

**“IN JOURNALISM, WE ARE ALL MEN”: material voices in the production of gender meanings**

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## ABSTRACT

*This study uses qualitative data to examine how male and female professionals in newsrooms experience and vocalize gender both in their lifeworlds and in media production in general. The research was based on semi-structured interviews with 18 Portuguese journalists. The responses were analysed through phenomenological and feminist lenses and indicated the issues men and women considered salient or negligible within our realms of inquiry. The study used the lived experience of the media professionals to identify two clusters of meaning that help explain how material practices and norms in journalism are lived and understood in the newsroom: Gender views in journalism and Gender differences in day-to-day professional life. Overall, the findings confirm that organizational factors and the traditional gender system play important roles in journalists' attitudes and perceptions about the role of gender in their work. The results are significant because they show how gender is simultaneously embodied and denied by both female and male journalists in a process of phenomenological "typification" and adoption of a "natural attitude" towards the gender system that may prevent the disclosure of new possibilities and understandings of the objective social world and of our gender relations.*

**KEYWORDS:** Gender in the newsroom; women in journalism; phenomenology; journalism; feminist media studies; interviews.

## Introduction

In the last thirty years there has been a considerable amount of academic research from media scholars that focuses on a gendered perspective of journalism production and representation issues (e.g. Byerly 2013; Byerly & Ross 2004; Chambers, Steiner & Fleming 2004; De Bruin & Ross 2004; North 2009a; Tuchman 1978; van Zoonen 1988). The media have also always been at the center of the feminist critiques which Gallagher refers to as a "common ground" (Gallagher 2001, 3) or common repository of information, ideas and representations that contribute to maintaining a particular gender *status quo* (Gallego 2002). In 1978, Gaye Tuchman called the academy's attention to the fact that women's role in society was systematically trivialized and devalued by the media leading to their "symbolic annihilation" (Tuchman 1978, 8). In a recent reflection on her work, Tuchman observes that even though much has changed in the media landscape since the 1970's, the problem of "symbolic annihilation" persists and it limits women's possibilities and opportunities while discouraging them to enlarge their life horizons (Tuchman 2009, 16).

In the last fifteen years the global media industry has experienced dramatic changes, including the emergence of new technologies that has transformed the way that news is produced, consumed, and also understood. Additionally, the effects of globalization, such as media conglomeration and hyper-commercialism, have led to greater competition to be faster, more appealing and more profitable. Even though the number of female journalists has been consistently increasing (the so-called "feminization" of the profession) this has not improved women's equal participation in media or gender balance within media content. On the contrary, these changes have led to intensified working practices and exacerbation of the typically women-specific work-family conflict (North 2009b), increased stereotyped media content (Tuchman 2009) and a privatized public sphere (Silveirinha 2007).

A number of important works have provided a basis for feminist claims concerning the importance of promoting gender balance and pluralism in media. The Global Media Monitoring Project (GMMP), which collects data every five years on one day a year basis, provides insights into the gendered nature of newsroom composition and constitutes a uniquely global output to disclose gender bias in media content as a trans-cultural phenomenon (Ross & Carter 2011). In general, findings concerning the Portuguese participation in the GMMP's news monitoring have been no exception: women are only 23% of news subjects, male sources dominate the majority of news themes and most female news subjects represent the non-specialized popular opinion (GMMP 2010).

Other international and global studies have shown that despite overall historic gains and pockets of progress, women in journalism lag when it comes to leading. Landmark reports such as Margaret

Gallagher's research for UNESCO (1995) and Byerly's report (2011) have documented gender positions in news organizations around the world and identified glass ceilings and other invisible barriers for female journalists. In terms of pay, the Central European Labour Studies Institute (2012) reported that regardless of decades of legislation, nowhere do female journalist's wages and benefits equal those of their male colleagues.

Apart from GMMP, Portuguese journalists do not generally figure in these international reports, but national reports and studies provide insights into how the profession has historically developed. During the first six decades of the twentieth century women's presence in journalism was scarce (Garcia [1994] 2009, 73-74; Sobreira 2003). The arrival of steady numbers women to Portuguese newsrooms began in the late 1960's and increased particularly from the mid-1970s (Sobreira 2003; Ventura 2012). This followed the national trend of an increasing female labour market participation, mainly in liberal professions such as advocacy, magistracy, medicine and teaching as well as key historical landmarks such as the recognition of free of speech and press freedom in 1974 and the liberalization of media sector in the 1980's. By 1987, women comprised around twenty percent of the certified journalism workforce and in 2009 they made up just over forty percent of the total newsrooms workforce (Garcia [1994] 2009).

In spite of this feminization process, Portuguese newsrooms are still marked by inequality. The number of women in decision-making, for instance, is low: In 1995, there was one female executive director and twenty years later there are two: one in a national daily newspaper (*Público*) and one in the Portuguese edition of *Le Monde Diplomatique*. Other phenomena such as female unemployment, professional insecurity and poor working conditions should also be taken into account. Feminization of Portuguese journalism can thus be described as a dynamic yet still incomplete process (Subtil [2000] 2009, 93-108). Furthermore, when considering the rise in the number of women in journalism, we should be aware that it took place within a "market-led, depoliticized 'post-feminist' redefinition of news" (Chambers et. al 2004, 12) and therefore explanations about gender in the newsroom should also take into account qualitative contextual data.

### **Beyond the "what" into the "why": gender and newsmaking**

In the last decade or so, journalism studies of gender have looked beyond the percentages of women and men in the media workforce to analyze how gender shapes their experiences and professional identities (see Byerly 2013; Chambers et al. 2004; Bruin and Ross 2004; Djerf-Pierre 2007, 2011; Kim 2006; Lavie and Lehman-Wilzig 2005; North 2009a, 2009b, 2014; Robinson 2005, 2008; Ross 2001, 2004, 2014; Gallego 2002; Steiner 1998; Tsui and Lee 2012; Van Zoonen 1998). This research has called for the need to learn more about what is actually taking place on the work floor and go beyond the mere "body count" (Bruin 2000, 224). Indeed,

More to the point, numbers do not explain where or how gender is meaningful, when and how women have cracked the glass ceiling in terms of senior-level management, how gender compounds (or does not) problems of castes, ethnicity, religion, marital or domestic status. (Steiner 2009, 125)

Research on news culture provides important explanations to the gendered nature of the profession. Liesbet Van Zoonen (1998) for example, has shown that the increase of human interest news and other changes in journalism towards making it more consumer-oriented and market driven have made more room for female journalists in the profession. However, this has created new dilemmas for women: "on the one hand they have to show that despite being women they are good journalists, but on the other hand they have to show that despite being journalists they are still real women too" (Van Zoonen 1998, 45). A cross-comparative study presented evidence that male and female journalists have similar epistemological beliefs and role conceptions about their work, a conclusion that can be explained by the appropriation of the dominant journalistic ideology and masculine values early in their careers (Hanitzsch & Hanusch 2012, 274). Yet, the commonly held assertion that gender might be an irrelevant or a minor issue given the pronounced presence of women in newsrooms remains problematic as women still face systemic gender discrimination (Steiner 2009, 117).

Despite the increasing number of female journalists in newsrooms, women are still seen as outsiders by their male colleagues. This happens because journalism practices are deeply rooted in a male-centered professional culture:

Many male journalists, particularly those in positions of authority in newsrooms, often don't experience a 'newsroom culture' as such. Rather, they are the 'culture', the newsroom is 'theirs' and they guard the parameters from 'outsiders', allowing some in, but rarely to the core, where power is experienced, wielded, and often homosocially shared. (North 2009b, 13)

Indeed, these gendered inequities or biases in newsrooms, as built into the dominant conception of journalistic professionalism, may be also embedded in seemingly gender-free distinctions such as objectivity and subjectivity, hard and soft news, as well as hierarchies of credibility of news sources (Reich 2014, 65). According to the standards of objectivity, celebrated as a standard for newswriting, journalists should leave their personal experiences, life stories and ultimately themselves out of the process in order to (at least apparently) maintain distance, fairness and neutrality (Mahtani 2005, 300; Steiner 1998, 146). In her classic piece on journalism studies, Gaye Tuchman also refers the strategic and routine procedures that enable journalists to claim objectivity and protect themselves from critics (Tuchman 1972, 665, 675). The demands for objectivity and detachment continue to have particular consequences for women journalists, whose gendered identities are felt to be at odds with a notion of objectivity (Van Zoonen 1998, 129) that undermines their personal experiences in order to become respected professionals (Tsui & Lee 2012, 372), the attempt to adopt more masculine traits in the field to be more successful or the ostracization felt by many women who dare to deviate from gendered social and even linguistic codes (Mahtani 2005, 301).

### **Journalism under the phenomenology lens**

As we have seen, the gendered newsroom culture and issues of gendered representation in media content have been well-researched by feminist media scholars. Yet, new research is still necessary. As Linda Steiner (2012, 219) has pointed out, "reporters, editors, audiences, and sources are gendered; but also they have the experiences – the standpoints - of race, class, national culture, professional culture, of generation and of historical moment". Furthermore, "women and men do not necessarily inhabit and control opposite realms. Indeed, even women who individually or in groups face substantial sexism do not necessarily develop gender-consciousness, much less female-specific approaches to work" (Ibidem). A focus on how women and men actually "inhabit and control opposite realms" and on their experiences can therefore shed more light into these unresolved issues.

Phenomenology, both as a philosophy and a methodological basis is a field of study that can help explore the experiences and standpoints of journalists across cultures and time in new searches for the "why" of gender inequity. It offers media studies scholars an approach to inquiry that has a good fit with feminist approaches to journalism as it is based upon an understanding of unique individuals and their meanings and interactions with the (professional) environment. At its centre, is the concept of *Lebenswelt* (Husserl 1980; Schutz 1962), which refers to the everyday experiences that are familiar to us all, as humans and to how we perceive, interpret and act in the world we find ourselves in.

Phenomenology was introduced in communication and media studies by Paddy Scannell (1996), whose "phenomenological approach" draws on Heideggerian views to explore radio and television use for audiences' "ways of being in the world" (1996, 173). Other perspectives are found in feminist media studies (e.g. Durham 2011), in sports communication (e.g. Gibbs & Haynes 2013) and war reporting (Markham 2011). João Carlos Correia's work (2004) on Schutzian phenomenology as a philosophical framework to study journalists is particularly inspiring for our research. The Schutz's concept of *relevance* for example - a system that explains selectivity in experience and in making certain selections *relevant* to an individual, group or social system - helps to understand journalism's selections as a system that operates within its community, determining what facts, people, events or version of reality are newsworthy. Equally relevant for our purposes is Schutz's concept of the *natural attitude* which encompasses a certainty about the world as independent of our subjectivities and taken-for-granted understandings of the everyday world. This attitude is founded on the suspension of any doubt and its pragmatic orientation is what allows agents to reproduce the conditions of their reality and guarantees a continuation of the social order. In Correia's view, journalists are potentially a kind of professionals of the natural attitude in a social phenomenology sense. This becomes particularly relevant if we consider that the *natural* gendered world comes across as one such typification by journalists.

Finally, we follow Lengermann and Niebrugge (1995) in relating feminist concerns with domination

in relational settings with Schutz's exploration of the interplay between subjective and objective understandings and the constitution of the configurations of meaning that gender relations are based upon. This feminist understanding of phenomenology as a philosophical framework not only gives us important clues to interpret the profession as it also provides us with a methodological orientation to the material voices of journalists and a path to understand the paradoxes of journalism as a gendered profession.

### **Methodological approach**

For many feminists, qualitative methodologies are better suited to give voice to personal, everyday perspectives of individuals and to understand how they make sense of their own lived experiences (Fisher & Embree 2000; Larkin, Watts, & Clifton 2006). This fits well with the phenomenological requirement to comprehend and interpret the meanings of human experiences (Larkin, Watts & Clifton 2006).

In combining these insights, our research was based and conducted on a methodology of phenomenological interviewing and analysis through which we have focused on individual meaning-making as a process situated in a cultural and professional context<sup>1</sup>. Therefore, our research questions were centered on participants' experiences as material embodiments and on the meanings these have for the respondents. Considering the importance of cultural systems in understanding people's motivations, actions and subjective experiences we asked: in what ways do journalists experience and interpret gender in personal and professional life?; how are these experiences similar and different for women and men?; how might they inform their work?

In order to obtain a sense of the way journalists inhabit their gendered personal, social and professional worlds and how they produce in-depth descriptions of the meanings associated with gender, the work of Moustakas (1994), Goulding (2005) and Josselson (2013) was drawn upon. Phenomenological research methodology assumes that both researchers and research participants are embedded in social and cultural experiential worlds. As feminist researchers we need to bring a "critical self-awareness of [our] own subjectivity, vested interests, predilections and assumptions and to be conscious of how these might impact on the research process and findings" (Finlay 2008, 17).

A purposive sampling approach was used to enable the selection of female and male current journalists working in radio, print and television news outlets. Eighteen participants (11 women and 7 men) were recruited through personal contacts, namely through members of the research team who had worked in the field, referrals from journalists familiar with the aims of the research and from contacts made during other research stages<sup>1</sup>.

Between 2014 and 2015 interviews of about one and half hours were conducted with participants. Each journalist was asked a range of questions in a semi-structured way, probing several aspects of her or his gendered personal and professional life. In all interviews our general guiding principle was that of "minimum structure and maximum depth" (Lester 1999, 2). Journalists were first asked to tell as much as possible about themselves to explore work history and personal experiences of gender; then, questions asked for the sharing of detailed information and perspectives on their profession, and finally the interview searched for reflection on the meaning of journalists' experience and interpretations of gender matters both in media in general and in their work in particular (Josselson 2013).

Audio-taped interviews were transcribed verbatim. Transcripts were read several times by all authors. First, interviews were read in order to detect key themes and issues which were then organized in a category-map. This map clustered units of meaning and was divided into sub-categories as new issues emerged, so that, in the end, a stable analytical framework was developed (Lobo & Cabecinhas 2010). The coding process and part of the analysis were supported by NVivo10 software. Significant extracts were then clustered into several themes, including the two that we analyze here: *Gender views in journalism* and *Gender differences in the day-to-day professional life*. From these wider themes emerged various different meanings that were identified and classified in sub-issues (nodes and subnodes). Informed by feminist examinations of gendered newsroom cultures and feminist phenomenology (Levesque-Lopman 2000; Fisher et. al. 2000), all issues were analyzed and compared.

In what follows, we discuss the vocalized experiences and understandings of participants: the first theme sets out the perceptual and practical background of our interviewees' lifeworlds and the second focuses on the material embodiment of their experiences.

## Findings and discussion

### Gender views in journalism: a case of professional myopia?

How journalists view key-issues in their work and interpret professional outputs is an important contextual factor that shapes their own production. Their lifeworlds include social, individual, perceptual and practical experiences and we begin by seeing how these elements work together to produce their approach to gender.

I think that if there is one profession where the gender issue is irrelevant, it is this one [journalism]. [...] Indifferent, that is. A woman has the same possibilities of a man, she can be better than a man and a man can be better than a woman. I honestly think that this is the perfect place to understand that there are no such differences. Here, gender doesn't count. What really matters is well-done work. In fact, I think that if you look at the newsroom, you'll understand this right away. (Francisco, 49 years-old, male, TV news program editor and coordinator)

In line with other research (e.g. North 2009a), gender issues, both in professional media cultures and in content, proved to be a difficult subject to talk about. When asked about gender asymmetries, respondents would often reject the idea itself, looked surprised or uncomfortable. As the above excerpt exemplifies, a common idea found in many interviews is that journalism constitutes an exception from most professional worlds as it is a profession where gender equality has been fully achieved. We found this to be frequently based on a common perception of journalism as a "modern" profession and of journalists themselves as naturally "modern", critical and open-minded people. In contrast, during interviews, gender was almost never considered to be a criterion for selecting sources, spokespeople, commentators or even news stories as opposed to other representation criteria such as geographical, cultural or racial diversity which in turn were considered important by most respondents.

When asked about gender-balance concerns in his choices for sources and commentators, Pedro, a senior editor of one of the most important national television news programs, replied:

P: I never think about it.

Researcher: Well, but if you thought, for instance, in terms of publics... well, half of the population are women...

P: I never think about it.

Researcher: But do you think about cultural diversity, for example?

P: In that I think. Often.

Researcher: Then you could think about having a balanced number of men and women...

Is it not a usual criterion?

P: No. I never think about it. (Pedro, 44 years-old, male, TV news program senior editor)

As we have seen above, the denial of embodiment in journalism has been mostly explained in terms of the profession's celebration of objectivity and neutrality by which journalists' personal experiences and life histories ought to be irrelevant (Mahtani 2005).

In phenomenological terms, the understanding of our environment is generally so natural and familiar to us that we do not pause to reflect on it or ever "think about it", as we take instead a "natural attitude" (Schutz, 1962). In Schutzian terms, we take the environment for granted, without questioning its validity, and without subjecting it to scrutiny. As it comes across in our interviews, gender seems to be a part of the experience of this "naturally attuned" system of practical knowledge to which professional typifications (Schutz, 1996) as above also belong. This is also reinforced by "relevance" (Idem, Ibidem), as seen above.

And yet, considering the noticeable gender biased landscape of national news media (e.g. Lobo & Cabecinhas 2010) or even the general gender statistics that have some media visibility, the prompt presumption by experienced media professionals that gender balance is not a problem in journalism practices and/or contents is paradoxical. Moreover, it proves to be deeply rooted in the false assumption that we live in a flawless meritocratic society, in which everybody will achieve what they worked for under the same conditions. Indeed, this was a recurrent argument among respondents. The excerpt

below is part of an interview with an influential figure in the coordination of news programs:

[...] People are worth what they are, people can't be worth because of their gender. If a certain woman in a certain context is better than a man, she should be the number one in the list, that's just it. [...] I don't think that people, either men or women, should reach top positions through quotas. They should get there only because they are efficient in their tasks and nothing else. [...] I don't have that kind of concern [gender balance in news contents] because I think that there is no need for it. I think it's foolish to have any concerns about that. (Artur, 44 years-old, male, TV news programs coordinator and editor-in-chief)

The idea of meritocracy has previously been identified as a common assumption in the collective imaginary (e.g. Lobo & Cabecinhas 2010) and seems to be working as a social myth justifying the general belief that concerns with gender asymmetries belong to the past. This assumption concurs with another belief about women's "natural" lack of presence in the public sphere which is also regularly associated with their "natural" lack of interest in public issues and/or media exposure. These beliefs were shared by both our male and female respondents and we could not find noticeable different gender patterns in terms of views on gender inequalities in the media. However, although women were reluctant to recognize gender differences or the need to improve gender balance in the news content or in media professions, they sometimes implicitly referred to gender inequalities within their professional contexts, producing ambivalent assertions. We can see this ambivalence in the following excerpt by a female journalist who somewhat devalues the importance of women's comment in light of a supposedly gender-neutral democratic mission of journalism:

I think that probably women, themselves, don't have any interest in being news commentators. It could be interesting [if they did] but it doesn't affect democratic life at all. (Ana, 25 years-old, female, newspaper reporter)

The mere reproduction of "reality" as it exists extra-discursively and "out-there" is, as expected, a recurrent explanation for any asymmetries:

Those [gender] inequalities observed in news contents probably come from the already existing [gender] inequalities in decision-making positions or credibility positions that are our information sources. (André, 31 years-old, male, online news media director)

Overall and despite their claims of journalism as a particularly "modern" or open-minded profession, respondents easily identified gender differences in media contents and the number of excerpts containing critical perspectives on gender in media even outnumbered reassuring perspectives given on the same topic. Within these critical perspectives, we were able to identify some revealing lines of thought. Some respondents, as in the excerpt below, would show critical awareness of gender biases in media contents and reflected on the problem by assigning it to other problems, such as lack of debate in the newsroom and careless gender approaches by some journalists:

I think there is, I'm sure there is, a clear sexist approach in some news pieces. It's awful. My colleagues and I have discussed that before but then... it's always the same problem, there is practically no debate about our work within the newsroom, there's a tremendous lack of debate within the newsroom [...] and when it comes to fait divers, there are some really awful totally sexist approaches [...] I don't think that a journalist has to look at reality as a social scientist, this is not scientific work, but you can't say things as if you were in a bar. I think that sometimes journalists use that type of bar language and very easily end up serving myths and perpetuating stereotypes. [...] I remember that once there was this piece on something about funk music in Brazil and the only thing you could see were women's asses shaking. That really pisses me off! (Diana, 39 years-old, female, TV news reporter)

In discussing gender differences in sports news - in terms of the sheer under-representation of women in both content and production, interviewees promptly recognized strong gender discrepancies in sports stories in newspapers, magazines, television programs and other media. Yet, no journalist explicitly expressed a view that this should be otherwise and when the subject of gender and sports news

came up, most men and women tended to downplay or naturalize the bias.

The excerpt below is from an interview with a female sports reporter who seemed uncomfortable talking about the subject matter and found it difficult to explain the meager presence of sportswomen in sports publications. However, when asked about a particularly sexist story, she seemed almost embarrassed to recognize the approach to women according to what newspaper directors consider to be the male readers' interests.

[...] the female championships of the... well, several sports that we cover are less relevant because... of space reasons and because we try to meet our readers' interests... and they care more about male championships... You know space is scarce and also... female championships have less space but they always have previews and results and when there's something more exceptional... [...] On the last page we always have a semi-naked woman... [...] I consider that [the naked woman] unnecessary, the writing is a bit vulgar and doesn't benefit women in general. (Ana, 25 years-old, female, sports newspaper reporter)

This suggests that although women in sports journalism are aware of some degree of gender biases, they seem to share the common assumption that sports are a male territory. However, ambivalence and criticism is also expressed, suggesting the possibility raised by Marie Hardin (2013) that journalists' gender might affect reporting practices, editorial decisions and the content of sports news.

### **Gender differences in the day-to-day professional life: embodiment in a play of mirrors**

The vocalized experiences of our interviews and the assumptions that underline them were the focus of the second set of categories that we analyzed in order to grasp how the embodiment of our interviewees' experiences is translated into professional practices. Here, then, we focused on the material, on the set of concrete assumptions and lived phenomena of their professional lives, as we agree with Fisher that "from a phenomenological point of view, the material is what is always already there, perhaps concealed or forgotten, but always present and dynamic" (Fisher 2010, 94).

Indeed, as the interviews evolved towards gender issues, interviewees came to identify gender differences in their daily embodied workplace lives. These excerpts were all coded within the same node, gathering different perspectives and explanations which revolved around three main sub-clusters of assumptions and experiences which we took as reflecting embodiment in the mirrors of journalism imagination: *Innate abilities*, *(Not) having it all* and *Personal Image*.

#### *Innate abilities*

The idea that men and women are naturally and evidently different was often referred to as a Mars-and-Venus image of gender differences in professional practices, as we can see in the excerpt below:

[...] men and women don't look at the world in the same way [...] they behave differently throughout life [...] women are more likely to be interested in certain issues, men suggest different ones... [...] they simply don't view the world, issues and life in the same way. (Diana, 39 years-old, female, TV news reporter)

Men and women were not only understood as seeing the world differently but also as having "innate" and "inevitable" different abilities. This characterization of gender "innate" differences was expressed in many excerpts (as in transcript below) and included associated attributes such as "credibility", "abruptness", "solidarity between colleagues" and "toughness" to men, whereas women were portrayed as "sensitive", "poetic", "calm", "jealous" or "manipulative". Because these assertions about the sexes are not only expressions of difference, but also represent embodiments of experience, sometimes women described them as if they were superior abilities that could somehow empower them.

[...] female journalists writing isn't as plain, raw and aggressive as male journalist's writing is. (Ana,

25 years-old, female, newspaper reporter)

The fact that we are women makes us more sensitive and also we have this maternal feature, even if we are not mothers... (Sofia, 35-years-old, female, television reporter)

Men are more laid back, women are more focused. [...] Men are more reliable. That's not to say that women are not efficient; I don't think that's the point, but being a man gives more credibility to whatever is said. [...] Women are always more connected with the sensitive and poetic side of life. (Marta, 30 years-old, female, newspaper reporter)

On other occasions, the sex differences assumption reflected a mirror of fragmented sisters:

Women constantly harm each other, they are not as loyal and faithful as men. Men can work together, help each other and when they have a leader or someone they believe in, they help and they work with him. For women, this is always very complicated. They are always trying to sabotage other women and they only harm themselves... (Sofia, 35- years-old, female, television reporter)

These comments mirror a naturalization of gender binaries. Indeed, according to Amâncio, "being a woman is socially constructed in opposition to the male set of male attributes" (Amâncio 1994, 53), which in its turn, is collectively recognized as the universal reference of attributes commonly understood as "a human being" or "an adult" (Amâncio 1994, 68). This means that women as a group tend to internalize a negative social identity, according to which they are outsiders. Amâncio also stresses that within this binary meaning matrix, women tend to be ascribed all the negative poles of common dimensions (rational/emotional, strong/fragile, etc.). Indeed, what emerges from the interviews is that not only "gendered professional skills" are considered to be different, but also "male skills" are closer to what is typically expected from a journalist. Thus, in this context, and according to previous literature on newsroom gender issues (Gallego 2000, 2002) it was not a surprise to find expressions of the view embedded in a male professional culture that it is up to women to adapt to the "male reference" and incorporate these "masculine attributes" in their own professional practices.

Female anchors who get the best news programs are highly persuasive. [...] A story has to be told in a raw way... [...] They [male anchors] are very affirmative, which may even be confused with a certain abruptness, you know? With a certain brutality. [makes sounds of roaring] (Pedro, 44 years-old, male, TV news program senior editor)

Once again, phenomenology also provides important insights into these excerpts. In Schutzian terms, the experience of the life-world is a process of "typification" and we employ a repertoire of maxims and recipes for understanding and dealing with the world (Schutz 1962). Here, we see that gender roles also come across as a "typification" which is incorporated into professional life as part of a "natural attitude" that does not question it as a social construction.

When asked about gender differences in professional practices, Francisco, a television news program coordinator, pondered about it and then told a story about a war report he did together with other male colleagues. During their stay, they became friends with two female journalists who ended up staying in the same accommodation as them, since lodging at the time was very hard to find. Later, they were evacuated by the Air Force and had to stay overnight in a military base where there were only men. According to Pedro, this was a difficult situation because recruits made a big fuss around the female journalists and the military authorities would not allow them to use the common dormitory and locker room. In Pedro's opinion, this was a ridiculous situation that could only happen in strongly gender divided environments such as military bases. In contrast, in journalism being a man or a woman is not an issue at all because, as a female newsroom colleague of his says, in journalism "we are all men":

To us, it didn't matter if they were women or men, it was all the same. And to them [women journalists] it didn't matter if we were men or women. We were just working and as our colleague Helena usually says, we are all men. (Francisco, 49 years-old, male, TV news program editor and coordinator)

### *(Not) having it all*

The adoption of the male norm seems to be the common ground of newsroom embodied gender relations. However, its contradictions were particularly evident every time the family-work issue was brought up, as the inescapable mirror of biological facticity. Once again, despite the common belief in gender balance in newsrooms and in journalism, journalists from all ages and career stages were spontaneously able to identify different gender constraints in the management of family and work demands.

Artur, an editor-in-chief of a national television station, is responsible for the assignment of stories and schedules to journalists. He is also in position to recommend colleagues or transfer them to higher hierarchical positions. When asked about gender differences in the newsroom, Artur considered that there was no point in discussing the issue. However, when talking about family constraints, he was very specific in pointing out gender contrasts:

[...] I recognize that women are not fully available [to work] because, within the family context, we still haven't reach gender equality. [...] a woman who is also a mother is much less available than a woman who is not a mother or who is single [...] I think that these women are less available to journalism [...] I am not judging, this is just my conclusion [...] let's say that I have this important story that would give her some prominence but she will have to work at night - I won't give it to her because I know she has to take care of her child. (Artur, 44 years-old, male, TV news programs coordinator and editor-in-chief)

As we can see, the journalist recognizes gender differences but he takes them for granted, positioning himself as a spectator and leaving the gender status quo unquestioned.

On the other hand, women frequently complained about difficulties in succeeding at work and meeting family needs at the same time. This was a recurrent issue in interviews with female journalists and it disclosed the perception of the "modern women" emancipation, which nonetheless flows into the "double shift" or motherhood dilemma (North 2014).

As far as my family life is concerned, it isn't easy to manage and how the newsroom works doesn't help. You will know your schedule for tomorrow by the end of the day. At 5, 7 or 8 p.m. they will be sending an email or message with your schedule for the next day. It's very hard to make plans and that affects family life in things like: take children to school, pick them up, etc. [...] It's a terrible mess to manage all this and you feel like you're begging all the time to work in the morning but there isn't much work then. [...] Sometimes I can get away with it because I do a lot of agenda proposals. (Diana, 39 years-old, female, TV news reporter)

Female journalists were quite aware of these "limitations". Some women admitted to self-constrain their careers because they felt that they could not let their families down, as recognized by their male colleagues:

Angela is an excellent editor. I invited her to be editor three hundred times! And two hundred and ninety-nine times she said: I can't because of the girls. (Francisco, 49 years-old, male, TV news program editor and coordinator)

Considering previous studies on the male-centered professional culture of newsrooms, it was not surprising to see that female journalists who try to operate outside the feminine stereotype may experience displacement, as they seem to be in "no man's land":

[...] it's very difficult to be a woman with strong opinions because there are so few of them. They are frequently isolated and seen as insane. (Marta, 30 years-old, female, newspaper reporter).

In their daily struggle to "have it all", women often adopt survival strategies which include the anticipation and negotiation of schedules, stories or tasks. Within their endeavour for family-friendly working conditions, female journalists do not always get the support they expect from their female colleagues.

In fact, in what concerns work-family conciliation and special needs or demands within the newsroom every day routines, female journalists found their male colleagues more supportive and understanding:

[...] some women don't have anything else in life, their lives are just work and they think all women's lives should be like that [...] they don't care if a woman has children, husband, schedules... They even seem to want to punish other women for that... [...] I talk about this with my female colleagues and we are totally aware of it: men are much more understanding towards our personal lives than women. Really. (Sofia, 35-years-old, female, television reporter)

In fact, during interviews, although most men would refuse to recognize gender inequalities in journalism professions, when it came to family/work conflicts, they would easily identify contrasts in the way women and men dealt with this problem. Interestingly, women found their male colleagues more supportive than other women and even complained about their female colleagues who were unsympathetic towards their personal problems. One reason for this attitude could be that female journalists who reach high positions may feel the need to prove that they can act out their roles as their male colleagues do (Gallego 2000) and, in their attempt to do so, they end up exacerbating what they believe they are expected to do.

### *Personal Image*

Family-work conflict was not the only career constraint experienced as women-specific. Since many of our respondents were television news reporters and/or editors, the issue of personal or physical image was raised several times. We have singled it out as another facet of embodiment and physicality.

Amongst our interviewees we often encountered the belief that all men in a suit and tie look good enough to be on television so in their case being good looking or not was irrelevant. In addition, we also saw that this ideal mirror seems to provoke a kind of "optical illusion" that turns men into a homogeneous looking group:

All men look the same, right? I think that's maybe because in men the aesthetical aspect is not so important. (Pedro, 44 years-old, male, TV news program senior editor)

In contrast, most respondents agreed that women need to be more careful about their image. They also recognized the added value of having a beautiful face and/or body as a skill to succeed in television and that how women look can be, in certain cases, a decisive factor in their careers.

There was a time in journalism where women were chosen only for their pretty face. Today we know that a [female] anchor needs to be more than a pretty face. (Francisco, 49 years-old, male, TV news program editor and coordinator)

Women have to be more careful with their image because, culturally, a man in a suit and a tie is always good looking [...] all a man needs is a shirt, a suit and a tie to look good. A woman needs more than that [...] a woman in a television channel must take additional care. (Artur, 44 years-old, male, TV news programs coordinator and editor-in-chief)

Paradoxically, and as we have seen above, Artur had initially stated that people are worth what they are *regardless of their gender*. However, when looking at the previous excerpt we conclude that he only finds this to be true in the male universe.

Considering that we were talking to educated, informed people that were aware of our research purposes and our gender focus, we have to consider that respondents were cautious in their statements and tended to adjust their discourse to perspectives perceived as politically correct. Therefore, some journalists took some time to answer and sometimes needed to use the perspective of "others" to disclose the hidden gender bias in terms of image:

Well, if you ask that [if physical appearance influences women's careers in television] to other journalists, you will probably hear this old sexist newsroom proverb: it's easier to make a good

journalist out of a hot chick than to make a hot chick out of a good journalist. Ok, it [beauty] helps. (Jorge, 44 years-old, male, TV news program editor and coordinator)

Female journalists too were uncomfortable with this issue, as if they felt that they were being directly called into question or were being asked to consider their own look's potential impact in their professional careers. Despite this discomfort, our female respondents mentioned some situations where physical appearance was a criterion for career upward mobility even though this was not necessarily perceived as unfair:

I remember that if a woman had a pretty face she would become an anchor faster than any other, right? When I worked in television, I remember that some female journalists who had more experience were angry because those pretty young journalists, who weren't as good as them, would be invited to be anchors [...] but obviously you can't have an anchor with a bad image, television is based on image. (Marta, 30 years-old, female, newspaper reporter)

## Conclusion

The issues relating to the production of unequal gendered representations are complex as demonstrated by a large body of research. In an explorative analysis, Monika Djerf-Pierre (2011, 48) for example, complemented GMMP's outputs with other data to find that "the ratio of women reporting the news is mainly determined by something else other than the level of gender equality in society". Going beyond the numbers into the cultural and contextual factors as sources of explanation can, therefore, enlarge our understandings of the problem.

Engaging in discussions of gender and sexual difference with both women and men who often rejected these very ideas in the context of their profession was stepping into a difficult terrain. However, interviewing journalists adopting a feminist phenomenological perspective enabled us to situate and map the meanings of their responses within the wider contexts of their embodied experiences. Linda Fisher (2010) highlighted that in phenomenological terms, identity and subjectivity should not be connected merely to the expressive voice - the expressive and semantic content -, but also to the material voice, to the embodied vocal situation. Finding the embodiment elements of our interviews allowed us to confirm Fisher's insight of how embodiment is, for the most part, culturally coded in terms of what counts as "normalcy" and that "normal" embodiment is construed not only in terms of appearance, but also importantly in terms of capability and functionality (Fisher 2010, 91).

How does this help us understand the well-researched gender bias in journalism? We saw that capability and functionality in the journalist' imagination of the system of gender roles is indeed very much a phenomenological "typification", part of their natural attitude that does not question it as a construct. As we heard in one of the above excerpts, when asked about gender priorities, a journalist may simply "never think about it". This may be understood as ways of reproducing "reality" as they see fit, in the most "objective" way, to use a term of journalism practices. On the other hand, a part of functionality in journalism is precisely the ideal of disembodiment or of absorbing all identities into the male norm. Simultaneously, we saw how material inequality is indeed experienced and "normalized".

The objectivation that results from the typification processes used by journalists may end up in the construction of stereotypes founded upon false generalizations. Moreover, there is a risk that because of its rigid system of production norms, journalism, in its search for adequacy to "the common man", may prevent new ways and dissidence (Correia, 2004).

This became clear as we explored of the natural attitudes of our interviewees in the three sub-clusters of assumptions and experiences which we identified in our analytical framework. First, the idea that men and women have innate abilities often came across as naturalized attitudes not only towards gendered professional skills but also towards a generalized male culture taken as the norm of the newsroom production. Secondly, despite the common belief in gender balance in newsrooms and in journalism, the gender constraints in the management of family and work demands fully emerged in the discussion of daily schedules and professional activities. Thirdly, the issue of personal image clustered around the contradictory, hidden or cautious gender bias in terms of bodily image of both male and female journalists.

The exploration of these three dimensions also gave us insights into some ambivalences that women in particular feel about the working conditions they experience and the product that journalism

produces. These ambivalences may not always be acknowledged by the individuals experiencing them but they are critically important for understanding gender and professional attitudes in journalism.

Although findings from our data cannot be generalized, we believe they are nevertheless useful in identifying conceptual issues that help us understand the debates on women in the newsroom. At the same time, we acknowledge that our research will have begun to shed light on the lived experience of gender in journalism, and that much more research is needed, identifying reasons for change and risks of not changing. Both more statistical and qualitative monitoring of working conditions are necessary alongside more in-depth hermeneutic understandings of meanings as produced by women journalists themselves. Indeed, understanding the production of meaning of gender at the level of the newsroom is a critical first step in efforts to address inequalities that female journalists and women in the news face across the globe.

## NOTES

1. This article draws from a larger research project which also included participant observation in two national multimedia newsrooms. For purposes of anonymity all the names of interviewees were changed.

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