

CONTEXTUALIZING THE GLOBAL MEDIA MONITORING PROJECT

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Ever since the beginnings of the women's movement in the 1960s, a critique of the media has been one of its driving forces. As has been so astutely noted, "if there can be one single achievement of feminist media studies over the last two decades, it is that it is now impossible to make any sense of the mass media without paying attention to gender" (Baehr and Gray, 1996: 1).

Women's troubled relationships with the communications media—their lack of access, control, under-representation and marginalization—have been part of UNESCO's inquiries for a number of years now. Until 1980, it must be admitted that the volume of UNESCO-funded researches on this issue was not substantial. However, after 1980, there was greater focus as "more emphasis was placed on the provision of summaries, syntheses and reference materials" ("Communication in the Service of Women," 1985). An initial review of the work entitled *Mass Media: The Image, Role and Social Conditions of Women* (1979) undertaken by Ceulemans and Fauconnier, was followed up by a comprehensive study by Gallagher in 1981 called *Unequal Opportunities: The Case of Women and the Media*.

Ceulemans and Fauconnier concluded that analyses of the available literature on women and media indicated that "media images tended to define woman within the narrow confines of her traditional domestic roles and her sexual appeal to man." This image was far from being complemented by portrayals which showed her important contribution to the public sphere. Another significant observation was that there was a vast amount of data available on the status of Western, in particular American, women. This was not sufficiently complemented by data for developing countries.

Gallagher's research showed that there is a remarkable consistency in the portrayal of women throughout the world. With the exception of media controlled by the state committed to social change, the overall features of media representation of women included "media under-representation of women and women's concerns; the use of

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women as a commodity in advertising; an ambivalent attitude to women evident in certain stereotyped images in which women were exclusively and unalterably ‘good’ and ‘pure’ or definitely and unchangeably ‘bad’ and ‘immoral’” (Gallagher, 1983).

Signiorelli’s annotated bibliography (1986) reviewed most of the relevant articles published through 1984 and confirmed the overall similarity of research findings: that as far as media content was concerned, men outnumbered women by two/three to one; and women were generally cast in traditional and stereotypical roles.

The Nairobi Conference Report in 1985 concluded that “the years 1980-85 were not characterized by any radical change in the communication media in relation to women’s portrayal and participation” (“Communication in the Service of Women,” 1985). Another significant finding enumerated in the same report underlined the importance of ideology: “...although the importance of structures is still clear, it seems that the strength of ideology itself was perhaps underestimated. It has been normal to suppose, for example, that in societies undergoing revolutionary sociocultural change, genuine equality between the sexes would be more easily guaranteed. Experience suggests that this conclusion is becoming less and less obvious.”

Regarding special policies and guidelines requiring media to promote the advancement of women in member states, the UNESCO report showed that only half of the 95 member states had formulated such policies and their effectiveness was either questionable or yet to be evaluated.

Over the years, there have been numerous responses to the growing criticism directed at the media regarding women’s issues both at the governmental and academic levels. These have resulted in reports and recommendations which can be found in the government records of the countries in question or reports of international bodies. For instance, in India, the Working Group on Software for Doordarshan set up in 1982, published its report in 1985. Widely known as the Joshi Committee Report, it proposed, among other things, that women’s issues should be accorded greater importance. The Canadian Radio-Television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) also established a task force on sex role stereotyping in the broadcast media. In 1982, broadcasters were given two years to implement certain voluntary guidelines for non-sexist portrayals. A report on sex roles in US and Canadian television (Williams *et al*, 1986) showed that “males still predominated on all the networks and almost all the people portrayed as powerful, authoritative and knowledgeable were male.”

Feminist studies on the media have also provided overviews of these issues in several well-documented works (for instance, Steeves, 1987; Baehr and Dyer, 1987; Rakow, 1992; Gallagher, 1992; Creedon, 1993; van Zoonen, 1994).

As far as examining these issues within academia was concerned, it was initially grouped around research in mass communications, in examining “effect” and “function” (McQuail, 1987). This “dominant paradigm” (Gitlin, 1978) based its analyses on “hard data” and measured content and effect through surveys and experiments. This approach, however, had to face severe criticism, since it has been argued that it shifts attention away from questions of media structures and organization and the ideological role of the media in the construction, mediation and distribution of “social knowledge” (Hall, 1977; Gitlin, 1978).

Much of the American research in the 1970s which examined different roles of men and women in the media were based on the mass communications’ tradition of quantitative and qualitative data analysis. No matter what type of media was under scrutiny, the results were almost always similar. In short, they showed that “roles of the males in mass media have been shown to be dominant, active and authoritative, while females have been shown to be submissive, passive and completely contented to subjugate their wills to the wills of media males” (Busby, 1975).

This early body of work has come under fire in more recent accounts (Rakow, 1986; Ang and Hermes, 1991; van Zoonen, 1994). Margaret Gallagher (1992) has, however, enumerated their strengths in saying that “evaluated in its historical context, its contribution is clear. Its disclosure and condemnation of sexism in media content provided a first, essential springboard.”

The Global Media Monitoring Project

Against this background, it is necessary to set the contributions of the World Association for Christian Communication (WACC) towards this project. Obviously underlining the importance of communication—and consequently, the role that media plays in this transmission—the WACC, along with ISIS International Manila and the International Women’s Tribune Centre, organized an international conference in February 1994, calling it Women Empowering Communication. Apart from providing a forum for women in the communications field to meet and discuss women’s issues, this conference also laid the groundwork for the holding of the United Nations Fourth World Conference for Women in Beijing in September 1995.

At the end of the Women Empowering Communication Conference, participants from 80 countries debated and passed a statement of principles and resolutions called the Bangkok Declaration. As expressed in this document, regarding the goal for women in communication, “...it is essential to promote forms of communication that not only

challenge the patriarchal nature of media but strive to decentralize and democratize them: to create media that encourage dialogue and debate; media that advance women and peoples' creativity; media that reaffirm women's wisdom and knowledge, and that make people into subjects rather than objects or targets of communication; media which are responsive to people's needs."

The plan for an international study of women in the world's news media also evolved at this conference, the report of which was presented at the Beijing conference. Media Watch Canada took the lead in putting together the Global Media Monitoring Project. Its aim was to focus on the representation and portrayal of women in the news media of television, radio and daily newspapers on a mutually agreed upon date of 18 January 1995. This one day monitoring compiled 49,152 data records and was carried out by men and women in 71 countries.

The methodology used was mainly quantitative content analysis and the results obtained are available in the document *Global Media Monitoring Project: Women's Participation in the News*, published by the National Watch on Images of Women in the Media (Media Watch), Inc. in 1995.

Some of the **chief results** obtained through this global one day monitoring of the media were the following:

1. That women comprise 43% of journalists but only 17% of the interviewees, and that while the news is more often presented by women, it is still very rarely about women (p. 10);
2. Among journalists, fewer women tend to be found in newspapers than on radio or television (p. 11);
3. The largest proportion of male interviewees, 29%, appear in stories on politics and government, while the largest proportion of female interviewees appear in stories on disasters/accidents (20% of female interviewees) and on crime (17% of female interviewees) (p. 14);
4. Three regions—North America, Africa and the Middle East—report considerably more stories on women's issues than other areas. One issue sets North American media apart from the rest, and that is "violence against women." Moreover, the most prominent issue in the North American media was "women's health"; this was the topic of 3.3% of the stories (pp. 17-18);
5. Twenty-nine percent of female interviewees are victims of accidents, crime or other events. Only 10% of male interviewees are victims. This may give the impression that the media

prey on female victims. If women appear over-represented as victims, it is only because they are under-represented even more severely in other areas of media coverage (p. 19);

6. The occupations of women and men in the news differ in two very striking ways: politicians and government spokespersons account for 19% of women and 51% of men; people whose occupation is unspecified account for 28% of women and 9% of men . . . Because women appear in news as victims more frequently than men, they are more frequently portrayed with no specific occupation (p. 23);

7. When power is the issue, news focuses almost exclusively on older males. When power is not at stake... (the news) portrays almost as many women as men (p.29).

The report concluded with the following **guidelines for future directions** in achieving a more equitable portrayal of women in the world's news media (p 31).

1. Shift media emphasis

The news media can shift their attention away from traditional events of policies, government and business to cover other areas in which women participate more fully. The relatively small proportion of women's issues in the news suggests that there is room to move in this direction. A shift of this nature does not necessarily mean that the media abandon their interest in power and influence. Rather, the media should broaden their search and achieve greater inclusiveness and diversity.

2. Increase access to power and decision-making

Women can be given the opportunity to participate more fully in traditionally male-dominated areas of society. This study establishes the fact that women are participating as journalists in the world's media, but participation in the politics, business, economy and so on is much less.

3. Address policies and regulations

Regulation may facilitate the process. Several countries have extensive regulations and guidelines that encourage or direct media (radio and television, rarely newspapers) to achieve an equitable gender balance in their programming, in their hiring practices, or both.

Canada has possibly the strongest such regulations of any country in the world, and one indication of success can be found in a 1992 study of television news on the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. The age profiles of female and male interviewees were parallel, *i.e.* there was not a significant "hump" due to older men. While there were more male interviewees overall, the link between gender, age and influence was eliminated.

4. Conduct ongoing analysis

Countries, individually and collectively, can continue to analyze the portrayal of gender in their media in order to pinpoint areas requiring change, to assess the effectiveness of strategies and to develop an empirical, scientific basis for increasing the participation of women in mass media.

More recently, WACC and ISIS International Manila organized yet another international conference where scholars, activists and media practitioners gathered together for a Regional Meeting on Gender and Communication Policy from 30 July – 2 August 1997 at Antipolo in the Philippines. Here, they drafted the Antipolo Declaration, wherein they outlined the key issues in gender and media, and corresponding strategies for policy intervention and formulation. The Antipolo Declaration states, "Women continue to have limited access to statement and decision-making in and through the media. Their portrayal and representation continue to be discriminatory ... This has to do with a number of factors ... The relationship between women, media and development policies continues to be negatively influenced and affected by globalization structures of the media discriminate against women In addition to the inadequate and biased portrayal of women in media content, the media in our countries are a major contributor to the perpetuation of patriarchal and sexist gender identities and relations between women and men Strategies for change have been instituted at both the national and international levels The most pressing problems with women, media and development relationship lie with many of the issues surrounding new technologies, the limits to democratization of the media and access and control"

The Declaration ends with a summary of issues and strategies and future guidelines for increasing social justice and, in particular, gender justice for women in the media.

The Bangkok Declaration and the Antipolo Declaration both underline

anthropologist Marilyn Strathern's observation that feminism provides a kind of unity: "Purposes may be diversely perceived ... Feminists may argue with one another, in their many voices, because they also know themselves as an interest group. There is certainty about that context" (Strathern, 1987: 268). There is general acknowledgment today that feminists are not one unified category, and that many differences exist in relation to regions, ethnicity, race, religion, etc. What is of importance here, however, is conceptualizing feminism as a body of people with certain common interests which transcend these differences, and have a broad common purpose in mind.

Intervention/Comments/Evaluation

In this paper, we attempt to contextualize the Global Media Monitoring Project's reports, first collated in 1995 and again in 1997. It is interesting to note how even into the beginning of the 21st century, the observations made still hold true.

The Global Media Monitoring Project monitored news on television, radio and daily newspapers worldwide on one particular day, and focused on the representation and portrayal of women in the news on that day. It relied almost entirely on the methodology of content analysis. There are certain limitations to this methodological approach which we will summarize here for the purpose of evaluating the Global Media Monitoring Project for this paper.

First of all, content analysis simply quantifies measurable units of communication, without providing information to show how these isolated pieces of data fit into the broader and total structure of the larger communication picture. "... There is no reason to assume that the item which recurs most frequently is the most important or the most significant, for a text is, clearly, a structured whole and the place occupied by the different elements is more important than the number of times they recur" (Burgelin, 1972: 313-28).

Second, Burgelin states that content analysis does not sufficiently distinguish between content and form, and he fails to tie them into a common interpretive framework.

Third, content analysis relies mainly on the obvious and manifest content of any image, and ignores the hidden ideological meanings. Therefore, larger theoretical issues tend to get blurred.

Fourth, content analysis measures only certain aspects of any given unit of communication. The results depend on the aims and objectives of the researcher, the manner in which the research is set up, and the specific questions which are posed about the content. "This implies that, contrary to the idea that a given method or

technique of analysis will produce unbiased descriptions of the world, content analysis is constructed from the biases or ideological position of the researcher" (Janus, 1977: 19-32).

Fifth, "the description is often a static one in which the image is described at only one point in time. When the method is used to describe content at more than one point in time, it may serve to detect a change in content, but cannot furnish an explanation for that change" (*Ibid*).

Last of all, the results of a content analysis depend on the types of the research questions which have been formulated, which is determined in turn by the theoretical framework adopted. Studies of women and the mass media generally reflect a liberal feminist theoretical perspective by setting up binary oppositions like the men versus women category. All men and women, for instance, are grouped together as a general overall category. No references are made to class, race, color, ethnicity, religion or cultural divisions within each of the categories. Consequently, and very importantly, "the questions are ahistorical, apolitical, and in no way indicate how the images of women or men are related to the fundamental structures of society" (*Ibid*).

With regard to the issue of consciousness-raising about women's issues, these have long taken place, both within and outside academia, in order to question media representations of women and production practices of the media. One kind has been the formation and organization of independent media, referred to by Marilyn Crafton Smith as "women's movement media" (cf. Creedon, 1993). Examples of this include the work of independent feminist filmmakers like Sylvia Spring of Media Watch Canada (for further references, see Citron, 1988) and the growth of feminist publishing houses.

The Global Media Monitoring Project deals with women's participation in the news, and their results largely indicate a marginalization or relative "making invisible" of women. The construction of the public sphere as male space underscores male authority. This is most evident in news programs. As far as news is concerned, one has to make the assumption about time, events and the supply of information to people. It must then be remembered that these assumptions have their roots in socially defined reality; and they mirror the way a society looks at the world. It is the very structure of society which provides the context for the interpretation of newsworthy events (McKinley, 1983). So, broadly speaking, it is not only women but also the poor and disadvantaged who are rendered relatively invisible.

Quoting Lerner (1979), Green and Kahn (1985) provides an indication as to why women are so marginalized in the news: As long as news has as its main focus

“the transmission and experience of power” and as long as “war and politics are seen as more significant to the history of humankind than child rearing,” women remain marginalized or invisible.

The pressure faced by news organizations to employ more women have yielded some positive outcomes. Regarding the examples earlier cited of India and Canada, the 1995 Global Media Monitoring Project results show that of all the participating countries, “India has the largest number of female journalists (standing at) 71%” (1995: 10). In addition, with regard to “equitable gender balance in programming … Canada has perhaps the strongest such regulations of any country in the world, and one indication of success can be found in a 1992 study of television news on the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation” (1995: 31).

Similarly, broadcasting corporations faced with pressure to increase their numbers of women employees had the fallout of women becoming more visible on the screen. In fact, the early 1980s recorded that the largest increase in employment was in the number of women newscasters, especially in television (Eddings, 1980; van Zoonen, 1991). Still, there has been no proportionate increase in the number of women in the senior level decision-making processes (Baehr and Dyer, 1987; Stilson, 1990; Gallagher, 1995). Perhaps one reason for this is that when women read the news, “… they are caught within the conflicting definitions of femininity and of ‘the news’—themselves trivialized, they can be blamed for trivializing … Women newsreaders are called on to speak from a carefully constructed position, with the mythical neutrality of the universal voice, and yet, as women, they are defined as outside both the political consensus and the masculine structure of language … The appearance of women newsreaders is not necessarily a step towards women’s liberation. In the contemporary style of news presentation where the reader may be recognized as a … performer, a transmitter rather than an originator of news, it is not difficult to imagine newsreading becoming a ‘women’s job’” (Holland, 1987).

The Global Media Monitoring Project report makes one suggestion of focusing more on women’s issues in the news (p. 31). However, the notion that news content will increase focus on women’s issues if the number of women journalists and producers increased, has not been supported by empirical evidence (van Zoonen, 1986). It is suggested that the existence of sex and power difference has to be taken into account and included as part and parcel of the regular research questions on news content and news production (*Ibid*).

Similarly, it has also been felt that an increase in the number of women in positions of authority within media organizations themselves would lead to a change in

the content of media (King and Stott, 1977; Tuchman *et al.*, 1978; Epstein, 1978). In fact, even the Global Media Monitoring Project (1995: 31), in its section on recommendations for the future, calls for “women (to be) given the opportunity to participate more fully in traditionally male-dominated areas of society (since women’s) participation in politics, business, the economy and so on is much lower.” All these issues state the problem in overly simplified terms. For one, it does not sufficiently cater to the limits which are set on women working in a largely male-owned and dominated media industry. For another, it does not take into account the relationship between representation and identity: “a specific women’s perspective or aesthetic which could radically transform—rather than simply adapt to—discriminatory structures and practices in the media industries” (Gallagher, 1992).

It has been argued that there are limits to what kind of new representations of women in the media will become available by interacting with mainstream media. It may just result in “a modest allotment of institutional legitimation … bought at the price of reducing the contradictory complexity (of feminism) for simpler and more acceptable ideas already existing in the dominant culture” (De Lauretis, 1987). The Global Media Monitoring Project, in producing and distributing its results, relies on the liberal feminist strategy of trying to change the media images of women. However, being based chiefly on quantitative content analysis and an inadequate theoretical framework, such reports have only encouraged “media creators to make mere marginal or cosmetic changes—changes that are, in any case, consistent with and limited by ruling class hegemony” (Janus, 1977).

While undoubtedly a phenomenally ambitious and groundbreaking piece of data collection and collation, the results of the Global Media Monitoring Project underline what has been known from previous research: that “a consistent picture emerges from … research studies which have investigated the media’s portrayal of women. At the very best, the portrayal is narrow; at worst, it is unrealistic, demeaning and damaging” (Gallagher, 1981).

Studying women’s representation in the media on a relatively limited basis such as this—without taking into account their historical, social and cultural context, as well as mode of production and structures of political organization—leads to underutilized research strategies and results which are not broad enough in their scope. They are “consistent with the liberal feminist objective of integrating women into the present system on an equal basis with men. The characteristics associated with ‘maleness’ in media images are those which have been defined implicitly as the goal for women in media images … Liberal feminist research has, in fact, (thus) conclusively demonstrated that men and women of mass media content are not equal. However, the form and

content of that demonstration (the posing of the problem, the methodology, the questions asked, and the conclusions drawn), being generated by the liberal feminist framework, lend themselves to a reaffirmation of the very framework which produced them" (Janus, 1977: 19-32).

Having said that, we do not mean to imply that quantitative analysis is "less true" than other forms of data analysis. Certainly, criteria, like accurate data collection and careful inferences made thereof, remain applicable methods of doing research. It is just that proceeding further with the research involves extending its scope. We also take into account that every research practice necessarily occurs in a particular historical and social situation, and is consequently partial in nature. "All social research takes the form of participant observation: it involves participating in the social world, in whatever role, and reflecting on the problem of that participation" (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1983: 16).

Towards A Multiperspective and Critical Approach

For any future project on women and the media, the theoretical framework that we propose has so much resonance with Kellner's observations that we quote him: "Contemporary societies require constant mappings and remappings because of the intensity of change and speed of current social transformations No one theory could possibly address all topics or illuminate all features of social life. Thus, one must choose which theories one deploys, according to the specific tasks at hand A multiperspectival approach holds that the more theories one has at one's disposal, the more talks one can perform and the more specific objects and themes one can address. Further, the more perspectives that one brings to bear on a phenomenon, the better one's potential grasp or understanding of it could be ... combining powerful approaches like Marxism, feminism, post-structuralism, and other theoretical optics might yield more insightful and useful analyses than those produced by one perspective alone ... The test of a theory is ... its use, its deployment, and its effects Contextual pragmatist and multiperspectival approaches thus work together to open up theoretical inquiry to a multiplicity of discourses and methods" (Kellner, 1995a: 26-27).

We therefore propose Kellner's (1995b: 8) three-step multi-pronged approach:

1. Political economy, which analyzes cultural media texts within their specific systems of production and distribution;
2. "Production" or textual analysis, *i.e.* how producers of media texts imbue such texts with meaning; and
3. "Reception" or ethnographic audience research, *i.e.* how audiences/monitors "make meaning" of media texts.

Since the 1980s, the methodological approach of using ethnographic analysis for research has gained ground in media and cultural studies (see, for instance, Morley, 1980 and 1986; Hobson, 1980 and 1982; Lull, 1988; Radway, 1984; Ang, 1985, Jensen, 1987; Liebes and Katz, 1990; Gray, 1992). This qualitative method of empirical research has gained popularity, being seen to overcome many of the shortcomings of quantitative analysis.

According to Hammersley and Atkinson (1983: 2), ethnography can be understood as "...simply one social research method ... drawing on a wide range of sources information. The ethnographer participates in people's lives for an extended period of time, watching what happens, listening to what is said, asking questions ... collecting whatever data are available to throw light on the issues with which he or she is concerned."

By their very nature then, ethnographies are grounded in the context of the realities of the everyday lives of people; what Geertz refers to as "the informal logic of actual life" (1973: 17). Researchers doing ethnographic analysis generally adhere to the following: "(1) observe and note routine behavior of all types characteristic of those who are being studied, (2) do so in the natural settings where the behavior occurs, and (3) draw inferences carefully after considering the details of communication behavior, with special attention paid to the subtle, yet revealing, ways that different aspects of the context inform each other" (Lull, 1987: 320). The multiple techniques employed in ethnographic analysis (observation, questionnaires, interviews, reporting, etc.) can then be systematically analyzed and compared with each other.

In practice, ethnographic analyses of the media take any given community of audiences—such as families, groups of women, children or, if we were to think of the Global Media Monitoring Project, then the monitors are understood as "audiences" themselves—as an empirical starting point. Researchers then decode the messages received from these audiences and provide their interpretations of such. The problem lies in the fact, however, that today, culture, and especially media culture, has become highly complex, interrelated and interdependent. Both the conferences organized by the WACC and ISIS International Manila attest to the power of transnational media corporations today. In this constantly evolving and mobile cultural situation, ethnographic analyses are also then only one other way of telling a story, or interpreting data.

Furthermore, ethnographic accounts are also contestable terrain due to their subjective component. Inferences have to be made, meanings have to be drawn and conclusions dependent on the researcher's position are then forwarded (cf. Morley and Silverstone, 1991: 157). Neither can the "studied subjects" be said to provide

absolute truths about their practices of everyday lives. What is of crucial importance, therefore, is the way in which interpretation of the ethnographic data is carried out, or what Ang calls the “politics of interpretation” (1996: 46).

With regard to this project and the direction we suggest that it should take, our submission is that the squabbling over turf between “mainstream” and “critical” research, quantitative and qualitative methods of data analysis, humanities and social sciences, etc. is not so much the issue here. As Carey notes, “... perhaps all the talk about theory, method, and other such things prevents us from raising, or permits us to avoid raising, deeper and disquieting questions about the purposes of our scholarship” (1983: 5).

What we are attempting to do, as defined at the beginning of this section, is to provide a multiperspective and critical approach when dealing with any kind of analysis of women and the media. A few things have to be borne in mind here. For one, “... essential to doing critical research (is) the adoption of a self-reflective perspective, one that is ... conscious of the social and discursive nature of any research practice ...” (Ang, 1996: 36). For another, we must also remember the Foucaultian framework in that the production of knowledge is always caught up within a web of power relations (Foucault, 1979).

The methodology we propose is one that emerges from and reflects the manner in which the question of women in media is posed. It must go beyond previous research in examining merely obvious, manifest content through quantitative analysis. We need to look at media as transnational industries which are subject to the laws of capitalism and the state, and as carriers of ideology. When media content is looked at, specific, individual units of communication have to be examined in relation to the entire message. Also, individual units have to be viewed not merely in terms of their explicit, visible content, but also for their implicit and hidden ideological meanings. The entire structure, thus analyzed, has then to be placed within the framework of the structures of capitalism and transnational media industries. We suggest combining quantitative content analysis with more qualitative ethnographic approaches in combination with semiology, feminist research on the media, and any other discipline or approach which would clarify and enrich the interpretive strategy. All analytical tools have their strengths and shortcomings. Our attempt is to transcend these as best as possible. We are aware that such analytical categories are open-ended, and research carried out in this way resists closure. This is, however, a deliberate option, because society itself is constantly in motion and changing (cf. Harding, 1986). Our objective is to work towards analysis that Cixous would call “open and multiple, varied and rhythmic, full of pleasures and perhaps more importantly, of possibilities” (Tong, 1989: 22).

Future research in this field of women in the media has become crucially important because the world populations are all in touch with global and/or local media. Thus, keeping in mind Ang's (1996: 80) apt observation that "The media are increasingly everywhere, but not everywhere in the same way," some of the issues we would like to consider and discuss are outlined in the following:

1. The question is not simply one of "where the power lies within the media systems" (Blumler *et al.*, 1985: 260)—*i.e.* as dictated by the producers of media or as interpreted by audiences—but rather how these relations of power are organized and structured within the multiple and heterogeneous practices of media use and consumption. Stated differently, rather than constructing binary oppositions between the media and the audience (and monitors are understood as audiences), we would like to view consumption of media practices "as a site of cultural struggle, in which a variety of forms of power are exercised, with different sorts of effects" (Ang, 1996: 43).

2. Leading from the above, why is it so important to monitor the media, and why is research so interested in doing audience studies? What is critical to remember in empirical monitoring/audience research is the politics of the knowledge produced. It is well known that implicit to carrying out media monitoring or audience research is very often its commercial or political usefulness and value. "In other words, what we should reflect upon is the **political** interventions we make when studying audiences—political not only in the sense of some external societal goal, but, more importantly, in that we cannot afford to ignore the political dimensions of the process and practice of the production of knowledge itself. What does it mean to subject audiences to the researcher's gaze? How can we develop insights that do not reproduce the kind of objectified knowledge served up by, say, market research or empiricist effects research? How is it possible to do audience research which is 'on the side' of the audience?" (*Ibid.*: 45). These are questions which keep cropping up insistently.

3. While monitoring or studying women in the media, we also need to ask a question which is difficult to address in its entirety: what are a woman's concerns? To what extent are they different from those of humanity at large? Krishnan and Dighe (1990: 115) remark in this context, "If we consider women's concerns as a part of human concerns in general, will we not assist in the historical process of

invisibilizing or ‘ex-nominating’ such concerns? On the other hand, if we differentiate women’s concerns as separate from those of humanity in general, would we be validating biological determinism on the one hand and, on the other, severing women from those networks of care and concern in which they are situated and from which they draw psychic sustenance?” To do so would be an error, as Gramsci has noted, since we need continuity with the past; existing ideologies can only be transformed, not abandoned entirely or legislated away (Simon, 1982).

As we have noted above, an increase in the number of women in higher positions of power within the media industries themselves will not necessarily effect change from structures of male domination. The demand (as made by the Bangkok and Antipolo Declarations) for associating more women at higher levels of policymaking will produce effective results only when these women are themselves equipped to exercise and develop a more equitable gender consciousness. Only the development of such consciousness can enable these women to then ask crucial and pertinent questions about changing the representation of women in the media, instead of just working to integrate women into the existing sociopolitical paradigm.

4. The Global Media Monitoring Project and other researches have conclusively shown that women are either under-represented or marginalized in the mass media, leading to what has been eloquently termed by Gaye Tuchman (1978) as their “symbolic annihilation” by the media. The Global Media Monitoring Project examines this issue of women’s representation as measured relationally against that of men’s representation. What we would like to include alongside this is that patriarchal structures of male domination should be seen in the light of a powerful mechanism for enforcing and perpetuating the class system. Our suggestion is to study the role of the media not just in its relationship between men and women, but also in its relationship between women and capitalism.

A multiperspective and critical approach such as this will not only demonstrate that women in the media are under-represented in relation to men, but also that their limited and biased portrayals are structurally related to the functioning of the capitalist codes of global and transnational media industries.

5. What clearly begins to emerge now is the beginning of a critical interpretive framework in which differences in media monitoring and audience research practices are not just seen as expressions of different requirements, uses or readings; but are all interconnected with the way in which social subjects are structurally positioned, not merely in relation to each other, but also in relation to broader political structures.

6. Within this critical interpretive framework, we have to take into account the construction of interpretations, which are certainly particular ways of understanding the world. Interpretations, by definition, are subjective, having to take into account different positions and points of view. It is never impartial. As Ang so succinctly puts it, “...the empirical, captured in either quantitative or qualitative form, does not yield self-evident meanings; it is only through the interpretive framework constructed by the researcher that understandings of the empirical come about. No theory brought to bear on the empirical can ever be value-neutral; it is always interested in the strong sense of that word. Here, then, the thoroughly political nature of any research practice manifests itself. What is at stake is a *politics of interpretation*” (Ang, 1996: 46, italics in original).

These issues and considerations lead us to the method of doing research, which, as we have already noted, is a political activity. Consequently, we submit that any analyses which will result are by no means definitive. They are to be viewed as provisional and open to challenge and further interpretation. It is a commitment that allows us the possibility of “being ‘surprised,’ of reaching knowledge not prefigured in one’s starting paradigm” (Willis, 1980: 90). What matters most of all is not to put forward definitive data or analyses about any aspects of women and the media, but a continuous critical and intellectual engagement with the various issues involved. To quote Stuart Hall, “I am not interested in Theory, I am interested in going on theorizing” (Hall, 1986: 60).

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