some scholars frame this medium as 'lifeworld content', or content devoid of explicit political messaging. 'Political shows' means those whose content discusses political news, features politicians as characters, or focuses on an area of public policy.

Swigger, however, argues that 'subtle cues about gender norms, particularly those regarding sex, sexual responsibility, and acceptable dating behaviour can affect public opinion' (p. 110). He finds that rape myths or healthy gender messages influence audience support for abortion rights and access to contraception.

In addition to cultivation theory, 'rape myth acceptance' theory, or RMA, is a key primer of political and policy opinions, to which Swigger refers. RMA refers to the set of messages that 'systematically transfer responsibility to the victim', first developed by Payne et al. (1999). RMA may influence political opinions in the following way: 'suppose you believe that sex is always the woman's responsibility, which is a strong aspect of RMA. Men cannot control themselves, but women are supposed to be the responsible party. If an individual actually accepts this myth, then it becomes easier to suggest that the woman should have to live with the consequences of sex as the responsibility is hers alone, and that public policy should not be designed to intervene on her behalf' (p. 114).

Therefore, this study sets out to test the relationship between RMA and policy opinions. This is a 'laboratory study', meaning that it is limited to a controlled experiment using college students as the primary sample. A

total of 95 participants were asked to answer questions about RMA and then shown a television episode: either *How I Met Your Mother* or *Parks and Recreation,* both American sitcoms. The former is underpinned by 'boys will be boys' messaging, while the latter is based on a narrative of empathy toward the female lead. Following exposure, respondents answered a series of questions about their political attitudes; namely, if women should have the legal right to an abortion, if employers should cover contraception as part of their employee insurance plans, if federal health care should cover abortions, and if federal spending should go toward women's shelters.

The study does not, however, have full external validity because individuals in the real world select television programmes and other media for themselves. This introduces an element of selection bias that can either augment or distort the findings.

Exposure to *Parks and Recreation* increased support for legal abortion, but that effect is statistically insignificant for those with high levels of RMA. As for those exposed to the *How I Met Your Mother* episode, they experienced a drop in legal support for abortion for both moderate and extreme RMA respondents. Other variables (contraception coverage) demonstrated similar results.

The authors suggest that this does not indicate that the respondents were persuaded or convinced to change their attitude to a different or new one, but that 'each treatment activated considerations that were already present and that respondents used the norms that were activated when subsequently registering their opinions' (p. 120). Furthermore, at the extreme ends of the scale, those with either strong or weak RMA support were not affected by exposure to broadcast media. Notably, the gender of the respondent was not a significant variable in predicting RMA. In general, however, women did tend to have lower levels of RMA.

While focused on the United States, this in-depth study into one specific media programming genre highlights the effect of seemingly apolitical or non-political content on gender norms.

46. **Proctor and Gamble and GLAAD Media Institute (2019) LGBTQ Inclusion in Advertising and Media.**

Key topics: North America; US; television; gender portrayal; LGBTQ+

This report is the first of its kind to measure the attitudes of non-LGBTQ+ Americans to exposure of LGBTQ+ individuals and representations in the media and is based on an online survey of 2,031 non-LGBTQ Americans aged 18 and over from 20 November to 3 December 2019. Respondents were asked about both their exposure to LGBTQ+ representation in adverts and entertainment media and their attitudes toward LGBTQ+ identities and individuals.

In all, 52% of non-LGBTQ+ individuals had seen LGBTQ+ representation in adverts, and 70% in either entertainment television shows or movies.

Respondents were then separated into two categories: those who had been exposed to LGBTQ images in media within the past three months and those who had not. Those who had been exposed to LGBTQ+

representation in the media displayed greater acceptance of LGBTQ+ people and support of LGBTQ+ issues, as well as less confusion with identities within the LGBTQ community. The findings also show that exposure to LGBTQ people in the media increases the comfortability of non-LGBTQ+ people with LGBTQ+ people in their daily lives.

For example, 72% of respondents who had seen LGBTQ+ representation in media said that they would be comfortable with learning a family member is LGBTQ+. This percentage fell to 66% for respondents who had not been exposed to LGBTQ+ representation in the past three months.

Similar trends held for other scenarios: seeing same-sex couples holding hands; seeing the wedding picture of a gay or lesbian co-worker; having a new LGBTQ+ family with children move into your neighbourhood; starting a conversation with people whose gender is unclear; starting a conversation with people whose sexual orientation is different than your own; learning your doctor is gay, lesbian or bisexual.

The poll and subsequent study found four main trends:
- Most non-LGBTQ+ people (86%) know at least one LGBTQ person personally
- Non-LGBTQ+ people are very comfortable with LGBTQ+ people appearing in the TV, movies and ads (76% for TV shows and movies; 75% for adverts; and 70% for adverts where they are represented as a family or with children)
- Non-LGBTQ+ people who are exposed to LGBTQ+ media representations are more likely to experience attitudes of acceptance and comfortability towards LGBTQ+ people
- Companies benefit from including LGBTQ+ people in advertisements because non-LGBTQ+ individuals expressed favourable attitudes towards companies that support LGBTQ+ rights, commit to offering products to all types of customers, value all kinds of diversity, treat all their employees with respect, understand that LGBTQ/other minority groups deserve recognition, are socially responsible, and that are leaders in business, etc.

The report concludes that these findings should urge businesses, brands and media outlets to include LBGTQ+ people in ads, films and television as it is not only good for wider society but good for their business.

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