



Pinto-Coelho, Z. & Mota-Ribeiro, S. (2006) 'Access of women and construction of femininity in the discourse of the Portuguese press', in Proceedings of *Breaking the Glass Ceiling*, 2nd International Conference on Women's Studies, 26-28 April, Eastern Mediterranean University, Famagusta, Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, forthcoming.

Access of Women and Construction of Femininity in the Portuguese Press

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Key-words: Access; women; images; news; discourse

Abstract

This paper examines some properties of the access of women to the Portuguese press, against the background of a more general discussion about the role of the press in the (re)production of gender inequalities in "western" societies (Gans, 1979; Tuchman, 1978; van Zoonen, 1994; Ayerra, 2003; Gallego, 2005). In particular we examine the sexual composition of the newsrooms and of the newspapers organization and some properties of the written and visual discourse. The analysis of women's access to newspaper discourse aims to reach two goals: on the one hand, stressing the qualitative and quantitative developments of women's participation in the newspapers as journalists, based on previous investigation in the Portuguese context (Silveirinha, 2004a, 2004b; Subtil, 2005); on the other hand, showing how gender inequalities are manifested and re(produced) in and by newspaper texts and images .

Combining Critical Discourse Analysis (e.g. van Dijk, 1996; van Leeuwen, 1997; Wodak, 1997; Fairclough, 1995; Lazar, 2005) with visual social semiotics (Kress and van Leeuwen 1996, 1998) we analyse some relevant structural categories, written and visual ones, and we show their implications in terms of gender ideologies and inequalities. Following the example of other studies, we have selected one daily edition of Portuguese quality newspapers.

Introduction

The issue of discursive and visual representation of women in the *media*, cinema, visual arts, and photography and in a wide variety of other discourses and images has been widely studied. This research aims to show how these representations produce and raise meanings, and how they put forth ideologies on what a woman is and on what she should be – and how, thus, they re-produce definitions of gender. The diverse discourses and images, disseminated in a more or less broaden form, are understood as organisers of a whole set of social representations about women. Therefore, it is assumed as an unsurpassing field, in order to question power relations and fight against mechanisms of reproduction of masculine domination.

Research in the fields of feminist critique of representation and Discourse Analysis has been involved in contesting discourses and images about women (Wodak, 1997; Lazar, 2005; Mota-Ribeiro, 2005a), focusing on the relationship between ads and social construction of gender, as well as on the sexual differentiation and on the role of ideology in ads (e.g. Winship, 1987; Goffman, 1979; Williamson, 1988; Betterton, 1987; Mota-Ribeiro, 2005b). The issue of visual images of women has been controversial and has also given rise to studies in several contexts, which seem more restrict at first sight, e.g. in drug prevention campaign materials (Pinto-Coelho, 2004, 2005), video games (Dietz, 1998), erotic/pornographic images (e.g. Holland, 1987) or in visual arts (e.g. Chicago & Lucie-Smith, 1999). Art production and debate (in painting and sculpture, but also in photography) have been focusing on sexuality and the female body (e.g. Dinnerstein & Weitz, 1998). Feminist critique has also sought to deal with ambiguities existing in the discourses and in the images that seem to challenge or update patriarchal definitions of female attributes (Bartky, 1998).

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Partially funded by the Foundation for Science and Technology, of the Portuguese Ministry of Science, Technology and Higher Education (POCI 2010 – SFR/BD/22705/2005).

In Media Studies, feminist researchers show that a rise of the feminine presence in newsrooms has had little effects in the redistribution of power or in a more differentiated allocation of news topics assigned to men and women. Men are still the main producers of newspaper discourse. The majority of women are still working in themes considered to be marginal or devalued in the hierarchy of news values. Additionally, women are also seen as less credible sources than men. In this sense, women's discrimination is a double one (Ayerra, 2003). This inequality originates a control of the possibilities of female discursive action, since newspaper discourse is one of the main producers of knowledge and social attitudes regarding women's situation, and also one of the most influential, not only for its credibility, but also for its broad dissemination.

In this paper, we focus on the role of news reports and images in the process of (re)production of gender inequalities, based upon the case of the Portuguese daily press – and in particular upon the organizational characteristics of three quality daily newspapers. Assuming that the social power of a group is proportional to the access (active or passive) that this same group has to public discourse (van Dijk, 1996), we stress the access modes of Portuguese women to newspaper texts and images. Our aim is to find out how sociological facts of newsrooms, located within a specific historical and socio-economical context (e.g. Gans, 1979; Tuchman, 1978), gain expression and are produced in and by female press reports. We also show how feminization of Portuguese press production has not yet induced the desirable change in the distribution of power in newsrooms and in disseminating pluralist female discourses and images.

Newspaper Text and Image as Discourse

We conceptualize newspaper text and image as discourse: as a use of semiotic resources (written and visual) and as a form of social (inter)action, shaped by and shaping social situations, structures and broader social processes. Describing texts or images equals therefore to account for dialectical relations between a specific text or image and the contexts that shape and are shaped by them. We thus define newspaper text and image as socially shaped as well as socially constitutive. This shaping can be done in different ways, either by limiting access to the production of news articles and images, or indirectly, by controlling visual and discursive structures. As far as their constitutive power is concerned, analysis may focus on two levels: the level of knowledge, attitudes and ideologies about social reality, and the level of social identities and relations (Fairclough and Wodak, 1997; Gunther Kress and Theo van Leeuwen, 1996, 2000).

Gender and Access to Newspaper Discourse

In order to study the way Portuguese press participates in the process of reproducing gender inequalities, we follow some principles about the ways gender is enacted in press discourse (van Dijk, 1996).

1) Power asymmetries between men and women as social groups result (and are manifested), amongst other things, on a privileged access (active or passive) to the press, which has been shown in several research activities. The press still integrates - both in terms of hierarchy and ideology - the range of dominant institutions characterized by a tacit androcentrism and exercises a specific influence. This dominance presupposes that, in this institutional domain, as in others, women are still subjected to definitions of their own situation imposed by the patriarchal "other", having little possibilities to intervene in these processes in order to effectively change power inequalities.

2) Gender inequality is manifested and constituted in many linguistic and visual properties of newspaper texts and images.

3) Regarding reception, control should be understood in terms of cognition, since the exclusion and devaluation of female voices implies that the knowledge enacted and produced in this discourse is partial, and, as is demonstrated, selective and negative. Therefore, it reproduces attitudes and ideologies that legitimate masculine dominance. This is especially important when readers (women and men) do not have access to other kinds of information, which could provide pluralistic gender relation models, helpful to a more critical perspective towards the dominant ideology.

Methodology and Data

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), like feminist studies, carries out its activities taking into account values of justice and social equality. However, it has an advantage when compared to feminist studies about the representation of women in the media: it operates with a politically invested analytical programme, which is undoubtedly more productive than the descriptive tools (mainly provided by Content Analysis) used for those studies. In this paper we use the analytical framework of CDA in the analysis of newspaper texts (van Dijk, 1988, 2005) and the semiotic framework of Gunther Kress and Theo van Leeuwen (1996) in the analysis of images.

We focus on the edition of three Portuguese daily quality newspapers in a day chosen at random: *Público*, *Jornal de Notícias (JN)* and *Diário de Notícias (DN)*. Using the masthead of each paper, we analysed quantitatively the sexual composition of the newsroom and of the entire newspaper organization. On a second stage, we analysed qualitatively all texts mentioning women, as well as photographic and journalistic images which represent female adult human beings, excluding those of TV programmes and cinema, as these are not still photographic images and hence should not be considered journalistic images.

As far as texts are concerned, we identified topics, classified them thematically (van Dijk, 1988) and analysed the way women are represented, as to a range of sociological categories created by Theo van Leeuwen (1997) – which include a range of linguistic and rhetorical phenomena, the focusing element of which is the concept of “social actor”.

In the analysis of images, at an early stage, we sought to find out how many images show women in comparison with those that show men in the overall collected images. In which sections do women appear and on which subjects? Then, we analysed the images as to their representational meaning, i.e. the way they represent “people, places and objects” and the relationships between represented participants. We classified these images according to their processes (narrative or conceptual), observing the compositional processes. Narrative processes “serve to present unfolding actions and events, processes of change, transitory spatial arrangements” (Kress and van Leeuwen, 1996: 56). Conceptual processes “represent the participants in terms of their class, structure or meaning” (Kress and van Leeuwen, 1996: 56) and deal with a more or less timeless, stable and constant (visible) generalized essence of one or more participants. Conceptual and narrative images play different functions in communication. The former serve to explain how things are; the latter tell stories (Kress and van Leeuwen, 1996). In these images, we questioned the relative absence or presence of the participants and their function in action. Who is assigned an active function in the image? What is the relationship between text and image? Since these are images that accompany journalistic texts, shall we deem these as narrative images? Do they depict a scene, an instance of the narrative event reported in the news? What are the implications and reasons of visual choices of press in terms of female representation?

Given the scarceness of available data (which does not allow us to reach a conclusion on possible discursive patterns the press reports on women), we focus mainly on the issue of access to the production of the newspapers, where to a certain extent sexist discrimination is more evident, contrary to what happens at a more and more sophisticated and subtle level of textual and visual representations (Lazar, 2005).

Access to Newsrooms

In comparison to what happened a decade ago (Subtil, 1995), the female presence in the three daily newspapers has increased, remarkably in *Público* and *JN*. In the former, female presence evolved from 37.7% to 56%; in the latter, it evolved from 15% to 33%. In *DN*, there isn't a significant increase (from 42% to 43.7%).

Table 1: Percentage of Female Presence in Newsrooms

	<i>Jornal de Notícias</i>	<i>Público</i>	<i>Diário de Notícias</i>
	%(N)	%(N)	%(N)
1995	33.03 (37)	55.96 (61)	43.75 (56)
2005	66.96 (75)	44.03 (48)	56.25 (72)
Total	100 (112)	100 (109)	100 (128)

We now consider the geographical location of newsrooms. Female presence is higher in Lisbon in the three newspapers: 55.8% in *DN* and 60% in *Público*; in *JN* it reaches 40.4%. It is important to emphasize that *JN* has many more journalists in Porto than in Lisbon, and the percentage in Porto only reaches 23.8%.

Table 2: Percentage of Female Presence in Newsrooms According to Geographical Location

	<i>Jornal de Notícias</i>	<i>Público</i>	<i>Diário de Notícias</i>
Porto	23.80%	54%	29%
Lisbon	40.47%	60%	55.8%

The increase of female participation in the three newspapers should be understood in a wider context of social reconfiguration of journalists and of changes taking place in Portuguese women's structural position over the last decades. In 1995, female journalists represented no more than 30% of the Portuguese journalists (Subtil, 1995), and now almost 10% more (39%) (*Público*, 8th of March, 2004). This growth results mainly from the fact that journalistic work has become increasingly something done by young and professionalized individuals, since universities are now the main provider of these professionals (Garcia, 1994). As we know, the percentage of female participation in universities has increased. In 2000/2001, according to numbers of the Portuguese Ministry of Higher Education, 67% of the students who got their degree were women.

Asymmetries in Positions of Power and Authority

One decade past the study conducted by Subtil (1995), we cannot say there is a real decrease in gender inequalities in decision-making power, though there are positive trends. As far as positions of newspaper directors, editors and board members are concerned, regarding the entire newspaper organization, *DN* shows the highest percentage of female presence: 13%. In *Público*, this percentage is 11%, but it should be noted that women occupy the position of Director in the Administrative Direction and in the Commercial and Marketing Direction. *JN* has the same percentage as *Público* (11%), and there is one woman (in a total of seven members) in the Administrative Board, which does not happen in *DN*. In this newspaper all members of the Board (in a total of nine) are men.

Table 3: Percentage of Female Presence in Management Positions of the Newspaper Organization (Directors, Editors, Board Members)

<i>Jornal de Notícias</i>	<i>Público</i>	<i>Diário de Notícias</i>
11%	11%	13%

As far as management positions in newsrooms are concerned, we had some problems due to newspaper differences in terms of terminology used to refer to management positions. To make it simple, we considered professionals that occupy direction, head and advisory positions as being part of the journalistic elite, such as directors, editors, senior reporters and members of editorial boards (Subtil, 1995; Gallego, 2005).

Table 4: Percentage of Female Presence in Management Positions in Newsrooms

	<i>Jornal de Notícias</i>	<i>Público</i>	<i>Diário de Notícias</i>
Editorial Direction	0%	0%	0%
Editorial Boards	40%	33%	60%

There are no women in the editorial directions, which seems to indicate that women are still excluded, similarly to what happened a decade ago. Nonetheless, in *Público* there are two vice-directors, both women, and female journalists occupy 33% of the positions of senior reporters, in Lisbon. In terms of Editorial Boards, *DN* has the highest percentage of women, 66%, and *JN* has 40%. As far as editors are concerned, women occupy 28.5% of the positions available in *DN*, all of them in Lisbon; in *JN* Porto, all 11 editors are men, very different from the situation in Lisbon: two editors, both of them women.

Overall, *Público* is the newspaper with a more rigid elite structure, if we consider the gap between the percentage of women amongst the journalists and the percentage of women in the journalistic elite (30.4%); in *JN* the percentage difference is 11.6% and in *DN* 10.8%. A comparison of this data with the study of 1995 shows that *Público* still leads this gap in terms of percentage.

Asymmetries in Section Distribution

In terms of women's distribution per sections, several aspects go against the classical distribution according to sex. In the context of traditional journalism, areas of news coverage considered to be more valued (politics, war, international affairs, economy and business) have been assigned to men. Besides, the protagonists and sources that are used in the news about these themes are mostly men. Women have been kept in "softer" areas, namely society and culture (Ayerra, 2003). Although we do not have 1995 data

to establish a comparison, as we did previously, it is possible to discuss the present distribution of female journalists according to newspaper sections.

Table 5: Percentage of Female Presence in Sections

Sections/Themes	<i>Jornal de Notícias</i>	<i>Público</i>	<i>Diário de Notícias</i>
Economy/Business	60%	75%	60%
Society	100%	50%	69%
National Politics	100%	77%	45%
International Politics	0%	62,5%	28%
Sports	0%	14%	50%
Culture	33%	61,5%	54%

In the society section, women still represent 50% or more of the section's editorial staff. In *JN* Porto, only women work in this section. The same percentage can be observed in arts and culture section, both in *Público* and *DN*. In spite of this trend in "soft" sections, which seems to conform to traditional journalism organization, in other areas things have changed. In all three newspapers, female journalists are a majority (60%) in economy and business. In politics (national and international), *Público* and *JN* seem to contradict traditional distribution: in *Público*, more than 60% of journalists in the "World" section are women, and in National Politics section of *JN*, 79% are women. Another positive sign of change is the Sports section of *DN*, a traditional male domain: 50% of journalists are women.

Several kinds of reasons can be found for this change. One has to do with more structural aspects, the effects of the increasing marketing nature of media on the media discourse order. This has not only contributed to the fading of classical limits of the different genres of media discourse (Fairclough, 1995), but also to a global trend to lighter information, a process that may be summarized through the notion of infotainment. These kinds of structural trends on the level of political economy of the media, and its discursive order, can help understand those shifts. This led some researchers to argue that there are more women in journalism only because journalism is now different (van Zoonen, 1994).

Access to Newspaper Texts

Does female presence in the newsrooms of these three daily newspapers mean a shift in the textual and visual representations of the feminine, as well as a change in gender attitudes and ideologies that underlie them? The analysis we made does not obviously allow us to answer, this question. For, as we argued, we have only analysed one edition of the three newspapers. However, within the context of the classroom where this study was produced, it would be relevant to answer this question, even if just as an example.

We started off counting all pieces of news where women are the main characters of the event, and/or are used as sources of opinion on the event or situation at stake. Therefore, in the analysed editions, we realised that *JN* and *DN* include the highest volume of news talking about women (20 and 19, respectively); *Público* has only 12 texts on this issue.

After having made an analysis on the subjects, we decided to group them by topic, creating a classification which is different from the one provided by the sections, as this is not clear enough from a semantic point of view. This classification includes the range of activities or feminine practices covered by the texts analysed.

Contrary to what could be expected, we realised that in the three newspapers, events related to political activities – in the most common sense of the word (party, governmental, municipal) – of the national feminine elite are the ones with larger coverage. In *DN*, this is followed by the coverage of events related to family life; in *Público*, it is followed by health- and culture-related activities of women; in *JN*, this is followed by events on activities related to arts, media and culture in general. These data show that, at least in this day editions, these newspapers stress female public life, especially the participation of women in political life.

Access to Newspaper Images

We now turn to a more quantitative analysis of the images, starting with an emphasis on the represented participants and comparing the number of images according to the sex of those participants.

Table 6 shows the results per newspaper. We have counted the number of images that represent one or more women – a) Images depicting women – as opposed to those where women are not present – b) Images containing no women. In the latter category we have counted separately those where human participants are not represented, where sex of the participants is not discernable, or representing children, and those depicting one or more man. We also found necessary in the "Images depicting women" category (that includes images depicting men and women) to separate those images showing only women.

Table 6: Number of Images According to Type of Represented Participants

Images	<i>Jornal de Notícias</i>	<i>Público</i>	<i>Diário de Notícias</i>	Total
a) Images depicting women	21	9	11	41
Images showing no men	7	6	4	17
b) Images containing no women	102	38	90	231
Images depicting one or more men	75	27	60	163
Images showing no human participants, sex not discernable, or children	27	11	30	68
Total of images	123	101	47	271

The scarceness of data does not allow us to put forth any conclusions per newspaper. The data resulting from such an analysis would not be significant, and in this paper we do not intend to compare the different editorial positions of each newspaper.

We will stick to a description of the number of images that represent female adult human beings. One of the most relevant aspects of the data is that in 271 journalistic images, published in the chosen day of the editions, only 41 include women. This number goes down to 17 if we consider images showing women without men. If we compare this number to the number of men shown without women (163), we certainly have to pay attention to these results in the light of under-representation of women in daily quality press in Portugal.

Another focus of analysis is the distribution of images of women according to sections or themes.

Table 7: Number of Images of Women According to Sections / Themes

Sections / Themes	<i>Jornal de Notícias</i>	<i>Público</i>	<i>Diário de Notícias</i>	Total
Focus	0	1	1	2
Society	4	1	2	7
National/Politics	1	1	0	2
World/International	1	1	0	2
Economy/Business	1	1	0	2
Sports	0	0	0	0
Opinion/Public Space	1	1	1	3
Arts/Entertainment	7	2	7	16
Local News	6	1	----	7
Total	21	9	11	41

The question is: has the present predominance of women in specific sections determined a more equal gender treatment in terms of images? An analysis of table 6, and of the obvious invisibility of women, compels us to conclude that the consequences of women's access to news production are yet to appear. This situation probably has to do with the fact that profound asymmetries in power and authority still persist, man still occupy most of these positions, and they are still the ones deciding editorial matters.

In terms of image distribution per section/theme, it is important to ask whether sections where women are a majority publish more images depicting women. According to the data on Table 7, for those sections, namely Society, Arts/Entertainment, that seems to be true. Images in "softer" sections are apparently less under-representative of women. For instance, there are seven images in society and 16 in Arts/Entertainment, in a total of 41 images portraying women. In Sports, however, a traditional male area of domain recently "feminized", there is not a single image showing a woman. What about Economy/Business, a section where, as we have seen, women are a majority? Only two images were found in this section and, surprisingly, these were photographs of columnists. This means we couldn't find a single image containing women to illustrate an article in this area.

Is it possible, then, to establish a connection between themes where images of women are less scarce and themes traditionally seen as feminine? Sports (no images), Economy/Business (two images), Politics/National (two images) and World/International (two images) are domains where protagonists or

participants are still men. As far as data shows, Society and Arts/Entertainment are not “forbidden” areas for female visual representation.

Representations of Female Action

Linguistic Construction

Which role is allocated to women in the public practice on which daily newspapers put an emphasis? Given the criteria used in the selection of the texts, the relevance of this question is smaller. Obviously, since we are dealing with cases where women are one of the agents involved, an analysis based on the distribution of functions (i.e. one which seeks to find out who is represented as acting on someone else) is, in a way, redundant. This, nonetheless, does not mean that the distribution is maintained all over the text. And the accomplishment of this exercise allowed us to obtain some interesting data, since we added to it the task of identifying some of the linguistic forms by means of which that agency is constructed (Halliday, 1985). Therefore, as far as political practices are concerned, enactment (i.e. the representation as active and dynamic forces in these activities) of women takes place in relation to material processes, in the case of *DN*, and in verbal processes, in the case of *JN* and *Público*. Political women are, therefore, seen as actors in several kinds of situations, either at a material or at a symbolic level. Considering the global results, which include an analysis of the options made in the representation of female practices covered in that edition day, we conclude that women are enacted mainly regarding verbal, material and behavioural processes, in this order of decreasing importance. We may argue that, at least in this day, women are represented as playing an active role in several domains of public life, and as credible sources of opinion.

The results of the analysis we made at a second stage, based on the form women are referred to, show the coherence of the choices made. As expected, from what we know about the usual ways of addressing public characters in journalism, women, besides being highly enacted, are made functional, individualized, named and titled. However, there are also subjects where women are referred to in a generic form, and are subject to highly generalized classifications, such as woman (women), and identified for their relationships of parenthood.

Visual Construction

Besides the presence/absence of women in the images, we tried to understand in which kind of images (narrative or conceptual) they are predominant, as well as how these images represent women, and which are the most frequent choices in terms of functions in action.

Most images analysed accompany news; those complementing opinion articles are just a few. News texts have a narrative nature. They tell a story and they explain how the action is developed. Journalistic images tend to follow this trend, and narrative images rule over conceptual images (Kress and van Leeuwen, 1996). However, most images analysed do not establish a direct narrative connection with the facts approached in the text; they usually have a conceptual tone, often classifying participants or being symbolic. These images of women are not illustrations, visual translations of the text; they present characteristics of conceptual images, such as the difficulty to identify the context of the representation and the frequency with which flat or blurred backgrounds are shown. This happens especially in the category of images of women “without men”. We have decided to stress these 17 images regarding certain aspects. Since there is no interaction with male characters in these images, they are provided with particular properties.

Surprisingly, in this category, women are often by themselves and not accompanied by other women, children or even animals. They are in more or less static poses, namely accompanied by the direct look of the woman represented to the observer (interactive participant).

In 15 out of 17 of these images the woman is isolated. Women are not shown with other women, they are not represented as a group – exceptions are a group of several workers in a factory, and a mother taking care of two children. The rarity of these images, the women’s isolation regarding their own sex, can indicate absence of group power and collective action.

We will now turn to the activity of women in images. Most of these images seem to reflect, as we have seen, an essence or fixed state, rather than a visual narrative of actions, and this emphasises inactivity and “staticism”. Women as active protagonists are extremely rare. When so happens, it is precisely in the two images where they are not alone (the workers and the mother images). Even in these images, women are not protagonists of specific narratives; they have, on the contrary, a conceptual nature. Women are shown as examples of two groups: the group of underpaid workers in Portugal and the group of victims of the war in Sudan.

These women are not nominated or referred to individually, either in the news reports, or in the caption. We do not know who they are. Even in one article where a female Member of Parliament plays a central role, the image only portrays the setting where the action took place. Only a few celebrities of show business (beautiful, young and thin women) are paid any attention in terms of image, and this happens only in small sections of “people” or “jet-set”, and accompanied by very brief notes.

As far as images of men and women are concerned, usually women are not given active or main parts. The depiction of women working (in a job environment or other) is very scarce and men assume the leading role, in terms of composition and interaction. Images do not show women as relevant on their own right, but rather in relation to the dominant group.

Final Notes

The analysis of women's access to the production of the three Portuguese daily newspapers chosen has shown that the increasing number and qualification of female journalists has not been enough to break the sexist glass ceiling of female exclusion from higher editorial positions. Similarly to what happens in other institutions of the Portuguese society, in these newspapers women are still subject to lower recognition than men. The gap between the percentage weight women have within the total number of journalists and the weight they have in higher editorial positions are clear-cut and deep. What are the reasons for this discrimination? What kind of obstacles are we talking about? One of these obstacles is of an ideological nature: the fact that these organizations are structured according to a patriarchal ideological principle of gender (Lazar, 2005), which privileges men as a social group and based upon attitudes that differentiate women from men in a negative way. Therefore, these are awarded patriarchal assets regarding access to the resources required to maintain male domination in the organizations. Obviously, only an ethno-methodological research on the production of news based on the issues of gender, similar to the one undertook by Gallego in Spain (2005), might back up this type of explanation. It is worth recalling Silveirinha (2004b), who argues that another obstacle is related to the strength that the values of objectivity and neutrality (which are core in journalistic ideology, traditionally masculine) may have in the journalists' denial of the relevance of gender and sex issues in the production of news (Gans, 1979; Tuchman, 1978). It would be interesting to proceed to an ethno-methodological study revealing the form female journalists manage these and other types of conflict in their daily work in newsrooms, combined with a discourse analysis on the form female journalists talk about their professional experience.

Regarding the way women are talked about, we found some aspects that contradict the stereotyped portrait of women, as well as some aspects that perpetuate it; the former usually have a stronger weight than the latter. Certainly, it would be necessary to proceed to a comparative in-depth analysis to observe the dominating ideological trend, e.g. within the scope of journalistic representations of female political practice, analysing the way presence, as well as relative absence (in terms of men and women) are organised according to gender.

Further to what has been said regarding female photographic images, we acknowledge that these are diminishing and unrealistic. In the images where women are accompanied by men, and wherever women are represented alone, the stressed aspects are: inactivity and passiveness, since the scarcely presentational trend of images is more to show what women are than what they do, both in their private and public life.

Feminist critique of representation used to be concerned with "representativeness". The idea behind this was to encourage more realistic representations, which could account for the diversity of women's roles and functions, rather than reproduce myths and stereotypes. But this is not the sole path. One could fight for female representations that are not dominated by the "realistic" aim, but rather by the emancipating aim, i.e. discourses and images that promote women's interests, thus exposing oppression, encouraging social equality of sexes, providing women and young women with positive role models, questioning ideological concepts regarding sexual differences (Marshment, 1993). Both these solutions pose some problems, submitting the contesting (and possible change) of feminine images to a deadlock. The solution would be necessarily to implement the feminists' claim, i.e. to redefine the values of patriarchal society. This is a redefinition of the meaning of words, images and the values of meanings. Since the definitions of gender are integrated in the presentational forms and in the aesthetic regime, a rejection would be required of the forms and regimes so as to destabilize cultural definitions of femininity and masculinity.

As a final note, we would like to underline the potential that the "feminization" of the press may have in the construction of a fairer and more equalitarian society, where the relationships with others and the meaning of whom we are or who we can be are not mediated by gender. We mention potential because, as Grant (1993) puts it, to talk about the position of a woman is not the same as talking from the political perspective of a feminist: to talk from the perspective of a woman means that one knows the reality by means of the gender grid, whereas talking from a feminist perspective means that one has a critical distance to the gender and to oneself. It is not enough to be a woman to stand for feminist interests; it is necessary to reject gender. As is common in this hegemonic type of situation, where domination is seen as consensual accepted by the majority, we may have to deal with the consent and even complicity of female journalists in their own subordination, since "women who accept the ideas and values of what feminists define as patriarchal ideology may be more likely to reproduce it in their work, than to challenge it" (Marshment, 1993: 127). Therefore, the lack of critical consistency of female journalists may be one of the elements that helps explain also why the increase in the number of women in the newsrooms does not match an effective shift in their power. As we have been able to realise in our research, female students of journalism were the ones who more strongly rejected the significance of these issues. Moreover, this is usually what happens whenever the subject of gender inequality and its discursive reproduction are at stake. As far as we are concerned, there is still a lot to do in our field, the academic, e.g. at the level of curricula of courses related to journalism, where the issues of gender might be further explored. Taking our

experience at the University as an example, we are very far from turning this issue into a priority in the training of journalists. A true revolution would be required in the mindset of trainers for that purpose.

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