

Recepção e comunicação social: tópicos para pesquisa

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RESUMO

O artigo descreve os fundamentos teóricos utilizados pela equipe CORE do Centro Nacional de la Recherche Scientifique (CNRS), constituída por Claire Belisle, Jean Bianchi, Robert Jourdan e Marie-France Koulommdjian. Comenta os meios sociais de comunicação e apresenta reflexões sobre dois textos: um Relatório elaborado pela equipe citada que mostra as linhas de pesquisa seguidas pelo centro e os principais projetos desenvolvidos pelos pesquisadores neste local. O segundo texto é um artigo publicado na Revista Medias Pouvoirs, que tem como pensamento central o seguinte: "Os trabalhos atuais sobre a recepção dos meios, referidos ao sujeito social no processo de elaboração e de construção do sentido, são tributários da evolução dos paradigmas das ciências humanas".

Palavras chaves: fundamentos, pesquisa, paradigmas.

RESUMEN

El artículo describe los fundamentos teóricos utilizados por el equipo CORE del Centro Nacional de la Recherche Scientifique (CNRS), constituída por Claire Belisle, Jean Bianchi, Robert Jourdan y Marie-France Koulommdjian. Comenta los medios sociales de la comunicación y presenta reflexiones sobre dos textos: un relatório elaborado por un equipo citada que muestra las líneas de la pesquisa por el centro y los principales proyectos desenvueltos por los investigadores y en este local. El segundo texto es un artículo publicado en la Revista Medias Pouvoirs, que tiene como pensamiento central lo siguiente: los trabajos actuales sobre la recepción de los medios, referidos al sujeto sociale en lo proceso de la elaboración e de la construcción de el sentido, son tributarios de la evolución de los paradigmas de las ciencias humanas.

Palabras centrales: fundamentos, investigación, paradigmas.

ABSTRACT

The article describes the theories fundamentals used by CORE group of the National Center of La Recherche e Scientifique (CNRS), constituted by Claire Belisle, Jean Bianchi, Robert Jourdan e Marie France Koulommdjian. It comments the means of social communications and presents reflections about two texts: a written report prepared by the mentioned group that shows research lines used by the center and main projects developed by the researchers on this local. The second text is an article published in Medias Pouvoirs Magazine, that has as central thought as follows: "Actuals works about means reception, referred to social subject on the process of elaboration and felling construction are tributaries of the evolution of humans sciences paradigms".

Key words: fundamentals, research, paradigms.

O artigo visa descrever e comentar os fundamentos teóricos e os modelos utilizados pela equipe CORE do Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique (CNRS), constituída por Claire Belisle, Jean Bianchi, Robert Jourdan e Marie-France Kouloumdjian, na análise da recepção dos meios sociais de comunicação¹. Dois textos serão examinados: o primeiro, um Relatório elaborado pela equipe, com a relação das grandes linhas de pesquisa e dos principais trabalhos em andamento na comunidade científica; o segundo, um artigo de divulgação, escrito também coletivamente e publicado na revista "Medias Pouvoirs"². O pensamento central aí exposto é o seguinte: "Os trabalhos atuais sobre a recepção dos meios, referidos ao sujeito social no processo de elaboração e de construção do sentido, são tributários da evolução dos paradigmas nas ciências humanas"³. Essa problemática é discutida a partir de três grandes correntes que têm alimentado os estudos sobre a recepção: a pesquisa dos efeitos, a perspectiva dos usos e gratificações e, em terceiro lugar, a emergência do quadro "culturalista", sobre as quais os autores tecem considerações de caráter histórico e crítico.

Destaco as seguintes premissas, dentre as que estão incluídas no citado Relatório:

- a) O enfoque interdisciplinar é indispensável para o estudo da recepção como prática cultural, combinado com a superação de uma abordagem unicamente voltada para a categoria dos usuários ou consumidores.
- b) Nessa linha de pesquisa, o receptor é um sujeito que está motivado pelo seu psiquismo e, externamente, pelo sistema social.
- c) Ao contrário dos métodos quantitativos, interessados mais numa espécie de contabilização de audiências, na recepção como prática social articulam-se diversas lógicas - do sujeito, dos meios, dos grupos sociais, dos mediadores - que, por sua vez, combinam-se entre si, interpenetram-se e se confrontam.

Uma outra premissa à análise proposta pela equipe consiste na delimitação do campo de conhecimento, referindo-se a pesquisa apenas ao rádio, ao cinema, à imprensa e à televisão, com forte ênfase nesta última. No caso do cinema, que corresponde ao meu campo específico de atividade, além da obra de Christian Metz, muito conhecida no Brasil, são mencionados textos recentes de Roger Odin e de Francesco Casetti⁴. Preocupam-se ainda os autores

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1. Trata-se da equipe Comunicação-Recepção (CORE) que trabalha há cerca de 10 anos no laboratório do IRPEACS (Instituto de Pesquisa em pedagogia da economia e em audiovisual para a comunicação em ciências sociais), que pertence ao CNRS (Centro Nacional da Pesquisa Científica) com sede em Ecully (Lyon, França). Claire Belisle é psico-socióloga e engenheiro do CNRS, Jean Bianchi é Diretor do Departamento de Comunicação do Instituto Católico de Lyon e pesquisador associado, Robert Jourdan é pesquisador associado do IRPEACS, Marie-France Kouloumdjian é também psico-socióloga, mestre de conferências na Université Lyon I e pesquisadora associada. Na qualidade de bolsista de pós-doutorado da CAPES, estou integrado a essa equipe durante todo o ano de 1992.
 2. "Rapport sur les modèles d'analyse de la réception des médias" (projet de colloque), IRPEACS, CNRS, janeiro de 1991. O outro texto é o artigo "Médias: la réception revisitée", in *MediasPouvoirs* (politiques, economies et stratégies des Médias), nº 25, jan/mar 1992, La Découverte, Paris.
 3. "Médias: la réception revisitée", ob. cit., p. 58.
 4. ODIN, Roger. *Cinéma et production de sens*, Armand Colin, Paris, 1990, CASETTI, Francesco. *D'un regard l'autre* (le film et son spectateur), P.U.L., Paris, 1990.

em criticar a tendência que exalta a passividade da recepção dos meios de comunicação social (MCS). Citam dados recentes obtidos no Canadá, revelando a diminuição da presença de adolescentes de 12 a 17 anos frente aos aparelhos de televisão. Outra pesquisa, esta sobre as práticas culturais dos franceses, demonstra que não se confirma o propalado enfraquecimento do interesse pela leitura, causado pela frequência mais intensa dos meios audiovisuais, em especial da televisão. Todas essas informações confluem para a verificação de que não se pode falar hoje em dia simplesmente de uma recepção, ainda que ativa, sendo mais indicado o conceito de "experiência dos meios" para definir essa complexa atividade de interpretação, de produção de sentido e de prazer⁵.

É necessário ainda levar em conta a complexidade dos comportamentos do usuário frente à telinha de televisão, por exemplo, quando entra em jogo toda uma teia de relações com fatos da vida cotidiana. Outros fatores que merecem ser considerados são a rapidez da evolução técnica dos MCS e a posição proeminente dessa atividade nos quadros da sociedade, nos níveis da economia, das finanças e da política.

OS EFEITOS

A discussão sobre os efeitos dos MCS responde à pergunta: O que esses efeitos fazem no indivíduo? Observa Sonia Livingstone, citada no texto em análise: "Ainda que o enfoque a partir dos efeitos, rigorosamente definido como experimental e behaviorista, já não esteja na moda, constitui ele, no entanto, a questão chave subjacente a toda investigação sobre a audiência"⁶. O trabalho da equipe CORE chama a atenção para a análise de Cumberbatch e Howitt sobre as pesquisas dos últimos 25 anos em torno da problemática dos efeitos, que se modificou aos poucos na medida em que os estudos se desenvolviam. É o caso, por exemplo, da distinção entre efeitos fortes e efeitos fracos. Na verdade, o desenvolvimento dos métodos de pesquisa, das análises quantitativas multivariadas e de um modelo psico-sociológico causal do comportamento obrigaram os pesquisadores a elaborarem modelos funcionais, cada dia mais complexos, para estabelecer distinções entre a influência dos MCS e a de outros fatores psicológicos e sociais. Pode-se falar da existência de "efeitos indiretos", difusos, que agem a médio ou a longo prazo, mediante uma verdadeira rede de elementos condicionadores. Referindo-se a instrumentos conceituais e a enfoques teóricos estranhos aos esquemas behavioristas dominantes, os autores mencionam ainda a contribuição de McCombs e Shaw⁷. Segundo essa pesquisa, existem correspondências entre a ênfase dada a certos temas pelos MCS e a ordem de importância que os mesmos recebem do público e dos políticos, mas nem sempre se poderá afirmar que os MCS desempenham um papel determinante nas questões de interesse coletivo.

5. "Médias: la réception revisitée", ob. cit., p. 59.

6. LIVINGSTONE, Sonia. *Making Sense of Television*, The Psychology of Audience Interpretation, Pergamon Press, Oxford, 1990, p. 9. Citada no "Rapport", p. 8.

7. MCCOMBS M.E. & SHAW D.L. "The Agenda-Setting Function of Mass-Media", in *Public Opinion Quarterly*, nº 36, 1987, cit. "Rapport" p. 10.

OS USOS E GRATIFICAÇÕES

A questão desloca-se agora para o polo oposto: O que os indivíduos fazem com os meios? Os primeiros estudos dedicados a essa temática possuíam um cunho mais sociológico, como no caso das relações entre tipos de conteúdo específicos e audiências encontradas nos diversos estratos sociais. Na tendência psicologizante, que predomina a partir de tempos mais recentes, o problema em causa procura responder à pergunta: Como diferentes membros de uma audiência podem produzir leituras-interpretações muito variadas de uma mesma mensagem?

Na década posterior à Segunda Grande Guerra e até o fim dos anos 60, os trabalhos sobre a recepção do rádio e da televisão concentraram-se nos estudos quantitativos dos índices de escuta, geralmente financiados pelas mesmas instituições que produziam os programas. Tratava-se de saber não apenas quantas pessoas viam um determinado programa, mas também de explorar os efeitos da televisão dentro de um determinado quadro psicológico/social, como seria o caso das pesquisas sobre a violência veiculada na televisão ou sobre o impacto da publicidade. Trabalhos nessa direção, naturalmente que a partir de projetos mais elaborados, continuam ainda a ser desenvolvidos (Collet e Lamb, 1986).

Mas o aporte mais significativo no estudo dos usos e gratificações foi introduzido a partir dos anos 60 por James Halloran e Jay Blumler, como aparece na síntese feita por Jensen e Rosengren: "primeiro descrições factuais, depois a organização dos materiais em torno de variáveis centrais, em seguida uma tentativa de explicação dos comportamentos e, finalmente, uma elaboração teórica sistemática"⁸. A crítica que se pode fazer a essa linha de pesquisa, segundo o trabalho da equipe CORE, é quanto à sua tendência ao experimentalismo, sendo que a maioria desses estudos não soube libertar-se de uma concepção behaviorista do agir humano, tanto assim que muitas das conclusões obtidas têm sido objeto de vivas contestações na comunidade dos pesquisadores. Referindo-se à prática da recepção na televisão, observa Sonia Livingstone que a perspectiva dos efeitos produziu teorias contraditórias ou opostas, na medida em que privilegiava ora o texto, ora os espectadores, sem que essa fundamental diferença de pontos de vista tivesse sido devidamente levada em conta.

OS "ESTUDOS CULTURALISTAS"

Essa tendência surge como alternativa às insuficiências registradas em teorias e métodos anteriores. Trata-se de aproximação alternativa, desenvolvida inicialmente pelo "Center for Contemporary Cultural Studies", da Universidade de Birmingham, a partir dos anos 70. Os assim chamados "estudos culturalistas" centram-se na problemática da produção, por meio de processos culturais e sociais, de significações históricas e particulares. Derivam de uma perspectiva "flou" atribuída ao trabalho intelectual (Geertz, 1983), que seria ao mesmo tempo pesquisa da cultura e crítica da cultura. Afastam-se da pesquisa empírica para reavaliarem e aplicarem alguns dos desenvolvimentos teóricos já propostos pela semiologia e pelo estruturalismo na Europa. Privilegiam as práticas sociais

8. JENSEN K.B. & ROSENGREN K.E. "Five Traditions in Search of Audience", in *European Journal of Communication*, Ed. Sage, London, 1990, p. 207-238.

e culturais enquanto práticas complexas de significação nas quais os MCS se integram de algum modo. Um texto clássico de Stuart Hall, de 1973, estabeleceu um corte histórico no tratamento da problemática da recepção: "Inspirando-se no sociólogo Frank Parkin, Hall propõe-se analisar como os telespectadores utilizam sua própria definição da situação para interpretar e decodificarem as mensagens da televisão", salientando que existem três enfoques possíveis: o primeiro é o modo de codificação do emissor; o segundo, um modo negociado que desloca parcialmente as significações; finalmente, um modo de oposição, buscando referências exteriores para dar andamento ao trabalho de interpretação das mensagens⁹. Pode-se afirmar que o trabalho de decodificação completa a proposta codificada na mensagem, na medida em que introduz elementos de outra ordem, como o impacto sofrido, o prazer e - naturalmente - os efeitos, gratificações e usos. Estes últimos, permanecendo embora uma instância importante, já não estão isolados, mas se integram num contexto social e cultural muito mais complexo. Para situar o conceito de visão culturalista da recepção, destaco o seguinte trecho do trabalho elaborado pela equipe CORE:

"As práticas da codificação e da decodificação não são simétricas. A codificação - o trabalho de produção do programa escolhe e organiza no discurso um conjunto de significantes audiovisuais. A decodificação - o trabalho de recepção do programa - negocia com o objeto televisivo presente, ou seja, com o discurso constituído. Em suma, a codificação fornece elementos e propõe limites em função dos quais a decodificação trabalha. Mas a codificação não tem meios para prescrever totalmente, para garantir a decodificação. A codificação já incluiu na mensagem emitida uma ou mais leituras preferenciais, aquelas que intencionalmente são transmitidas à audiência. Esta, em sua prática de decodificação, poderá adotar ou não as leituras propostas, tendo sempre a opção de fazer com outros olhos a leitura da mensagem. As práticas da recepção abrem um espaço de jogo entre a cumplicidade com o código investido na mensagem e a resistência a esses mesmos códigos"¹⁰.

Menciono em seguida algumas pesquisas de campo dentre as que aparecem nos textos que estou examinando. No fim dos anos 70, Morley estudou a relação texto-sujeito a partir de uma pesquisa sobre o cinema, procurando introduzir o conceito de interdiscursividade no quadro teórico desenvolvido por Hall. Na mesma perspectiva, Morley e Brundson fizeram uma análise semiológica do jornal de atualidades "Nationwide", da BBC de Londres. Procuram enquadrar em contexto mais amplo e diversificado as reações a uma mensagem, encontrando práticas de significação complexas que os semiólogos tenderiam a relacionar com a mera competência lingüística e os marxistas com uma teoria abstrata sobre a ideologia. Frente ao programa "Nationwide", a tipologia Parikin-Hall-Morley, que representa uma abordagem de cunho etnográfico, verificou que jovens metalúrgicos partilhavam com empregados de banco uma mesma proximidade do código dominante: apesar de aparentarem um distanciamento que, de fato, era puramente verbal, os dois grupos aceitaram da mesma

9. "Rapport", ob. cit., p. 13. O texto de Stuart Hall, "Encoding/Decoding", pode ser encontrado em *Culture, Media, Language*, Hutchinson University Library, 1980, p. 128-138.

10. "Rapport", ob. cit., p. 13-14.

maneira a mensagem global do programa visto, seu enquadramento ideológico e as avaliações nele inseridas. Outro aporte considerado significativo aparece nos trabalhos de Roger Chartier, que iniciou seu estudo a partir de uma história econômica centrada na produção e no comércio de livros e revistas. Chartier destacou o espaço que compete à recepção, assim como a relativa autonomia dos leitores-usuários, num terreno onde o discurso histórico estava acostumado a privilegiar a força de imposição de sentido, a partir do emissor¹¹.

Como conclusão a respeito do aporte dos "estudos culturalistas", o Relatório aponta para o fato de terem esses estudos contribuído para tornar mais complexa a problemática da recepção, passando a considerar também as características sócio-culturais dos usuários. Dessa forma, a análise desloca-se do mero estudo da difusão para o de uma circulação da informação no contexto do desenvolvimento cultural. É evidente que toda uma conceituação de cultura resta ainda a ser desenvolvida e perfeitamente delimitada, a fim de que os estudos ditos "culturais" venham a ser instrumentos úteis de trabalho. Por outro lado, neste texto que se apresenta como de caráter introdutório, a equipe CORE pretendeu salientar que o polo da reflexão sobre a recepção deslocou-se pouco a pouco dos MCS, considerados em si mesmos, para os grupos sociais e para as diversas culturas às quais eles se dirigem. Assinalou ainda, a partir dos estudos semiológicos, cuja função é desmontar as articulações do texto e os respectivos jogos de escritura, que "os pesquisadores foram levados a terem em conta a existência de estratégias semióticas, restituindo assim aos usuários dos meios o respectivo papel na organização do percurso significante"¹². O capítulo termina com o quadro sinótico proposto por M. Real, mostrando os elos de integração existentes entre as diversas disciplinas que abordam a problemática da recepção dos MCS.

A EVOLUÇÃO DOS PARADIGMAS: o campo teórico atual

Numa primeira observação de conjunto, verifica-se que a evolução das práticas de investigação em comunicação social corresponde a importantes mudanças nas pesquisas em ciências humanas e nos estudos de eunho literário. Pode-se mesmo falar na emergência de uma "nebulosa culturalista", uma busca ainda não bem definida de caminhos. É o que acontece com os pesquisadores que pretendem fugir da tradição dos efeitos behavioristas, sem no entanto renunciarem a ir ao encontro dos usuários concretos. São como que patamares atingidos pouco a pouco, em sucessivas idas e vindas. O objetivo é a criação de modelos mediante a intervenção de um certo número de campos do conhecimento científico que integram a problemática do sujeito, como os da antropologia cultural, da etnografia, da psicologia social, da linguística, dos estudos literários, da hermenêutica. Numa classificação mais específica, pode-se dizer que os trabalhos concentrados sobre as práticas dos usuários mostram que o campo da recepção se organiza em termos de contratos (Boullier); de interesses e de horizontes (Fouquier); de competências e conhecimentos (Véron); de "trabalho" de identificação, contextualização e personalização (Bertrand, De Gournay); de espaço transacional, de relações com o outro e com a realidade (Bélisle, Jourdan); de processos identitários (Kouloumdjian). Em síntese, o que os pesquisa-

11. ROGER, Chartier. *Histoire de l'édition française*.¹ Le livre conquérant, Fayard-Cercle de la Librairie, Paris, 1982.

12. "Rapport", ob. cit., p. 16.

dores da equipe CORE querem destacar é que a recepção não pode ser posta hoje em dia como polo complementar da emissão, numa perspectiva comunicacional linear. Ao contrário, a prática dos MCS insere-se num percurso alimentado por fatores externos, que se apresentam e se renovam a cada dia. Ela só adquire sentido no interior da coerência global desse percurso.

A partir desse amplo quadro de tendências e de influências recíprocas, os textos em exame apontam algumas perspectivas, denominadas aqui de **disciplinas-recursos**, que constituiriam hoje o quadro ideal para o desenvolvimento das pesquisas em comunicação social. São elas:

- a) **A teoria da interação**, com os aportes da etnologia e da psicologia, incluída a dimensão étnica. Bateson parte de uma evidência liminar: havendo ao menos dois interlocutores não pode deixar de haver comunicação. Mas o sentido provém da relação com o contexto/meio ambiente, cabendo ao destinatário estabelecer essa relação e fixar o significado da mensagem, a partir daquilo que esta propõe. Superado o nível da decodificação, o destinatário trabalhará a mensagem com as informações que ele possui. Tal aplicação não se realiza apenas no caso óbvio da conversação, mas se estende à comunicação por difusão, apesar da impossibilidade de reação em tempo real às propostas do emissor. No caso da experiência audiovisual, a situação de escuta tem a ver com um conjunto de elementos dotados de estrutura complexa, entre os quais a instalação material, a organização do tempo de recepção, o feixe de relações interpessoais e, naturalmente, as disposições psicológicas do receptor. No Glossário que constitui um dos apêndices do Relatório consta a seguinte definição para o vocábulo **Interação**: "Processo de comunicação inter-pessoal e fenômeno social, instalado em um quadro espaço-temporal de natureza cultural, marcado por códigos e por rituais sociais. Esta noção, que se tornou central em ciências sociais, aporta uma nova perspectiva epistemológica: ela coloca em primeiro plano, para compreensão dos fenômenos humanos, os processos de informação e de comunicação, os princípios da causalidade circular e de retroação, exigindo que se leve em conta o contexto e a dinâmica próprios a cada sistema relacional"¹³.
- b) **A teoria da interlocução e do ato de linguagem**, a partir do pressuposto de que a valorização do sujeito e da palavra como comportamento intencional renovou o estudo da comunicação lingüística. Os textos em exame apontam para contribuição de Francis Jacques que, sob o prisma da filosofia, procura fundamentar o estatuto do Outro para além das margens estabelecidas por Kant e pela fenomenologia de Merleau-Ponty, relacionando sua reflexão com a problemática da Referência e do valor do discurso em confronto com o objeto. O percurso que, como vimos, começa no diálogo inter-pessoal, que funciona como modelo, chega às formas sociais, à publicidade, aos meios de comunicação de massa: "produção de sentido na medida em que ela se realiza em discurso pela conjunção de duas instâncias postas em relação interlocutiva, com referência a um mundo a ser dito"¹⁴. Esta proposição segundo a qual a perspectiva dialógica serve de porta à compreensão da cultura dos

13. "Rapport", *Glossaire*, p. 47.

14. "Rapport", p. 25.

MCS tem evidente parentesco com o pensamento de Todorov e de Bathkin, já muito estudados pela teoria literária.

c) Os autores citam ainda como perspectivas em cujo interior desenvolvem-se as atuais pesquisas em comunicação:

- a **genealogia das práticas culturais**, na perspectiva histórica adotada pelo já mencionado Roger Chartier;
- a **transicionalidade**, a partir do reconhecimento da importância das zonas intermediárias (pré-consciência, jogo, etc...) no funcionamento psíquico, que como se vê nos trabalhos de D.W. Winnicott, G. Roheim e R. Kaës (espaço potencial entre o indivíduo e as pressões/estimulações do espaço social);
- a **atividade interpretativa do sujeito na recepção e os esportes da semiologia**: no primeiro caso, os autores referem-se à problemática da **estética da recepção** e à contribuição de H.R. Jauss e da escola de Constance, autores muito estudados no Brasil nos últimos 15 anos; no que se refere à semiologia, são citados Umberto Eco e Christian Metz, ambos já muito pesquisados por intermédio de excelentes traduções brasileiras.

A apresentação desses horizontes de pesquisa, que os autores do Relatório insistem em definir como uma contribuição meramente introdutória, tem por objetivo chamar a atenção sobre a complexidade dos meios de comunicação, de que resulta a necessidade de serem utilizados diversos modelos analíticos e aportes teórico-metodológicos menos habituais. A equipe prepara neste momento um livro dedicado à recepção dos MCS, a ser lançado no final de 1992, integrando e aprofundando a reflexão sobre essas diversas linhas ou perspectivas que acabam de ser levantadas.

CONCLUSÃO

À modo de conclusão, quero referir-me à excelente contribuição da pesquisadora Ien Ang, citada no artigo de "Medias Pouvoirs", autora de um texto crítico publicado recentemente no "European Journal of Communication"¹⁵. Trata-se, em síntese, de uma reflexão sobre as questões da autonomia e da identidade cultural no contexto dos meios de comunicação em sua perspectiva de difusão mundial, incluindo uma crítica à concepção do "popular" como fonte de resistência ao "hegemônico". Destaco os seguintes pontos:

1. O campo dos chamados estudos "culturalistas", na sua dimensão de prática intelectual, é em si mesmo eclético, crítico e deconstrutivo, não se regendo pelos paradigmas das disciplinas tradicionais, sobretudo no que diz respeito à divisão de fronteiras entre os campos do conhecimento. Insistindo, com Clifford Geertz (1983), em que o quadro "culturalista" deve reunir ao mesmo tempo a pesquisa da cultura e a crítica à cultura, Ang dá um testemunho pessoal para reforçar sua convicção de que sensibilidade crítica e sensibilidade diante do mundo concreto podem ser mais importantes para os pesquisadores do que o profissionalismo teórico e a pureza metodológica. Um psicó-
15. O artigo intitula-se "Culture and Communication: Towards an Ethnographic Critique of Media Consumption in the Transnational Media System", in *European Journal of Communication*, SAGE, London, vol. 5 (1990), p. 239-260.

logo marxista francês lamentava não trabalhar com a intensidade desejada porque gastava muito tempo lendo os jornais. Do meu ponto de vista, disse-lhe Ang, é essa atitude aberta ao mundo que constitui o requisito básico para quem deseja empreender estudos que possuam realmente uma dimensão culturalista.

2. O interesse predominante dos estudos "culturalistas" refere-se à profunda conexão que foi decretada entre as práticas de significância e o exercício do poder. Em outras palavras, uma aproximação culturalista da recepção não deve parar no momento pseudo-intimo do encontro entre os meios e a audiência, mas estender-se também aos significados diferenciados e à significância das situações específicas de recepção enquanto articuladas com relações gerais e sociais de poder. Informando sobre sua intenção de entender e conceitualizar as audiências de televisão, como no caso de pesquisa sobre o seriado norte-americano "Dallas" (1985), Ang observa que "a análise da recepção intensificou nosso interesse sobre a maneira pela qual o público constrói ativa e criativamente seus próprios significados e cria sua própria cultura, deixando de absorver passivamente significados que lhe eram impostos de antemão"¹⁶.
3. Referindo-se à contribuição de Marcus e Fisher, Ang afirma ainda que a aparente integração universal ou global promovida pela difusão crescente dos meios de comunicação de massa não provoca necessariamente a eliminação da diversidade cultural. Ao contrário, permite a justaposição de alternativas diversas para a compreensão do mundo, de tal forma que cada um pode ser melhor entendido à luz do outro. Frente à inelutável disseminação de um sistema transnacional de meios, afirma a autora, a única saída razoável é a negociação em contextos culturais concretos. No fundo, trata-se de uma conformação à condição pós-moderna que, enfatizando o que é em lugar do que pode ser, faz da etnografia uma forma de crítica cultural despojada do ranço das utopias¹⁷.

16. Ien Ang, ob. cit., p. 242.

17. Ver MARCUS, George & FISCHER, Michael. *Antropology as Cultural Critique*, The University of Chicago Press, 1986. um livro mais recente de Ien Ang é *Desperately Seeking the Audience*. Routledge, London, 1991. O único autor latino-americano citado na bibliografia que acompanha o artigo de An é Jesús Martín Barbero: "Communication from Culture: The Crisis of the National and the Emergence of the Popular", in *Media, Culture & Society*, 10(4), 447-65.

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Women, equality and media: an appraisal for the 1990's

Eileen Mahoney

RESUMO

O trabalho avalia a batalha das mulheres pela igualdade e auto-determinação, mostrando a importância da mídia nesta luta.

Palavras chaves: mulheres, feminismo, mídia, estudos da cultura.

RESUMEN

El trabajo evalúa la batalla de las mujeres por la igualdad y la autodeterminación, mostrando la importancia de los medios de comunicación en esta lucha.

Palabras centrales: mujer, feminismo, media, estudios de la cultura.

ABSTRACT

The text appraises the battle for women's equality and self-determination, showing the importance of the media in this struggle.

Key words: women, feminism, media, cultural studies.

INTRODUCTION

In a world filled with war, death and dislocation, poverty, disease and malnourishment, inequality and sexual abuse, why have and do women, who bear the greatest of these burdens, concern themselves with media?

Are not issues related to health care, socio-economic wellbeing - if not, financial independence, cultural autonomy, reproductive rights, legal protection, education - development - and the like far more pressing?

Is there a reasonable choice between working towards remedying such issues - i.e., those that truly matter, and concerning oneself with the media?

The answer, if one is to accept the actions of women throughout the world (and indeed, throughout history if a broader range of cultural expressions is considered) as adequate testimony to their views, is no.

The reason was given thusly by Beatrice Forbes-Robertson Hale in her accounting in 1914 of **What Women Want**:

Women have often been taunted with lack of the creative and reasoning faculties. But until the present age the number of women possessing opportunities to develop these has been so small in proportion to men as to make any comparison insidious. Only now are the faculties of women emerging from obscurity. Through all time women as a class have been silent; now a proportion becomes articulate. During the years of their silence Man the Romancer has spoken for them, clothing them with the garments of his own Fantasy. So well has his fancy wrought that sometimes women have even believed it fact, though more often their acquiescence has been superficial... He forgets, too, that his fantasy clothed but one creature - 'Woman' - a chimera of his own brain, and that what he is at last witnessing is the rise of women, individually and collectively, an infinite variety of conscious persons bound together by the single need of self-development. When as many women as men are free to express themselves, there will remain but one great struggle on earth, the struggle of all the dispossessed, men and women alike, for their inheritance. (Hale, 1914:6-7)

Recent feminist research has retrieved the cultural works of women "from obscurity" and has shown that, though marginalized, women have managed, historically and currently, to be active producers of culture. (See Douglas, 1977; Rakow, 1986) Their "silence" thus reflects social conditions that restrict access to means of communication.¹ (Hull and Smith, 1982) Nevertheless, Hale's main point is well taken, and that is, that women's struggle for self development and autonomy is inextricably linked with becoming "free to express themselves."

Women in the past two decades, to which this article will devote much of its attention, have incorporated media issues into larger social and political

1. Hull and Smith underscore the historical and contemporary experience of Black women writers: "As a major result of the historical realities which brought us enslaved to this continent [North America], we have kept separate in every way possible from recognized intellectual work. Our legacy as chattel, as sexual slaves as well as forced laborers, would adequately explain why most Black women are, to this day, far away from the centers of academic power and why Black women's studies has just begun to surface in the latter part of the 1970s. What our multilayered oppression does not explain are the ways in which we have created and maintained our own intellectual traditions as Black women, without either the recognition or the support of white-male society." (Hull and Smith, 1982: XVIII)

objectives and projects. This focus on cultural production and consumption has involved political and theoretical debates, internationally, nationally and locally. A comprehensive review of the enormous, varied efforts of women throughout the world to advance their position, to promote equality, and to express their views is not possible here. What is offered, in fact, is partial and suffers particularly from the lack of much original work from women in developing societies. It is nonetheless hoped that some benefit may be derived from it.

In the pages that follow then, the discussion focuses on three arenas of struggle - namely, international organizations, specifically the United Nations, academe, i.e., Western media studies, and media organizations. Consideration of women, media and development issues is particularly relevant in the discussion of policy debates undertaken in international organizations. However, no strict comparison of women's issues with those involved in national development will be attempted here. Additionally, some of the main currents in Western media and cultural studies, as well as the impact of feminism are addressed. And, the (seemingly?) unchanging record of facts and figures regarding women's participation in mainstream media is highlighted.

Women, Media, Development and Power

While there have been long-standing efforts - at the personal, local, national and international level - to improve the social position and status of women, the development of the international women's movement in the 1970s is taken here as a point of departure. One of the manifestations of this movement was its impact on international organizations, namely - the United Nations.²

Indeed, the designation of 1975 as International Women's Year, and the United Nations Decade for Women (1976 - 1985) were intended to put women's issues "on the international agenda of the 1970s and beyond." (United Nations, 1975 p. 18) "Equality, Development and Peace" were the stated themes and broad objectives of the Year 1975, and the Decade that followed added "Employment, Health and Education" to the agenda. A series of conferences - Mexico, 1975; Copenhagen, 1980; Nairobi, 1985 - were devoted to women's issues, and efforts to organize "plans of action" at regional, national and global levels were initiated and reviewed. Research was conducted to gain a more accurate picture of women in the world.

The multifaceted picture that emerged situated women within a global political economy over which they exercised little or no control. One powerful element underpinning, but rarely visible in, this picture was (is) women's lack of control over - even access to - means of communication. Hence, despite significant differences in the lives and needs of women across the world, Margaret Gallagher reported:

-
2. It must be noted that women have pressed their concerns in international bodies throughout this century. And, the efforts of women are not circumscribed by the activities discussed below. Examination and analysis of international conventions, the records of the League of Nations and the United Nations offer ample material to support this. However, the United Nations Decade for Women may be viewed as an acknowledgement of these efforts, and therefore, I focus on its relationship to media issues.

[Yet,] in a striking way, aspects of the mass media's relationship to women - in terms both of portrayal and employment - transcend cultural and class boundaries. The same limited set of dominant characterizations of women, the same impoverished patterns of female participation in the media can be found - well-rooted - in established media structures and 'emergent' in younger systems. This in itself is highly indicative, pointing to the global context within which communication systems are developed and media content created. The context is primarily an economic one. (Gallagher, 1981: 28-29)

The dominant "images of women" in mass media were (and remain) unrepresentative and exploitative, and unacceptable in light of the objectives of the women's movement. (See Unesco, 1989:209-221) Recognition of the need for more realistic and balanced representations, and greater participation of women in media and communications, however, did not lead to expected action within the framework of the United Nations.

Gallagher, in her report mid-Decade report, *Unequal Opportunities*, offers a telling example. Although "[t]he events leading up to the World Conference of the United Nations Decade for Women, held in Copenhagen in July 1980, suggested that the issue of communication would feature prominently in the conference discussions... there was little, or no discussion on communication" at the Conference. (Gallagher, 1981:159)

The main reason - probably also influential in the organization of the conference schedule which is also cited as problematic - reports Gallagher, is that "[b]y 1980 the entire communication issue had become highly controversial in international debate." The report of the International Commission for the Study of Communication Problems (the MacBride Commission) was published in 1980, and had become, along with the call for a New International Information Order (NIIO), the focus of intense debate in Unesco. In Gallagher's view, attempts to strengthen "proposals concerning communication in the Draft Programme of Action ran aground because of governmental reluctance to become embroiled with the question."³ (Ibid:160)

The "question" that stymied - in part - discussion of communication issues at the United Nations women's conference(s) centered on the call by developing nations for a NIIO (subsequently renamed, New World Information and Communication Order, NWICO). Throughout the 1970s, members of the developing community called attention to distorted media images of Third World peoples and realities, and to the imbalanced international flow of information and media products. In effect, the NWICO struggle underway in Unesco was calling for corrections in the media similar to those women sought. More realistic and balanced representations, and greater participation and autonomy in news and cultural production.⁴

3. Gallagher also critiques the influence of governmental concerns on actual women's participation in this and other meetings.

4. The movement for a NIIO that followed the initial call for a New International Economic Order, and the subsequent policy initiatives advanced in other fora - e.g., planning methods for resources (radio frequencies) distribution and use in the International Telecommunication Union, UN Decade for Development, and right to "prior consent" regarding direct broadcast satellites - represented heightened awareness of the significance of communication to national development. (Lent and Giffard 1982) These efforts were viewed as a broad mobilization of developing countries, and widely interpreted as examples of North-South conflict - i.e., Third World countries against the West.

Though many issues raised by women in the United Nations overlapped with the concerns of the NWICO, efforts to acknowledge and incorporate them were lacking. Indeed, the MacBride Commission report - **Many Voices, One World**, offered very limited attention to women's issues, and included only one relevant recommendation. These efforts to work within international organizations to reform the mass media then, "remained in the true manner parallels, continually equidistant." (Gallagher, 1986, see also Roach, 1990)

To be sure, this lack of coordination and support weakened these initiatives, especially the NWICO. Nevertheless, the recognition of women and members of the developing nations of the power of the media was confirmed in the response to their initiatives by Western media interests and Western (primarily the United States) governments. Three aspects of the overall reaction deserve attention as they have shaped the media environment in which we now live.

The United States government attacked any suggestion that the free flow of information, its policy throughout the postwar period, need be modified as antithetical to "democracy" and "freedom". Balancing the international flow of news, questioning the content of advertisements or media products (as in the case of the women's movement), or proposing "planning" methods for resource use - all represented intolerable encroachments on the freedom of enterprise principle upheld by U. S. policy and manifest in the transnationalization of American economic and cultural/communication activities. (Schiller, 1976, 1981)

Briefly, the American response, waged by powerful media organizations and government representatives, had three basic elements: biased media coverage of the NWICO debate and of Unesco and the United Nations (see Giffard, 1989; Herman, 1989); an attack on multilateralism (see Massing, 1984; Hughes, 1985-1986; Coate, 1988); and the promotion of deregulation and privatization of communication and information resources. (Roach, 1987; Mahoney, 1988)⁵

Ultimately, Western reaction to challenges advanced within international organizations, especially the NWICO, resulted in the US and British withdrawal from Unesco. (See *Journal of Communication*, 1984) And, this political response, and moreover, the ongoing deregulation and privatization of media and communications facilities and services, have fundamentally weakened international organizations. (See Mahoney, forthcoming; *Media Development*, 1990) Deregulatory policies effectively remove the sphere of informational/cultural production and distribution from regulatory oversight. The result has been the nearly unrestricted construction of media conglomerates with an unmatched "global reach." (Smith, 1991; Bagdikian, 1989; Schiller, 1989)

While massive media mergers continue to concentrate cultural production and distribution into fewer and fewer corporate (predominantly white, male) hands, global political economic realities further weaken many (developing) countries, as well as the position of women within societies. Hence, the United Nations report for the 1985 Nairobi meeting maintained that

5. Biased media coverage of the women's movement, of women's issues and of women is analyzed in Tuchmen et al 1978, FAIR 1991; Wolf 1991b.

difficult economic conditions in developing nations, including the debt crisis and deep recession of the early 1980s, undercut efforts to improve the livelihood of women:

No lasting recovery can be achieved without rectifying the structural imbalances in the context of the critical international economic situation and without continued efforts towards the establishment of a new international economic order. The present situation clearly has serious repercussions for the status of women, particularly underprivileged women, and for human resource development. (United Nations, 1986:11)

Assessments of the United Nations Decade, and its impact on media relevant to women in Africa have also considered economic hardship a major reason for the lack of improvement. (See Boateng, 1989; Ismail 1984; The Minority Rights Group, Report N. 77)

The UN's activities nonetheless called attention to the continuing agenda of women's equality and well-being. And, women's initiatives and development projects continue to receive some degree of support from the United Nations and Unesco. (Unesco, 1989) However, the political economy of aid accompanying privatization often focuses on objectives (e.g., training media "professionals") that more or less "fit" the dominant models of communication. (See **Media Development**, 1990; Golding, 1977)

Additionally, there are "positive action" initiatives being advanced within the Commission of the European Community (EC).⁶ And, Gallagher reports that some space within that regional organization to work towards equal opportunities for, and improved portrayals of women in European media organizations. Yet, a "rosy picture" is not what's on offer. (Phone interview with Gallagher, 23 April 1991)

Although it is important that women's issues have been kept on the agenda during a turbulent period, the increasingly commercialized media environment may well undercut the gains achieved in the (former) public service broadcasters in Europe. A greater reliance on independent productions as a result of privatization, for instance, threatens hard-won job-security, maternity and child care policies. (Gallagher, phone interview, 23 April 1991, see also Haslem in European Broadcasting Union, 1991) And, commercial media treatment of women, historically and currently, remains incorrigible. (d'Ancona, 1991)

Nonetheless, Gallagher and other women in European broadcasting continue their efforts to utilize the resources and the leverage that the EC may provide to push forward women's equality and non-sexist portrayals

6. The Commission of the European Community has established a Steering Committee for Equal Opportunity in Broadcasting. This Steering Committee is supported in the EC's Third Action Programme (1991-1995). The Committee has made recommendation to European broadcasting organizations regarding employment policy, women's involvement in programme production, analysis of content, and sensitivity seminars for producers and journalists, and multi-media training kits for universities, as well as broadcasting organizations. Hedy d'Ancona, the Dutch Minister of Welfare, Health and Cultural Affairs, recently called for the European establish a similar working party. (See d'Ancona, 1991 and European Broadcasting Union, 1991)

in European broadcasting. (See European Broadcasting Union, 1991; Gallagher, 1990; *Women of Europe Newsletter*, 1990)

In an overall sense, however, women's abilities to use international organizations, specifically the United Nations and its affiliated bodies, to advance media reform measures now confront different political economic realities. The political regulatory framework has shifted dramatically eroding whatever influence international institutions may have previously had.

In fact, the global political economy of communications currently is such that private media enterprises now operate almost unrestricted. Media enterprises - underpinned with sophisticated communication technologies - create global media spectacles (e.g., sports, advertising, war coverage, films) with little national or international legislative oversight.

While women continue to raise in international, regional and national policy bodies the concerns and needs of the world's women, and the impact of mass media on women's issues, international organizations, the United Nations system in particular, confront an uncertain political and financial future.

Academe: Media and Cultural Studies

Another battlefield for women struggling to have more accurate representation and greater autonomy in cultural production and consumption is academe. Here, only some of the major developments can be reviewed. While there have been some hard-won victories, say in the development of women's studies departments in higher education, the overall picture must be acknowledged as mixed. We begin with a paradox which again calls attention to questions of development, as well as to those concerning women.

In (American) communications scholarship, we find two very different claims regarding the influence of media. **Within** the United States, the media is said to exercise little, if any, influence. This position is the consistent result of conventional media research from Lazarsfeld's early research to current "active audience" findings. The central thesis underpinning this orientation, though embodied in various research methodologies down through the years, is the dominant paradigm of "limited effects." (See Katz, 1987) This perspective maintains that the media has little influence in people's lives.

In this view, audiences derive a "multiplicity of meanings" from media programming. (Fiske, 1987; Rapping, 1987) In effect, this position of "audience sovereignty," similar to consumer sovereignty, argues that people get what they (consumers) want from media; not what may be intended by the media industries that produce messages. [American media products are also considered to have "limited effects" in Europe as well where newly privatized media markets are eagerly sought.⁷]

7. A recent statement of the popular U. S. business and government position regarding national cultural/communications policy is provided by Hon. Janice Obuchowski, Director, National Telecommunications and Information Agency, Department of Commerce, U. S. Government: "Finally, it goes without saying that our video entertainment producers do well abroad and could do even better if certain governments were not so concerned about cultural influence. I will say that... it strikes me as mighty peculiar that a culture as rich as France's should feel threatened by Mickey Mouse. But this is the fact." (Obuchowski, 1990) Obviously, France is not the only object of this view.

Beyond the Western market economies, that is, in the vast area of the world referred to as "the developing nations" or the "Third World," U.S. media products and institutional arrangements are assigned awesome power. (This view will now be extended to include the formerly Socialist countries.) U.S. International Communications studies and policies, and its emphasis on "development," represented by the work of Lazarsfeld's contemporaries - Lerner, Schramm, Pye et al, maintained that media inputs from the West would fuel modernization in the developing world. From Western media products, audiences would learn new values, norms, behaviours and goals thus transforming their traditional societies into modern ones. (See Schramm, 1964; Lerner, 1977; and Stevenson, 1988 for an updated view)

The vast difference in these two assessments of media power in mainstream American media research has only recently been subject to scrutiny.⁸ (See Schiller, 1989; Luther, 1985) What is relevant here is that those dispossessed of power over media (as well as other resources including their own labor) have been told that media images, however, distorted, exercise at least benign, if not extraordinarily helpful, influence. Moreover, those women or members of the developing community seeking self-development have been offered the very definition of their aspirations as "a chimera" of (in some instances, "becoming like") those (white Western men) in power. Relatedly, the media ("the Romancer") have created "fantasies" of "liberation" - for women, in the bedroom, kitchen and even in grey suits, and in the case of development, of high consumption standards - far from easily realized, and not the objective. (See on women, Tuchman, et al, 1978; Haskell, 1987; Wolf, 1990; FAIR, 1991)

Feminism and the Study of Media

In contrast, feminism has challenged the dominant images of women on both a theoretical and practical level. Feminists approach popular culture from a variety of disciplines and political positions.⁹ I briefly review six basic areas: social theory; analysis of images; audience response; recovery and reappraisal of women's work; women within media industries; and the political economy of women's work.

8. I do not cover (U. S.) critical communications research in this review because it does not suffer from the limitations I wish to call attention to. For relevant critical work, see *The Critical Communication Review*, edited by Mosco and Wasko, the Institute of Media Analysis in New York City (NYC), the National Lawyers Guild's Media Monopoly Committee, Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting (NYC), Paper Tiger Television (NYC), Women Make Movies (NYC), some members of National Public Radio ("Undercurrents" team in NYC) and the work of the Union for Democratic Communication, amongst others.

9. Within the literature, Rakow identifies two shared assumptions: namely, (1) women are considered/recognized/identified as central consumers of cultural products, important objects/subjects in media/culture, and at times, significant creators of cultural work as well; and (2) understanding how culture functions for women and for patriarchal society is crucial to changing the social mythologies and social relations manifest in women's oppression. (Rakow, 1986:23)

One of the central arenas of debate between feminism and media/cultural studies revolves around social theory. That is to say that viewing society as essentially patriarchal or capitalist patriarchal is a basic point of contention. The models of cultural production and reproduction that follow may draw upon a variety of fields, including Marxism, psychoanalysis, critical theory, cultural studies, structuralism, poststructuralism, postmodernism, deconstruction, semiotics, racism, and feminist history and theory.¹⁰ Still, race, class, patriarchy, and sexuality remain contested issues in feminist cultural analysis and production.¹¹ Within and between these debates, there is concern that theory illuminate, not obfuscate power relations. (See Franklin, et al, 1991; Segal, 1991 for recent review articles.)

Analyzing "images of women" in film, advertising, soap operas, primetime entertainment and news programming, etc. has been a continuing area of research. The construction of sexuality and the role assigned women in media is subject to scrutiny. (Williamson, 1978) Documentation and examination of sex-role stereotyping, supported by content analysis of various media products, continues to support criticism of dominant media images. (See *Journal of Communication*, 1974; Janus, 1977 and Tuchman, Daniels and Benet, 1978; *Women in Europe*, 1978 for early examples.) The journal, *Communication*, 1986; UNESCO's *World Communication Report*, 1989; Wolf 1990; FAIR's *Extra* 1991 and the conference (papers) report included in the *Gender and Mass Media Newsletter*, March 1991 evidence little change.

There is, however, also a heavy emphasis given to dismissing a passive role for women audiences. Active audiences that may "resist" dominant messages and/or advance alternative "readings" of media fare are central to cultural studies conducted by many feminists. (See within a large literature: Mattelart, 1982; Brown, 1990; McRobbie, 1991)

Additionally, recovery and reappraisal of women's cultural works are arenas of historical, theoretical and contemporary work. (See Douglas, 1977; Radway, 1984; Rakow, 1986) Recovery efforts have focused on some of the most marginalized and dispossessed – i.e., women (and people) of color. The stereotypes and "significant omissions" of Blacks, Asians, Chicanas, and Native Americans in mass media and feminist and communication studies has been the

10. There is an enormous literature in the relevant debates compressed into single "referents" here. The two recent review articles cited present a fairly good overview of the relevant literature.

11. In the US, for instance, Treichler and Wartella called for greater integration of feminist and media research agendas. The objective being the creation of "feminist cultural studies" rooted in "a general move in the U. S. toward a critical and interpretative study of culture." (Treichler and Wartella, 1986:13)

However, according to Franklin et al, "[Thus,] while feminists have turned to disciplines such as cultural studies for frameworks to analyse the cultural dimensions of gender inequality, and while the work of feminists and has been influential in both challenging and reworking these frameworks, there remain substantial difficulties in defining what might be meant by specifically feminist understandings of culture." (Franklin, et al, 1991:181)

And, within American and European communications scholarship there are debates regarding the "general move" towards cultural studies in mass communication research. (See Curran, 1990; Schiller, 1989)

subject of a growing literature. (See Hooks, 1981; Lewis and Joseph, 1981; Moraga and Anzaldúa, 1981; Carby, 1982; Hull and Smith, 1982; Lorde, 1984; Walker, 1984) These early works, as well as some of the works recovered underscore the power structure operating in cultural production, (including Western feminism). At the practical level, these barriers have prompted the creation of alternative presses including Long Haul Press and Kitchen Table Books (New York).

Still others working within media, for instance the television industry, find women are often **Boxed-In** by dominant interests and attitudes (sexism) embodied in the "professional" standards and programme output of media organizations. (Baehr, 1980; Baehr and Dyer, 1987; Gallagher, 1988; Channels, 1990; Gallagher, 1990; European Broadcasting Union (EBU), 1991)

In the U.S., Creedon reports that currently 60% of journalism and communication students are women, and raises similar issues regarding not only industry practices, but also the education these students receive. Both industry and academe are critically failing to take women into account. (Creedon, 1989, see also Wolf, 1991a)

Finally, women's work in the office, home and factory is being transformed by new information technologies (computers, satellites, fiber optic networks and the like). These new information technologies also underpin the transnational corporate economy which produces and distributes cultural/media products on a global scale. Yet, little attention is being paid the impact of the "information revolution" on women.¹²

A recent paper presented at a Programme on Information and Communication Technology conference in Britain, for example, argues that gender issues are "for the most part ignored" in research on information technology funded by the Economic and Social Research Council. (Liff, 1991) Similar "omissions" may be found in (communications/media) research, educational policies and industrial initiatives in scores of countries.

This is not to say that nothing has been achieved. There are individuals and groups doing what they can to produce, recover and incorporate materials regarding the struggle of women and members of the developing world for self-determination in their own work in the classroom and/or in writing. Nonetheless, crucial questions of power, stated clearly and unambiguously, require continued attention and indeed, resolution.

Media organizations

In terms of media organizations, women have engaged several tactics - namely, monitoring portrayal and lobbying for more realistic presentations of women; pressuring traditional media to employ more women; and creating alternative women's media. While the last is of crucial importance, it cannot be addressed in the space below.¹³ Here, we will focus on the portrayal of women, and the employment of women in the mainstream media.

12. Notable exceptions include: Ehrenreich and Fuentes, 1981; Nash and Fernandez-Kelly, 1983; Gregory and Nussbaum, 1982; Mosco, 1982; Cockburn, 1985; Marshall and Gregory, 1985; Reinecke, 1986; Steeves, 1989; Marsden, 1990; Redclift and Sinclair, 1991. The research agenda put forth by Franklin et al. includes science and technology, as well as representation and "Thatcherism and enterprise culture" (Franklin et al, 1991)

13. The **World Communication Report** of Unesco (1989) includes a list of various organizations and groups throughout the world.

The general picture that emerges from a variety of recent studies indicates little improvement in these areas. Regarding the portrayal of women, Unesco reports of 1981 and 1985 maintained that:

On film, in the press, and the broadcast media, women's activities and interests typically go no further than the confines of home and family. Characterized as essentially dependent and romantic, women are rarely portrayed as rational, active or decisive... Prevalent news values define most women, and most women's problems, as unnewsworthy... As the "bait" through which products are advertised, women are exploited in terms of their sexuality and physical appearance. (Quoted in Unesco, 1989:209)

Updated reports found "no major differences." (Ibid.) And, a recent study of **Women and Television in Europe**, also calls attention to the "persistence of disturbing stereotypes" in media output. (Gallagher, 1988:4)

In the United States, research yields consistent data for past ten years on the ratio of male to female characters on television - i.e., two to one. Adult women are a minority of female characters visible, while 70% of males are adults. Two out of five women are depicted in occupations, as compared with two of three men. As for racial representation, Chicana and Asian women are almost never seen. Black females account for 12% of female characters, but are confined to situation comedies. (Unesco, 1989:221; see Hooks, 1981, and Lewis and Joseph, 1981)

Though a few female broadcast journalists have become highly visible, the "Cosmo girl" factor is considered to be determining in television journalism. (Stilson, 1990) According to Marlene Sanders, whom believes that with 35 years experience, she couldn't get a job in American television news, "the networks exploit the glamour" of their female journalists, and save the hard-news stories for the men. Television journalist Sheila Kast reports that female reporters have been told that their "writing skills" account for their lower profile. Still, others simply slip past that age line that allows, on average, male news anchors to be twenty years older than female TV journalists. (Ibid: 22-24)

A recent issue of Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting's (FAIR) publication **Extra!**, reports that even those issue-areas directly related to women, such as abortion, rape, healthcare and the like, women are not likely to be the authors, or to be interviewed or widely quoted. (FAIR, 1991)

Tiffany Devitt reports, for example, that "according to the National Newspaper Index, a data base that indexes articles from all major dailies (newspapers), there were more articles on how the issue of abortion has affected various political candidacies, (electoral) races and (political) parties, than there were articles on how women with unwanted pregnancies are affected by growing restrictions on (abortion) funding and counseling." She continues, "though former Governor Bob Martinez of Florida will never have an abortion, a **Washington Post** headline (August 1, 1989) declared: 'Governor at Risk on Abort Issue.'" (Ibid: 5)

An analysis of female teen magazines points out that although sexually provocative images of (predominantly white) girls fill the pages of such publications, few if any carry articles on sexuality, birth control or sexually transmitted diseases. "One out of ten women in the U. S. get pregnant in their

teenage years," and AIDS is now considered a primary killer of young black women. (Ibid: 11)

Another underscores tobacco companies' belief in media power as evidenced in their advertising campaigns that target women. Scadly, the statistic of female smoking, from a young age, "justify" [sic] tobacco companies' advertising budgets. (Ibid: 7)

And, one writer simply reads *The New York Times* one day, and finds few women writing or quoted in it, few stories about or for women in it, and no editorials or sports coverage particularly relevant to women. (Ibid: 8-9) With some variation, I think this is not far from the truth in many media environments.

Given the new communication technologies, and the deregulation, privatization and transnationalization of media industries underway, are things likely to improve? Addressing a major meeting on women in broadcasting last November, the Dutch Minister of Welfare, Health and Cultural Affairs, Hedy d'Ancona offered the following assessment:

In 1989, 91 television channels were receivable in the 12 countries of the European Community and in the six countries of the European Free Trade Association together. Forty-seven of them were commercial, taking revenue and viewers away from the public broadcasting systems... The programmes offered by most of these commercial channels are more or less the same as those of media giants: games, quizzes, soap operas - the ball for him, the oven for her.
(Published in European Broadcasting Union, 1991: 10)

Even this appraisal, though it raises basic questions, doesn't go far enough. As Wolf argues, the return to "the beauty myth" in recent times has been accompanied by eroticized violence towards women found in music videos and films. These messages travel the world through newly commercialized television services, as well as through dominant film distribution networks. It is not simply more of the same, women are increasingly depicted as victims of incredible violence in contemporary media. (Wolf, 1991a)

Would this change if more women were employed in the media? A recent study by the American National Commission on Working Women concluded: "In order for women to make a measurable impact, their numbers must be significantly greater than they are now." (FAIR, 1991, emphasis added) There is debate about whether women as media professionals advance the interests of women or their own careers. (Gallagher 1988; Tuchman, 1978) The point to be made here, however, is that in no country of the world, according to the studies I reviewed, do women comprise 50% (even 40%) of the media work force. Nor do the women employed generally enjoy positions comparable to men within the organizational hierarchies. (Linne, 1987)

Case studies from Canada, Ecuador, Egypt, India and Nigeria, reported, despite great differences, "it is remarkable that in each case the situation of female employees follows a similar pattern." Generally, women are under-represented in the ranks of the media, and occupy low-level administrative positions. In terms of production or on screen activities, women a subject to "a kind of sex-stereotyped segregation" that places them in educational and children's television departments. (See Unesco, 1987 and Unesco, 1989)

Margaret Gallagher finds a similar profile in her 1990 survey of European broadcasting. Women account for 36% of employed personnel, with more found in radio than television. More women are employed in part-time and temporary positions than men. More than half the full time women employed work in administration, as compared to 13% of fully employed men. Within every professional categories (e.g., managers, producers, camera operators etc.) analyzed, "women's share of the jobs is greatest at the bottom of the hierarchy and least at the top." Salaries show the same differentiation with men in the highest paid positions in across all professional categories. (Gallagher, 1990) Stilson offer comparable data on American network television (news) organizations. (Stilson, 1990)

These are not aberrations or special cases. Nor is the media the only industry in which women encounter discrimination, albeit referred to as "glass-ceilings," the "mommy track" or the "tampon problem." (See *Cosmopolitan's* report "Men on Top" April 1991 for a British example.) And, prevailing political situations and economic conditions in many countries throughout the world today suggests that women will have to continue to fight inequality and violence in the media and in society.

Prospects

This report indicates that the battles for women's equality are far-from won. Indeed, there seems to be little to cheer about, and lots more to do. I believe the most important lesson from all of the efforts of those that have gone before, and those who continue to struggle, is that the media are enormously powerful. And, that they must be taken into account in any and all struggles for women's equality and self-determination, as well as for development and peace. How these battles can and should be waged can only be decided within the specific conditions confronted. However, certain realities exist.

At the international level, the power of transnational political economic interests cannot be ignored. Within academe, theoretical debates must be rooted in social realities, and accompanied by sustained efforts to rethink curricula and to forge employment opportunities for women. And, media organizations must be recognized for what they are - that is, increasingly privately-owned, profit-motivated transnational business with close links and shared interests with the power structures that operate at national and international levels.

In order to change social structures and relationships in such a way that allows women, men and the developing community the fullest opportunity for self-development, "Man (-made media) - the Romancer" must be challenged and transformed.

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