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The Democratic Public Sphere

– Challenges and Developmental Perspectives

No. 8

Christina Fiig: *A Theoretical Framework: News Sources, Gender and Majority-Minority in Danish TV News Programs*

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The Democratic Public Sphere – Challenges and Developmental Perspectives

The public sphere is generally considered to be the central nervous system of democracy. This is where society's political opinion formation takes place and where elected politicians are expected to explain and legitimize their administration of power to the citizens. Today, however, the public sphere appears to be challenged in various ways by phenomena like spin, professionalization of politics, commercialization of media, inequality with regard to participation, etc. Furthermore, important political decisions are often made in contexts that are closed to the general public – e.g. professional networks, global enterprises, the EU system. This collective project will conduct a multifaceted, interdisciplinary analysis with the aim of mapping the nature and scope of these challenges. Subsequently, the project will consider possible models for strengthening the public sphere as a factor in the process of political decision-making.

AU IDEAS is an initiative created in 2011 in cooperation between Aarhus University Research Foundation and Aarhus University. Its purpose is to facilitate the realization of visionary and original, interdisciplinary project ideas. An AU IDEAS Pilot Centre works for a period of 3-5 years on developing a research idea with the aim to establish a larger research centre. The present Pilot Centre has received funding for the period 2012-2015.

A Theoretical Framework: News Sources, Gender and Majority-Minority in Danish TV News Programs

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The general theme of this research paper is the relationship between democracy, gender/ethnicity (here characterized as majority/minority status) and media. The media are among our most powerful agents of entertainment, information, and socialization. Media sites contain considerable ideological negotiation and contestation, that is, they struggle over meaning and values. Media can also be considered a vital political arena in the shaping of politics, democracy and of our perceptions of ethnicity, gender, and power.

Investigating news sources in a gender and ethnicity perspective is relevant, but rare in Danish and Nordic research. This particular project is framed by a discussion of democratic theory and democratic considerations in relation to the empirical investigation. I embrace concepts of democracy and the public sphere as central categories of analysis. In line with Dahlgren (2009) I highlight the important insight from theories, empirical research and debates on political communication, the public sphere tradition and cultural studies. The idea being that in the contemporary media world, popular culture and politics cannot be fully separated because they inform each other (Dahlgren 2009: 141).

This paper sketches three approaches to studies of news: 1) democracy and civic engagement 2) news production and 3) intersectionality. The aim of the paper is three-fold: *First*, it presents three approaches that enlighten an analysis of news sources in a perspective of gender and minority/majority. *Secondly*, it discusses the significance of a Nordic empirical context for this

particular theoretical framework. The project is rooted in a Danish and a Nordic empirical context in terms of gender norms, media systems, the relationship between the public and the private spheres, in terms of history of multiculturalism and democratic practices. *Thirdly*, it illustrates how perspectives of democracy and intersectionality may benefit an analysis of TV-news. This empirical context is analyzed through the lens of "travelling" concepts (Knapp 2005) imported from Anglo-Saxon theoretical traditions and research. Like intersectionality, a travelling concept causes some fruitful noise when applied in a different empirical context.

The purpose of this endeavor is to sketch the landscape and scope of the project including the wider context for a media project in turbulent (neoliberal) times and in the midst of profound change. The place of the press in this wider informational orbit must be re-described (Schudson 2008: 7). The media's present turbulent situation means that their character and their role in democracy are in transition, and the same goes for television journalism, which incorporates "more and more of the personal, the intimate the sensational, the subjective, the confessional" (Dahlgren 2009:3; 128).

The research object is television news and the distribution of news sources in a perspective of gender and majority and minority status. Via television, we become inexorably involved in talking about other elements of the media matrix as well (Dahlgren 2009:127). The paper focuses on the theoretical framework and does not elaborate much on perspectives to empirical studies of media relations.

Gender bias is one systematic feature of television news. We know from Belgian research on TV news items (Hooghe & de Swert 2009; De Swert & Hooghe 2010) that women are used less as news sources in TV-news than men. Belgian researchers indicate that the selection of news sources, i.e. actors appearing in a news broadcast and delivering a statement, remains strongly biased (Hooghe & de Swert 2009:13). Their analysis covers a comprehensive

data set of 76,673 news items, accounting for the entire news production of the Flemish public broadcasting corporation VRT and the main commercial station 2003-2007.

The empirical data behind this paper is a study of news sources of two Danish news programs. One is the daily current affairs program *Deadline* broadcast by the state-financed public service provider Danish Broadcasting Corporation (DR), and the other is the daily news program *TV2-nyhederne* broadcast by the commercial TV-station TV2. The empirical data describes the news sources in terms of gender and majority Dane/minority ethnicity in relation to different types of source status/profession (journalists, politicians, bureaucrats, researchers, NGO spokespersons, laypeople in *vox populi* and some more detailed categories) and different types of news items. The underlying idea of a descriptive analysis is that quantitative data can be useful in calling attention to debates on democracy, inclusion and the public sphere. The project is part of the research project AU Ideas 2012-2015: The Democratic Public Sphere at Aarhus University/ www.offentlighed.au.dk

Two Theses in the Project

A central thesis in the project is that a gender and majority/minority perspective on the media sheds light on "blind spots" in the public sphere: i.e. formally, women and ethnic minorities have access to the media as news subjects, news makers and news producers, but in reality there is a significant underrepresentation of different categories of women and ethnic minorities across the different news outlets.

Another thesis in the project is that a perspective of intersectionality can enrich the analysis by illuminating how the intersection of gender, race, ethnicity and class play out in relation to news sources. This perspective is employed in some studies of TV and news media, which have inspired this project (e.g. Meyers 2013; Andreassen 2005). By intersectionality perspective I

mean a theoretical and methodological focus on the interplay of gender, ethnicity, race, class and other signifiers of social identity.

Intersectionality as a concept originates in black American feminists' theories about their experiences and social position as women (gender) of colour (race) (Crenshaw 1994). Intersectionality is grounded in the thinking that studies of gender are always related to other social categories that work together to define a person's particular subject positions (Crenshaw 1994; Phoenix 2006; Yuval-Davis 2006). When race and gender are viewed as parallel, rather than as intersecting, institutional discrimination can only be recognized when it occurs along one axis, as due to either race or gender, but never both. A perspective of intersectionality indicates that the analytical focus is broader than a gender perspective and that the relationship between social categories forms an open empirical question (Hancock 2007). Equally, intersectionality is an aspect of social organization that shapes all our lives. Gender structures shape the lives of both women and men, and everyone has a race/ethnicity (Weldon 2008:195).Everybody is positioned simultaneously within social categories, such as age, class, ethnicity, gender, race and sexuality. So even if we focus specifically on one social category such as gender, intersectionality reminds us that we cannot understand the category in isolation (Phoenix 2006: 22). Gender, race, class and other markers of social identity are inextricably linked with a hierarchy of dominance in complex and varied ways (Meyers 2013:2).

An intersectionality perspective is addressed throughout the project with an ambition of attending to differences among women and men and ensuring that the unique perspectives of different groups of women are not overshadowed by those of more privileged women (Weldon 2008). This perspective opens up the analysis of women and men as broad categories, and it is a key trend in contemporary gender and media studies with a focus

on the exploration of sexuality, race, ethnicity and other components of identity alongside gender (Kearney 2012:13).

Existing Research

Research on journalism, news and gender has zoomed in on women's access to and participation in the media with specific focus on the choice of sources, experts and news anchors in the media and on media leadership (Andreassen 2005; Byerly & Ross 2006; Eide 2000; Fiig 2010; Gidengil & Everitt 2003; Gill 2006; Wahl-Jorgensen 2000; Norris 1997; Ross 2003; Ross & Carter 2011; Ross & Screberny 2000; van Zoonen 1998). A general conclusion is that the media are characterized by inequality in terms of gender, ethnicity and race. A similar conclusion characterizes analyses of various types of media and representation of gender in texts and genres (e.g. Carter, Steiner & McLaughlin ed. 2014).

The literature is rather pessimistic concerning media representation of gender, race and class (e.g. Dines & Humez eds. 2011) and concerning women's access to media, the gendered status of the actual newsroom and news discourses (Ross & Carter 2011).

The British media researcher Keane has argued that the media are a mirror of society and that the democratic role of the media has been understood as a forum for a society's collective dialogue with and about itself (Keane 1991). This view partly illustrates the present project. Media both reflect *and* construct images of society and its relations of democracy, gender and power. Media shape images, ideologies and ideals as well as an understanding of our social environment, the world and the people in it (Meyers 2013:30). Most readers/viewers/listeners will read, watch and listen to news programs based on the idea that they reflect the news of the day. Very few people reflect upon the content in terms of what is *not* the news of

the day or how the news alternatively could have been constructed on a given day (Willig 2011:15).

Existing Data

A focus of this research project is the data describing the news sources in a program. For example, the news surface of the Danish Broadcasting Corporation's late night news program *Deadline* 10.30-11 pm on weeknights usually features 3-4 key topics and 4-6 news sources are typically interviewed or debate in the studio; infrequently on site. Before we begin sketching the theoretical framework, let me note that source selection as a concern of fair and accurate general reporting emerged as early as the Hutchins Commission report in 1947 in the US (Martin 1991: 179). One element is the choice of information source – the selection journalists make among the many potential holders of information of those sources whose information and viewpoints will actually be included in the news (Zoch & VanSlyke Turk 1998:762).

The theoretical background and analytical framework of this paper are based on existing empirical data. International research and more consultant-based records of (Danish) news sources across various media reveal a bias in news sources, such as underrepresentation of women as news sources, stereotypical usage of female sources in relation to specific news items and shorter airtime for women than for men interviewed on TV (Hooghe & de Swert 2009; Gomard & Krogstad eds. 2002; *WACC-Who Makes the News*?). Three data sources have informed my working thesis on a gender bias in news sources.

The study of Belgian TV-news mentioned above points out that for more than a decade female news sources have received less attention in television news than male news sources (De Swert & Hooghe 2010).

Second, a world -wide data sample *Who Makes the News?* based on national media monitoring of TV, radio and newspapers in 1995, 2000, 2005

and 2010 also indicates a gender bias. Each of the four investigations focuses on one single day of news coverage across the world. The 2010-investigation includes findings from 108 countries, which participated in the day of monitoring of women's portrayal in the news as sources, subjects and journalists (Ross & Carter 2011:1151, *WACC-Who Makes the News?*).

A study of three newspapers from three Southern states in the US looks at the selection that journalists make from many information holders based on a sample of stories published between 1986 and 1996. In other words, this is a study of gender as a variable in source selection and use. The study found that women were infrequently cited as sources, that female journalists attached greater credibility to female sources than male reporters, and that female reporters were still more likely to cover local stories, while their male counterparts covered state, national and international news (Zoch & VanSlyke Turk 1998:772-773). Another American study looked at 18 big and small newspapers throughout the US for a week in 1999 employing content analysis of 889 stories (Armstrong 2004). The study found that male sources and subjects received more mentions and were placed more prominently in the stories. The authors conclude that males have a higher public status in newspaper coverage than females and that the gender of the news writer can be linked to gender portrayals in news stories (Armstrong 2004:150). A third American analysis of the influences of the editors' and reporters' gender via 30 newspapers' web sites showed few differences in issues covered, but differences in what male and female reporters covered related to the predominant editor's gender. The study points at the significance of women (editors) in managerial positions as they tend to treat their female reporters on a par with male reporters but equally conclude that "these findings do not support drawing a straight line from reporter or editor gender to news content that somehow flows out of one's gender"(p.136) (Craft & Wanta 2004:135-136).

Previous Research

The initial motivation for the project is based on a kaleidoscopic view of Nordic and Danish literature concerning gender and the news, and more specifically gender and TV-news. There is very little systematic empirical data on the distribution of news sources in Danish media. A noticeable exception is Andreassen's analysis of the representation of visible minorities in Danish written and electronic media (2005) in a perspective of intersectionality.

This project draws on existing international analyses of TV-news in a gender perspective from Belgian TV-news (Hooghe & de Swert 2009; De Swert & Hooghe 2010) and some American analyses of news source selection (Armstrong 2004; Craft & Wanta 2004; Zoch & Vanslyke Turk 1998). These analyses apply a gender perspective.

A perspective of intersectionality is applied in two studies among other studies of media and news: Meyers' analysis of African American women in the news in the field of gender, race and class in journalism (2013:2) and Andreassen's (2005) analysis of the Danish news media's communication about visible minorities.

In a literature review, Hooghe & de Swert (2009:14-16) identify three main reasons why female news sources are selected to be heard in the news. First, topics/female topics: some topics are traditionally associated with women or coined as "female issues", for example consumer news, health or family matters, education, culture or social policy (Van Zoonen 1998, Craft & Wanta 2004). Female news sources are often assigned to these topics. Second, the gender of the reporter who produces the news story (Hooghe & de Swert 2009:14). Third, the editing process is important. Due to editorial preferences and the editing process, more women are interviewed on soft news items, and this almost always means that the news item will be considered less important (Hooghe & de Swert 2009:14). Summing up, the Belgian study

paints a rather bleak picture of the selection of TV news sources in a gender perspective.

Three Theoretical Perspectives

The previous sections outlined some general building blocks of the project. This section and its three sub-sections highlight its theoretical universe and fits with what research from different fields have concluded on media and democracy in terms of civic engagement, citizenship and the public sphere. However, it takes the analysis a step further by suggesting a combined framework of theories on democracy, news production and theories of intersectionality of gender and other difference-making categories. I have not attempted, nor will I propose a synthesis of them as they originate in different research traditions. Applying different "conceptual lenses" can allow alternative interpretations to come into focus (Allisson 1971; here from Cram 2009). Although it enjoys less fanfare than in the early 1990s, the tradition of deliberative democracy with its emphasis on a revised concept of the public sphere remains an important background framework in the analytical tool box (Habermas 1992; 1996). Having said that, it is crucial to mine other theoretical traditions for their suggestions for analyzing the complexity of media issues in a perspective of diversity.

Initially, I situate the theoretical framework within studies of media and democracy. I borrow an outline of the three traditions from Dahlgren (2009:4-6), who employs a distinction between (1) political communication with a focus on communicative interaction between the formal actors in the political communication system: political institutions/actors, the media, and citizens (p.5), and (2) the public sphere tradition derived from Habermas with a focus on deliberative democracy and civil society and with a critical look at institutional arrangements especially in the media (p.5). Dahlgren points out, and rightly so in my view, that the public sphere tradition often seems oddly

removed from everyday sociological realities and that its strength lies in its historical, analytical, and not least normative scoop (p.5). The third "culturalist" (as renamed by Dahlgren) tradition is based on cultural studies and focuses on meaning, identity and practices.

1) Democracy and Civic Engagement

The project's democratic perspective is partly informed by a theoretical framework by the German sociologist and philosopher Jürgen Habermas (1962; 1996) who has argued for the (positive) significance of the public sphere and citizen engagement in its democratic dialogue. Such a theoretical horizon is of course tied up with some fundamental normative conceptions and assumptions about people and society (Dahlgreen 2009:2). With a Habermasian perspective and its normative underlining of inclusion, public dialogue and public participation, the media is emphasized as a key vehicle for the public sphere. The concept of the public sphere forms a central analytical construct in our ongoing efforts to understand the relationship between democracy and the media (Dahlgren 2009: 126). An echo of Habermas is also found in more empirically informed understandings of democracy, e.g. Schudson's (2008) interesting analysis of "Why Democracies Need An Unlovable Press?" Schudson argues that democracy is about "assuring a role for popular participation and for popular review of governmental performance within a system of competitive elections…"(2008:8).

Several other understandings of democracy besides deliberative democracy are part of the project's analyses of media, the public sphere and democracy with emphasis on a market orientation and economic thinking in an age of neo-liberalism and the ideology of consumerism (Lewis, Inthorn & Wahl-Jorgensen 2005). We start out by looking at some broad debates on citizenship and democracy.

T.H. Marshall's (1950) understanding of citizenship as status that entitles one to certain bundles of entitlements and benefits as well as obligations does not apply well in the following analysis. Citizenship, defined as a set of civil, political and social rights, does not provide an adequate theoretical framework for analyzing political participation and identity work in a public sphere in the 20th/21st century characterized by central political arenas beyond the nation-state, by globalization and by issues of recognition and difference. Citizenship issues are no longer exclusively about the struggle for social equality, but also a battle over cultural identity and demands for recognition of group differences (Delanty 2000). Bearing a perspective of deliberative democracy in mind, one can add that citizenship is also a question of access to and inclusion in the public sphere and the media.

The public sphere forms a central arena for a citizenship practice if by citizenship we understand four components: rights, responsibilities, participation and identity (Delanty 2000). Rather than merely focusing on citizenship as involving legal rights, there is now agreement that citizenship must also be defined as a social process through which individuals and social groups engage in claiming, expanding or losing rights [...] "Such developments have led to a sociologically informed definition of citizenship in which the emphasis is less on legal rules and more on norms, practices, meanings, and identities" (Isin & Turner 2002:4; here from Fiig 2011).

These general considerations narrow the debate on democracy and citizenship in relation to the media. In what follows, I am inspired by Dahlgren's take on political engagement and participation (2009) and on the media: "We live in highly mediated societies, and much of our civic knowledge derives from the media. In a sense, the media bear some responsibility for our political involvement" (Dahlgren 2009:81). By means of a distinction between politics and the political (inspired by Chantal Mouffe) and talk, Dahlgren sets out to analyze how "talk" in the media can generate

the political and thereby potentially lead towards politics, both traditional and alternative politics (2009:101). Dahlgren's analysis looks at television journalism and popular television culture and its (lack of) success in helping to sustain civic engagement in national politics guided by the question of how the popular quality of television resonates with notions of public spheres and civic cultures (2009:126).

Drawing on a range of empirical studies of TV-journalism, Dahlgren points at examples of political events that can strengthen civic engagement for example the global media event *Live Aid*, which can carry with it an element of "global cosmopolitanism" (p.130) and how TV visuals are able to mobilize civic engagement and participation for example in resocializing private life towards a shared public culture (Scannell 1996; here from Dahlgren 2009:132). Other studies conclude differently, i.e that citizens don't seem to benefit much from TV journalism because they cannot easily transform journalistic information into civic knowledge and practice (Couldry, Livingstone & Markham 2007, here from Dahlgren 2009:130). Studies of news items in the US and the UK point out that the overwhelming claims made by journalists about citizens present no evidence and that citizens have no clear place in the news (Dahlgren 2009:131; Lewis, Inthorn & Wahl-Jorgensen 2005).

Dahlgren's analysis of television as a space for civic identity and agency is formed by a discussion of contributions and limitations framed by some of the dimensions of civic cultures (knowledge, values, trust, practices and identities) that he has identified in regard to the links between politics and television (2009:141-148).

Regarding *knowledge*, television does not do well in conveying detailed information, whereas it does well at evoking discussion and hereby contributing to a "talkative citizenry" (p.145). TV is therefore important in promoting political talk. Regarding the second dimension of *values*, Dahlgren argues that TV offers a mixed bag in regard to values (p.145). Many concerns

about values linked to private life, consumption and market relations and at the same time discourses still reiterate many basic values and virtues of democracy (p.145). When it comes to *trust*, Dahlgren argues that TV tends to show very few examples of "thin trust" that typifies civic social bonds "or cooperation that makes a political impact" (p.146). On the other hand, Dahlgren argues, TV does an important job in familiarizing viewers with particular elements of society that many people would otherwise never encounter, meaning that TV has conveyed a growing sense of society's plural character (p.146). Concerning *practices*, Dahlgren points out that one of the key practices of civic culture is discussion and that different kinds of programming situate the viewing subject differently – hence the different roles the viewers are placed in and the various relation to practice. With reference to Lewis, Inthorn and Wahl-Jorgensen (2005), Dahlgren reminds us that the "immediate civic practices and sense of empowerment to be derived from television news as such is limited" (p.147). Finally, the dimension of *identities*, which Dahlgren seems critical of. He points out that a sense of civic "we-ness" in contemporary television is "quite thin" (p.147) with a typical media focus on the viewers as consumers on the market and less on the viewer as citizen and the principles of universality "embedded in the notion of the citizen" (p.147). On the other hand, television as a major institution of popular culture offers us a framework for fantasizing and speculating about our lives and identities, Dahlgren argues (p.148).

Summing up, Dahlgren concludes that TV news contributes to the public sphere in complex ways but offers very few entry points for civic identity and agency. When the study of TV-journalism is expanded to TV in broader terms including popular culture, the conclusion is that the latter holds degrees of political relevance. Dahlgren's conclusion is mixed:

The point is not that we should try to arrive at some ultimate, once-and-for-all evaluation, but rather, to be alert for how television- despite all its familiar limitations- may at times help move us beyond the narrow definitions of politics and the public sphere, and connect us to civic cultures in subtle, surprising and unintended ways (Dahlgren 2009: 148)

Another approach to analyses of media phenomena is to look at news and at the relationship between journalism and democracy. Scudson (2008) discusses what news can do for democracy and the democratic role of journalism based on the premise that democracy and journalism are not the same thing (2008:11). Scudson bases this discussion on six functions (2008: chap.2) of news in a democratic perspective.

1. Information: Informing the public of news we would not otherwise know.
2. Investigation: journalists perform its institutional role as a watch-dog.
3. Analysis: serious analysis demands a great deal of time and effort.
4. Social empathy: the journalistic imagination. Telling an individual story and demonstrating the link between private troubles and public issues (p.18).
5. Public forum: for a dialogue among citizens.
6. Mobilization: the news media can serve as advocates for particular political programs and mobilize people.

In conclusion, Schudson argues for an emphasis on the six functions of journalism and hereby for greater sophistication about representative democracy (2008:24) for journalists. In other words, journalists should cover more carefully some (democratic /CF) institutions and relationships that today they take for granted or ignore (2008:24).

Summing up, the literature facilitates a fruitful debate about the prerequisite for and the relationship between journalism and news on one

side and democracy on the other. Let's look at the second approach to the analysis namely the actual news production.

2) News Production

Scudson's typology of approaches to the sociology of news production (2005/1989) maps news-making and discusses how news is produced in the responsible institutions. These approaches are all in opposition to early functionalist media studies (Willig 2011). Despite Scudson's self-criticism (2005:172) of the approaches, they still carry some weight in explaining a framework for news production. The latter is highly relevant in relation to a debate about an analysis of news sources.

News' political economy focuses on the relation between news and political and economic structures and the link between the outcome of the news process and the structure of the economy and the ideology of the state, respectively. This approach has been characterized as "historical/materialist" analyzing media and news as sub-problems of structural questions of class, power and capital (see Willing 2011). The economic organization of news is not clear in as much as a link between ownership of news organizations and news coverage is not easy to determine (See Curran et al. 2009 for an empirical analysis). The political context of news -making is also a broad topic, which is partly dependent on the political ideologies of the state. In market societies, there are various institutional forums and constitutional regimes for the press. The distinction between market and state organization of media, or between commercial and public forms of broadcasting masks important differences within each category (ibid. p.179).

The social organization of news production and journalism and the interaction of journalists and their sources form a third approach to news making. It originates primarily in organizational sociology, especially the study of social organization, occupations and professions, and the social

construction of ideology (Willig 2011).This approach looks at journalistic norms of work and organizational possibilities and constraints. A "cultural" approach to news emphasizes the constraining force of broad cultural traditions and symbolic systems. This perspective tries to understand how journalists' efforts on the job are constrained by organizational and occupational demands (Scudson 2005:174). News is the product of a set of institutionalized work practices and journalists are socialized into these practices. Louw (2005:72 ff) points at some parameters in these routinizing journalistic practices. Journalists are trained to work according to a set of formulas, which narrow the options for what can become news and "newsworthiness". They are also trained in the selection of sources and discourses. The term "editorial power" (*den redigerende magt)* is coined by Lund (2002), who points at organizational demands for editing and selection of events, approaches, agendas and themes. This includes linguistic routines employed in describing politicians or executives in private industry elite positions and the de-emphasis of certain issues in this process (Lund 2002: 27-28; 167).

3) A Perspective of Intersectionality

When it comes to research on media, the perspective in gender research has undergone a "paradigmatic shift towards intersectionality" (Yuval-Davis 2006) away from a focus on women and the significance of gender. The analytical framework in this third theoretical approach looks at the intersections of gender and other differentiating categories – in this case ethnicity/majority/minority status and profession. A perspective of intersectionality reveals diversity among women and among men and illustrates how categories of difference and social divisions can be used for different purposes for different people depending on their positioning. Black women, in particular, have argued that it is important to deconstruct the

category "women" and to recognize that social class and "race" produce both commonalities and differences between women (Phoenix 2006:21).

In relation to news sources, it makes sense to not only investigate women and men as analytical categories, but also to analyze the different categories of news that groups of men and women are selected for such as experts, politicians, *vox populi* etc.

Speaking of gender apart from race, class, ethnicity and other divisions is inaccurate and distorting: There is no such thing as race apart from gender, no such thing as class apart from gender or race (Brewer 1999; here from Weldon 2008: 195).

Meyers' (2013) analysis of representation of African American women in a variety of news formats on six case studies demonstrates some of the ways that race, class and gender shape media representation. Her point of departure is "that we do know a bit about the representation of African American men in the news, but very little about African American women" (2013:1). Meyers employs an approach of qualitative textual analysis and critical cultural studies. One of her case studies investigates the representation of African American women on TV; i.e. national cable network news (CNN and FOX NEWS). One of her conclusions is that African American women, unlike men, were more likely to be portrayed as victims than as criminals (2013:46) and that the dominant themes in news coverage of African American women are victimization, poverty, crime, dysfunction and violence (2013:139). This conclusion is in line with a key study of Danish news media's communication about and representation of visible minorities from 1970-2004 by Andreassen (2005). The project examines how mass media's communication about visible minorities has contributed to constructions of sexuality, gender, race and nation with a specific focus on how whiteness – represented by ethnic Danes – has been constructed (2005:6). Andreassen concludes that the news media's representation of visible minorities

contributed to stereotypical images of visible minorities such as "the criminal immigrant", "the oppressed immigrant woman", "the veiled woman" etc. (2005:277).

Using intersectionality in a research project's design and methodology produces several challenges. I shall address these elsewhere. Weldon (2008) helpfully suggests some precision in the methodological and theoretical use of intersectionality, which:

"admits the possibility that the ways that social structure affect each other vary over space and time. Some axes might be more salient or politicized in some contexts than in others. For example, most of the writing about intersectionality derives from the work of women of colour in the United States. Are gender, race and class similarily entwined in other national contexts?" (Weldon 2008:208).

Discussion

In the sections above, I have pieced together a theoretical framework for a discussion of news sources in a perspective of gender and majority-minority status. I have pointed out some of the limits of this reasoning without dismissing the relevance of the concept of democracy and multiple understandings of it for my analysis. This leads to further reflections on a coherent theoretical framework for a project based on a sensitivity to inclusion in and exclusion of Danish media. And based on a sensitivity to a Nordic empirical context. The focus of the current study will prove to make specific comments upon the discussion of the significance of a Nordic context for the analytical points.

I am inspired by Sartori's idea of 'concept travelling'(1970) and his idea that thinking about concepts must include how well the concept 'travels' to a variety of cultural and national contexts (here from Goertz &

Mazur 2008:5). In this particular project, the theoretical approaches primarily originate in an Anglo-Saxon research context, which means that a conceptual travel covers the reception of and application in an empirical context of the Nordic countries and the Danish case. This is both in terms of a media system (Curran et al. 2009), of democracy and of intersectionality. Especially the last theoretical approach highlights the need for some reflections on the importance of a 'transatlantic travel of the categorical triad of race-class-gender" (Knapp 2005) and on how these dimensions play out in the case of Danish news programs.

To address the potential influence of a 'transatlantic travel', we are going to look at the three issues of media systems, democracy and intersectionality based on the idea that they potentially are played out differently in a Nordic empirical context compared to an Anglo-Saxon context. This task is carried out with the danger of exaggerating the differences between a Nordic and an Anglo-Saxon context based on theoretical debates. An empirical study can contribute with more precise knowledge on the significance of a Nordic context.

My argument on the significance of different media systems is in line with Curran, Iyengar, Brink Lund and Salovaara-Moring's (2009) work on media systems, public knowledge and democracy. The authors identify different media systems; an unreconstructed public service model in which the programming principles of public service still largely dominate (exemplified by Denmark and Finland), a dual model combining increasingly deregulated commercial television with strong public service broadcasting organizations (the UK) and the market model (the US). The differences between the models are remarkable. The authors conclude that their evidence suggests that the public service model of broadcasting gives greater attention to public affairs and international news and thereby fosters greater knowledge in these areas, than the market model. It equally makes television

news more accessible on leading channels and fosters high levels of television news consumption (Curran et al. 2009:22).

A second point of importance for the idea of a conceptual travel is the history and tradition of gender roles and gender equality in the Nordic countries. When explaining the idea of a "Nordic model", a long tradition of political democracy and Lutheranism is often underlined (Melby, Ravn & Wetterberg 2008:4). Another characteristic of a Nordic model is that the closeness and subtle boundaries between public and private, local and national, the state and civil society gave space for women's agency (ibid.p.5). In relation to this project, a central idea is that there are gendered norms and possibilities for majority women in the Nordic countries, which are different from the ones women experience in many other regions of the world. Examples are women's role in public life, in parliamentary politics, political representation and women's participation on the labour market, which since the 1970s has reached a greater level than in most other regions of the world (Fiig 2009a; 2009b).

The third consideration concerns the theoretical perspective of intersectionality. I argued with Hancock (2007) above, that a perspective of intersectionality indicates that the analytical focus is broader than a gender perspective and that the relationship between social categories forms an open empirical question (Hancock 2007). In the case of the two Danish news programs, which form the basis of the empirical investigation, there are relatively few sources which are visible minorities; i.e. people of colour or persons belonging to a group of minority population. This indicates, that a focus on 'whiteness' also forms a central analytical focus as well as a focus on visible minorities. As stated above, we know from a study of Danish news media's communication about visible minorities that Danish news media's representation of these minorities contribute to stereotypical images in a range of different ways (Andreassen 2005).

Weldon's discussion of the concept of intersectionality is helpful in that it points at a model ('intersectionality-plus'), which admits the possibility that the ways that social structures affect each other vary over time and space (Weldon 2008:208). Besides, this model of social structure interaction is consistent with the idea that different social structures might have different types of effects in different context (ibid.). Weldon points out that these differences and variations help us identify the distinctive features of particular national constellations of social structure, perhaps linking such structures to particular historic trajectories (ibid.). In relation to Weldon's consideration, a question of the status of the different categories of gender, ethnicity and class is central. Verloo argues that a 'one fits all'-approach to addressing multiple discriminations is based on an incorrect assumption of sameness or equivalence of these social categories connected to inequalities and to the mechanisms and processes that constitute them (2006:2011).

Summing up

The previous paper has sketched a first draft of a research project's theoretical framework by means of three theoretical approaches. The point of departure for the project is first a lack of in depth knowledge concerning news source in Danish news programs in a perspective of gender and minority-majority population. We know from various smaller investigations that there is a bias in the news sources in Danish media in a gender perspective. What we do not know is this bias' precise scoop, nor do we know about the distribution of this bias in more detail concerning gender, majority-minority population and profession. The second point of departure for this project is the application of a perspective of intersectionality in order to get more detailed knowledge on the media than a gender perspective can offer. Existing studies of news selection on (Belgian) TV has applied a gender perspective (Hooghe & De Swert 2009; De Swert & Hooghe 2010). The (presumably) biased news

selection will form the basis for a discussion of democracy, the public sphere and television as a platform for politics and civic culture.

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