

Women, media and marginalization: Causes and challenges

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Gender is but one of several factors shaping the identity of individuals, intersecting with other identities, such as education, social status and the wider political and social context. This contribution addresses global issues when it comes to marginalization of women in the media output as well as in the newsroom. It will also address perspectives linked to social media.

All over the world, women are underrepresented in traditional media output, but surveys indicate a trend towards increased visibility and increased diversity of voices. Still, women occur as a minority everywhere. And when they occur, they are oftentimes portrayed in other roles (victims, home-makers) than men. Longitudinal studies offer several explanations:

- Men hold more official positions – as politicians and bureaucrats (or high academic positions) – than women.
- Journalism is top-heavy, concentrating less on everyday people and their experiences
- The leading positions in the newsrooms/editorial staffs are held by men
- Women to a higher degree than men refuse to speak to or be portrayed by media.
- There is a historic male-dominated tradition (a doxa, a taken-for-grantedness) in journalism, which favours some themes over others, and these themes are often related more to men's issues. This tradition may also favour stereotypes.
- Other burning priorities put gender/women lower on the agenda.
- Fear of social media harassment may cause women to avoid media exposure.

The paper will discuss various theories of media marginalization and 'othering' of women (de Beauvoir (2000), Spivak (2005), Gallagher 2003) and also raises questions concerning how different national contexts will have an impact on media priorities and portrayals.