

## Observing the Observers: Journalism and the Gendered Newsroom

**Authors :** M. Silveirinha, P. Lobo

**Abstract :** In the last few decades, many studies have documented a systematic under-representation of women in the news. Aside from being fewer than men, research has also shown that they are frequently portrayed according to traditional stereotypes that have been proven to be disadvantageous for women. When considering this problem, it has often been argued that news content will be more gender balanced when the number of female journalists increases. However, the recent so-called 'feminization' of media professions has shown that this assumption is too simplistic. If we want to better grasp gender biases in news content we will need to take a deeper approach into the processes of news production and into journalism culture itself, taking the study of newsmaking as a starting point and theoretical framework, with the purpose of examining the actual newsroom routines, professional values, structures and news access that eventually lead to an unbalanced media representation of women. If journalists consider themselves to be observers of everyday social and political life, of specific importance, as a vast body of research shows, is the observation of women journalist's beliefs and of their roles and practices in a gendered newsroom. In order to better understand the professional and organizational context of news production, and the gender power relations in decision-making processes, we conducted a participant observation in two television newsrooms. Our approach involved a combination of methods, including overt observation itself, formal and informal interviews and the writing-up and analysis of our own diaries. Drawing insights in organizational sociology, we took newsroom practices to be a result of professional routines and socialization and focused on how women and men respond to newsroom dynamics and structures. We also analyzed the gendered organization of the newsmaking process and the subtle and/or obvious glass-ceiling obstacles often reported on. In our paper we address two levels of research: first, we look at our results and establish an overview of the patterns of continuity between the gendering of organizations, working conditions and professional journalist beliefs. At this level, the study not only interrogates how journalists handle views on gender and the practice of the profession but also highlights the structural inequalities in journalism and the pervasiveness of family-work tensions for female journalists. Secondly, we reflect on our observation method, and establish a critical assessment of the method itself.

**Keywords :** gender, journalism, participant observation, women

**Conference Title :** ICMMC 2015 : International Conference on Media and Mass Communication

**Conference Location :** Istanbul, Türkiye

**Conference Dates :** October 26-27, 2015