Gendering in Political Journalism
A Comparative Study of Russia and Sweden

av

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Abstract


The news media are expected to provide equal space to female and male political actors, promoting the idea of equal access to political power, since they are recognized as a holder of power with a social responsibility to respect gender equality. However, as previous research shows, political news coverage is characterized by so-called “gendered mediation” (Gidengil and Everitt 1999), i.e., gender imbalance, stereotypes, and a lack of discussions about gender inequality. Scholars point to media logic, organization, and individual characteristics of journalists as the main reasons for this pattern, but still very little is known about how and why gendered mediation is practiced and processed in political news.

This dissertation focuses on gendering understood as the perceived imprint of gender on the media portrayal of politics and politicians, as well as the processes by which gendered representations materialize. By applying a perspective of comparative journalism culture studies (Hanitzsch 2007; Hanitzsch and Donsbach 2012), it examines the processes and modes of origin of gendering as they are perceived and experienced by journalists. The study is based on semi-structured interviews with 40 journalists working for the quality press in Russia and Sweden.

The results show that the national culture of political journalism, and the context it is located within, are of crucial importance for understanding gendering and its modes of origin. Gendering may cause problems to the democratic development of society and the position of the quality press in it; however, it also offers a potential for promoting gender equality. The choice of the form of gendering does not fully depend on journalists. It depends on the contextual possibilities for journalists to fulfill the gender-ethical ideal of the quality outlet as long as they need to meet the demands of society and market, and to face the challenges of political communication.

Keywords: gender, gendering, journalists, journalism culture, political journalism, Russia, Sweden.

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