Media and Communication
Open Access Journal | ISSN: 2183-2439
Volume 6, Issue 2 (2018)

Media and Communication between the Local and the Global

Editors

Jessica Gustafsson and Kinga Polynczuk-Alenius

COGITATIO

Media and Communication, 2018, Volume 6, Issue 2
Media and Communication between the Local and the Global

Published by Cogitatio Press
Rua Fialho de Almeida 14, 2º Esq.,
1070-129 Lisbon
Portugal

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Media and Communication (ISSN: 2183–2439)
2018, Volume 6, Issue 2, Pages 145–148
DOI: 10.17645/mac.v6i2.1637

Editorial

Media and Communication between the Local and the Global

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Submitted: 20 June 2018 | Published: 29 June 2018

Abstract
This editorial introduces the thematic issue of "Media and Communication between the Local and the Global". It does so first by presenting the origin of this thematic issue: the *Media, Globalization and Social Change* division at the NordMedia 2017 conference. The thematic issue is then anchored theoretically through discussion of the widely conceived notion of mediation as a technological, symbolic and ethical process—highlighting the interest in how media actors and communication technologies, practices and artefacts mediate between global phenomena and local contexts, which is what unites the contributions to this thematic issue. Last, the final section of this editorial introduces the articles, which coalesce around three broad themes: migration, marginalised communities, and consumption.

Keywords
communication; consumption; global; local; marginalised communities; media; mediation; migration

Issue
This editorial is part of the issue "Media and Communication between the Local and the Global", edited by Jessica Gustafsson (Södertörn University, Sweden) and Kinga Polynczuk-Alenius (University of Helsinki, Finland).

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1. Background

This thematic issue is an outcome of the *Media, Globalization and Social Change* division at the biennial NordMedia conference held in August 2017 and hosted by the Faculty of Communication Sciences at the University of Tampere, Finland. The conference, which has been organised since 1973, brings together media and communication scholars from—and also increasingly outside of—the Nordic countries of Sweden, Denmark, Finland, Norway and Iceland. The general theme for the 2017 conference, "Mediated Realities—Global Challenges", encouraged researchers to ponder the role of the media and communications in contemporary life-worlds, cultures and societies. In particular, it invited scholars to think across the scales of "global" and "local", as well as how global challenges such as financial crisis, climate change and forced migration, were mediated in the Nordic region, and how they impacted on the Nordic welfare states.

The contributions to the *Media, Globalization and Social Change* division embraced this theme, but also expanded upon it. The division covers a wide range of theoretical approaches and empirical areas of study that investigate communication, media cultures, media institutions, ideologies, texts and media consumers from an international, transnational or global perspective. Following these interests, the articles brought together in this thematic issue elaborate upon how global phenomena such as migration, marginalisation and consumption, play out in various local contexts—sometimes confined to and sometimes reaching beyond national borders.

2. Media and Communication between the Local and Global

The claim that media and communication are amongst the critical forces driving the contemporary processes of globalization has become somewhat of a cliché (e.g., Rantanen, 2004; Thompson, 1995; Tomlinson, 1999). As

technologies, media and communication connect their users and recipients to the world and its peoples, both known and unknown (e.g., Silverstone, 1999, 2004). They can also become tools by which individuals, communities and societies may impact upon their lived realities. They may, for example, help the disenfranchised individuals and groups to articulate, reflect on, and find solutions to their experience of marginalisation and exclusion (Gumucio-Dagron, 2005; Jallov, 2012). In the process, they may empower the marginalised subjects and groups to gain more control of decisions concerning their own lives (Mefalopulos, 2005). As practices, discourses and artefacts, media and communication serve to highlight and explicate the link between global processes such as migration, as well as structures such as economic inequalities, and the local realities and everyday lives of the audiences (e.g., Berglez, 2013; Chouliaraki, 2006, 2008a, 2008b). Theoretically, it is possible to discuss all these aspects of media and communication using the concept of mediation.

A globalised world is a world mediated: we get to know distant people and places through media representations more than through direct experience (Chouliaraki, 2006; Silverstone, 1999). Furthermore, direct human contact is increasingly complemented and extended by media and communication technologies (Thompson, 1995). Mediation therefore describes the use of various modes and technologies of communication to transcend time and space (Livingstone, 2009; Silverstone, 1999; Tomlinson, 1999). As such, it is a technical process enabled by the capacity of communication technologies to transmit content across physical distances (Silverstone, 2008).

Mediation however, need not always involve media technologies. It can also be approached as a symbolic process whereby communication provides a terrain for (re)constructing, (re)circulating and (re)consuming meanings and forms within and among societies (McCurdy, 2013). As such, mediation involves an important ethical element: to mediate is to create through communication a sense of immediacy, understood as both proximity and urgency; it is to bridge geographical, social, cultural and moral distance in a bid to create meaningful connections among people, close and distant (Livingstone, 2009; Silverstone, 1999; Tomlinson, 1999).

3. Contributions

While the articles presented in this thematic issue may not explicitly engage with the theory of mediation, they all explore different mediation practices by critically examining the relationship between media and communication on one hand, and phenomena such as migration, development, social change, gender and consumption, on the other. They individually invoke a range of theoretical and methodological approaches, but what unites them is the attention to the mediated interplay between the local and the global, the home and the world, the self, in-group and humanity at large. By investigating this interplay, they tackle the following questions:

- How do global media and communication technologies mediate the lived realities of locally situated individuals?
- How can media and communication help migrants and their close ones to mediate between their current location and the "home" from which they have been physically dislocated?
- How do journalists mediate between global phenomena—particularly forced migration—and local audiences?
- How are the global connections mediated through the discourses and artefacts of consumption?

With those questions in mind, the contributors to this thematic issue consider this interplay within three broad themes: migration, marginalised groups and consumption. Although migration has a history as long as humankind, in recent years we have witnessed an increased level of forced migration. For that reason, four of the contributions to this issue approach the phenomenon of migration from varied perspectives.

Heike Graf's (2018) article "Media Practices and Forced Migration: Trust Online and Offline" examines the use of mobile phones among the recent migrants in Sweden and Germany through the notion of trust derived from the systems theory of Niklas Luhmann. The article suggests that the online sphere, accessible through the phone, helps the migrants connect to and stay in contact with their familiar world from which they are physically removed. However, the smartphone can also function as a substitute for human beings and human contact; using GPS services on one's own smartphone, there is no need to ask a stranger in the host country for directions, thereby avoiding the risks of being met with hostility. The familiar device offers security in an unfamiliar setting, yet it can also impede the establishment of trust in the host society.

In the article titled "Female Bodies Adrift: Violation of the Female Bodies in Becoming a Subject in the Western Media", Tuija Parikka (2018) looks closer at the media representation of the mass harassment of women during the New Year's celebrations in Europe in 2016. She then juxtaposes the interpretation offered by journalists in their news reporting with how the events were perceived and understood by migrants. In doing so, she explores whether and how the body can function as the socially constructed medium for politicizing culturally specific possibilities of becoming a subject.

Markus Ojala and Reeta Pöyhtäri (2018) also approach migration from a journalistic perspective. Their contribution "Watchdogs, Advocates and Adversaries: Journalists' Relational Role Conceptions in Asylum Reporting" examines how journalists in Finland perceive their role in the context of reporting the 'migration crisis'. In line with the social-interactionist approach, the ar-

ticle argues that journalists' role conceptions in this specific case are influenced by the current political context and journalists' interactions with officials, asylum seekers and anti-immigrant publics. Thus, Ojala and Pöyhtäri emphasise that the role conceptions develop in relation to different reference groups.

Elham Atashi (2018) approaches the theme of migration by turning the focus on the Iranian diaspora community. Her contribution, "Iranian Diaspora, Reality Television and Connecting to Homeland", analyses the reality TV show *Befarmaeed Sham*, which is the Iranian diaspora's version of the UK format *Come Dine with Me* that has become popular among the diaspora audience as well as the Iranians living in Iran. The article illustrates how the local adaptation of global reality format can help create a space for the Iranian diaspora to connect to home, engage in national debates and introduce topics previously taboo. The article concludes that the show can potentially influence civic engagement and the identity formation of Iranians back home.

Departing from the thematic of migration and aligning with the theme of marginalised groups, Jessica Gustafsson's (2018) article "Domestic Connectivity: Media, Gender and the Domestic Sphere in Kenya" explores how increased access and use of media technologies has changed Kenyan women's everyday life in the domestic sphere. It argues that media technologies have helped transform the domestic sphere from a secluded place to a connected space where women can get input and interact with the world beyond their immediate surrounding, whilst concurrently fulfilling their domestic duties. Media technologies enable enhanced communication and offer new ideas and perspectives. Yet in order to understand women's ability to implement these in their lives, an intersectionality perspective is needed as factors such as education, income, and rural/urban location not only influence women's access to media, but also how they use media.

The final two articles explore the theme of consumption from different perspectives. Kinga Polynczuk-Alenius' (2018) contribution "The Dialectics of Care: Communicating Ethical Trade in Poland" examines how care is communicatively constructed by Polish ethical trade organizations. Adopting the concept of the dialectics of care, the article argues that the organizations take the "local moral horizons" and personal experiences of their situated audiences into consideration when trying to promote ethical trade. Polynczuk-Alenius identifies two distinct tactics adopted by the organizations when advocating the care for distant producers while simultaneously catering for the interest of the Polish public: linking it to the discourse of product quality, and connecting it to care for oneself, one's family and society. By using these two strategies the organization manage to communicate and raise awareness of global interconnectedness.

Trine Kvidal-Røvik's (2018) article "The Meaning of the Feminist T-Shirt: Social Media, Postmodern Aesthetics, and the Potential for Sociopolitical Change" examines consumer culture as a potential avenue for political or social change. This contribution suggests that it is critical to recognize resistance through consumption as it reaches places that traditional politics rarely managed to reach. Additionally, sociopolitical messages in consumer culture can express counter-hegemonic standpoints, despite operating within neo-liberal (i.e., hegemonic) structures. Social media presents new ways of circulating and spreading these sociopolitical messages and new opportunities for consumers to express their views and opinions about consumer culture.

Acknowledgments

We would like to thank the contributors to this thematic issue for their commitment, the reviewers for providing invaluable feedback, and the editorial office for guidance and support.

Conflict of Interests

The authors declare no conflict of interests.

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COGITATIO

Media and Communication (ISSN: 2183–2439)
2018, Volume 6, Issue 2, Pages 149–157
DOI: 10.17645/mac.v6i2.1281

Article

Media Practices and Forced Migration: Trust Online and Offline

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Submitted: 21 November 2017 | Accepted: 28 May 2018 | Published: 29 June 2018

Abstract

This article explores the relationship between online and offline practices in the special case of forced migration. By applying a central category in social relations, trust/distrust as developed by Niklas Luhmann, this article contributes to the understanding of forced migration in the digital age. It presupposes that, without a strategy of trust, it would be almost impossible to cope with situations of unfamiliarity and uncertainty. By interviewing refugees, the question is in what contexts the refugee recognizes that they can trust (or not). The article concludes that through the combination of on- and offline communication practices, more varied mechanisms for the creation and stabilization of trust are provided. In contexts of unfamiliarity, interpersonal relations with the native inhabitants play an important role in bridging online and offline worlds.

Keywords

media technologies; migration; refugee; systems theory; trust

Issue

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1. Introduction

When Aisha, a woman in her 40s, wakes up, she brews a cup of Arabic coffee and opens Facebook on her smartphone. She scrolls through the latest pictures posted by her daughter studying in Italy and checks her notifications to see whether she has missed a message from her husband, who has traveled to Lebanon to visit his sick father. She writes a short status update to inform her family members and friends that she is feeling well. Her family is dispersed throughout the world. None of her relatives are left in Syria, and only her sick father-in-law could not make the journey out and is stuck in the neighboring country of Lebanon. "When I open Facebook, I feel happy, and when I don't, I close Facebook", she says. On the one hand, she is connected with her family and seems to forget that she is drinking coffee alone and living in exile. After almost four years, she still feels alienated from the country she lives in. The feeling of loneliness disappears at least for a while in the virtual realm of Facebook familiarity. On the other hand, she can control how much bad news she is willing to digest, and if the limits are reached, she leaves her Facebook feed and listens to Arabic music on YouTube and says: "I feel better". For a moment, she seems to forget troublesome news and her everyday-life in a new country that is so different from her former life, before the war, in a big house with a happy and fulfilling social life.

For Aamir, a man in his 20s, the smartphone has become his "best friend", and Dalia, in her 50s, compares her smartphone with "food". Leila, in her 40s, spends all her free time on the Internet. Rihanna, aged 25, frequently uses her smartphone, too: "I use it here for 90% of my day or maybe more. In Syria, I used it only 10%". My interviewees' smartphone use corresponds to a recent German study among refugees from Syria showing that it has considerably increased in the country of asylum compared to usage in the country they left behind (Springer, Karnowski, & Herzer, 2016). Furthermore, in a newspaper article, a refugee claims that he trusts his smartphone "100%" (Wall, 2015).

Based on an interview study, this article explores the relationship between online and offline communication practices in the special case of forced migration. Can we

speak of being connected in the online world, but perhaps disconnected in the offline world? Are there any patterns evolving from online presence that indicate conditions for trust-building offline?

This article assumes that the online/offline distinction has heuristic benefits, despite the growing literature claiming a blurring of boundaries between offline and online worlds (e.g. Deuze, 2012) and arguing against a separation of online and offline realms (Boellstorff, 2012). I do not question the 'reality' of the virtual world as opposed to the 'physical' in offline worlds. Instead, I simply refer to communication with (online) or without (offline) communication technologies in order to make clear the role of media technologies for migrants' (in my case refugees') engagement in their new societies, that is, their building up of trusted relationships in a new geographical place. The relationship between geographical places, that is, the new society and virtual spaces, is of interest here. As Turkle (2011) has shown, frequent media use creates challenges in coping with both online and offline interactions.

2. Forced Migration

To grasp this broad and complex issue of offline/online relationships, the conditions of forced migration have to made clear. In this special case, the involvement in a nationally and culturally different place away from home is something that has been forced on people. My interviewees have described their former life (before the war) as good. As Faris in his early 30s declares, although his parents had already emigrated, he had no intention of leaving the country: "I didn't want to leave Syria. I had a good life, went to university, had a part-time job. And I had a girlfriend. But then the war came". Even for Batoor, aged 27, the decision to leave his country was forced on him. His father and older brother were murdered by the Taliban, and as the now oldest son in his family, his mother and uncle decided to let him escape. "I was happy there, went to school and worked in my uncle's business".

Migration separates a human being from their familiar (offline) world and is often characterized by experiencing several losses, such as the loss of valued social roles, the loss of former life projects, and the loss of intimacy with beloved ones. In the new country, life is different, often involving poverty, inadequate housing conditions, unsatisfactory mastery of one's new life by, e.g., difficulties in finding a job, and problems understanding the new language and culture. The special case of exile is often described as an "unhealable rift forced between a human being and a native place" (Said, 1984, p. 49) or a "discontinuous state of being" (Hannerz, 1996, p. 105). However, especially in the digital age, although physically distant, social contacts can be retained in an effective way. What is often left of a community in a new country is the realm of the online world, that is, communicating with family members, friends, and acquaintances via social networking sites (e.g. Baldassar, 2016). Diminescu (2008) has characterized today's migrants as connected ones, characterized by multi-belongings to territories and networks.

3. The Role of Trust

Especially in situations of uncertainty and risk (Beck, 1986/1992) trust (as well as distrust) in people, or in information disseminated by people and organizations (offline and online) is crucial for meaning production and, more concretely, for making personal decisions such as whether to escape and whether to engage in the new society. It is assumed that, in coping with (offline) situations that are characterized by a lack of knowledge, dangers, intercultural encounters, misunderstandings, stereotypes and so on, strategies of trust and mistrust are of crucial importance. Gillespie et al. (2016) warns, for instance, that a lack of trust "drives refugees towards unofficial, potentially dangerous and exploitative resources" (Gillespie et al., 2016, p. 18). We can go further by saying that a lack of trust in general might lead to feelings of alienation (Luhmann, 2004), which in turn have an impact on the receiving society.

In other words, without a strategy of trust, it would be almost impossible to cope with situations of unfamiliarity and uncertainty. The relationship between online and offline worlds can also be described in this way: presenting oneself as perhaps approachable in the online world but unapproachable in the (new) offline world offers no opportunities for learning to build trusted relationships, and no opportunities for winning trust outside familiar online community relationships. However, social network sites can also be used for presenting oneself as approachable within the new and unfamiliar offline world, and that one places value on what is going on in the new society and shows an interest in seeking trusted relationships.

4. Systems Theoretical Approach to Trust

Here, I want to make use of systems theory[1] as developed by the German sociologist Niklas Luhmann. His book about trust was published as early as 1968 (*Vertrauen. Ein Mechanismus der Reduktion sozialer Komplexität*) and 11 years later was translated into English. He relates the notion of trust to the actant, or in his words, to the "observer". The observer, in our case the refugee, acts in a context, and describes something in one way or the other way, for example whether a person or a source of information is trustworthy or not. This act of describing is what is of interest here. Or, in the

[1] Systems theory is basically a communication theory. To simplify, 'systems' mean a context, that is a construction of the observer, of what belongs to the context and what does not, of what is within the system and what is outside (environment). It is about marking a boundary between what is indicated and what not.

words of constructivism, the reality of, for example, trustworthy information only appears to us, to the observer, through the construction/observation that an observer makes (see e.g. Fuchs, 2001).

Trust, in the broadest sense, is described by Luhmann as “confidence in one’s expectations” (Luhmann, 2004, p. 4), meaning an expectation on the grounds that people and organizations, and also technologies, behave/work in accordance with one’s positive expectations of them. It is the expectation that the other will handle one’s vulnerability in the best way. Or, in other words, that the other will not take advantage of one’s exposure. Here, trust is connected to the perspective of the observer (and not to the thing as such), from which trust is built up, maintained, or refused.

In this approach, trust is seen as a basic fact, even a precondition for social relations, and as a precondition for social life itself. It develops on an interactional field that is influenced by psychological and social contexts, including media-technological contexts, which I am especially interested in. In any trusting relationship, there are two specific parties involved: a trusting party (trustor) and a party to be trusted (trustee).

One can have trusted relations not only with individual people but also with people who are role holders, such as journalists, politicians, social workers, doctors, and so on. One can have generalized trust in institutions or organizations, such as migration departments, employment agencies, newspapers, and hospitals, and also have trust in social systems such as politics, media, and health care. Trusting these organizations means that they function at an “expected level of quality” (Blöbaum, 2016, p. 6). It means that newspapers deliver correct information, and that migration departments decide correctly on asylum requests, and that health care works properly. Trust is also relevant within groups: refugees trust other refugees (or not); social workers trust other social workers (or not), journalists trust other journalists (or not) (Blöbaum, 2016).

However, trust is not identical to trustworthiness or the credibility of information or of people. The distinction between trust and trustworthiness can be understood in this way: the attribution of something/somebody as trustworthy refers to the observer (in our case, the refugee) on the basis of their perception. Building trust is scarcely possible without previous information that can be trusted (or not). Trustworthiness is seen as the “fundamental prerequisite for trust” (Blöbaum, 2016, p. 9) and is, therefore, not identical to trust. Here, we can find the difference between the trustworthiness of something and trust that is understood as a decision to act, and to overcome an element of uncertainty. One has decided to trust someone in order to enable possibilities of action.

Refugees’ mobility is based on individual decisions to trust (or distrust) information and to trust people, organizations, and also states. A decision is based on internal (psychological system) and external (social system) factors and does not mean that it has to be a rational decision or is merely a rational choice. According to Luhmann, decision is a “matter of communication” and is, therefore, a “social event” (Luhmann, 2003, p. 32). As an illustration from my interviews, Batoor says, his mother and uncle made the decision to pay the costs to let him flee. Trust means, in other words, dealing with the future in advance, by deciding to escape in order to find a secure place to live. By ‘pretending’ that they are confident about the future (seeking asylum in Europe), one can overcome feelings of uncertainty. For Batoor, trust in his family’s decision can be seen as a kind of security, as a coping strategy in situations with uncertain futures. The same goes for his mother and uncle: in the act of communicating the decision, they are confident about making their family’s survival more certain.

When one decides to trust, and therefore to act, one takes a risk. As an example, to trust this information and to choose this way and not another for an escape from one’s country means taking risks. The decision to act is based on “a purely internal calculation of external conditions which creates risk” (Luhmann, as cited in Blöbaum, 2016, p. 18). First through their action the refugee becomes vulnerable, not just through trusting communication technology or other information sources. One chooses an action in preference to others in spite of the possibility of being harmed; this is, according to Luhmann, a situation of trust (Luhmann, 2000, p. 97).

More generally, risk and trust are part of a circular process. Trust is involved when a person risks something, and conversely, without risking something one cannot trust. As a consequence, exposing one’s own vulnerability is the instrument for initiating relations of trust (Luhmann, 2004). Trust is only needed in uncertain and risky environments, which means when the possible harm may be greater than the advantages. Trust is not needed in a familiar world. Familiarity means in this context the ‘taken for granted’ character of what exists, that everything functions without risks like it used to. According to Luhmann, familiarity can be understood as “a socially constructed typicality” (Luhmann, 2004, p. 19).

In this sense, to act—on the grounds of trust—rests on motivational sources of a different nature, which in the case of refugees is their personal readiness to take great risks. Building trusted relationships on the basis of trustworthiness of information, of people, of institutions etc. is always directed towards the future, meaning a confidence in one’s expectations, and a confidence in a better life elsewhere in the future. There is always the risk included that other persons or institutions can abuse one’s trust.

5. Interview Study

In order to explore conditions for trust-building, I conducted a pilot study that consists of seven interviews with refugees in Sweden and Germany, conducted in the fall of 2017, and on studies published on refugees’ me-

dia use. All of these people interviewed, aged between 25 and 60 years, three men and four women, have received residence permits for three years in Germany or for five years in Sweden. Some were approached through snowballing, others via my volunteer work with refugees at the Red Cross. With one exception, a young man from Afghanistan, all my interviewees come from Syria. They have lived between 2.5 and 4.5 years in the new country, and currently they do not plan to return to their home countries. Two of my interviewees are unskilled (among them a housewife with a high school diploma), the others have university or college degrees. Five of them are unemployed and seeking jobs, and two have found jobs with the help of their ethnic communities. With one exception, my interviewees have some immediate family members living nearby, that is in the same city or/and the same new country. The interviewees were selected on the basis of being frequent users of the Internet, having received residence permits and studying the language of the country of asylum. In other words, they plan to settle in the new country. All my interviewees were given an alias since they were informed about ensuring informant confidentiality.

The interviews lasted between one and two hours, mostly in cafés and in two cases there were also follow-up interviews in private settings, that is, in the homes of the interviewees Aisha and Batoor. From these interviews especially, I gained a deeper insight in their feelings and thoughts of being a newcomer which has delivered more material for my study.

Mostly, the interviews were conducted in Swedish or English, and in two cases in Arabic with the help of an interpreter. The presence of an interpreter has made the interview more formal and therefore less rich in information. The interviews were recorded and partly transcribed. There was one exception, since it was a three-hour conversational interview about almost 'all and nothing', and I only took notes. I feared that I would influence our open atmosphere in a negative way if I had put a recorder on the table.

In interviewing these people, firstly I wanted to know what they do online; second, what the interrelations between offline and online worlds look like; and finally, whether there are any patterns evolving from online presence that indicate conditions for trust-building in the offline world.

6. Trust in the Digital Age: "Trust in Smartphones"

When studies of trust are carried out, it is necessary to specify what type of trust is referred to. In order to relate the notion of trust to the refugee, the question must address in what contexts the refugee recognizes that they can trust (or not). As I have mentioned above, someone claims to trust their smartphone "100%" requires looking more specifically what this can imply, which I want to explain in the following section.

6.1. Trust in Receiving Useful and Correct Information Online

Trust is here directed towards technical resources such as different applications. Some examples such as GPS and map functions are widely used for safely navigating journeys across land and sea. "In our group, there was always somebody who had a functioning smartphone" as Batoor relates. Locative functions are also useful in the new city, as described in the next section. Trust is also built up in other application software such as language translation programs, which all my interviewees appreciate very much. In situations of seeking a job, job-finding-applications such as "jobbrapido" and "career builder" are used that are often recommended by friends from one's own ethnic community, as my interviewees told me. Generally speaking, people tend to automatically trust sites and sources that are either recommended by people you know, or by reviews and ratings (Metzger, Flanagin, & Medders, 2010). However, after several stereotypical responses such as "Your merits are good but there is no job for you", Aisha feels disappointed about the outcome of these job-finding applications. At the time of our last interview, she had nearly given up trusting them. Batoor tells another story about a life counseling app for managing his mental health. He has built up a trusting relationship in the performance of this product, which he says gives him valuable advice and support.

When asking my interviewees about what news platforms they use, most of them follow news programs from their home countries and also receive information through Facebook (see also Kaufmann, 2018). Swedish or German news channels are not used mostly for language reasons. They have not heard about German and Swedish public broadcasters who broadcast in simpler language especially produced for migrants. In this case, familiar news channels from the home country are prioritized. This corresponds to a study claiming that the official websites of the receiving country targeting migrants are seldom used (Felton, 2015). It applies especially to those people who generally lack trust in political and media institutions because of their experiences from their home countries (Felton, 2015).

A trusted relationship with the performance of a product means that a kind of continuity is expected, a continuity of reliable information from news channels, counseling programs, and language and map applications. Or, in the case of Aisha, who is disappointed by the outcome of some software applications, she considers no longer using them. To build up trusted relationships with new information sources is more challenging when such a relationship has not been recommended by others, or if one already has a distrustful relationship with these sources because of experiences from the past. Furthermore, trust in applications involves different levels of risk: using a job-finding-application is perhaps less risky than a locative map function when navigating a risky journey.

6.2. Trust in Managing the Others' Perceptions of Oneself

A study (Kim & Lingel, 2016) that explores newcomers in urban spaces highlights another function of smartphones besides delivering information: As a newcomer says, "I rely on mobile technology. And on avoiding having to ask some person, any person on the spot" (p. 226). This was also the case when Batoor arrived in Germany. He explains his frequent use of locative technology as follows: "I lost my confidence when I arrived in Germany". He asked a German for directions and got a very angry response: he had better leave, because there is no place for refugees. He felt surrounded by mistrust in his new context. "Now, I'd rather stick to my mobile" when asking how to get somewhere. In this case, using locative technology has the purpose of hiding one's lack of spatial knowledge and, therefore, one's status as a newcomer. A smartphone has the benefit of the user becoming 'invisible' in urban spaces, of behaving like all the other people, by paying attention to a smartphone instead of asking a stranger for directions (see also Witteborn, 2015). Furthermore, "with a smartphone, I feel normal" Batoor says. He seems to merge with the society; he does the same thing as all the other people around him. He is part of the society, and he belongs to it, at least on the surface. He feels he is managing others' perceptions of himself.

Here, the smartphone is directed at replacing the human being with a technological product that the user is familiar with, and, therefore, it seems to deliver more security in an unfamiliar environment. A smartphone cannot disappoint one's expectations, at least not in the same way. If errors occur, the consequences are not so far-reaching: one can change the battery, the application software, or the entire smartphone. One will not lose confidence in all mobile devices. To handle a loss of confidence in one's own expectations about the new country as a better place to live in is much more demanding. After 2.5 years in Germany, Batoor says, he has gradually gained his self-confidence again. However, his first interpersonal (offline) experiences have left traces which influence his behavior both in the online and offline world. If he can avoid direct contact with German people in a situation of risk and uncertainty and can replace this with an electronic device, he does that.

Acting on the basis of a decision to trust technologies also means establishing a dependent relationship with the trusted object. If, for example, a refugee trusts communication technology and takes this as a prerequisite for action, access to a phone as well to the Internet becomes vital, as described above, the smartphone is similar to "food" (Dalia) or is the "best friend" (Aamir). There are two forms of risk that can be distinguished. One of these forms relates to the anticipation that perhaps technology might not be working, or that access to the Internet or even the phone cannot be achieved. When Batoor was without his phone for two weeks because it was stolen, he borrowed a tablet from his friend to at least keep in contact with his family and to have access to his life counseling app. But during this time, he felt as "if I lost a leg. I was not complete". The other form of risk is that of replacing people, or in other words, direct contact with people, with an electronic device.

The smartphone as a multi-functional device has become an essential tool of managing social relations. Being dependent on a smartphone is a recognized phenomenon for groups other than refugees. However, perhaps, since this is in a "discontinuous state of being" (Hannerz, 1996, p. 105), smartphones seem to offer some kind of continuity and familiarity.

6.3. Trust in People Available through Social Network Sites

If changes in the familiar offline world occur, as with migrants, the conditions for developing trust in human relations and confidence in the new situation of the offline world are affected. Trust can be lost and has to be developed anew. The refugee lacks familiarity with the new societal context and, lacks, for instance, an understanding of the expectations of others and thus the precondition for establishing relations of trust. For example, Batoor, who "lost his confidence" when he arrived in Germany, had an expectation of the new society that everyone would welcome refugees and give them the necessary help. This also refers to an image that was popular among many refugees arriving in Germany and that is described as "positively distorted" in the study by Emmer, Richter and Kunst (2016).

In other words, for refugees, the new societal context is generally unfamiliar, but the social network sites remain the same. Familiar interpersonal connections can easily be maintained in the online world. There is a great deal of literature about how migrants in transit and destination countries can maintain "network capital" through access to the Internet (e.g. Madianou & Miller, 2012; Georgiou, 2013; Lee & Katz, 2015; Polson, 2016). They can easily follow information and communication from back home, can have continuous contact with their family members "where once migration has truncated it" (Baldassar, 2016, p. 156) and sustain and develop ethnic community relations with people in their country of origin as well as in their destination country. Physical proximity is no longer a precondition for the maintenance of significant social ties (see also Robertson, Wilding, & Gifford, 2016). Digital media technologies have thus changed the mode of coping with the unfamiliar.

So, if familiarity is central "to accommodate oneself to the future in a trustful or distrustful manner" (Luhmann, 2004, p. 19), a communicative approach to the familiar online world seems to be reasonable and expected in order to cope with the new surroundings. Recent research has, for instance, shown that knowing who to trust often leads people to seek help in their own communities from those they regard as reliable sources, which is based on previous experiences. Harney (2013) notes,

for example, that fears and uncertainties are managed by mobilizing personal online networks. In other words, the trustworthiness of the familiar online environment seems to be a of great importance in coping with the new life.

For all my interviewees, most of their Internet use is dedicated to maintaining interpersonal contacts (this is also confirmed by a study by Emmer et al., 2016), that is, mostly with friends and relatives from their home countries or with friends from their ethnic community in the new country. When asking my interviewees whether there are native inhabitants among their Facebook friends, only Dalia nods and shows me her two Swedish Facebook friends on her Facebook site. They are "very friendly employment officers", she explains. Following her new Swedish friends gives her both language training and some insights into the life of people outside her own ethnic community.

These online community structures can also promote/support the inner security or self-confidence necessary for the readiness to trust. Being active on social network sites they feel familiar with can increase personal trust, that is, trust in "in one's own self-presentation and in other people's interpretation of it" (Luhmann, 2004, p. 40). Batoor, who reveals his loss of self-confidence, says later in the interview that he has partly regained it through his own ethnic community which he is active in. He has Twitter, Facebook and Instagram accounts where he receives recognition and approval from his community.

This corresponds to a study by Godin and Doná (2016) about young Congolese people in the UK using social media to show their knowledge in what is 'really' going on in their homeland. They become a voice in the public debate, which has helped them to gain self-confidence. These refugees find hope in social network sites and not in the physical place where they feel "stuck" (Twigt, 2017). Without hope of a better future, one loses confidence in acting in an attempt to change one's situation.

Using the familiar online world to 'recover' is an important step but must be supported by the offline world if trusted relationships are to be established. In the case of Batoor, he has received refugee status, and can attend language classes and integration courses. Now, he is able to rebuild a 'normal' life—free from merely waiting. Hence, he feels more capable of handling possible disappointments. His process of regaining self-confidence is an outcome of a learning process which is based on his motives and experiences, that is, on internal (psychological) and external (online/offline) conditions.

7. Online–Offline Relationship

In stressing the possibilities of Internet access for maintaining a familiar world, there are also risks attached. Scholars have, for example, interpreted massive online presence as "encapsulating" (Jansson, 2011) or as "settlement 'escapes'" as described in the case of young adults with refugee backgrounds in Australia (Gifford & Wilding, 2013). The frequent use of social network sites, which, according to boyd and Ellison (2007), primarily supports pre-existing social relations rather than establishing new ones, has a special impact on migrants. This is confirmed by a recent study of Syrian refugees that concludes that "refugees feel more connected to their home than to the host community". However, they "see value in contacts with locals" which they hope to develop with the help of language apps, for instance (Springer et al., 2016).

Being included in the online world can support exclusion from social connections within the offline world. Or, in the words of Gifford and Wilding, there is a problem of: "being an insider in a virtual world ... and being an outsider in the real world" (2013, p. 569). Scholars are convinced that there is a relationship between extensive presence within the online world and integration processes in the offline world (e.g. Alencar, 2017) and that integration processes for immigrants may be delayed. However, more research is needed.

The scope for developing relations of trust and also distrust in the offline world is generally enhanced by being aware of the growing interrelation between online and offline environments, and of "a growing seamlessness of interrelations between digital and face-to-face communication" (Polson, 2015, p. 632) in meaning making in general and in building trust in particular. How to initiate trusted relations depends on the communication situation (see e.g. Smets & Kate, 2008), and it can be assumed that risk-taking and confidence in one's own expectations are perceived differently in online and offline milieus (Blöbaum, 2016, p. 18).

A study of social media use of refugees and integration in the Netherlands (Alencar, 2017) states that social contacts offline are especially preferred when trying to obtain reliable information about important societal fields such as the labor market and education system (Alencar, 2017, p. 13). As it also has turned out in my interviews, offline contacts are essential when seeking a job, which not only includes the employment agencies, but also people who can arrange contacts with potential employers. Faris for example reveals that his dream is to work as a security officer. In order to receive reliable information, he went to the employment agency to discuss his chances. Here, in offline contacts, it seems to be easier to recognize that a person is trustworthy and can deliver reliable information. As it has turned out in my interviews and is also confirmed by the study by Emmer et al. (2016, p. 51), interpersonal information online is viewed as the most trustworthy type, and interpersonal contacts are seen as being essential for bridging offline and online worlds.

In coming into face-to face contact with locals privately, Rihanna tells that she and her husband joined an NGO initiative "Kompis Sverige" (Friend Sweden) in order to learn more about Swedish people and Swedish

culture. “We met a nice couple. They have invited us to their house and we have invited them back. It was nice but it was already two years ago”, Rihanna states. Offline contacts seem to demand more engagement from both sides and seem to make it harder to sustain a relationship. As Luhmann claims, according to the offline world: “Whoever wants to win trust must take part in social life and be in a position to build the expectations of others into his own self-presentation” (Luhmann, 2004, p. 62). This takes time and demands offline encounters which can be accompanied or even initiated by online communications.

Social network sites can also be used to present oneself as approachable in the new unfamiliar environment, not only for one’s own community. I assume that social network sites can make it easier to building self-presentation skills that tie in with the new environment, and that therefore can lower a refugee’s threshold of entering a new society. However, this also implies that one knows what is going on in the new country. It was striking in my interviews that news about the new country was primarily retrieved through the filter of the subject’s own community and not directly from Swedish or German news media. In the interviews, it became obvious that most of the information the interviewees were interested in and the contacts they maintain are connected to their respective home countries. Especially for those who have immediate family members in their home countries, their thoughts are often with their relatives, and the space for dealing with their new life is limited. Others, who have started a new life together with a family that is physically near and can regularly meet, seem to have better preconditions for presenting themselves as approachable within their new society. For example, Rihanna, living together with her husband and newborn son, is joining several employment programs in order to make her education more compatible with the challenges of the labor market.

8. Conclusions: The Janus Face of the Smartphone

Trust is, according to Luhmann, generally seen as a resource to be able to act under conditions of uncertainties and risks, and specifically as a decision to act in the light of trust or even distrust. Applying this to the conditions of today means here adding a digital, online dimension to the process of deciding to act in a trustful or distrustful manner.

On the one hand, it seems to be easier to develop relations of trust (or distrust) online. The online world connects to a familiar world and offers some kind of continuity. It makes it easier to make solid risk evaluations through easy access to knowledge and other’s experiences. In other words, my interviewees have more possibilities to build trusted relationships. However, online resources are accessed selectively, and if one has learned to stay within one’s own community, the scope of gaining experiences outside the community is limited.

This means, on the other hand, that certain other possibilities for trust-building can be excluded from consideration. The familiarity of the community can, therefore, also hamper trust building in an unfamiliar world. Always keeping up to date with what is going on in one’s own ethnic community leaves little time for other things. Access to it is easy and distraction is, if so desired, quickly achieved. We know, based on the research literature, that technology use can “both facilitate and hamper individuals’ engagement with unfamiliar environments” (Kim & Lingel, 2016, p. 231) and can segregate and connect communication spaces.

Blöbaum (2016) claims that, under the conditions of on- and offline practices, the stabilization of trust is affected and, perhaps, its “shelf life” is reduced. Trust can easily be lost as the result of changed communication environments and has to be developed anew. This can also mean that old (dis)trusted relationships can be changed. The often-described distrust of refugees in state institutions originating from the past (Felton, 2015; Gillespie et al., 2016) is something I have not encountered in my interviews. There was, instead, a kind of disappointment expressed about employment agencies that cannot offer jobs, or about migration authorities that work too slowly. Here at least, my interviewees expected a certain level of quality and, hence, have trusted these institutions so far. It is too early, however, to speak of distrust regarding these institutions.

To summarize, through the combination of on- and offline communication practices, more varied mechanisms for the creation and stabilization of trust and even distrust can be provided. It ultimately depends on internal conditions, the motives and experiences of the refugee to use digital media technologies for building-up trusted relationships in the offline world. However, trusted offline relationships can be supported by external conditions, that make these possibilities visible. It became obvious from the interviews that interpersonal relations, both online and offline, play an important role in seeking and maintaining trust. Hence, supporting interpersonal, meaning intercultural contacts in both the online and offline world can improve the scope of experiences of both groups, of newcomers and natives. However, it needs further research to explore under what circumstances digital communication technologies can hamper or enable engagement with the new society.

Acknowledgments

I thank my reviewers for their useful comments on an earlier version of this article.

Conflict of Interests

The author declares no conflict of interests.

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Media and Communication (ISSN: 2183–2439)
2018, Volume 6, Issue 2, Pages 158–167
DOI: 10.17645/mac.v6i2.1278

Article

Female Bodies Adrift: Violation of the Female Bodies in Becoming a Subject in the Western Media

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Submitted: 21 November 2017 | Accepted: 14 June 2018 | Published: 29 June 2018

Abstract
This article focuses on how the violation of female bodies in the case of mass harassment of women is rendered intelligible by the Western media and the refugees. Violation of female bodies is approached as a site for politicizing possibilities of becoming a subject in the Western media. Informed by Deleuzian notion of "becoming" and the subjectivation of the refugees, I argue that the understanding of "violation" is a central component in contributing to possibilities of becoming affirmed as a subject in the Western media. Empirical material subjected to critical text analysis includes a key text form the Finnish daily newspaper *Helsingin Sanomat* and refugee interviews. The analysis suggests that the repression of irreducible conceptions of "violation," and the subsequent erasure of the uncertainty of a "self" in the process of becoming, yields to offering possibilities of becoming primarily in Western terms and the affirmation of Western ideological certainty in understanding mass harassment of European women by the refugees.

Keywords
body; mass harassment; media; refugees; subjectivity

Issue
This article is part of the issue Media and Communication between the Local and the Global, edited by Jessica Gustafsson (Sodertorn University, Sweden) and Kinga Polynczuk-Alenius (University of Helsinki, Finland).

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1. Introduction

New Year's Eve celebrations in 2016 were interrupted by an escalating panic caused by women's experiences of becoming a target of mob sexual assaults in various cities in Europe. Mass harassment of European women, or "taharrus gamae"[1] by the migrants from Northern Africa and Arab countries has resulted in a heightened need for a discourse to construct an interpretation regarding the potential emergence of "sexual terrorism". The violated female body could no longer be imagined as the one "over there" in the Middle East in need of rescue, but "here" in the West as the body which becomes impacted by culture in previously undefined terms. The traditional discursive binaries of the West proved an untenable framework of thinking within which to understand the violation of the female body in the West.

The mediation of the violation of the female body is here approached as a site for politicizing possibilities of becoming as subjects, namely pertaining to the discursive preconditions under which a subject can emerge in highly inflammatory situations. Here, I theorize the connection between the Deleuzian (1995) notion of "becoming" and the subjectivation of the refugees as a process whereby a "self" is under construction by the Western media and argue that rendering "violation" intelligible is a central component in contributing to possibilities of becoming a subject in the Western media. The flexibility of the Western media to reimagine the preconditions of becoming a subject became tested in the mass harassment cases. The empirical material included in this article consists of a key text from the Finnish daily newspaper *Helsingin Sanomat* (HS), as well as the refugee interpretations of the mass harassment covered by the

[1] Mass harassment of women, or "taharrus gamae", is here used as an empirical term referring to the harassment of women by groups of men. The term and the phenomenon are subjected to politicizing, or contestation of meaning concerning an issue (Fraser, 2013), by the media.

Western media. Without the discourse of the previously defined "Other", phenomenon of mass harassment can only be poorly understood. Thus, the aim of the article is to articulate irreducible conceptions of "violation" in acknowledgment of the contemporary uncertainty in understanding mass harassment of women in the West.

In the following, I explore the theoretical connections between subjectivation, bodies and "becoming". I then describe the method of collecting and analyzing the empirical data and subject the key case from HS and the refugee interviews to critical text analysis.

2. Bodies in Becoming a Subject

In the context of Europe, the media has traditionally been assessed for its biased representations of migrants who are portrayed as invaders, aliens, or criminals—in short, as a social problem (Binotto, 2010; Bond, Bonsaver, & Faloppa, 2010; Bruno, 2010). In such portrayals, the media has resorted to identifying foreigners as the enemy and has functioned as the site of social control and the arbitrator of normalcy. When such biased representations align themselves with right-wing agendas (Bond et al., 2010), the media often contributes to the reproduction of relationships of power and racist views (Campani, 2001). For example, in Finland, immigration and Islam merged in the media, especially in 2008 when the right-wing True Finns started to become more popular. Since then, heated debates about multiculturalism, or lack thereof, have been extensively presented by the national media. Many of these debates have focused on honor killings and rapes, resulting in the association of violence and criminality with refugees and Muslims in general (Eide, 2010).

While public discussion connecting gendered violence with "race and ethnicity", in Keskinen's view (2011), is not as polarized in Finland as in some other European countries, rapes of Finnish women by migrant men have resulted in the reproduction of an understanding of migrant male sexuality in particular as threatening. Similarly, many others (Boulila & Carri, 2017; De Hart, 2017; Jazmati & Studer, 2017; Pirani & Smith, 2016) point out the tendencies of public discussion to employ the notions of migrant masculinity as a threat to European women, often in close connection with migration policy debates.

Considering the overall prevalence of criminality discourse in framing the migrants, mass harassment of women by migrants and refugees tests the functioning of democratic media discourses for their capacity to make sense of the complexity of mass harassment as a form of criminality whereby the violation of female bodies becomes negotiated anew. The human body is, after all, the oldest of media, and as such, also a medium of culture (Kraidy, 2013). As a medium of culture, the relationship between the body and culture is often viewed as reciprocal (Durham, 2011). The body is impacting and impacted by culture or shaping and being shaped by culture. The "materiality is the grip of culture on the body" (Bordo, 2003, p. 16, as cited in Durham, 2011) through which culture becomes mediated as culture "takes hold" of a body. The "self" becomes created through such subject positions, or subjectivities, as an embodied experience of culturally specific ways of talking about bodies (Durham, 2011, p. 56). Through the violation of female bodies in mass harassment cases, the bodies function as the socially and culturally constructed medium for politicizing possibilities of becoming a subject.

The Deleuzian notion of "becoming" (Deleuze 1995; May, 2003, p. 144), rather than being-as-difference or identities, serves as a theoretical point of departure in understanding difference in itself. Deleuze invites us to imagine difference as a *state:* "instead of something distinguished *from* something else, imagine something that distinguishes itself" (Deleuze, 1995, p. 28, italics added). Difference, then, should not be defined in terms of exclusion, as in an object distinguishing itself from another object by negation; such understanding of difference presumes a pre-constituted identity (Deleuze, 1995, pp. 49–50).

In May's interpretation, "difference lies beneath and within the passing identities to which it gives rise" (2003, p. 144). From this perspective, differences are perceived not in terms of oppositions, as in Subject and its Other. Thus, whenever "bound by a limitation or an opposition", Deleuze invites us to ask what such a situation presupposes in limiting the world of infinite possibilities of becoming (1995, pp. 50–51, 56–57). Instead of reducing difference to an opposition, we should observe difference as *differing* beyond preconstituted identities that seek to establish limits to the underlying realm of "disparateness".

As the refugees not only claim a material presence in the host countries as groups of people but are also subjected to a constitution of a "self" by the media, "being" a refugee here pertains not only to crossing geographic boundaries but also to discursive borders in the context of the public sphere. Hence, central questions to be asked in this context are: how is "violation", in violation of the female bodies, rendered intelligible in Western media and by the refugees, and subsequently, what kinds of embedded possibilities of becoming a subject through tensions inflicted on and through the body are enabled for women and the refugees by the media? What are the underlying discursive preconditions for a subject to become in this context?

From Deleuze's perspective, deciding problems and affirming differences is a political act; in this process, negation only captures a shadow of a problem, and "is always a reaction, a distortion of a true agent or actor" (1995, p. 268). Decisions regarding the issue of "violation" in the media mark the becoming of an affirmed subject, however distorted that may be.

As almost every nation has non-citizens in their territory who are affected by the ways issues are identified, defined, and mediated, the legitimacy and efficacy of the

public sphere, in Fraser's view (2007), should be guaranteed by the all-affected principle which requires native citizens to include any affected parties in the public deliberation process, perhaps to acknowledge the multiplicities of possible meanings underlying an issue in the Deleuzian sense.

To address the questions highlighted above, I begin by describing the methodological process undertaken to select and analyze all empirical data, including the key media text and the refugee interviews.

3. Introduction to the Methodological Background and the Empirical Data

While this study is predominantly qualitative, a general quantitative overview of the mass harassment debate in the main Finnish daily newspaper HS[2] at large was conducted. The purpose of this preliminary step was to get a broad understanding of the scope and content of the mass harassment debate in HS, and primarily to identify key moments in reporting in order to select the key case for closer qualitative analysis.

To collect data on HS coverage of mass harassment cases in Europe over the New Year of 2016, I used the search term "mass harassment" which brought up Cologne and Helsinki cases. Each observation, all from HS, was coded based on location and time: "over there", (12) "over here" (10) or "in-between" (7), between December 31, 2015 and January 23, 2016. Because HS covered the events in Cologne differently from the ones in Helsinki, "location" was included in the coding frame as a variable. In "over there" cases HS reported on mass harassment in Cologne without references to Finland. In "over here" cases HS reported on local (Finnish) investigations on mass harassment in Helsinki. "In-between" reports addressed the factual and/or thematic connection between the events in the context of the two locations. HS reports on Cologne events were typically published in the section for foreign news, whereas HS reports on Helsinki events were domestic, city news, or editorials. The study's time frame excluded reporting which occurred after the immediate news cycle following the events, such as any reports published later on over the course of the spring and summer.

All HS reports on mass harassment were closely read through several times to achieve a general thematic understanding of the coverage of mass harassment discussion at large. Based on descriptive analysis of the coverage, the key moment in the coverage of the events in which politicizing the violation of the female body was identified was intense. The main article "'Sexual Harassment is not a Tradition or a Ritual'—According to an Expert, a Distorted Conception of Mass Harassment is Spreading in Europe". (Huusko, 2016) was first published on January 12, 2016, and republished a day later, now titled "The Goal of Mass Harassment is to Isolate Women". This text is the main story to bridge "over there" and "over here" in order to create a space for an "in-between" interpretation in which experts render mass harassment as a form of violation of the female body intelligible in the Western context. Rapidly circulating beliefs regarding "taharrus gamae" on social media prompted the HS to engage in the expert clarification of the nature of mass harassment beyond merely fact-based reporting at a decisive moment in the news cycle.

This key text is subjected to critical text analysis and, as such, grounded in a cultural analysis of the cultural presuppositions it upholds, and the subject positions it thus comes to affirm, through rendering the issue of violation of the female bodies in the context of mass harassment intelligible in the West.

As the Western media has been extensively criticized for its circulation of Othering discourses of the Middle East (Culcasi, 2012; Falah, 2005; Halim & Meyers, 2010; Hedge, 2011; Parikka, 2015; Pippert, 2003; Said, 1997), this media case is subjected to discussion by the refugees who are vastly affected by the public deliberation of this issue. Their interpretations of the violation of the female body complement the media analysis in this context for how culture shapes the violation of the body.

Thus, one female participant and three men were included in the study. The female participant was from Iran, 24 years old, and was interviewed on July 8, 2016, in Tampere, Finland. The three men, aged 39 years, 38 years, and 27 years, all from Iraq, were interviewed on July 20, 2016, at the reception center for the refugees in Lieksa, Finland. The interviewees were selected based on willingness to participate; a call for participants was announced at the local reception center by Director Tomi Martikainen, and the three Iraqi men volunteered to be interviewed. Similarly, a call for interviewees was circulated through Finnish Immigration Service, Migri, in Tampere, and was responded to by a female migrant from Iran.[3]

All four interviewees identified themselves as Muslims, although the woman was not a believer in her faith. She had arrived in Finland in 2013, married a Finn in 2015, and divorced him a year later. She had studied computer engineering in Iran and later graduated from a professionally oriented university in Finland. The woman, like her siblings, left Iran with the permission of her "open-minded" father who had also wished to leave because "open-minded families like these don't really believe in living there because the government is so strict" (F24). Yet the father, to his regret, never left.

The three men had all arrived in Europe either through Greece, before traveling on to Finland, or through the city of Tornio, in the North of Finland, dur-

[2] HS, as the largest Finnish daily newspaper and as an example of Western media, is included in this research project for its definition power in the context of politicizing mass harassment in Finland.

[3] Regardless of the difference of her status as a migrant, her interview is used in this context due to its relevant contribution to the same issues that the refugees coming from Iraq are discussing. While the number of in-depth interviews conducted is relatively small, the interviewing process reached its saturation point in regards to addressing the key questions at hand.

ing the peak year of refugee flows in 2015. The men were high school graduates, all married with wives and children in Iraq with whom they kept in touch by calling them through Skype, Viber, or by messaging. The circumstances for leaving their country of origin were much harsher for the men than the woman. For one of them (M39), the journey took him through Jordan, Turkey, Greece, Macedonia, Serbia, Croatia, Slovenia, Austria, Germany, Denmark, and Sweden, prior to his arrival in Finland. The ruthlessness of war culture for him consisted of having been betrayed by a member of Al-Qaeda, posing as his fellow worker at the construction site for Abu Ghraib, which he was building in collaboration with the Americans. This ultimately led to him being kidnapped by Al-Qaeda: "I lost my life then".

The other man (M38), a private security company employee and translator for the US army, had to escape a clan conflict when "another kind of Muslim, Shi'a, asked me to give my daughter for his son…[so] I refused because she was only 13 years old, and Shi'a rules, it is okay that the girl is 10 years old, 11 years old, it is not a problem….I want my daughters to finish their education and to be something important like a doctor or an engineer….After university, they can choose if they want to marry or not".

The third man (M27), a translator for the British in the oil city Al Basra, was aspiring to be a nurse in Finland and had volunteered to help retired people in need in Lieksa. He left Iraq because, having worked with the British, the clan "gave me a paper to fire me from the clan, and this is Iraq, this is our culture, if you are fired from the clan, no one can protect you…not even the government".

During meetings with the interviewees, any acts of influencing their views were avoided while the semi-structured interviews were conducted. Similarly, regarding ethnographic sensibilities (Madison, 2005), I intervened as little as possible as they spoke in a narrative form. As a result, they each decided how they chose to frame themselves beyond the most obvious demographic questions, such as name, age, faith, education, country of origin, and their refugee journeys. Beyond the basic background information, reasons for leaving Iraq or Iran and initial impressions of Finland were highlighted. Other issues of interest included the role of media in becoming a refugee, their media use and media criticism in general, as well as reflections on the mass harassment of women on the New Year's Eve 2016, covered by HS. In addition to the HS case, I asked the interviewees to also comment on the case of mass harassment and killing of Farkhunda Malikzada in Kabul, in 2015. Farkhunda Malikzada became a victim of a mob assault, and ultimately killing, having been falsely accused of burning pages of the Quran. This incident was recorded by participants and bystanders by using their cell phones, posted on social media, and later remediated by *The New York Times*, adjacent to an article, "Flawed Justice after a Mob Killed an Afghan Woman". This case has been analyzed as a media text elsewhere (Parikka, in press) and is only approached here through the interviews. Revisiting this case in this context from the perspective of the refugees is motivated by the inability of the Western media to render the violation of the female body intelligible beyond the construction of it as "incomprehensible" in this case. The refugees' interpretations of it and the New Year's Eve mass harassment case are included for their empirical and heuristic value in making sense of the phenomenon.

When introducing the media cases to the interviewees, I asked them for their views on the violation of the female bodies in conjunction with each of the cases. Here, I will analytically only focus on the interpretations of the violation although each interview as a whole, recorded and transcribed word-by-word as texts, extended from one to almost three hours, and covered a wider range of issues. The transcripts were initially closely read through several times for thematic understanding of the material. Subsequently, analytical attention was focused on sections where the interviewees discussed the two media cases, and more closely, on references, such as hitting, burning, raping, killing, as being constitutive of "violation", which was often empirically framed by defining rights to the female body and its protection (e.g., covering). Similarly, to the critical text analysis of the HS text, the analysis of the interviews as texts places an emphasis on the cultural presuppositions in the service of affirming a "self" through the violation of the female body. The findings emanating from the critical text analysis of the HS case and the interviews cannot be generalized to the refugee and migrant population or media at large due to the small number of cases included here.

Next, I begin the analysis of the empirical data by describing the broader HS coverage of New Year's Eve 2016 mass harassment events first, followed by a critical text analysis of the HS article ("'Sexual Harassment is not a Tradition'...").

4. Undoing Western Media: From "Taharrus Gamae" to Sexual Harassment of Women in Becoming a Subject

In the HS reporting of mass harassment of women at large, topics ranged from preventative measures taken in Finland prior to New Year's Eve, reporting of the New Year's Eve events in Cologne, investigation into the potential connection between the two, to the emergence of contradictory information regarding the number and nature of harassment incidents in Helsinki. The number of the cases in the entire sample is 29 in total with the following distribution: "over there" in Cologne (12), "over here" in Helsinki (10), and in-between the two (7).

A close reading of HS cases addressing harassment in Cologne demonstrates that there are two primary positions for the harassed women and the male migrants: harassed women are predominantly characterized as victims of mass harassment which is set forth by descriptions of them as crying, anxious, and groped women who recount their personal experiences of the events of

the evening. The male migrants, as perpetrators of harassment, are in several accounts described as drunken masses of foreign men of Northern African or Arab origin and rendered voiceless. According to Jazmati and Studer (2017), a large part of German and other European press reproduced the colonial discourse of "wild North African men" who sexually threaten white European women. In HS, none of the migrants were cited for comments, nor did anyone come forward as a representative of them.

At the onset of HS coverage, the unusually slow media response both in Cologne and Helsinki to the events was reported on by HS, and accusations of deliberate delays emerged. This served as a focal point for bridging harassment cases in Cologne with those in Helsinki: was the lengthy silence regarding the events in Cologne, and extensive police reporting in Helsinki, potentially acting as a political weapon for or against the refugees? HS claims that the news value of the events in Helsinki was limited to the communication coming from the police. Hence, communication from the police set the dominant frame for any subsequent reporting on both cases. Such reporting strives to separate facts from interpretations. This framing was disrupted by remarks from a police officer who referred to the harassment cases as "a new phenomenon in the history of sexual crimes" (Manner, 2016a)—a comment which resulted in contradictory and confusing statements regarding the Helsinki events thereafter. A notable feature of "over here" reporting is the dominant presence of the voices of the police and reporters over any other, including politicians. Interpretations are rarely articulated, with the exception of an Iraqi reporter. The reporter refers to the frustration of drunken young men whose asylum applications have been denied, and who begin to commit sexual crimes (Manner, 2016b).

While the style of reporting remains predominantly cautious and reserved in HS, the newspaper made a decision, as a response to social media flow regarding the issue, to further politicize the violation of the female bodies in the context of the story "'Sexual Harassment is not a Tradition'..." which is here subjected to closer critical text analysis.

The article was motivated by a need to address the fear of spreading of "taharrus gamae". "Spreading" suggests the potential discursive dilution of Arab-Europe boundaries, as the "game" is feared to become played upon the female bodies by the refugees in Europe. Along with this "game" and the threat of terrorism, fear, in Melotti's view (2016), is returning to Western countries in general.

How the violation of the female bodies should be understood, with the emerging subject positions, in this HS text is grounded on the rejection of the possibility of non-Western interpretations of "violation." The article claims that the more correct interpretation of the attacks is, rather, that they are sexual harassment or sexual violence. "An understanding of taharrush gamae, circulating in the European media, is a misunderstanding....It is not a ritual or a specific sexual harassment tradition. It is an extreme form of sexual harassment and sexual violence". As such, it is not to be conceived as "planned and organized harassment of women, which is spreading to Europe with the refugees from Arab countries".

Although the article notes that organized and political mass harassment in Egypt is a well-known phenomenon, exemplified by the political nature of mob harassment attacks and rapes during the stepping down of Hosni Mubarak in Cairo in 2011, the increase in sexual harassment of women has occurred in several countries and can be attributed to social, political, cultural, as well as military factors but not religious ones: "large discrepancies between the EU countries can be explained by legal and cultural differences. Different countries have different understanding of what is conceived as sexual harassment....The culture of sexual harassment in the Arab countries cannot be explained by Islam, because commonality of harassment varies between Muslim countries". The HS text refers to the phenomenon of harassment that extends "everywhere" from Egypt, Sweden, and Iraq to Finland as top countries in terms of harassment experienced by women, in that order. The replacement of the notion of a "mass harassment game" with the concept of "sexual harassment/sexual violence", through the establishment of a cultural limitation imposed on any possible Islamic influences of how the "violation" should be rendered intelligible, gives rise to the subjectivation of the refugees and the violated women in ways that are more recognizable within the Western domestic violence discourse. As Bern points out, victimization of women is particularly typical of domestic violence discourses which sidestep the responsibility of the abusers or problems regarding the "social and political context that tolerates and fosters this violence" (2004, pp. 2–3).

Within this discourse, an intelligible rendering of a refugee subject pertains to the reduction of him to Western maleness through his assimilation into the Western drinking culture "over here", with its embedded understanding of maleness as the same: "It seems that [the men] went there to have fun but the situation got out of control....Understanding that harassing women when drunk is fun is of course completely wrong. One should not be naïve and think that it would be acceptable among the migrants either" (Huusko, 2016). Through the mediation of the Western drinking cultures, Middle Eastern maleness can fuse with that of a Western man, and become universalized, "like us"; their behavior is condemned as the behavior of drunken Western men harassing women is condemned, and becoming a victim is understood through risks associated with drunken men who act out of control. The article finds blaming women highly problematic, yet is rendered intelligible on the very same notion it is critical of: sexual harassment of women due to their presence among drunken men in public spaces.

While HS in this case cannot be considered as blatantly emphasizing the association of refugees as sexu-

ally threatening to white European women, like the media coverage of Cologne events elsewhere in Europe did (Jazmati & Studer, 2017), the interpretative frames of the events rely on a reductionist Western logic of understanding how gender operates in sexual violence discourse. In this case, Western maleness and femaleness, with its embedded positions in the sexual violence discourse, precedes and sets limitations on the possibility of differentiating, in Deleuzian terms, the act of mass harassment of women in Europe.

How the "violation" of the female body is constituted by the refugees, not in the shadows of the Western media, but through their articulation of a "self" in becoming a subject, is explored next.

5. Redefining Violation of Female Bodies: "They Don't Like Us"

Which discursive preconditions underlie the refugees' articulations of a "self" through the violation of the female body in the context of mass harassment cases then? Refugee subjects in becoming assume an already-there subject/object positions of the criminality discourse, and firmly reject the reductionist logic of reducing all refugees to such positions. They thus recognize "the thread laid out by identity" in Deleuzian terms (1994, pp. 49–50), which serves as a trajectory for their differing when speaking of a "self" in becoming in regard to the violation of the female body. They acknowledge the threatening nature of the kind of "criminality" that the Finns are "nervous" about: "the people [in Finland] have all the right…to be afraid of refugees" (M39). A male refugee attributes "people not [accepting] us [into the community]" to "bad things" refugees may do: "How shall I say it…they are hitting on the girls, and then for example, and when the girls don't want that, they are forcing them" (M39). Yet the view of a collective subjectivity of the refugees as criminals through the potential violation of the female body is also avoided by the Iraqi and Iranian interviewees, who articulate a "self" as differing from "them/they" as the ones determined by such criminality discourse.

In many instances, the "violation" committed by "them", as mentioned by the interviewees, becomes rendered intelligible by the affirmation of a subject who is presumed to have a right to the female body in Arab/Islamic terms. For example, an Iranian female constructs an understanding of a woman's right to her body and sexuality in terms of her having a right to be protected by a man in Islam. By her account, this is a right that, if given away, is constructed as warranting economic, sexual or other types of punishment. Instead of Muslim women then, she explained that it was not Muslim women but Western women who lacked rights, since "they" are not forced to cover themselves nor are they protected by their family:

> They [school teachers] always explained that…women have lots of rights in Islam.…
> We are under dad's protection, so it is nice someone is protecting us, we don't have to go to work.…If the husband lets her work, she can keep all the money for herself, the man is the one who has to pay for all the living and the children, and if the woman does not give sex to the man, he can cut some of the money.…It's like a woman's right. And you can be at home with a child, and *if the husband hits you*, that's fine, *you did something bad, he has to, it is the law.…In Islam, it says you have to punish your wife*.…I always grew up [learning] that Western countries don't care about woman's rights.…Like if a woman gets pregnant, the guy can just leave.…They don't force women to cover so they show themselves and they are not protected anymore. *The woman is protected because family is protection for the woman*. (F24)

In her explanation, the woman's right to her own money by her own work precedes her right to her body and sexuality. Furthermore, violation of the female body (e.g., hitting) is in the above quote mandated by Islam. As such, it becomes imagined, not in terms of violence per se, but rather, in terms of protection of the family which is signified as protection of the female body. Thus, punishment is ultimately constructed as imperative for the protection of the female body.

To the extent that "violation" of the female body is conceptualized in terms of protection of the same body, that body is not culturally influenced by victimhood, but rather, the body in terms of requiring containment through its violation:

> They [Arab men] do understand that they [women] are allowed to do things here.…They can, for example, stay outside the house at night, go to a restaurant at any time, drink beer and alcohol, spend the night with someone, but the way they are living for some of those people, I am sorry to say but I have to…they think that these are, sorry, bitches, and *don't have any manners*. We have such people like that.…We don't have lots of ladies who can drink in public [in Baghdad]. (M39)

The interviewees argue that Finnish women's liberties are known to the refugees, yet not necessarily fully acknowledged by all. From this perspective, having a right to male protection is non-negotiable for some; in other words, it is construed as imperative of the female "sex"[4] as part of a spiritual contract of a kind:

> If somebody does not cover herself, for many men, they see that *she wants* to give it to me. That is why she is not covering, if she wanted to keep it to herself, if she wanted to protect it, she would cover it but now

[4] In rape cases, analyzed by Butler, being a property of a man is conceived as an objective of her "sex", and while on the streets, "she is looking to become the property of some other" (Butler, 1995, pp. 52–53).

> that she is showing it to me it is like a gift from God to me. So I am allowed to go to her, I am allowed to do whatever I want to do, I can even rape, and my God is fine with it. That is what I see in many places. (F24)

In Soutar's view, covering oneself provides many women a feeling of control over their bodies because it prevents sexual exploitation (2010). The decision to wear one is thus both social and religious (Al-Mahadin, 2013). In the Iraqi and Iranian interviewees' comments above, a "self" is predetermined by spirituality which tracks on the female body and the transformation of its "violation", as understood in Western discourses, into "protection" of family, then a female subject, not as the Other of man, but as a being habituated from the spiritual realm.

Does the positioning of the female body beyond male-female dichotomies also render it beyond something that can be violated as such? In the interviewees' talk, assuming an illegal access to the female body (not granted by the woman's legal family or by disregard of other protective measures as in "God's gifts") is constructed as warranting the ultimate violation of the male body.

> Here we have the *uimahalli* [facility for swimming and saunas]. People go to *uimahalli* like everyone goes, but they were drunk, and they discovered that no one will stop them if they stepped inside the sauna for the ladies, and they did it, they did it like that.…The first one will go and open the door just to see and say aah, and say sorry, and after that the other one will go, and they will make it like, oh we didn't know, but one of them was going like four times, and others were going like six or five.…If any one of them did it in Iraq or in Egypt or in Syria or anywhere I think that the *family of her will kill him*.…If she is having her privacy in sauna, for example, and she is, of course, naked because it is sauna, and he is trying to see her naked so if this happened in Iraq you can bet t*he law will make him like a ball* and play with it.…I really, really love the law of oriental places…laws must be more strict here. (M39)

In his talk, subjecting the female body to a male gaze without permission is constructed as the ultimate form of violation of her family's rights ("the *family* of her will kill him"), dishonor, and disrespect, for which the loss of a "self" is deserved, even death. While the "violation" of specifically the female body *in terms of violation* may be unimaginable here by a "self" in reference to Arab/Islamic terms employed in this discourse, the affirmed subject emanating from this position is rarely truly identified with by the interviewees. Becoming identified by a predetermined subject position through violation of the female body is thus avoided by them throughout, and furthermore, also in the accounts that affirm individuality as ultimately incompatible with Islam.

The Iranian female refers to the case of Farkhunda Malikzada's mob harassment and killing by stating that "Western laws don't work there [in Afghanistan]", and constructed an account of the fundamental lack of individuality in such societies:

> They have a sentence in Farsi: If you don't want to be ashamed of what you are you have to be of the same color as the society.…One person gets up and has an idea that she should be burned—yeah!—and they don't think and they follow the guy next to them because you are going to get punished if you say something else.…If somebody is destroying Islam or something similar, people have to gather and fight against it. It is good thing normally, in Islam.…People who were born religious, they never had a chance to think individually.…Usually, the idea comes from somewhere, like what should we do about it, like some person randomly yells or something—you have to burn—yeah, you have to burn—something similar to that.…a lot of these things, a lot of that happens. (F24)

Khazaal (2017) maintains that the Arab states, in general, do not recognize nonreligious identity for Arabs; any allegations of leaving Islam result in violence, including mob killings and other forms of violence. In his view, there is no place for an individual in the community of believers who is rather perceived as a disturber of collective harmony, or a collective body. The Iranian interviewee (F24) recalled another video, similar to Farkhunda Malikzada's, of the killing of a daughter whose father had been enraged having found out about her boyfriend. The notion that "they don't see this really as violence, but as the defense of what they believe" (F24) is also constructed by another interviewee:

> They cannot think about it with their head, they think by hand first, they don't care, it is very easy, this woman, she burned the Quran, that's it. They don't ask you why you did it.…In Afghanistan especially, it is about Islam and Quran: no one (including the police) can help in this case. (M38)

The female body in the accounts above is not granted individual subjectivity required for its violation, and subsequently, the status of victimhood. Instead, the female body yields to the confirmation of collective (male) subjectivity. Both possibilities of perceiving the female body, as being beyond violation, or alternatively, as being violated, in the mass harassment cases are indeed realized by the Iraqi and Iranian interviewees, yet transcended without reducing a "self" to one position or another: their self-positioning does not align with either Arab/Islamic or Western terms, nor can they be interpreted in dichotomous or straightforward ways. As they do not necessarily identify with a particular subject position prescribed for a collective or an individualized subject through a specific understanding of "violation", they retain a possibility of shifting positions in becom-

ing in this context. Thus, the Iraqi and Iranian interviewees themselves remain in a *state* of distinguishing himself/herself, in Deleuzian terms, to not to become "distorted" as subjects in becoming.

6. Conclusion: Female Bodies Adrift

The mediation of the violation of the female body in the context of mass harassment of women in Europe is here approached as a site for politicizing possibilities of becoming subjects. How "violation" is rendered intelligible is a central component in contributing to possibilities of becoming affirmed as a subject in the Western media. By enforcing an understanding of violation of female bodies, in the cases of mass attacks in Cologne, within a Western sexual violence discourse with its subject-object positions instead of mass harassment (a game), HS contributed to the organization of a relatively vulnerable subject position for a female victim of sexual violence in the hands of refugee males. The refugees' acts are rendered intelligible through the lens of Western drinking cultures, as they become identified universally as the same. Establishment of universal maleness in Western terms is in this context set forth through limitations imposed on the possibility of any Arab/Islamic influences in understanding "violation".

What is signified as "violation" by the Western media is not constructed as such by the refugees in the context of their interpretations of the harassment cases discussed here. In these interpretations, the female body functions beyond such subject-object, perpetrator-victim, dichotomies, and is not understood in relation to the terms that would specifically render it as "violable"; it is rather imagined as something that is preceded by the family's rights to the body and its protection, which when left unprotected (as in God's gifts), can be constructed as accessible as opposed to violated per se, or punishable (as in Farkhunda Malikzada's case) in the establishment of a collective subjectivity. How to imagine female bodies beyond predetermined positioning remains unarticulated, and as such adrift.

Articulations of "violation" of the female bodies by the refugees, as irreducible to the Western meanings, yet intelligible, become erased by the Western media through the erasure of mass harassment discourse with its possibilities of signification of collective subjectivity beyond the Western sexual violence discourse. Hence, understanding "violation" is a central component in contributing to possibilities of becoming a subject in the Western media: the female body is not constructed as violated in the same way if impacted by other than merely Western influences. From this perspective, the Western media can construct possibilities of becoming a subject for women and refugees by curbing differing and offering stable identities, and an understanding of "unity", when there are none. Becoming a subject, in other words, is predominantly enabled in relation to a relatively unchanging understanding of universal maleness and femaleness, and the relationship between the two in Western terms that the refugees can identify with. Refugees involved in mass harassment attacks, as covered by the HS, were not subjected to vilification in a similar vein as some other European media, and yet, the complexity of the issue remains unaddressed. The realm of Deleuzian "disparateness" that underlie the possibilities of becoming a subject in mass harassment cases remains repressed. This compromises various possibilities of affirming a "self" in the *process* of becoming, in all of its uncertainty in-between Western and Arab/Islamic influences. Controlling the understanding of "violence" is a key precondition for "stifling" the process of becoming, or movement of meaning. Deliberation, by Fraserian all-affected parties, of what it means to violate someone becomes limited by the establishment of the preconceived certainty of Western ideologies.

As it is, the mainstream media offers possibilities for re-organization of the terms of becoming as subjects for women and the refugees rather cautiously in this context. This does not, however, determine the positionality of the refugees themselves who, while making sense of "violation", remain "elsewhere" beyond subject positions set forth by these discourses under construction, and thus retain an unfixed "self" in relation to, but also beyond, the oppressive regimes of bodily violence of the Islamic world (Khazaal, 2017) and the reductionist logic of many Western media discourses that may seek to "Other" the migrants on the one hand, but also reproduce the migrant "self" within the unity of Western "sameness" on the other. Voices that are not solely articulated through individuality nor collective subjectivity, but perhaps by Deleuzian radiuses of terms, are critical to contemporary challenges of understanding mass harassment of women in the West.

Acknowledgments

I am thoroughly indebted to remarkable anonymous reviewers who from different angles provided the kind of criticism that significantly contributed to this project. I am also grateful to have had the opportunity to benefit from astute observations and suggestions of the academic editors, Jessica Gustafsson and Kinga Polynczuk-Alenius, as well as from productive exchanges with a conference opponent for this paper, Poul Erik Nielsen, in the summer of 2017. Director Tomi Martikainen at the Märäjälahti Reception Center in Lieksa, Finland, allowed me numerous unhurried visits to the Center to learn about the life at the facility from its staff and residents for which I am profoundly thankful. My deepest gratitude, however, must be expressed to the interviewees. Without their generosity to discuss difficult and sensitive matters with me, this paper would have remained severely partial. This project has received financial support in the form of the Summer Support of Research Grant from St. John's University.

Conflict of Interests

The author declares no conflict of interests.

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COGITATIO

Media and Communication (ISSN: 2183–2439)
2018, Volume 6, Issue 2, Pages 168–178
DOI: 10.17645/mac.v6i2.1284

Article

Watchdogs, Advocates and Adversaries: Journalists' Relational Role Conceptions in Asylum Reporting

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Submitted: 24 November 2017 | Accepted: 13 April 2018 | Published: 29 June 2018

Abstract
Journalistic role conceptions are usually understood as internalised professional conventions about the tasks reporters pursue in society. This study insists that more attention be put on the relational and context-dependent nature of journalistic role conceptions. Adopting a social-interactionist approach to journalistic roles, the study examines how Finnish journalists conceived of their professional roles when covering asylum issues during the so-called "refugee crisis" of 2015–2016. Based on an analysis of open-ended, semi-structured interviews with 24 journalists, we highlight how considerations of the political context and interactions with three key reference groups—officials, asylum seekers and anti-immigrant publics—shaped the journalists' conceptions of their tasks and duties. The article contributes to the study of journalistic role conceptions by illustrating how the conceptualisation of journalistic roles in relation to reference groups takes place in practice. It also sheds light on the tensions involved in journalistic balancing and negotiation between various available role conceptions, especially in the shifting societal and political contexts of a Europe marked by multiculturalism and the simultaneous rise of anti-immigrant movements.

Keywords
asylum seekers; migration; journalism; refugee crisis; role; role conception

Issue
This article is part of the issue "Media and Communication between the Local and the Global", edited by Jessica Gustafsson (Sodertorn University, Sweden) and Kinga Polynczuk-Alenius (University of Helsinki, Finland).

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1. Introduction

As migration, both voluntary and forced, reshapes the lived experiences of peoples, journalism emerges as one of the key cultural practices that can facilitate the adaption of societies to increasingly global and multicultural realities. Due to their professional expertise and institutional position as the principal providers of daily knowledge about distant events, journalists are influential interpreters of global processes for national and local audiences (Berglez, 2013), while also shaping collectively-shared social imaginaries and normative sensibilities about living in culturally diverse societies (Deuze, 2005; Ojala, 2011). However, with the recent ascendance of online counter-media platforms and "post-truth politics", news journalism has become an increasingly contested field. As challenges to the neutrality and trustworthiness of mainstream news media are being voiced by previously marginalised voices, what purposes journalism should serve and how news reporters ought to represent various political views are issues ever more frequently raised in public by those participating in contemporary societal conflicts. Having to come to terms with the diverging demands and expectations emanating from these new challengers potentially forces journalists themselves to be increasingly reflective about their professional tasks and duties. The contemporary societal environment marked by globalisation, multiculturalism

and the simultaneous rise of anti-immigrant movements hence motivates renewed interest in the study of journalistic roles and role conceptions.

Journalistic role conceptions are cultural conventions pertaining to the occupational tasks that journalists believe they ought to perform in their social environment (Donsbach, 2008; Mellado, Hellmueller, & Donsbach, 2017, p. 5). In journalism studies, role conceptions have traditionally been associated with certain functions that journalism is believed to (ideally) serve in society, and they have been observed to be rather constant over time in a given journalistic culture (Lewis, 2012). However, a social-interactionist perspective on journalistic roles has challenged this view by insisting that, instead of an enacted collection of internalised ideals and norms, a social role is the product of social interaction and alters from one situation to the next (Hellmueller & Mellado, 2015). The social-interactionist approach thus emphasises the context-dependent and relational nature of journalistic roles, the meanings of which a reporter constantly negotiates through interaction with reference groups, including sources, audiences and peers.

The purpose of this article is to focus on the relational and situational aspects of journalistic roles by analysing how Finnish journalists made sense of their professional roles when reporting on a contested topic in a context of high societal tensions, namely the "refugee crisis" of 2015–2016. Along with many other countries in Europe, Finland became a destination for a significant number of asylum seekers in the latter half of 2015. Within a few months, some 32,000 migrants applied for asylum in Finland, amounting to the fourth largest number among EU member states in proportion to the overall population in 2015 (Eurostat, 2016). Given the fact that approximately 40,000 asylum seekers in total had arrived in Finland in the previous four decades, the new situation became an intense political and societal issue, prompting both citizen activism in solidarity with asylum seekers and anti-immigrant demonstrations and violence. Indeed, dubbed a "refugee crisis" by the news media and political commentators, the Finnish debate in many ways echoed discourses elsewhere in Europe that focused on the perceived risks of migration (e.g., Greussing & Boomgaarden, 2017; Harrison, 2016; see also Vertovec & Wessendorf, 2010), but also featured powerful expressions of solidarity and condemnations of xenophobia (Holmes & Castañeda, 2016). Significantly for our purposes, the refugee debate involved critical questions about the role of the news media in these developments. Far from enjoying a hallowed position as a trustworthy informer about international and local events or as a neutral mediator between conflicting viewpoints, news workers were regularly accused of questionable reporting that distorted reality in favour of certain ideological ends. Journalism hence became a highly politicised cultural practice in the societal struggles over immigration, multiculturalism, tolerance, human rights and racism.

This study examines how Finnish journalists conceived of their professional roles when covering the "refugee crisis". More specifically, by adopting the social-interactionist approach to journalistic roles, we analyse how considerations of the political context and interactions with three key reference groups—officials, asylum seekers and anti-immigrant publics—shaped journalists' perceptions of their professional tasks and duties. The study thus contributes to social-interactionist theorisation about journalistic role conceptions by illustrating how reporters' conceptualisation of their professional roles in relation to reference groups takes place in practice. We highlight not only that journalists' role conceptions vary according to the specific reference group they interact with, or have in mind when writing a story, but also that their attitudes towards particular reference groups, and hence their role conceptions, depend on the way they perceive the broader societal context, which tends to shift over time. In sum, the study both corroborates and substantiates social-interactionist theorisation of journalistic roles.

2. Journalistic Roles and Role Conceptions

There is a rich tradition of research concerning the roles journalists perform in society. Theoretical and normative lines of inquiry (e.g., Christians, Glasser, McQuail, Nordenstreng, & White, 2009; Siebert, Peterson, & Schramm, 1956) have been complemented by empirical observations of journalistic work (e.g., Gans, 1979; Tuchman, 1978) as well as by interviews and surveys focusing on journalists' own conceptions of their roles (e.g., Hanitzsch et al., 2011; Weaver & Willnat, 2012). In this body of literature, journalistic roles are typically understood as the tasks and duties served by journalism, or those that it ought to serve, in society. As such, they are informed by "expectations, values, norms and standards defining how news people and organizations should and do work" (Hellmueller & Mellado, 2015, p. 4). As these tasks and duties are internalised during professional training and work, journalists develop corresponding personal and collective role conceptions, or beliefs about the expectations of others, which guide their actions on the job (Donsbach, 2008; Hanitzsch & Vos, 2018). Accordingly, journalistic role conceptions have been identified as one significant factor in explaining actual news production—alongside other factors, such as personal values, organisational culture, institutional routines and various systemic constraints (e.g., Preston, 2009; Shoemaker & Reese, 2014).

The notion of a journalistic role conception is closely associated with other similar concepts, such as journalistic values, journalistic ethics and a professional ethos (Mellado et al., 2017; Plaisance & Skewes, 2003; Reunanen & Koljonen, 2016). For instance, prominent journalistic values in Western journalism, such as an orientation towards serving the public good and being autonomous as well as the ethicality, objectivity and topicality of jour-

nalism (Deuze, 2005, p. 445), are all related to how journalists conceive of their professional role, or what is expected of them. In the end, no clear-cut distinctions can be drawn between these various concepts since all include "ideas about what is good journalism and what is journalism's role in society" (Reunanen & Koljonen, 2016, p. 2). Here, we prefer the concept of journalistic role to emphasise how journalists perform their professional tasks in social interaction, and how their conception of what is good journalism is shaped by these interactions (see below).

Many recent empirical studies on journalistic roles have taken the form of large-scale surveys, which allows for international comparisons of divergent journalistic cultures (see, e.g., Hanitzsch et al., 2011; Weaver & Willnat, 2012). Disseminating information, interpreting events and confronting societal powers have been observed to be the most typical roles journalists identify with worldwide (e.g., Carpenter, Boehmer, & Fico, 2015; Tandoc, Hellmueller, & Vos, 2013). Nevertheless, notable variations exist between countries concerning the emphasis journalists put on different roles (e.g., Hanitzsch, 2011; Hanusch & Hanitzsch, 2017).

In the Finnish context, the values of neutrality, objectivity, autonomy and public service characterise how journalists conceive of their professional roles. In a large-scale survey conducted in 2013, Finnish journalists ranked as their most important duties reporting accurately, being an impartial observer, analysing topical issues, telling stories about the world and letting people voice their opinions (Pöyhtäri, Väliverronen, & Ahva, 2016). Many also emphasised the task of monitoring and scrutinising political leaders and powerful institutions in society. In this regard, Finnish journalists reflect a broader culture of Nordic journalism that corresponds with the political culture of consensual corporatism and with a media system that is characterised by a strong independent press, high degree of professionalism and strong press freedom (Ahva et al., 2017). Finnish journalists tend to see themselves in the service of the general public and the common good rather than as representing a particular interest group or ideology. Thus, even as they increasingly value their role in generating public debate and actively participating in that debate, an ethos of political detachment, independence and neutrality still prevails among Finnish journalists (Reunanen & Koljonen, 2016). They tend to conceive of their role more in terms of mediating various viewpoints rather than as expressing their own political positions on issues.

3. A Social-Interactionist View on Journalists' Role Conceptions

As a method for studying journalists' role conceptions, surveys come with an in-built assumption about role conceptions as explicitly stated tasks and ideals. This is a valid approach in the sense that journalistic roles are partly embedded in the existing institutions of the profession, such as journalistic education, professional associations, media ethical standards and codes of conduct, as well as in media laws and regulations, media organisations and media markets. Indeed, journalistic role conceptions have been observed to be rather constant over time, despite significant changes in the technological means and commercial environments in which journalism operates (Lewis, 2012; O'Sullivan & Heinonen, 2008). The survey approach, however, tends to have little to say about how, and to what extent, role conceptions operate as cognitive scripts that guide journalists in their actual work. This is problematic because several recent studies have indicated that the actual role performance of journalists often differs from their role conceptions, as stated in surveys, interviews and codes of conduct (Mellado et al., 2017; Tandoc et al., 2013). Moreover, research has long recognised that journalists regularly face conflicting expectations from their surrounding environment and must find ways to negotiate between and combine multiple roles in their work (Hanitzsch & Vos, 2018; Hellmueller & Mellado, 2015; Kramp & Weichert, 2014; Rosten, 1937; Tandoc & Takahashi, 2014).

In contrast to the survey-based studies on journalists' role conceptions, Hellmueller and Mellado (2015) have recently outlined an alternative approach that focuses on the relational and situated nature of journalistic roles. Rather than understanding journalistic roles as a-contextual tasks and duties, their approach builds on what social psychology identifies as the relational essence of social roles. A role is patterned behaviour that is performed through social interaction and obtains its substance and meaning in relation to other people, whose perceived expectations guide how a person acts within that particular role (Berger & Luckmann, 1967; Lynch, 2007). Accordingly, a social-interactionist view on journalism emphasises that the practice takes place in particular social situations and journalists make sense of their actions through interactions with reference groups, including sources, audiences and media organisations (Mellado & Van Dalen, 2014). Journalists perform a particular role in social interaction wherein "they anticipate the consequences of their reporting to others and the social context" (Hellmueller & Mellado, 2015, p. 6). This perspective adds a fair amount of malleability, negotiability and context-dependence to journalistic roles (Tandoc & Takahashi, 2014). Journalists may both perceive and enact their roles quite differently according to the topic they are covering, the kind of sources they are engaged with when reporting on the issue and the perceptions they have about the broader societal context.[1]

In line with the social-interactionist approach to roles, the present study focuses on the fluid, relational and situated nature of journalistic roles. We assume that, instead of following clearly defined principles, journal-

[1] Discussion on the merits and pitfalls of role theory and its various strands, as they have been developed in the fields of social psychology and sociology, is beyond the scope of this article. For critical overviews, see, for instance, Biddle (1986), Turner (2001), and Lynch (2007).

ists conceive of their roles in relation to the topics they are covering and their perceptions of the broader societal context, and they must creatively interpret them in the face of the often contradictory expectations presented by various reference groups, including sources, audiences and peers. Therefore, journalistic roles are constantly under construction, and journalists must be able to actively choose between various available roles and work out ways to enact them in particular situations. Such selective and creative role performance may concern, for instance, adopting a detached versus an involved stance, choosing between a fact-disseminating role versus an interpretive role requiring analysis and explanation, or serving as a conduit for a variety of societal voices versus being an advocate for a chosen cause (see Tandoc et al., 2013).

Extraordinary conditions that shake existing routines, such as working on a previously unfamiliar topic or in a context of heightened societal tensions surrounding the reported issue, may bring further volatility to journalists' role conceptions. In this respect, the "refugee crisis" presents an interesting case of analysis. First, only a small group of Finnish journalists, mostly working for national media outlets, had significant experience in covering migration issues. Indeed, although a quintessential feature of modern global realities, large-scale migration had nevertheless remained a distant phenomenon for the vast majority of Finns. With the sudden arrival of previously unseen numbers of asylum seekers in reception centres across the country, regional and local reporters quickly needed to address this new topic as part of their daily journalistic routines. Second, reporting on the evolving migration situation brought journalists into contact with a variety of new sources, including asylum officials, asylum seekers and civic groups, which rapidly mobilised around the question of refugees and asylum policy. Journalists hence had to quickly establish professional relationships with, and attitudes towards, reference groups that they had had little previous interaction with. Third, civic mobilisation and the heavily polarised public debate turned asylum into an increasingly delicate topic for journalism. As one sign of the heightened pressure put on journalists, newsrooms and individual reporters frequently received vitriolic feedback on their reporting from various audiences, and they at times became targets of hate speech and even personal threats. All of these aspects potentially had an impact on how Finnish journalists conceived of their professional roles when covering the asylum question during the height of the "refugee crisis".

Thus far, the social-interactionist theorisation on journalistic roles has largely failed to inform empirical studies of journalistic practices (see, however, Tandoc & Takahashi, 2014). Therefore, aside from generally cited observations about the impact of key reference groups and working contexts on journalists' role conceptions, there is a dearth of knowledge about how journalists actually negotiate their roles when engaged in reporting. The present study aims to fill in this gap by analysing how journalists narrate their own experiences of being in interaction with key reference groups when covering the refugee situation. In this respect, three reference groups merit particular attention. First, journalists regularly interacted with *public officials* during the "refugee crisis" because of the heightened public demand for fact-based information. Second, *asylum seekers* themselves were an important reference group as sources for real-life stories. Third, citizen-activists, and particularly *anti-immigrant groups*, turned into a key reference group for asylum reporters due to their visible online presence and aggressive criticism of refugee journalism. Our purpose is to examine how journalists' role conceptions shift depending on the reference groups they interact with and to focus on their perceptions of the changing political and societal contexts during the "refugee crisis".

4. Data and Method

For the purposes of this study, we conducted semi-structured interviews with 24 Finnish journalists working in print, television, radio and online news in national (9 interviewees), regional (12) and local (3) news organisations across the country. The interviewees were selected on the basis of their extensive involvement in reporting on asylum-related issues for their news organisations during the period. Some interviewees were identified based on their reporting and recruited directly, while others were contacted through their superiors. The selection included both female (15) and male (9) journalists, with most of them being at mid-career stage, having already acquired several years of work experience as journalists.

The interviews were conducted in between December 2016 and February 2017, and they lasted for approximately 90 minutes. The general themes were as follows: (1) aims and professional ideals in asylum reporting; (2) the performance of the newsroom and the national media in the "refugee crisis"; (3) personal experiences, main sources and challenges in covering the topic; and (4) feedback from audiences and the general opinion climate on immigration. The interviews were transcribed and coded by categorising them according to the main themes of the interviews.

Role conceptions, unlike actual role performances, cannot be directly observed, and therefore, any inferences about the ideas journalists entertain regarding their expected behaviour necessarily rely on what they express in speech or writing. This implies a distinctly interpretive methodology, one aiming at understanding the way people think and feel about themselves in their specific socio-historical circumstances (see Hammersley, 2013, pp. 26–29). While such an analysis can never claim to capture the true conceptions of the studied individuals, it may nevertheless shed important light on journalistic culture, or journalists' shared beliefs and ways of reasoning that influence what they do. As such, role

conceptions can be studied by asking journalists to explicitly define their (most important or valued) roles and tasks, as is typically done in surveys. Alternatively, they can be inferred from the way journalists talk about their work more generally, alluding to, for instance, their core competences, general motivations, basic ideals and audience perceptions (Donsbach, 2008). While combining both strategies in our interviews, we found that observing the less explicit dimensions of journalists' role discourse proved to be highly rewarding, helping us to discern tensions between various role conceptions and recognise how journalists negotiated between clashing professional norms and values.

When asked directly about their intentions and objectives in reporting on asylum issues, our interviewees tended to allude to a few well-established professional roles among Finnish journalists (see Ahva et al., 2017; Pöyhtäri et al., 2016; Reunanen & Koljonen, 2016). Establishing and disseminating fact-based information, telling the stories of individual asylum seekers, explaining the asylum issue or mediating public debate as impartial gatekeepers were referred to by many as important tasks, as was the watchdog role of monitoring the conduct of officials and politicians. More nuance—and internal tension—with respect to role conceptions emerged, however, when the interview turned to practical situations and reference groups in asylum reporting. When talking about interviewing an asylum seeker, for instance, the journalists tended to float rather different ideas about what they sought to achieve or how they and their fellow journalists ought to act, compared to when the issue involved covering the operations of officials, investigating anti-immigrant mobilisation or obtaining feedback from readers and viewers. Aside from general tasks and duties, journalists, in other words, seemed to conceive of their roles in relation to other societal groups that they interacted with when reporting on the asylum topic (see Hellmueller & Mellado, 2015).

Following our interest in the social-interactionist dimension of journalists' role conceptions, the analytical focus here is on both the relational and situational aspects of role conceptions. First, while there are multiple actors and actor groups relevant to a journalist either as a source, fellow worker, superior, authority or audience member, three reference groups—officials, asylum seekers and anti-immigrant groups—specifically stood out during the interviews. Interactions with these three groups appeared to be especially challenging, leading to considerable ambiguity about how they should be treated in asylum reporting. Second, the way our interviewees perceived of these interactions and their professional roles was closely intertwined with their analyses of the broader asylum situation and shifts in the public debate. Contextual considerations, hence, seemed to affect the journalists' negotiation of their professional roles in the public debate. Accordingly, in the following analysis we read the interview text in light of theoretical and research literature on journalistic roles and role conceptions, focusing on how the interviewees talked about their work, personal motivations and normative expectations in relation to (1) their interactions with officials, asylum seekers and anti-immigrant groups and (2) the shifting political and societal context of the "refugee crisis".

5. Analysis

Journalists' accounts of their interactions with the three reference groups were frequently marked by contradictions about their professional intentions and roles. First, their close interaction with *public officials* challenged their role conception as independent watchdogs. Second, when interacting with *asylum seekers*, journalists had to negotiate between perceived expectations of objective dissemination and a more engaged role as an agent of civic education and solidarity towards the plight of refugees. Third, the mobilisation of *anti-immigrant groups*, including actions against asylum seekers as well as vitriolic criticism, personal threats and online attacks against the news media and individual reporters, unsettled the journalists' conception of themselves as neutral and non-partisan mediators of societal debate. In sum, interactions with these three groups illustrate how Finnish journalists at the time needed to qualify and actively negotiate their preferred role conceptions as neutral and detached watchdogs.

6. Officials: Collaboration versus Watchdog Role

The arrival of asylum seekers, mostly from Iraq, Afghanistan, Somalia and Syria, in autumn 2015 was generally experienced by both local and national journalists in Finland as an unprecedented event. As state agencies adopted a series of extraordinary measures, including the rapid opening of new asylum seekers' reception centres in municipalities across the country, editorial offices were trying to keep up to date with the rapidly evolving developments with only limited resources. A constant influx of new and developing information engendered a sense of urgency, uncontrollability and unpredictability in newsrooms. An apparent "crisis mode" of reporting took hold and was characterised by a heavy dependence on officials for information. Without exception, when asked about their most important sources in asylum coverage, our interviewees mentioned public officials, including those at the Finnish Immigration Service, the police, the Ministry of the Interior and the municipal administration.

Given the conditions of a perceived local and national "crisis", a close and mutually beneficial relationship between news journalists and officials was established. Officials provided the journalists with a constant stream of newsworthy facts and sometimes even suggested ideas for new topics to report on. Conversely, the officials could count on journalists to disseminate necessary information to the public. As an illustration of this mutually beneficial relationship, a journalist working for a re-

gional newspaper in western Finland recounted how he had participated as a representative of his newspaper in a local coordination group set up during the early stages of the "crisis" by administrative agencies, aid organisations and the media for the purpose of sharing information. When asked whether it had been easy to obtain information from officials, he described his relationship with officials in terms of consensual cooperation:

> Yes, yes it has been [easy]. Somehow, it feels like these officials also wanted—as openly as they possibly can—to tell everything. So that, the more we have facts out there in the public domain, the easier it is [for people] to understand the situation. That cooperation, I'd say, really has worked quite well in this town. (Journalist 1, regional newspaper, western Finland)

With few exceptions, our interviewees commended the openness of public officials and the access they were given to relevant officials, including the police, asylum officials and the Ministry of the Interior. This experience of openness and willingness to cooperate clearly undermined the journalistic ideal of operating as an independent and critical watchdog. Instead of conceiving themselves as pursuing diverging or even opposing objectives, journalists saw no contradiction of interests between journalism and officials. As Journalist 1 reasoned, they both agreed that openness and the sharing of information and facts served to generate a better public understanding of the situation. In terms of journalistic role conceptions, journalists seemed to adapt to the expectations of the official state apparatus and its interests in quelling potential panic and social unrest (see Christians et al., 2009, p. 217; Hanitzsch & Vos, 2018, p. 156). Journalism's perceived role as a pillar of social order in cooperation with other arms of the official and unofficial state apparatus overcame its role as a critical watchdog of those arms, and the measure of good journalism was reduced to disseminating reliable (i.e. official) information in an efficient manner (Carpenter et al., 2015).

As a sign of the importance of the watchdog ideal in Finnish journalism (Ahva et al., 2017), however, several interviewees also expressed unease about journalists' close collaboration with officials. They felt that they themselves, or their fellow journalists, had become too dependent on official sources in asylum reporting. Some felt that the problem lay in journalistic routines, which led them to prefer officials rather than alternative sources, while others pointed to practical constraints, namely the poor availability of alternative sources or lack of time to search for them. The importance of maintaining a critical stance towards officials was emphasised especially by journalists working for national news outlets, typically with greater resources to do investigative journalism than the regional media. A journalist working for a national television channel, for instance, criticised her peers for having become too uncritical and easily manipulated as mouthpieces for the police and other officials. In her view, there were no excuses for journalists not questioning the official versions of events and actively seeking alternative viewpoints:

> Pretty much we are at the mercy of officials. Feels like at times they've taken us for a ride. Take police communications—how everything they say has been mediated without being filtered. It's been quite uncritical, I think. I don't understand why. Why haven't we investigated? We have a country full of investigative journalists. (Journalist 2, national television network)

The initial "crisis mode" of asylum reporting subsided in early 2016, in tandem with the rapidly declining number of arriving asylum seekers. With the slowing pace of new developments, the dominance of officials as sources of information decreased and journalists had more time to search for alternative sources as well as to question official views. This, predictably, led to a less harmonious and open relationship with officials. An increasingly critical approach to officials took hold as journalists started to expose, for instance, deficiencies and malpractices in reception centres. Many journalists also began to address questions concerning the observation of human rights in the asylum process. Journalists quickly rediscovered their role as critical watchdogs whose task it was to expose officials' wrongdoings. When asked about what she saw as the most important duty of journalism in asylum reporting, one journalist articulated the watchdog role in unequivocal terms:

> Probably one important duty is, of course, to monitor this decision making. To me, it is essential that we can—we must monitor that our justice system operates the way it should operate. That there are no abuses or arbitrariness. Or that those international commitments Finland has signed are implemented, observed. And this has not been the case recently. It is evident. We are—let's say we are only scraping by. So monitoring all this is to me an essential role for us. (Journalist 3, national current affairs magazine)

7. Asylum Seekers: Advocacy versus Objective Dissemination

Compared to earlier reporting on migration, asylum seekers became more visible in the Finnish news media during the "refugee crisis" and were interviewed more regularly than in the past. When recounting their encounters with asylum seekers, our interviewees alluded to several professional intentions. First, especially in the early stages of the "crisis", the journalists strived to balance the barrage of official information by adopting the human-interest angle and telling (mostly sympathetic) stories of individual asylum seekers. Many of them saw their task as telling stories about the situation in a way that brought the issues and the people involved closer to the readers, while making asylum seekers and their

personal circumstances more familiar to local and national audiences. Second, the interviewees intended to bring the otherwise unheard voices of asylum seekers into the public conversation. Hence, covering the asylum seekers' perspective seemed to invoke role conceptions that emphasise the educative and facilitative duties of journalism, focused on raising public awareness and promoting democratic deliberation by bringing a plurality of perspectives into public debate (Christians et al., 2009, pp. 158–159; Hanitzsch & Vos, 2018, pp. 154–155). When asked about her intentions in asylum reporting, a journalist working for a regional newspaper expressed both these role conceptions:

> Perhaps, at least, to bring forward the faces of asylum seekers. To make it evident, in a way, that they are real human beings who live here, amongst us.…Perhaps also to give, as many-sided as possible, that space of voice to various people. (Journalist 4, regional newspaper, central Finland)

Third, as the Finnish government started to design and implement restrictive reforms to asylum legislation from late 2015 onwards, and as it put pressure on the Finnish Immigration Agency to process asylum applications more rapidly, many interviewees felt that the system was being turned against asylum seekers. Corresponding with their watchdog role conception, journalists often appeared to identify themselves as defenders of the weak and vulnerable members of society (Christians et al., 2009, pp. 141–142). They, therefore, sought to investigate the cases of individual asylum seekers in order to expose potential flaws and injustices in the asylum system.

The adoption of educative, facilitative and watchdog roles when interacting with asylum seekers implies that journalists experienced a degree of identification with the "cause" of asylum seekers in terms of improving their lot in society. At times, these role conceptions veered towards pro-refugee activism and a political advocacy role, which emphasises the intent of journalists to actively influence audiences and their opinions (Donsbach & Patterson, 2004; Statham, 2007; Tandoc & Takahashi, 2014). One journalist, working for a national television network, expressed frustration with the increasingly restrictive asylum policy and the general incapacity of those in opposition to do anything about it. In her view, questioning the legitimacy of the prevailing asylum policy was the goal of critical journalism. This would require a powerful personal story with which people could identify and which would "blow up" the asylum policy debate:

> Everyone knows that Finland's asylum policy is stringent. So what would be the story that would blow up this whole thing? It would, once again, require a strong story that people could identify with. That's just how it goes. (Journalist 5, national television network)

Such an open expression of political partisanship regarding the asylum question was, however, the exception rather than the rule. As an indication of the prevalence of Finnish journalists' conception of themselves as apolitical and detached observers (Ahva et al., 2017; Reunanen & Koljonen, 2016), even those who said they sought to raise awareness, foster empathy and combat xenophobic prejudice by telling the stories of individual asylum seekers typically did *not* perceive these activities as forms of political advocacy. In addition, many of the interviewees alluded to the principles of neutrality and objectivity in criticism of their peers, who they perceived as having adopted excessively idealistic and naïve views about asylum seekers. In this respect, one frequent criticism of how news journalism covered the asylum issue was that it had suppressed negative facts and views concerning asylum seekers. When asked about how the Finnish media had covered the asylum issue, a regional journalist raised what he perceived as a condescending attitude that prevailed in major national news outlets towards those expressing critical views of asylum seekers. For him, there was a tendency among journalists to discount and condemn all critical opinions as racist:

> I think we, the media, *Helsingin Sanomat* and many other big newspapers as well, were a little bit guilty of being patronising. We somewhat ignored the kind of fears many people had, and prejudices and all that. And certain critical attitudes. To overstate [it] a bit, we gave the message that these people are not benefit seekers, that they are in grave distress [even], that we ought to help them, and that all divergent opining and criticism of this is racism. So keep your mouths shut. (Journalist 6, public service media, regional office)

In the coverage of asylum seekers, the "good" intentions of defending asylum seekers as a marginal and vulnerable group had to be constantly negotiated with respect to the neutral mediator role of journalism, including demands for objectivity, impartiality and neutrality. To achieve neutrality and objectivity, journalists balanced positive stories with more critical perspectives on immigration, including immigrant crime and cultural differences. One journalist, when asked whether she consciously thought about what kinds of perspectives and opinions to make public in her reporting, distanced herself from both the "racists" and "the tolerant" (*suvakit*)—the latter being a derogatory group label attached by Finnish anti-immigrant online commenters to those they considered to be pro-immigration (i.e., who did not share their views on immigration). Attempting to find a position in the middle, the journalist described her intention to avoid giving "too optimistic an image" of asylum seekers and emphasised the importance of being "realistic" and matter-of-fact in her reporting. Notably, she was reflective of her shifting role as a journalist in the public debate, alternating between positive and critical representations of immigration, according to the "situation at hand":

> It's absolutely clear that I don't want to give a voice to racists. But I don't deny, I have also intended not to give too optimistic an image of them [asylum seekers]. That I must say. The aim then has been to be realistic and matter-of-fact…I am not the most blue-eyed "tolerant", but I am also not—both according to the situation at hand. (Journalist 7, regional newspaper, central Finland)

8. Anti-Immigrant Mobilisation: Principled Partisanship versus Impartiality

The arrival of asylum seekers in large numbers witnessed anti-refugee demonstrations in several municipalities, engendered the organising of far-right street patrols, and even resulted in a few violent attacks against local reception centres. One notable element of the anti-refugee mobilisation was online activism, which included the targeting of mainstream news media and journalists, accusing them of biased reporting in favour of asylum seekers and multiculturalism. Many of our interviewees reported they had been targets of harsh criticism, had been subjected to insults and even threats in online forums and counter-media sites, and had frequently received hate mail concerning their reporting on asylum seekers. While being occasionally criticised for biased reporting is not exceptional, and while this accusation has been regularly heard especially in relation to migration issues, the emergence of an overtly hostile online public had an apparent impact on journalists. Several interviewees acknowledged that they had been upset by the strength of these anti-immigrant reactions and hateful attacks against journalists. Even those interviewees who had not personally received harsh critiques or threats acknowledged being well aware of this public backlash.

There was a notable division among our interviewees concerning their response to such antagonism. Some interviewees had actively countered anti-immigrant arguments in their reports and columns or had attempted to undermine radical right-wing groups by writing critical investigative stories. They tended to perceive anti-immigrant mobilisation as a xenophobic, racist and illiberal reaction, designed to silence liberal voices in society. Because human rights and democratic values appeared to be threatened by this mobilisation effort, remaining "neutral" was not an option—journalists recognised their obligation to defend liberalism and condemn racism and xenophobia. Hence, when speaking in general terms about democratic values, journalists felt entitled to express a principled stance (see Reunanen & Koljonen, 2016):

> My own work has somehow been guided by my values, where, I think, human dignity is universal and human rights issues are important. If we begin to erode them at some end, then we will also further erode them for all. We either have them or we don't. (Journalist 8, joint national newsroom of Finnish regional media)

Adopting a partisan role conception was, hence, one possible response to anti-immigrant mobilisation. For others, however, the perceived obligation to maintain a neutral position guided their reaction. Journalists leaning towards the latter approach attempted to maintain their neutrality by becoming increasingly cautious in their reporting. This involved paying added attention to word choices in reporting so as not to incite controversy or appear to side with a specific group or viewpoint—especially not that of asylum seekers. Reflecting on the impact of audience feedback on his own reporting, one journalist acknowledged that he had intentionally tried to avoid getting a reputation as a partisan reporter, again alluding to the derogatory term "tolerant" that had become increasingly mainstream in public debate:

> Perhaps the feedback has had the effect that I've tried to avoid getting too strong a reputation as this kind of a "tolerant" reporter. So I would like to do some major news stories that would also introduce the negative side of things. To somehow demonstrate that I'm not this blue-eyed fella with an illusion that, oh boy, what a nice bunch all these asylum seekers are. Rather, I'm a sensible person who is aware [chuckles] that there are certain problems. (Journalist 9, national television network)

For those striving for a neutral role in the asylum debate, the purpose of reporting was to avoid feeding the goals of the groups with extreme or anti-democratic ideas, who they saw as actively looking for ways to discredit mainstream media as untrustworthy and biased. They felt that any factual mistakes, editorialising or efforts to manipulate readers' emotions in news reporting would be taken advantage of by "the opposite side" to raise moral panic about immigration. Aside from reporting, cautiousness also extended to the journalists' activities in social media, where they consciously toned down personal opining on the issue of asylum seekers.

9. Discussion

There is a fair amount of ambiguity and negotiability to journalistic role conceptions. They may be explicitly articulated as ideal types in surveys (Donsbach, 2008), where respondents can rank them in their preferred order, but journalists must eventually interpret their meaning in their actual working practices and in relation to specific news topics. Even when working on a specific beat, journalists entertain several role conceptions, as Tandoc and Takahashi (2014) found when surveying US environmental journalists. Our analysis corroborates their finding. The way Finnish news journalists invoked various journalistic role conceptions when recounting their experiences with asylum reporting suggests that there is no single role that a certain news topic calls for. Journalists alternate rather flexibly from one role conception to another without necessarily demonstrating any great consistency.

The apparent malleability of journalistic role conceptions gives further import to the social-interactionist approach to journalistic roles. This view emphasises the nature of journalistic roles as relational to reference groups and social contexts (Hellmueller & Mellado, 2015; Mellado et al., 2017). Interactions with reference groups, perceptions of the broader political context and anticipation of the potential consequences of their reporting are key in informing the journalist about what tasks and objectives one ought to pursue in a particular situation. The analysis presented in this article sheds more light on how this negotiation of professional role conceptions takes place in three ways.

First, the accounts of our interviewees about their interactions with sources and audiences demonstrate how journalists had to develop a certain attitude, and outline a desirable type of conduct, towards those reference groups outside the journalistic community. Asylum officials, asylum seekers and anti-immigrant publics turned out to be particularly central in this regard, typically prompting the interviewees to engage in lengthy reflections about how such groups should be approached, represented and covered in reporting. Whereas interactions with officials tended to strengthen journalists' assumptions of themselves alternatively as cooperative disseminators or as critical watchdogs, asylum seekers inspired journalists to invoke the roles of educators, mediators and even political advocates. The emergence of anti-immigrant mobilisation as a vocal adversary of mainstream journalists, in turn, encouraged some to embrace a partisan position in defence of liberal values, while others refused to get involved in a public confrontation and instead opted for guarding their role conception as neutral observers. Second, identification with these alternative role conceptions was seldom straightforward or entirely consistent, indicating how our interviewees often struggled to position themselves with regard to the three reference groups. This apparent unease may have resulted from the unusual situation in which the reporting took place. Indeed, extraordinary events such as the "refugee crisis" may bring reporters into contact with new reference groups, or change the usual dynamics with old ones. This can unsettle established role conceptions and reactivate the "boundary work" of journalists as they seek to define themselves in reference to others (see Lynch, 2007). Conversely, in normal times journalistic relations with reference groups may be highly routinised and are much more likely to reaffirm the journalists' existing role conceptions.

Third, the way our interviewees recounted the "refugee crisis", and its shifting political and societal repercussions, demonstrates how contextual considerations affect the interpretation of journalistic roles. While neutrality, objectivity and apolitical detachment continue to be valued ideals among Finnish journalists (Ahva et al., 2017; Reunanen & Koljonen, 2016), reporters must interpret what they mean with respect to concrete issues. Moreover, even as they tend to assume that neutrality means occupying the "middle ground" in disputes (Campbell, 1987; Durham, 1998), journalists must first establish where this middle ground exists in a given debate and at a given point in time. In the asylum debate, the rise of anti-immigrant voices and their rhetorical strategy of constructing an internal foe out of "the tolerant" (i.e., those who did not agree with their views on immigration) seemed to have the effect of moving the middle ground for many of our interviewees: it came to exist between "the tolerant" and "the racists". For those not willing to embrace an advocacy-oriented position in the public debate as a defender of the weak and vulnerable outsiders, guarding a conception of oneself as an impartial observer meant that the journalist had to shy away from (openly) empathising with the asylum seekers' cause and from standing out as actively opposing the anti-immigrant views. The defence of democracy and human rights could be negotiated within this neutral position insofar as they were conceived of as universal—and hence, apolitical—values and not associated with the interests of any participants in the societal conflict.

10. Conclusion

This study has focused on the influence external groups have on journalistic role conceptions. Our intention, however, has not been to downplay the importance of education, the working environment and other contexts of professional socialisation for the development of journalistic role conceptions. Factors internal to the journalistic profession, including media organisations and the broader institutional culture, are undoubtedly vital in moulding the perceived societal expectations attached to journalism as a practice (e.g., Ahva et al., 2017; Preston, 2009). Nevertheless, the social-interactionist approach provides an important addition to the study of journalistic roles by reminding us about the rootedness of journalistic roles in social relations and politico-historical contexts (Hellmueller & Mellado, 2015).

The recent social and political conflicts concerning refugees are indicative of the tensions European societies are struggling with in adapting to large-scale migration, both voluntary and forced, which is part and parcel of contemporary global capitalism (Žižek, 2016). Concurrently, the move towards increasingly multicultural societies introduces various new challenges to journalism and places new demands on it, including greater knowledge of and sensitivity towards other cultures, the representation of minorities and the diversity of covered viewpoints as well as finding solutions to societal problems, such as intercultural conflicts and racism (e.g., Deuze, 2005; Eide & Nikunen, 2011). As indicated by our interviewees' experiences in the "refugee crisis", the increasing connectedness of localities to transnational processes also brings journalists into contact with individuals and groups they previously had little interaction with. All of these changes will potentially destabilise traditional con-

ceptions of what it means to be a journalist and call for their active negotiation.

Far from being an insulated field with autonomous rules and operational norms, journalism is being carried out in continuous interaction with other societal groups, and this interaction shapes the journalistic profession, including journalists' conceptions of their tasks and duties. Hence, despite the relevance of professional socialisation as the fundamental basis of journalistic role conceptions, this study has sought to demonstrate how dealing with contradictory expectations and contextual considerations in concrete situations, especially in shifting political and societal contexts, are necessarily part of journalists' sense-making and negotiation process concerning their roles. Further studies should aim at further analysing, and theorising about, the interplay between internal and external influences on journalistic role conceptions.

Acknowledgments

The authors appreciate the feedback given on earlier versions of this manuscript by Kaarina Nikunen and Mervi Pantti, as well as the reviewers and editors. Research was supported by the Helsingin Sanomat Foundation. Our special gratitude goes to the journalists who participated in the interviews.

Conflict of Interests

The authors declare no conflict of interests.

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Media and Communication (ISSN: 2183–2439)
2018, Volume 6, Issue 2, Pages 179–187
DOI: 10.17645/mac.v6i2.1293

Article

Iranian Diaspora, Reality Television and Connecting to Homeland

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Submitted: 29 November 2017 | Accepted: 14 June 2018 | Published: 29 June 2018

Abstract

Befarmaeed Sham, an Iranian diasporic media production adapted from the original UK reality show "Come Dine with me" features Iranian diaspora of diverse backgrounds as contestants in a cooking reality show. The success of the show has been unprecedented among audiences back home in Iran, reaching millions of households. Using discourse analysis this article examines the potential of reality TV in widening the scope of public sphere and in providing a space for participation and representation. The key practices to illustrate this are ways diaspora position themselves as subjects through discursive practices to express agency in generating, participating and sharing opinions. Casual talk and the entertaining attribute of reality TV focused on the everyday life of ordinary people, constructs a space to normalize audience engagement with what is otherwise, restrictive taboo topics embedded in themes around belonging, homeland, gender, and identity. The article concludes that the broad system of discourse used by diaspora as participants in the reality show constructs a space for representation. It can be considered as a contribution to enhancing the public sphere to not only communicate and connect with their homeland but to express opinions on broader social issues as a practice of civic engagement. This unique adaptation of reality TV is an important aspect of globalization and in using new media to mobilize diaspora in connecting to homeland.

Keywords

diaspora media; homeland; Iranian diaspora; migration; public sphere; reality TV

Issue

This article is part of the issue "Media and Communication between the Local and the Global", edited by Jessica Gustafsson (Södertörn University, Sweden) and Kinga Polynczuk-Alenius (University of Helsinki, Finland).

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1. Introduction

Since the Islamic Revolution in 1979, millions of Iranians have left their homeland for new locations around the globe. The plurality of Iranian diaspora provides a complex trajectory in the function of homeland both as a point of origin for return, as well as an imaginary, left behind. This latter typology reflects on the framework for understanding the interaction of diaspora with their homeland as fluid and dynamic based on the varied experiences of migration (Cohen, 1997; Morley, 2000; Safran, 1991). The approach taken in this paper considers the relationship between diaspora and their homeland as a dialectic process where diaspora see themselves both as members of a nation and as a no place based on the experience of belonging with metaphors of de- and reterritorialization.

Diasporic media, referring broadly to the multiple platforms of communication produced to meet the specific needs of the diasporic community, has always been prominent in sustaining links between Iranian diaspora and their homeland. With direct input and control over programming, diaspora has established and advanced this specific media as an alternative to dominant national media (Panagakos & Horst, 2006). The varied set of professional and amateur actors involved in diasporic media that deliver and prepare content has diversified the space for communication (Georgiou, 2007). In the past decade, globalization has accelerated and expanded the capacity of diaspora to use TV networks in connecting to the homeland. On-line technologies have also helped to ease access by eliminating state restrictions and allowing programming from diasporic TV networks to reach domestic audiences directly.

The intersection of the diaspora community with multiple platforms of media has led to what Appadurai describes as "diasporic public spheres", opening a way for participants to "move from shared imagination to collective action" (1996, p. 8). The use of internet technologies has shaped a much-needed space for civic deliberation by offering diaspora a display to communicate diverse opinions on social, economic and political concerns back home (Newland, 2010; Parham, 2005). The dynamic of diaspora using media and making direct connections to domestic audiences is considered by Brinkerhoff (2009) as a significant bottom-up strategy of activism and being influential on politics back home. This strategy has been particularly valuable in providing visibility for disadvantaged groups and marginalized communities that do not have co-operative political ties to their country. The Iranian diaspora illustrates this well as they have traditionally utilized diaspora media to provide audiences back home with alternative information. In this context, diaspora media has advanced an agenda for expression and participation in internal political debates, evading the heavily censored state media (Faris & Rahimi, 2015). While this has expanded the communicative space for engaging with home, it has also led to state measures to discredit the legitimacy of content. The emphasis on influence and mobilization of home audiences has heightened ideological polarization with tensions over diasporic media often labeled as politically motivated (Michaelsen, 2016).

In the past decade, diasporic media have countered such challenges by doing more to adapt to global media. The popularity of reality TV with its entertainment overtones has opened the boundaries of diaspora media attracting home audiences to what has traditionally been a highly polarized space. The genre of reality TV provides access for viewers into the lifestyle and behavior of ordinary people which can also benefit from this space to advance alternative information and awareness on important social issues (Bignell, 2005). One striking feature is the ability to bypass flow of information from official sources of mass media, and give a voice to ordinary citizens as participants.

This paper contributes to a better understanding of how diaspora is localizing this form of global media as a tool of representation, agency, and connection with homeland? What specific practices are used in the representation of diaspora? How are participants in the reality TV using the interplay of communications in negotiating connections to the homeland and in widening the scope of the public sphere? I use one of the most popular reality TV shows *Befarmaeed Sham*, translated as "please come to dinner" produced by the diasporic network, Manoto TV. It has been adapted based on the UK cooking show "Come Dine with Me". To highlight its distinctive features, the first section provides a review of global reality TV shows and the impact and connection with local audiences. In developing my argument I draw on this section for better understanding of reality TV's potential as a domain for an alternative form of engagement with audiences and as a public sphere for expression, representation, and agency. The next section provides an outline for understanding the evolution of Iranian diaspora and the complex relations between this community and diasporic media. This relationship has steadily been influenced by local and global factors that involve incessant adaptation to remain relevant as a medium for communication with the homeland. This is followed by discourse analysis of randomly selected episodes of *Befarmaeed Sham* to illustrate the multiple modes of communication. The paper concludes that although the reliance on the popularity of reality TV as a new form of media can be understood as specific to Iranian diaspora and as a consequence of socio-political context back home, it can also be viewed in enhancing access to the public sphere. Participation of diaspora in the reality show is argued to be a form of self-determined practice that encourages participatory modes of civic engagement in connecting with homeland.

2. Reality TV and Localizing the Global

The globalization of western reality TV and local adaptations by national broadcasting networks has been hugely popular. Edwards (2012) associates this success with new directions in storytelling that involves emotional appeals and direct demand for audiences to invest in television programming. Cast members in reality shows are turned into celebrities with participatory fan culture. Reality shows offer a more engaging experience and the ability for audiences to form a deeper connection to programs and its participants. Skeggs and Wood (2012) focus on the intense connections between audiences and participants that unlike other genre requires continuous visual attention and judgement. Audiences are engaging with text beyond its initial delivery in traditional television (Evans, 2011). For Chalaby (2003, p. 457) the genre of reality TV is increasingly part of a new global order of transnational networks. The "Real World" and "Survivor" series are considered to be pioneers of reality TV leading the way for other competition-based shows focused on capturing individual participants. The original British show "Pop Idol" for example and its US version has been adapted in over 40 countries. "Got Talent", a British show, has been adapted for broadcast in 58 countries (Kemp, 2014).

One of the promises of reality TV is the capacity to foster democratic processes with its interactive nature and appeal to the masses. The consistent involvement of wide sectors of society with passionate viewers eager to tune in promotes participation. In countries such as Indonesia and China, for example, reality shows have a huge fan base surpassing demand for traditionally popular soap operas. The popularity divulges a triumph in various cultural contexts that exist in dynamic tension with dominant state power. In authoritarian states, the ethos of democracy and salient role of individuals is em-

phasized with each contestant in reality TV participating as an ordinary person (Bingchun, 2009). The practice of social action and commitment by audiences to participants in the reality shows is an important function. Across the globe, for example, audiences have been so fervent to vote that they have encountered jammed phone lines, often requiring multiple efforts and hours of alert determination to place their votes (Meizel, 2011). For ordinary participants, there is power in social mobility and inclusion in representation previously accessible to elite class and celebrities (Riegert, 2007). Throughout the Arab world, for example, the reality TV "Star Academy" resembling American Idol had become so popular that restaurants owners complained of being empty in the region during its broadcasts (Miles, 2006).

The contribution of reality TV to participatory politics has been mixed. Some scholars consider the superficial nature of such programming and question the direct influence as leading to social change (Jenkins, 2006; Murphy & Kraidy, 2003). Some have criticized the adaptation of such programs as an invasion of western mass media and promotion of a particular model of self-representation focused on the individual as a real actor and performer (Morreale, 2005; Murray & Ouellette, 2004; Windle, 2010). Yet, despite the criticism for cultural relativism, the adaptation of global reality TV shows seems to be obscured by its more important functions in promoting participation as a form of civic engagement. Wu (2014) offers insight on the significant link between one of the most popular reality TV shows, "Super Girl" in China and audiences expressing opinions on the broader social issues which enhanced civic engagement. Furthermore, diaspora and other marginalized communities can count on reality TV's entertaining communication in counterbalancing a more positive portrayal of images and narratives that reinforce negative stereotypes (Grassian, 2013). The "Shah of Sunset", for example, a reality show based on the lives of Iranian diaspora living in Los Angeles, has provided a different perspective exposing millions of viewers to the culture, trials, and antics of the Iranian diaspora. This may impact audiences to probe deeper about the Iranian culture and its people.

Representation of participants from marginalized communities exchanging opinions on taboo topics can trigger communications, national dialogue and public debates that would otherwise remain obscure. Punathambekar (2010) for example writes on the deeply political nature of "Indian Idol" and the relationship between reality TV and public discourse to mobilize support for contestants. Graham and Hajru (2011) consider the significant potential for the opening of communication spaces and leading to larger national debates on significant issues. In the South African version of "Big Brother", participants of mixed race and backgrounds were indirectly tackling the issue of race relations and a history of divisions marked by decades of Apartheid (Mathijs & Jones, 2004, p. 173). The diversity among participants in a reality TV can intersect dominant social norms by providing a public sphere for interaction among individuals of different backgrounds (Nalin, 2008). In societies with a history of tension and conflict along ethnic and racial lines for example reality TV offers an opportunity to surpass differences. The portrayal of ordinary people, rather than actors with attachment to multiple places and diverse communities widens the grounding and scope of belonging and identity (Georgiou, 2010). These networks also play an essential role in the way diasporic communities are reshaping ways to connect and be part of the global cultural scene. For Iranians in Iran, the ability to receive entertainment in their native language from diaspora communities has completely shifted their viewing experience.

3. The Emergence of Iranian Diaspora and Media

Since the revolution in 1979, migration has been a consistent part of life for most Iranians. Understanding the structure of migratory waves is vital to understanding the community of Iranian diaspora particularly when taking into consideration the specific positioning of media to the homeland. The first large exodus took place during the dramatic political upheaval of the Iranian revolution and less than a year later the Iran–Iraq war. It involved an abrupt migration of Iranians anticipating political and religious persecution. In this wave, exilic identity was the core factor in establishing diaspora media as a transnational network. The subsequent waves of migration were more diverse including non-political categories such as skilled professionals, working-class population, and economic migrants. This is important to note as the different characteristics of migratory waves altered the objectives and needs for utilizing diasporic media in connecting with the homeland (Darznik, 2008).

Some of the earliest diasporic TV launched by the first wave of Iranian migrants were independent run networks typically with a low budget and a single male host. The content was exclusively partisan framed leaving domestic audiences apprehensive and distrustful (Karim, 2003). There were also issues with limited access to programming often requiring high subscription monthly rates. This led to a linguistically defined and elite audience that relied distinctly on these select media platforms to connect and reaffirm belonging to the homeland (Budarick, 2015). In Los Angeles for example, diaspora TV focused on nostalgia and the desire for home by featuring exiled singers and entertainers symbolic of the old homeland (Ghorashi, 2003). The start of online technologies and the internet permeating inside Iran by the late 1990's had a dramatic impact in the direction of diasporic media. The boom in television programming from US and Europe reaching millions of Iranian viewers directly provided alternatives in media consumption. Content had to appeal to an increasingly sophisticated and tech-savvy domestic audience. As more and more Iranians owned satellite dishes, the number of diaspora television networks expanded. The emergent youth culture

in Iran had gradually grown to rely on the use of social media for information with an unfettered appetite for entertaining programs (Harrison, 2003). Foreign channels became the main source of media consumption among domestic viewers with over 40 native language channels ranging from melodrama dubbed shows to news and entertainment received via satellite from Turkey and the Middle East. Diaspora TV networks were steadily leading a role as a counter-narrative to state media and influential in politics back home. The Iranian government would often place blame for unrest in local streets and uprising as triggered by diasporic TV networks (Fellers & Moaveni, 2003). This period marked a transition in diaspora media becoming a significant platform for organizing an otherwise fragmented transnational community. The emergence of an influential diaspora media united Iranian migrants through a shared experience of displacement from home (Naficy, 1993).

The diaspora media network Manoto TV, a family owned television channel represents this transition well by achieving an unprecedented popularity with viewers back home. By opening a space, a void in the area of non-political programming it has captured a yearning among home audiences for entertaining content (Bajoghli, 2018). Launched in 2010 from studios in London, programs range from the Iranian diaspora participating as contestants in game shows, late night talk shows, and reality TV, adapted from global formats. Although viewing the global phenomenon of western style reality shows from a local perspective is not new, its adaptation by diasporic television network has delivered a novel way for representation of diaspora as participants in the context of entertainment with cooking, singing and talent shows. Programs are accessed via satellite and on YouTube with the vast majority of viewership inside Iran (Torbati, 2012).

I focus on this diasporic TV network and the popular reality show, *Befarmaeed Sham*, translated as "please come to dinner". It is based on the original UK cooking show "Come Dine with me" with the distinct difference of diaspora as contestants in an amateur cooking competition. The social text that surrounds the productions is complex and multi-layered as the camera focuses on the interplay of private and every life of diaspora with the backdrop of the host country where each resides. The next section outlines the analytical framework and the data used in this paper. It is focused on the space provided by reality TV as a public sphere and analysis of three dimensions of discourse based on the nature of communications and interactions that constitute the adaptation and use of this global media format in connecting diaspora to homeland.

4. Method and Analysis

4.1. Framework

Data collection involved random selection of ten episodes of *Befarmaeed Sham* from 2010–2016 that were filmed across European cities populated by Iranian diaspora. Episodes were accessed and viewed on Manoto YouTube channel. The format of the show is based on four contestants forming a group that meets for the first time in the first contestant's house and dine in each other's home over a period of a week. Each evening after the three-course dinner, prepared by the host, contestants publicly share and evaluate the host's performance in cooking and hospitality with the winner receiving a small cash prize announced in the fourth and final group dinner. Each group of four contestants totals 4 hours of content featured in single 60-minute episodes. The format and sequence for episodes are based on the same order as the original reality show. However, there are differences as each evening's dinner as the contestant hosting the dinner in the group has a formative role in impelling the direction and temperament of each episode. The identification of each episode in this paper is based on the categorization of the group number, followed by episode number featuring each individual contestant and date of the broadcast. All episodes were transcribed and coded for group and episode numbers, participant's gender, age, occupation, marital status, and place of birth. This detailed biography is provided at the start of each episode by the host narrative that is only presented orally.

The methodological approach in this article is based on Fairclough's (1992, 2003, 2010) discourse analysis. Discourse is defined as multidirectional interactions and processes producing and interpreting the text, as well as the situational context of its use (Fairclough, 1992, p. 3). This broad approach as based on the dialectical relations between language and other objects, moments and elements in the social world or moments along with internal relations. The dimensions of discourse are made apparent in verbal interactions between participants as well as the functions and context of text and performance by each participant. This framework encompasses description, interpretation, and the explanation of the representation of social world through human action. This also corresponds with Gee's (2005) view that the main function of discourse is to facilitate the performance of social activities. The discursive analysis consists of using three pillars of text, discourse practice and sociocultural practice to outline the connections between processes and relations that may not be visible to the producers or analysts of these texts (Fairclough, 2010, p. 132).

4.2. Text

The textual analysis involved the examination of verbal styles used by the narrator and the social actors (the contestants and the audience) to convey traits and connections to the homeland. At the beginning of each show, audiences are provided with a brief self-introduction and biography for each participant that includes name, age, the city of birth, number of years living away from home, and occupation. The opening shot launches straight into connecting with the contestants based primarily on the

identification with the homeland. The camera rotates rapidly back and forth between images of the host country as the context where each diaspora resides and the biography. It combines the narrative self-introduction by each participant in their work setting or public sites such as a playground, coffee shop or restaurant. This non-verbal backdrop facilitates an understanding of the diasporic context for audiences back in Iran, offering them a glimpse of everyday lives in diasporic spaces.

In the introductory section contestants carefully position their identity first on aspects of their individuality and then identification with the homeland. The descriptive bases for representation emphasize agency in individualism. It places the diaspora as subjects in constructing their biography. The sharing of national identity with information such as the place and location of birth provides access to participants within the boundary of the nation-state. This re-territorialization assures audiences back home of a connection while the de-politicization accentuates the entertainment value of the reality show and upholds confidence. This is important for audiences that are typically distrustful of political motives of diasporic media networks. The number of years living as diaspora is included in the biography. The multiple categories of situating the homeland as the place of birth and a palpable place left behind allow participants to represent their sense of interconnected belonging. These examples illustrate this connection.

> Sara is female, 41 years old, from the town of Hamedan, a single mother of 2, accountant, has been living in London for 6 years. (Group 10, Episode G3, 2016)

> Arvin is male, 21 years old, from Tehran, a student in pharmacy, has been living in London for 3 years. (Group 10, Episode G1, 2016)

Capturing diaspora as participants in the context of the reality show constructs a space away from the portrayal of Iran as the homeland to focus instead on belonging. Using self-described biographical text achieves a multifaceted mode of belonging with ambivalence and resistance to the politicization of identity. The interplay in the biographical style of communication pivots belonging to multiple places with a transnational orientation. The goal of text illustrates agency to display, communicate and promote an identity that transcends differences to focus on the common and collective experience of diaspora as being away from home. To reflect on representation, the range of participants suggests diversity which encourages audiences of different backgrounds to relate to participants.

4.3. Discourse Practice

Discourse practice looks into processes of text production, distribution, and consumption. It examines the production and positioning of text in a certain way among possible alternatives. I examine individual storytelling as a specific mode of communication in an intimate setting that provides a singular space for the participant's narrative to emerge. This mode of communication encourages positive values of "ordinariness, informality, authenticity and sincerity" (Fairclough, 2010, p. 158).

Participants engage in a performative and discreet form of storytelling prior to the arrival of guests. The camera is focused entirely on the participant in their private homes and in the backdrop of family photographs and objects such as a painting hanging in a bedroom or a personal item that the participant considers as being important in their lives. The gaze into the private domestic space and personal objects is an effective visual to display socio-economic backgrounds of the diaspora. The openness to allow the public gaze into domestic spaces such as kitchen, living, and bedroom demonstrates trust and sincerity. The show highlights the interrelations between the home and homeland as two complimentary locations with each participant navigating attachment and dis-attachment to each site. The home as the private space of the contestant is infused into the public domain contributing to the informalization of the contemporary society's discourse (Fairclough, 2010).

As the host begins preparation for the dinner, production is focused on individual storytelling as a prelude to the interactive communication with guests that arrive later. This entire section taking up half of the 60-minute episode is focused on the individual participant with the agency to select topics for communication. The pace of the storytelling is reflective, intimate and slower in comparison to the much more upbeat way participants interact with each other later in the show. While each participant starts preparing the ingredients and narrating the recipe for dinner, cooking which is the main theme of the reality show takes a trivial role as a periphery for individual storytelling. Participants use a self-confessional style of storytelling. Though stories audiences come to understand their experience and to convey a specific perspective on varied topics such as the challenges of forced migration, raising children away from family back home, personal freedom, adapting to foreign language, culture, gender relations, loneliness, economic hardship, and erosion in family life. The camera is focused entirely on the participant using a discursive style that echoes an emotional, therapeutic and more intimate communication. This mode exhorts casual informality but also authenticity.

The interplay of emotions immersed in feelings of sadness, grief, and loss, and then by allotment of an object such as family pictures or personal art, stir sentiments of longing for the homeland. Aslama and Pantti (2006) explain that the explicit focus of using emotions in reality TV is emphasized on establishing effective relationship with viewers. Paradoxical implications and correlations between narratives of individual and emotional pain, sadness, and isolation are allied with separation and loss of homeland.

> I want to share with you this picture of my sister (tears are shed silently as participant continues talking) and reminds me of home. (Group 38, Episode E4, 2011)

> I have an extensive collection of Tomato ketchup that I wanted to share with the viewers. The reason for this collection is that it is a memory of my homeland and growing up with my brothers, we always used this sauce, which is why I hold on to this memory by collecting these bottles. (Group 42, Episode E4, 2012)

> When I first left my homeland and came here (as a migrant), everything was new. I did not have the support network of my family. I did not think I could make it. I want to reach out to all the women like me, living away from home and tell them, that you will make it but it is very challenging and difficult. (Group 19, Episode E1, 2011)

> I view my life as better back when I was in Iran, I hope to return to my homeland and to see my family. (Group 60, Episode E4, 2012)

Next, participants position themselves as self-determined social actors. Each participant provides a distinctive narrative on the motivation for taking part in the reality TV show. This is used to demonstrate the discursive nature of agency in connecting to home. For example, some participants explicitly point to diasporic identity as isolating them from networks of family and friends and consider participation in the reality show as an opportunity for visibility and in restoring links to the homeland. This narrative is instrumental in enhancing the connection to audiences back home. The expression of dislocation and the desire to re-connect to home as the motivation for participating in the reality show is an effective engagement strategy. It constructs familiarity and an emotional connection between participants and audiences (Hill, 2017).

> My mother asked me to participate in this show because she wanted my relatives and family in Iran to see me (my life. I am participating because I want to connect with them. (Group 43, Episode E1, 2012)

> I wanted to show you all [referring to audiences] this painting which means a lot to me. It reminds of my homeland, my town, and my community back home which I miss, and wanted to share it. (Group 44, Episode E1, 2012)

The participant-generated content in the form of individual and unscripted storytelling is empowering. It provides a space for each participant in the reality show, as ordinary people to have a voice and more importantly a public sphere for visibility. The self-selection and varied choice of topics illustrate agency regarding the way each participant opts to engage with viewers. The practice of this type of communication fragments the traditional boundaries between participants and viewers, encouraging a new relationship. The commitment, motivation, and contribution of participants to use the space of the reality show to engage with social issues remind audiences of the significance of civic engagement. Moreover, the space for participation is neutral given the right of everyone including marginalized groups such as youth and women to have representation.

4.4. Sociocultural Practice

Once the guests arrive, there is a transition from individual storytelling to interactive communication between participants. Various strategies, choices of content and styles are used to produce and present the discourse. The sociocultural practice provides an interpretation of the construction of social identities and representations of the social world through the text by considering aspects such as the context of the situation, and the wider societal context or context of culture (Fairclough, 2010, p. 95).

Opportunities for interaction in small group settings can lead people of different backgrounds to use the space of entertainment and casual talk to construct opinions and interact with other participants. While communication by participants is positional particularly in discussing taboo social issues, different perspectives are openly shared and confrontation is not emphasized. Participants demonstrate interest and commitment to engage in open discussions. This model of communication is influential in exhorting audiences back home to engage with such issues. The ability to talk freely and interact with people that were unknown to each other previous to the show, promote trust. The opportunity for participants as a group and community to self-regulate communications and interactions in the group fosters values of freedom and individual liberty. In this space, exchanges of narrative appear effortless and without an authority or preferred viewpoint providing participants with a sense of agency and empowerment.

Another fundamental emphasis is the salience of gender relations that is presented with key variable and crucial implications for home audiences. Many of *Befarmaeed Sham* episodes feature mixed age and gender groups. The prominent display of interactions and narrative schemes disrupt the norms on morality and the boundaries for male-female relationships. The visual framing defies strict state censorship rules regarding women's representation and appearance. The public display of socialization between participants removes barriers for interactions. Men and women of all ages, diverse ethnic, education and class backgrounds mix freely to contest gender relations through the re-appropriation of norms and alternative redefinition of what is available but more importantly, is possible. The representation of this diverse and complex interaction provides audiences with an alternative construct for social relations. The space for expression of appearance and interaction

is fluid and free from social restrictions and state control. Interactions signify a post-gender community featuring participants that invalidate its significance. Identities constructed around the norms of the state are deterritorialized to produce alternatives. For example, male and female participants openly discuss religion, culture, marriage, sexuality, gender identity and other taboo topics such as divorce. Female participants display and communicate their economic independence while the male single parent participants challenge cultural gender role expectations and take an assertive position in cooking and taking care of children. (Group 37, E1, 2011)

> When I was younger, I wanted to be a boy instead of a girl. I first became aware of happiness in being a woman (female) and the possibility of freedom when I migrated from home. Back home, there are many impositions and conditions that harbor fear for being a girl. (Group 10, Episode 3, 2011)

After the guests arrive, participants use the group setting for interactions in the private spaces of their homes. This interactive communication provides a public display of expression on a range of social issues based on the lived reality of everyday life of Iranians back home. They openly express opinions and negotiate positions on restrictive issues such as drinking alcohol.

In some episodes depending on the specific host, a variety of alcohol brands are openly consumed by participants. This practice of agency to break social taboos by drinking alcohol is a striking depiction of resistance and in breaking with norms. Moreover, it is an authentic representation of reality back home that is performed and reinforced by participants. Although alcohol consumption is illegal in Iran and punishable by law, its use is fairly widespread. It is hidden from the public gaze and yet, privately a socially acceptable practice (Momtazi & Rawson, 2010). Participants express diversity and division in the framing of the issue of alcohol consumption. Connection to the homeland is defined by conflict as much as accord, in diverse ways in which the idea of belonging both outside and inside of homeland may be viewed. At the same time, each division of diversity and expression of opinion is rooted in mutual support and respect. These examples illustrate the use of reality TV's unscripted communication and the space offered by diasporic media as a platform for freedom of expression in exchanges between participants.

> I opened and served the champagne. Mohammed shared with us that he did not drink alcohol, I respect his choice, and it does not bother me. (Group 1, Episode G1, 2010)

> There was a lot of drinking alcohol in the show and it does not fit so well in our culture as the show is called come to dinner-not come drinking. (Group S10, Episode G3, 2016)

> Let's not drink (alcohol) tonight as we have in the other nights (several wine bottles are already placed on the dinner table by the host) with each other. But let's lose ourselves and have fun by smoking. (Group 10, P3, 2011)

The socio-cultural practices of discourse through the interaction and communication between participants provide a sphere for representation of expression. The intensity of interactions between participants in this section of the show is much more developed because of the nature of communications on topics pertinent to social issues back home. The right for freedom of expression from state censors enable *Befarmaeed Sham* to serve as a global space for discussion on local topics that could never be broadcast on domestic television. The multiple levels of interactions generated by participants and incorporated within the entertainment structure of reality TV serve an important function for explicit form of participatory process. Moreover, such discussions and exchanges in the context of reality TV can engage viewers talking and generating discussions during and after shows. From this perspective, even when interaction is not visual, audiences remain or can be influenced by the content from reality shows (Ayish, 2011, p. 768). For viewers back home, the emergent discourse spawned in reality TV and generated in multiple formats by diaspora as participants can have a vital impact in contributing to alternative information.

5. Conclusion

This article has explored the participation of diaspora in reality TV mediated by a diasporic media network. It has provided a better understanding of the way diasporic media have adapted successfully to the current global media environment, to appeal to home audiences that seek entertaining television with cultural resonance. The intricate interactions and different communicative features of this genre facilitate what Fairclough (1992) described as discourse.

The rise in alternative ways that diaspora uses global media to communicate with the local has provided innovative forms of engagement in the public sphere. This suggests the participation of diaspora in reality TV as a way to enhance contributions to civic engagement. The open space for the expression of opinions in what Livingstone and Lunt (1994) highlight is interfacing of many discourses, is part of the political process. Reality TV as a form of media takes on many attributes of globalized culture while constructing a new space for showcasing narrative to disseminate information about matters that are often taboo at home. This unique adaptation of reality TV is an important aspect of globalization and in using new media as a practice to mobilize diaspora that remains otherwise fragmented to cultivate the expression of diverse voices and engage with audiences back home.

While participants share the individual stories of migration and the impact of physical dislocation from the homeland as a distinctive and deeply personal event, the consequences of this experience has led them to belong to a diaspora, which entails an emotional attachment to a place of origin. In contrast to the individualistic experience of migration, participants collectively share the experience of being diaspora. The action and practice of participation in the reality show have unified and reterritorialized an otherwise fragmented community. It has organized diasporic voices as a network to interact as a community away from the homeland. The diversity in participation and manifold forms of expression in the public sphere has provided the diaspora with an accessible tool for civic engagement. It has contributed to opening the media spaces for participation and representation and expanding the framework of public sphere described by Appadurai (1996). The opportunity for a much broader range of people to participate in the reality show, reflects a vision for a more diverse participation back in the homeland.

The space to incite communications and interactions on taboo social issues has also expanded beyond the territory of the homeland to domestic spaces such as the living room of participants in the reality show as sites where Iranians around the world could explore ideas for the future. These occasions might also help to explain issues that could not be done in the homeland due to restrictions that need to be addressed. In doing so, it can link diaspora perspectives and voices with domestic politics and national debates. This unique diasporic global media adaptation serves as a model for a visible and direct way to represent and interact along the nexus of global to local. It is an important aspect of globalization and in media mobilizing diaspora to reterritorialize home. Interventions aimed at bringing about social and political and economic transformation are often carried out by the government and non-government organizations. In societies which are resilient to external influence and intervention, diaspora can use mediated interactions to exert focused, organized, and powerful influence on the homeland.

Acknowledgments

The author would like to thank the editors of this issue for their comments on the earlier version of this manuscript.

Conflict of Interests

The author declares no conflict of interests.

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Media and Communication (ISSN: 2183–2439)
2018, Volume 6, Issue 2, Pages 188–198
DOI: 10.17645/mac.v6i2.1295

Article

Domestic Connectivity: Media, Gender and the Domestic Sphere in Kenya

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Submitted: 30 November 2017 | Accepted: 9 May 2018 | Published: 29 June 2018

Abstract
This article explores how increased media access and use influences Kenyan women's everyday life and alters the domestic space. Based on 30 in-depth interviews with women in Uasin Gishu County, Kenya, the article demonstrates that women have incorporated newly gained media into their daily lives and routines. Increased media access has opened up the home and turned the domestic sphere from a secluded place into a connected space in which women can receive input from, connect with and interact with the world beyond their immediate surroundings whilst simultaneously remaining at home and fulfilling their traditional gender roles. Women's media use thus reinforces their connection to the domestic sphere and the gendered division of labour. Although it has the potential to challenge gender inequalities, the extent to which this occurs depends on the individual woman's ability to act on the imaginaries and ideas that media carry.

Keywords
domestic sphere; gender roles; Kenya; media and everyday life; women's media use

Issue
This article is part of the issue "Media and Communication between the Local and the Global", edited by Jessica Gustafsson (Södertörn University, Sweden) and Kinga Polynczuk-Alenius (University of Helsinki, Finland).

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1. Introduction

> Jane is a 22-year-old woman. She grew up in a rural village in Western Kenya, where she lived with her siblings and grandfather as both her parents passed away when she was a young girl. Their house was not connected to electricity, but they had a battery driven radio that the grandfather used to listen to vernacular radio stations on. Sometimes Jane was allowed to switch it to her favourite radio station, Kiss 100, a commercial private radio station in Nairobi, so that she could listen to modern music. Less than a year ago, Jane moved to her aunt's house in a middle-class estate in Eldoret to help look after the aunt's children. Now she can listen to radio whenever she likes, and, since relocating, she has also been exposed to TV for the very first time in her life. She loves TV due to its audio-visual character and content that, according to her, "help her develop". She says that TV teaches her how to live and interact with other people. In other words, it prepares her for life to come. The TV also helps her to look after the children, as they can watch cartoons while she does other household duties or while she is busy on her new mobile phone. Her new mobile phone is a Techno touch, a smart phone, which allows her to access the Internet and therefore to chat to her friends and her boyfriend (who lives in Nairobi) using Facebook and WhatsApp (Interview Jane, 16th April 2015).

In the last year, Jane's life has changed dramatically. Not only did she leave a rural setting for a life in the city, but she also had to navigate the increased media access that came with such a move. Even though Jane's domestic responsibilities mean she stays mainly inside the home, she is now exposed and connected to the world outside; locally, regionally and even globally through media. Jane's story illustrates the huge disparities in how people in Kenya live and their access to media. It also draws attention to how the increased introduction of media in people's homes is changing people's—especially women's—everyday lifei in the domestic sphere, which is a theme this article will explore.

The use of new technology, such as mobile phones, is currently growing rapidly in Kenya. Consequence, there is a growing interest in how access to new technology can

help assist development goals and for example bridge gender inequalities. Popular development discourse often paints a very optimistic picture of the appropriation of, for example, mobile telephony. Yet, in order to fully understand this use of media and technology, it is important to situate it in the societal context and existing power structures, as new technology has the potential not only to challenge but also to reinforce existing power structures (Tenhunen, 2013). Moreover, it is important to situate a new technology in the existing local media ecology. Thus, this article examines the increased access to and use of both old and new information and communication technologies (ICTs), since it wishes to emphasise that, in recent years, all women have become more connected to the world beyond their immediate surrounding but that the degree to which this has occurred depends on factors such as their educational level, geographical location and financial situation. Through qualitative interviews with 30 women in Kenya, the article aims to discuss the following question: How does increased access and use of media influence Kenyan women's daily life in the domestic sphere and in what ways does it challenge gender inequalities and prevailing gender roles?

2. Background and Literature Review

In order to understand and situate women's media use in Kenya, this section will first discuss gender inequalities in Africa; second, it will deal with theories of media in the domestic sphere and, finally, it will review some relevant literature on media and gender in Africa.

2.1. Gender Inequalities in Africa

Gender inequality is often illustrated by the dichotomy between the public and domestic sphere. Traditionally, women in many African countries had the opportunity to partake in public life, even if their involvement was not equal to that of their male counterpart, but this changed with the arrival of colonialism and the introduction of the modern African states (Mikell, 1997, pp. 3–10). With Colonialism and Christianity came the idea of building the home (Mutongi, 1999/2005, p. 73) and women's identities were to a large degree reduced to mothers and domestic dependent wives, as women were discouraged from partaking in activities in the public sphere, for example, agricultural work, in which they had previously engaged (Cornwall, 2005, pp. 7–11). Consequently, women's access to the public realm decreased and space became increasingly gendered. Women's restricted mobility and limited access to public spaces affected women's access to income as well as information and knowledge (Hassanin, 2009, p. 77).

Nowadays, few Kenyan women are formally employed. The majority of women do work, whether in the informal economy or in the household, but their work is often undervalued and "invisible" (Nzomo, 1997, p. 242). Since their income is not always considered part of the household economy, their contributions do not often lead to more decision-making power in the family (Wamue-Ngare & Njoroge, 2011, pp. 10–11). Moreover, women have triple work burdens due to their domestic, reproductive and productive roles (Nzomo, 1997, p. 247), and only the latter generates income.

Repeated financial slowdowns in the Kenyan economy (Kelbert & Hossain, 2014; Wamue-Ngare & Njoroge, 2011) and the HIV/AIDS epidemic (Oburu, 2011, p. 153) have increased the pressure on women to conduct paid labour. As men rarely voluntarily give up their privileges that patriarchy has given them (Nzomo, 1997, p. 236), several studies have shown that changes in family constellations in Kenya, whereby the superiority of the man as the breadwinner and head of the family is challenged, has increased conflicts, divorces, gender-based violence and alcoholism (Kelbert & Hossain, 2014; Wamue-Ngare & Njoroge, 2011). Women's gained power thus comes at a high price and, even though they have to engage in paid work, the un-paid work remains.

Gender equality is central in the Kenyan 2010 constitution. However, due to strong prevailing cultural norms and a law passed in 2014 that made polygamy—though not polyandry—legal, such gender equality might take time to implement. Moreover, as Josephine Ahikire (2014) states, although several African governments have adopted more liberal forms of feminism and passed national gender policies that aim for gender equality, few resources have been allocated to its implementation. There is therefore a risk that concepts such as gender and empowerment become depoliticised buzzwords (Ahikire, 2014, pp. 11–17).

The dominant perception of womanhood in Kenya is to a large extent synonymous with being caring and motherly (Spronk, 2007, p. 12). Many men perceive modern working women as "out of place" (Kesby, 1999, p. 40) or egocentric (Spronk, 2007, p. 12). In Kenyan popular culture, modern women who challenge traditional gender roles are often labelled immoral. The "city girl" and the "university girl" are two reoccurring stereotypes that are often contrasted with the "pure village girl" in popular discourse (Ligaga, 2014). Thus, women's increased freedom and liberation often receive misogynist responses from conservative men who argue that they are defending "African culture" (Ahikire, 2014, p. 20) by stigmatizing women who break with gender norms as neglecting African customs (Nzomo, 1997, p. 241). Yet, despite this response from men, women continue to explore the available possibilities to challenge the gender structures that are imposed on them in their daily lives (Ahikire, 2014, p. 8).

2.2. Media in the Domestic Sphere

Media and communication technologies have the ability to disrupt and reshape the boundaries of different spheres in society. When media enter the home, the dis-

tinction between private/public is highlighted and simultaneously challenged. Media and communication technologies become embedded in the everyday routines of the household and those who are part of it. However, media can also have a disembbeding effect by facilitating contact between people in the home and those outside (Morley, 2000, pp. 86–87). Morley phrases this effect as the ability to "articulate together that which is separate" (Morley, 2000, p. 87). While sitting on the living room sofa, family members can follow events in other parts of the world on the TV or talk to a friend in a distant place on the phone.

In the 1970s, Raymond Williams (1975) introduced the concept of mobile privatisation to describe this phenomenon. He argued that both the radio and the television facilitated new social input by bringing news and entertainment into the home. These technologies helped people fulfil their wish to discover and see new places while not having to leave the safely of their house. Williams argued that these new technologies were characterised by two contradictory but linked predispositions: mobility on the one hand and more self-sufficient family homes on the other (Williams, 1975, pp. 26–27).

As domestic technologies are embedded in the everyday life of the family, they contribute to the construction and maintenance of gender relations within the family. It is therefore possible to talk about gendered patterns of media usage. For example, in her study, Ann Moyal identified a distinct female usage of the telephone; women utilised the phone for kin keeping and nurturing friendships, thus helping women to create and sustain a network outside their homes (Moyal, 1992, p. 67). Moreover, Lana Rakow and Vija Navarro (1993) found two distinct mobile phone practices among women: remote mothering and working parallel shifts. Remote mothering refers to the ability to always be available to one's children and to be able to fulfil the obligations of a mother across time and space, while working parallel shifts refers to being able to exist simultaneously in the domestic and work sphere (Rakow & Navarro, 1993). These distinct female media practices have developed due to women's subordinate position. As much as these practices can challenge the restrictions imposed on women's lives, they simultaneously reinforce traditional gender roles.

2.3. Media and Gender in Africa

Several studies (Hilbert, 2011; Wamala, 2012) suggest that women in the Global South often have less access to ICTs than men, due to women's restricted access to education, employment and income. It is thus women's position and disadvantages in the societal structure that impact on their access and usage of ICTs (Wamala, 2012, pp. 3–4). It is therefore necessary to adopt an intersectionality approach when analysing women's access and use of media and communication technologies, as factors such as class, race, education and age not only influence women's marginalisation, as Kimberle Crenshaw (1991) argues, but also their access and use of media and communication technologies.

Mobile phones are being adopted rapidly in Africa, leapfrogging landline telephones, and, even though women still have lower mobile ownership than men in Kenya, the penetration rate is high, even among rural women (Gustafsson & Nielsen, 2016, 2017). Many studies show that women mainly use their phone to nurture strong ties, i.e. stay connected with family members (Gustafsson & Nielsen, 2016; Tenhunen, 2008), but research also shows that mobile phones can help women venture into businesses (Tawah, 2013).

After marriage, it is common for women in Kenya to move to the village or the home of the man, and while many men go to work in the city, the wives usually remain to manage the home and the children. The mobile phone therefore becomes a tool that facilitates communication between dispersed family members (Murphy & Priebe, 2011). Moreover, rural women in Kenya seldom make use of the mobile quality of the mobile phone; they rather use it as a traditional landline (Murphy & Priebe, 2011). Alette Schoon (2011) argues that the mobile phone actually facilitates immobility, as the phone "make[s] it easier to stay home and get through the day", at least for housebound women in poor areas in South Africa (Schoon, 2011, p. 112).

According to George Gathigi (2009), radio, which is the medium with the largest audience in Kenya, provides women with information and news but also companionship in their daily life in the domestic sphere. His study also demonstrates how radio upholds gendered spaces within the domestic sphere, as men often listen to one radio in the living room, whereas women listen to another radio in the kitchen while preparing food. Moreover, the study suggests that women are more orientated towards health and family programmes because they can relate to the content. One single mother in Gathigi's study felt less abnormal after listening to a programme which discussed single motherhood and women-headed families (Gathigi, 2009).

Similarly, Lila Abu-Lughod (1997) and Bodil Fredriksen (2000) demonstrate in their work how women in Egypt and Kenya use TV content to reflect on their lives, prevailing gender structures and their own position within those structures. Both studies draw on Appadurai's (1990) idea that media offers new imaginaries, new ways for the audience to see and imagine their reality. The findings of these studies underline the importance of situating women's media use in their everyday life setting and within a wider societal context.

3. Methodology—Studying Women's Media Use in the Domestic Sphere

The present study is based on semi-structured in-depth interviews and was carried out between January and June 2015 in three different locations in Uasin Gishu County, Kenya. The previous year a baseline survey with

799 households had been conducted in five areas (two rural settings, two peri-urban and different parts of the city of Eldoret) to better understand people's media access and use. Some of the most prevalent results were significant differences in media access and use between men and women but also between people living in rural, urban and peri-urban areas and how these intersected. Consequently, the qualitative study, which this is part of, aimed to explore these differences. The interviews were conducted in some of the same areas as the baseline study had been carried out as one rural area, one peri-urban area, and two locations in the city of Eldoret were selected. In each location, the local administration, the chief and the village elders permitted access.

Approximately the equivalent of one month was spent in each location and the first few days were devoted to general observations of the area and its media situation and informal conversations with people. However, observation was not a major data collecting method but a complement that was used to better understand the areas and help achieve diversity in the sampling process as it provided knowledge about who lived or spent time in which places.

After the initial phase, individuals living in the area were interviewed. Semi-structured in-depth interviews were chosen, as it is a method that allows the interviewee to influence the direction of the interview and generates in-depth nuanced understandings of the subject studied (Kvale, 1997). The interviews discussed which media (old and new) the women had access to and used, which type of content they preferred and how media use was integrated in their daily life. The interview guide consisted of general questions like "What do you normally like to watch on TV?" "What do you use your mobile phone for?", "Who do you normally communicate with?"—questions that were followed up by probing questions to better understand how and why they used media in a certain way and the meanings they ascribed to their media use. All interviews were conducted with an interpreter present to enable the interviewees to express themselves in Kiswahili or Kalenjin in addition to English.

In total, 30 interviews with women were conducted; most often in or in close proximity to the interviewee's home, for example in their compound or on their plot, unless the interviewee was working in the area and it was more convenient to conduct the interview at the workplace while on break. 10 interviews were conducted in a rural area, 10 interviews were conducted in the city of Eldoret (half of these interviews took place in an informal settlement and half in a middle-class estate), and the remaining 10 interviews were conducted in a peri-urban area—bringing different female experiences together. The interviewees were purposefully sampled according to theoretical indices, thus aiming to achieve diversity in terms of age, financial status, geographical setting and education; however, the study does not aim nor claim to be representative. No concrete checklist was used to select interviewees, but when approaching potential interviewees, these categories were in the back of our mind. One factor for example that influenced the selection of which people we approached was the type of housing they lived in—ranging from bricked houses with satellite dishes to mud huts without electricity, as it influences the household's media use. Moreover, the type of house they lived in often corresponded with their financial status and thus often also influenced level of education. Age was another category which were considered when approaching who to interview, yet sometimes it was difficult to estimate someone's age and if they agreed to be interviewed we did not decline due to them being a few years younger or older than we had anticipated. In the rural area, five women below 30 (18–29) and five above 30 years (30–72) were interviewed. In the other two areas, we interviewed six women under 30 and four above 30.

The interviews were recorded with the consent of the interviewee and ranged between 45 minutes to 2 hours in length and have been transcribed and translated into English if conducted in Kiswahili or Kalenjin. The names of the interviewees have been changed to better protect their identity.

First, each interview transcript was read repeatedly to gain an overview of the material, which was then structured according to different media through a simple paste and copy process. Next, each medium was broken down thematically by identifying content-based themes through open coding. By cross reading the material, it became apparent that, on a more conceptual level, many of the content-based themes corresponded across media platforms. For example, both TV and radio were regarded as important for keeping up-to-date with world news but also for their ability to teach the women about various topics (about family life and relationships in particular). Through these cross readings, three overarching conceptual themes were constructed, and it is these themes that will form the basis of this article: "Letting the world into the home", "Maintaining and deepening strong ties" and "Financial and cultural barriers to women's media consumption".

4. Analysis: Women and Media in the Domestic Sphere

The following section will first analyse women's use and experience of media around the three conceptual themes mentioned above, and, second, it will discuss the findings in relation to the concepts of domestic connectivity and intersectionality.

4.1. Letting the World into the Home

> Ivy, a 25-year-old married mother, lives with one child and husband, who is a welder, in an informal settlement in Eldoret. Finances are often the cause of arguments in their relationship and, according to Ivy, her husband "has a light hand". To avoid arguments

> and ensure that the daughter and her have enough to eat, she realised that she needed to start earning money. Through a programme on Citizen Radio she came to ”the realisation that women can also do business” and she started a fish business. Instead of having a stall, she operates the business from home using her mobile phone to communicate with the fish market and customers, thus she can look after her daughter and the home at the same time. She also uses her mobile phone to save and send money to her sister through Mpesa and to organise the Chama (table banking) that she has together with other women; this also acts as a safety net because the Chama offers loans. Their house has a TV, and Ivy, who loves Afro Cinema, has organised her busy daily schedule around it: “between 2 pm and 3 pm I watch and when the time comes I go back to work” and “from 9 pm I can watch until 11 pm when I go to sleep”. Through her phone, she also accesses Facebook and she says, “Facebook I love because of friendships”. She explains that she even has Facebook friends in South Arabia and how they discuss life. It is clear that Ivy is not happy in her marriage and has considered leaving but has decided to persevere (Interview Ivy, 13th April 2015).

Ivy is very connected. She has access to radio, TV, a mobile phone and social media. Her story highlights several aspects of how media is letting the world into the home (which I discuss further below): Mobile phones have helped women start up income-generating activities in the proximity of the home, thus not interfering significantly with their household duties. Media content comes with ideas and teaching that women can apply in their lives, and it provides much-needed relaxation and escapism. The phone is used to maintain a network outside the house, be it family, the local Chama or distant friends on Facebook.

The mobile phone assists many women to run businesses from home. Similar to Ivy, the phone helps Eda, 28, peri-urban, run her small tailoring business from home while taking care of her children. Another woman, Bee, who is 19 years old and lives with her grandmother in a rural area, braids women’s hair in a room in their compound. Bee uses her mobile phone to communicate with her customers, which means that she does not have to sit and wait for customers and can take care of her 9-month-old baby. The mobile thus enables women to conduct paid work from home—turning the home into a workplace, not only for unpaid domestic work but also for paid work, which resonates with Rakow and Navarro’s (1993) concept of working parallel shifts. The mobile thus help women overcome the fact that their restricted mobility often have negative impact on their income (Hassanin, 2009). In recent decades, women in Kenya have been forced to take on more financial responsibilities (Kelbert & Hossain, 2014; Wamue-Ngare & Njoroge, 2011). Sylvia Chant (2006) calls this phenomenon the feminization of responsibilities and obligations to stress that the increased burden placed on women does not increased their power within the household.

Due to the deregulation of the media market in Kenya in the 1990s and the fact that TV and radio sets have become cheaper, news and entertainment in many different forms have entered into many Kenyan homes. Radio is still very important in Kenya (Gathigi, 2009) and it allows women to stay updated on the world outside the home, while simultaneously fulfilling their obligations as women or running small businesses inside the home or in the close proximity of the compound, since the radio is portable. TV, which is appealing due to its audio-visual character has changed the perception of the world:

> Let us say the president, we didn’t know at first what he looked like. But after the TV we knew if he’s short or tall or how he talks, everyone we saw on TV, we saw other countries, how they were doing there, different from us, we saw many things. (Grace, 50s, peri-urban)

Grace is a married shop owner who lives on her own as her husband decided to relocate to the rural once retiring. They bought a TV 20 years ago and Grace feels it has reduced her sense of place, since she can see and experience distant places and cultures. TV also keeps women company and entertained, and several women stresses that, since acquiring a TV, they stay up later and that “the house is very quiet without a TV”—emphasising that TV has become an essential part of everyday life in their households. Noni, a single mother who runs a hair salon near her house bought her first TV two years ago, suggests that TV offers a form of escapism, a needed break:

> Like sometimes maybe you’re tired, your day didn’t go well, when you’re seated there and watching the soap opera, it’s good. (Noni, 33, peri-urban)

Latin American soap operas and Afro cinema are popular among the women in the study. The soaps and series do not only offer escape and entertainment; almost all the women interviewed said that they watch because the programmes can teach them something—lessons they can apply in their everyday life. In other words, media content carries new imaginaries (Appadurai, 1990), which help women reflect on their own reality from new perspectives.

Kate is a 22-year-old student at Moi University. She is expecting her first child in less than a month, which means that she will have to take a break from her studies. One year ago, she got her first TV and she recites the story of a woman called Maricruz, who is the main female character in her favourite Mexican soap. Maricruz comes from a poor family but falls in love with a wealthy man. According to Kate, the story has a moral lesson that she finds useful in her own life:

> So, I learnt that it is good to forgive and move on with your life and there is always something good at the end of every bad experience. (Kate, 22, peri-urban)

Many women also state that they like to listen to radio due to the discussions about family life and relationships, which Gathigi's (2009) study supports. These discussions function as a public forum where family values and gender roles are discussed and negotiated:

> Like yesterday, they were discussing a matter of a girl. She had just given birth to a baby; the guy didn't want to take responsibility so the girl struggled with the baby. By the time the baby was six months, the guy wanted to come back so the girl was asking people to help her decide what to do. So, I learnt that if a guy doesn't want to take responsibility for a child, you can take care of your child and take the precautions with the government where they help you get the custody of the child. (Eli, 23, peri-urban)

By listening to this discussion, Eli learnt about her rights as a woman. Eli is a single mother to a three-year-old boy, so the discussion had parallels with her own life situation. To use media content as an entry point to reflect on one's own life situation and gender relations is something which previous studies has pointed to (Abu-Lughod, 1997; Fredriksen, 2000). In this case, media content function as support, by emphasising that others are going through similar difficulties, but also as an eye-opener by exposing women to new imaginaries (Appadurai 1990). In this instance, ideas that challenge the norm of the traditional family headed by a man. Apart from listening to radio and watching soap operas (at friends' houses, because she has no TV of her own), Eli started to use her mobile phone to access the Internet and social media when she joined university one and half years ago. Higher education has introduced several women, especially university students, to the Internet since it has become a mandatory tool to access information for school projects. Yet, for many women, the Internet is still a mystery that they do not engage with, something that they have yet to grasp how to use or how it can benefit them. This is reflected by the fact that, out of all the women with Internet-enabled phones in rural areas, only one uses the phone to browse online; the other women do not browse since they do not know how, which stress that knowledge is an important dimension of access.

Once browsing the Internet becomes part of the women's daily routine, it opens up a new information channel and new ways to experience and interact with the outside world. Women in this study go online to read celebrity gossip, discover the latest news, find job or education opportunities, and access health information:

> I've googled a lot, maybe concerning some information, maybe concerning some news, maybe breaking news, maybe I want to take care of the baby, development of a child or, or even maybe I have some symptoms of some illness I can just check some symptoms and just see which sickness….Yeah, knowledge, information—any part of the world you want to know you just Google. (Lily, 31, urban, middle class estate)

Lily, who is on parental leave from her job at a bank, feels that knowledge about anything or any part of the world is available to her since she started accessing the Internet five years ago; you just have to google it. Google has thus emerged as an alternative source of information, a complement to traditional circles of knowledge sharing, such as female relatives, who traditionally had a privileged standing on issues like child nursing. Similarly, Noni, who has used the Internet for three years, stresses how Google assists her in her job as a hairdresser:

> Let's say mostly, I google maybe when I need to know something, like there was a mama who came and told me that her hair was falling out…then I always Google knowing how to treat it. (Noni, 33, peri-urban)

The Internet provides useful information to these women. By accessing the Internet using their mobile phone, which is by far the most common way of accessing Internet, they can retrieve information and get answers to many questions. The Internet thus brings a database of information into their homes, information that was previously difficult to attain. As these quotations suggest, the Internet is often synonymous with the search engine Google; moreover, it is clear that the women fully trust Google and thus lack critical media literacy. Apart from Google, social media platforms such as Facebook are also popular among Internet connected women in this study, as they help maintain friendship and make new friends, as the story of Ivy illustrated.

4.2. Maintaining and Deepening Strong Ties

Media open up the home to the world outside and enable connectivity, yet media also strengthen women's strong ties and their connection with their natal homes, stressing media's disembedding and embedding effects (Morley, 2000). Many married women are dislocated due to rural-urban migration or marriage:

> What I love the most is the vernacular….You know, when I listen to that I feel like I'm at home [laughs]. (Eda, 28, peri-urban)

Eda and her husband moved to another part of Kenya because of her husband's work. Throughout the interview, it is clear that Eda misses home, but, by listening to radio stations that broadcast in her mother tongue, she feels in touch with home. Other women prefer vernacular radio stations because they broadcast in the language that they are most fluent in, and this helps them maintain their language and pass it on to their children:

> There are these programmes that discuss past events, maybe things to do with Kalenjin, you know sometimes it is good to remind yourself of how to speak Kalenjin because you can speak so much Swahili that you forget the vernacular, so we teach ourselves and the children. (Terry, 41, peri-urban)

For Terry, listening to vernacular radio is to nurture part of her identity and past. One could thus argue that vernacular radio is important for these women's identity construction. Kesby (1999) states that women's physical dislocation due to marriage influences their identity and sense of "otherness". Listening to these radio stations is thus a way to carry some of their past with them into their new life. Women's mobile phone usage also reflects their wish to stay connected with their natal families:

> Interviewer: And whom do you normally talk to on the phone?
>
> Ann, 27, urban: My relatives…relatives, people that you love.
>
> Jemutai, 26, rural: I bought the phone so that I could talk to my parents….It brings us together as a family, also with our other family who are in Maasai, we talk sometimes, and because we can't always reach them we talk on the phone.

For Ann and Jemutai, who got their first mobile phones three and six years ago respectively, the phone makes it easy to stay connected more regularly with relatives, which strengthens family ties despite physically distance. This contact also helps increase a sense of security and emotional support as family members are only a phone call away (Tenhunen, 2008).

The phone also helps the women maintain and co-ordinate family life between spouses (Gustafsson & Nielsen, 2016; Murphy & Priebe, 2011). Cheru is a 19-year-old married mother, who has moved to her husband's family home in a small village. Since job opportunities are few in the rural, the husband has moved to Nairobi to work as a guard, but he bought Cheru a phone so they can communicate. They speak daily on the phone, which makes her feel "like he [her husband] is around". Mobile phone thus helps reduce distance between dispersed family members (Kesby, 1999; Murphy & Priebe, 2011). Cheru's phone is Internet-enabled but she does not know how to browse.

4.3. Financial and Cultural Barriers to Women's Media Consumption

Robson (2000) argues that "women's access to goods and resources in various societies is frequently constrained by their mobility and associated gender roles" (p. 180). This is true in Kenya, especially for women in the rural areas. Unless women have access to a TV in their homestead, they rarely watch TV as cultural norms restricts women's public TV watching:

> No, we don't go to the shopping centre to do that, it's only men who are used to that, they watch football and come at night but for girls it's not allowed, it's not good….According to our culture, you don't find girls going to the shopping centre to watch TV, it sounds awkward and irresponsible, how do you just, you know you are a woman you also have other duties to help with your mother doing household chores, when it reaches evening that is when the boys go to the shopping centre to watch, but for girls, no, it is not allowed actually. (Dede, 30s, peri-urban)

In fact, none of the women in this study have watched TV in a public place, which illustrates how deeply rooted this custom is and how women have internalised the ideal of womanhood as caring and motherly (Spronk, 2007) and how their restricted mobility influence women's access to information and knowledge (Hassanin, 2009). As a result of this norm, coupled with the fact that not all households have a TV, some women in the rural areas have only watched TV a few times in their entire life. In February 2015, the Kenyan government switched off the analogue TV signal. To receive the digital signals, one needs a decoder, which many households cannot afford to buy. This digital migration has affected women significantly because, unlike their male counterparts, they cannot go to commercial places to watch TV:

> Grace, 50s, peri-urban: It has affected me a lot…because I'm alone in this house and TV was something that kept me busy after supper. I could watch even up to 10 pm, but now I can go to sleep earlier because I don't have anything to keep me busy…
>
> Interviewer: And do you have any plans to buy the decoder?
>
> Grace, 50s, peri-urban: Yes! I had planned because I was paying school fees for my child I said let me pay this school fees after that I will buy the decoder, yes, I want.

For Grace, as for many women with a TV, buying a decoder is a high priority, but seldom the highest. Finding the money to purchase a decoder might be difficult when other financial obligations are more important, and women are rarely in charge of the family's economy (unless they are single, which often means that the finances are even more constrained). Poor finances also prevent women from replacing broken or lost media apparatus:

> Joy, 31, urban, informal settlement: I can't stay without a phone….Because I have many children in school I have to pay school fees first and then save up for the phone.

> Caroline, 53, rural: I used it for a short time then my son got the phone….I used it for phoning, the radio and to watch videos that the kids had put there….I did not expect my son to sell the phone. Interviewer: So why did you give the phone to your son?
>
> Caroline, 53, rural: Because he was not staying at home so I decided to give the phone to him to use…but he sold it to pay school fees.

Many women ascribe importance to media, whether it is to stay updated, be entertained, enable contact with loved ones or meet new people; however, strained household finances occasionally force them to sell a phone or prevent them from replacing a broken radio or lost phone. Thus, women's financial situation and prevailing gender norms influence women's media access and use.

5. Domestic Connectivity and Intersectionality: Understanding Women's Access and Use

In Kenya, women's connectivity has increased over the last decade. Today, more women than ever before have access to mobile phones, TV, radio and some even to the Internet and social media. This study shows that the women interviewed have incorporated media into their daily lives and adjusted their daily routines around media, which have been ascribed with meanings in their lives.

As Morley (2000) argues, domestic media stress and can alter the distinction between private and public. However, social space and the distinction between public and private is not only socially constructed; it is also often gendered (Robson, 2000, pp. 179–180). For women in this study, who, due to cultural norms and domestic duties, are often bound to the home, media opens up the home to inputs from the outside world. Images and sounds from all over the world enter the home through the TV and radio (sounds), the mobile phone brings people in distant places "closer", and Google provides some women with information that was previously difficult to attain, at least without leaving the house. Moreover, the mobile phone has, in line with what Rakow and Navarro (1993) calls working parallel shifts, helped some women venture into income-generating businesses that they can run from home while simultaneously conducting their unpaid work as mothers and wives.

Media content, especially soap operas and radio discussions about relationships, allow women to reflect on their own situation and existing gender roles. Through media, women are exposed to new imaginaries (Appadurai, 1990)—different ideas about marriages and family life, which can help them to form their own ideas of what it means to be a woman or a wife today. In the long run, these changes might challenge norms, and women who embrace modern life and enjoy greater mobility might no longer be perceived as immoral (Spronk, 2007). Presently, the prevailing societal norms moralise these women and these norms are often internalised and upheld by the women themselves. This is illustrated by the fact that it is unthinkable for all the women in this study to watch TV in a public place.

The fact that media, whether a vernacular radio or a mobile phone, help women feel in touch with their natal homes is important for their identity construction (Kesby, 1999) and sense of security (Tenhunen, 2008). Having your mother just a phone call away to provide moral support seems to be very liberating for many women, who, through marriage or rural-urban migration, have been physically displaced, since it arguably helps them to navigate their new roles and settings. Although it could be argued that women using their mobile phone to nurture strong family ties reinforces gender roles, this could still be perceived as an outward looking practice, since the regular contact the mobile phone enables is a new additional routine in women's everyday lives that helps them stay connected.

Williams (1975) developed the concept of mobile privatisation in the 1970s to describe how homes in West were changing, partly due to increased media access. Half a century later, homes in Uasin Gishu, Kenya, are now changing in a similar way. Due to women's restricted mobility in Kenya, using the word "mobile", even though it refers to mobility of the mind, risks communicating a wrong impression of their situation. The mobile phone for example is often, especially in the rural areas, mainly used as a landline, which facilitates regular communication with dispersed family members. In other words, it helps them nurture strong ties and makes mobility and travel less essential. Increased media access has not necessarily improved women's physical mobility, rather it has helped them to better cope with their immobility by being able to stay connected with the world without leaving the domestic sphere; which is also something which Schoon (2011) underlines in relation to women in South Africa.

In other words, *domestic connectivity* is a phrase that better captures the experience of women included in this study, as it both stresses their confinement to the home and their increased connectivity. Communication technologies become means to receive input from the outside and connect with new spheres, whether this is being part of networks outside the home or working whilst also managing their traditional gender roles as caring mothers and the head of household duties. Increased media access has therefore not only changed everyday life for these women; it has also altered the domestic space, turning it from a secluded into a connected space.

The concept of domestic connectivity highlights the interesting interplay between media usage, (im)mobility and domestic bonds. It should be situated in relation to women's everyday lives and media situations, as new media technology might impact differently on a rural woman's everyday life than on an urban woman's everyday life, since urban women often enjoy greater mobility.

Yet it is important not to perceive domestic connectivity as something static that can be concretely measured. Women's media situation, their bonds to the domestic sphere and connections with the world outside are influenced by several conditions, which, to some degree are fluid and can change, whether this is due to increased media access, changing gender roles or rural-urban migration, as the story of Jane illustrated at the beginning of this article.

Yet, this study also reveals huge disparities in women's media access and use in Kenya. Crenshaw (1991) suggests that, in order to better understand the marginalisation of women, it is not enough to merely discuss women as a homogenous group. Women's experiences of the patriarchal structure depend on factors such as education, class, race and age, as these intersect with gender. The concept of intersectionality is thus useful when discussing Kenyan women's access and use of media and technology and the impact it has on their everyday lives.

One factor that tends to most influence media access and use is whether women live in urban or rural areas, precisely because it intersects with education, income and increased life choices and opportunities. More women in the urban areas are educated. Many might have grown up in rural areas and moved to urban centres to access higher education and, once they have completed the education, few consider moving back because income-generating opportunities are greater in the urban areas and life there is less restricted as traditional gender roles, although still present, are less prevalent. This is true for women even if they lack higher education. In urban areas, there are more opportunities to run a business as a woman, and society is less condemning if you find yourself as a single mother.

So where do media fit into the picture? Overall, urban women have higher access to media technologies. One obvious factor is better access to electricity. Moreover, due to the increased opportunity to run a business, it is easier for women like Ivy to be inspired by a radio show and start running a business from her home using her mobile phone to communicate with customers. Once the business is profitable, Ivy has the financial independence needed to upgrade her phone to one that can access the Internet, the skills to use the technology, and the financial means that is required to use those services.

Similarly, it is easier for a woman like Eli to feel empowered by the knowledge that she can get custody of her child if required, as she soon will have a university degree and is planning to move back to Nairobi, an area where social norms are less restricting. Thus, factors such as education, financial situation and geographical location not only influence the media you have access to but also influence how you can realise the wider imaginaries that media content and connectivity offers.

In other words, media's ability to challenge gender inequalities is far from direct and revolutionary. This is also implied by the term "domestic connectivity", as it emphasises the tendency for women to be bound to the domestic realm. It is true that media offer new perspectives, relaxation, enhanced communication and escapism, but it is also true that women use media in a manner that does not interfere with their duties as mothers and wives. Therefore, their media use does not challenge the gendered division of labour. One could even suggest that it in fact reinforces it, yet another possible interpretation is that women use the new technology that is available to them to improve their everyday lives within the boundaries that society and prevailing gender norms impose.

6. Conclusion

This study draws attention to the present changes in women's media habits and argues that media can simultaneously have disembedding and embedding effects (Morley, 2000). Media help women transcend the boundaries of the private and public sphere by opening up the domestic sphere to external input, yet, at the same time, media facilitate the maintenance of strong ties and make immobility less of a restriction. The article introduces the concept domestic connectivity to stress and highlight this ambiguity.

This study suggests that media use often confirms and conforms to—rather than challenges—the gendered separation of the private and public and the division of labour which suggest that new information technologies are far from the quick fix that popular development discourse sometimes suggests. Thus, the results of this study have relevance beyond Kenya by showing that in order to better understand the interrelation between media use and gender roles and norms, it is imperative to situate media use in women's everyday life and given social context and take into account how factors such as education, income, their rural/urban location influence not only women's access to media but also their ability to act out their gained perspectives and knowledge or imaginaries (Appadurai, 1990). Moreover, it highlights the importance of moving away from single media studies and rather looking at women's entire media ecology.

Conflict of Interests

The author declares no conflict of interests.

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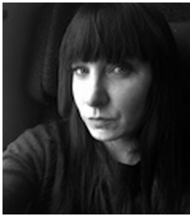

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COGITATIO

Media and Communication (ISSN: 2183–2439)
2018, Volume 6, Issue 2, Pages 199–209
DOI: 10.17645/mac.v6i2.1283

Article

The Dialectics of Care: Communicating Ethical Trade in Poland

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Submitted: 24 November 2017 | Accepted: 16 April 2018 | Published: 29 June 2018

Abstract

This article is an empirical exploration of how ethical trade organisations draw on and appropriate in their communication the moral repertoire of ethical trade. Theoretically, it employs the notion of the "dialectics of care" to examine the tactics used in ethical trade communication to reconcile care for oneself and one's close ones with care for distant producers. Empirically, this article is based on the discourse-theoretical analysis of two interviews with the representatives of Polish ethical trade organisations: (1) a fair trade firm, Pizca del Mundo, and (2) an NGO, the Institute for Global Responsibility. The analysis finds that ethical trade organisations seek to harmonise care for distant producers with the interests of the Polish public through (1) embedding it into the discourse of product quality, or (2) linking it to care for oneself, one's family and society while raising awareness of the global interconnectedness.

Keywords

care; discourse-theoretical analysis; ethical trade; fair trade; interviews; metageography; moral education; Poland

Issue

This article is part of the issue "Media and Communication between the Local and the Global", edited by Jessica Gustafsson (Södertörn University, Sweden) and Kinga Polynczuk-Alenius (University of Helsinki, Finland).

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1. Introduction

This article is an empirical exploration of how two ethical trade organisations in Poland draw on the moral repertoire of ethical trade in their communication. It proposes and employs the notion of the "dialectics of care" to investigate how care, understood as an ethical and emotional concern for others (Silk, 1998; Smith, 1998), is conceptualised and negotiated in ethical trade communication to reconcile individuals' own interests and the interests of their family members with the interests of distant producers. This is important, because ethical trade stems from the recognition of the shortcomings of the current North–South trade that is devised to satisfy Northern consumers' perceived need for the lowest possible prices at the cost of driving Southern producers into ever-direr poverty (see Miller, 2003). To remedy the situation, ethical trade proposes a wide set of initiatives that are aimed at reconstructing global trade as a web of more just and equitable relationships (Hudson & Hudson, 2003; Raynolds & Bennett, 2015). Here, the underlying assumption is that the late-capitalist economic and trade systems are neither natural nor absolute. Rather, they are constructed and, therefore, open for renegotiation.

Translating structural efforts into moral terms, ethical trade attempts to reclaim trade as a nexus of relationships among human actors in the context of global commodity chains in which human labour figures only as an "inanimate" aspect of production (Smith, 1998, p. 20). This is done, I propose, through communication, broadly conceived as a "symbolic process whereby reality is produced, maintained, repaired, and transformed" (Carey, 2008, p. 19). In this view, communication is not about mere transmission of information and messages via technology. Instead, communication is also performative: it creates a specific vision of the world and—through mediation rather than transmission (Silverstone, 2002)—calls into being subjects willing to inhabit this world. Building on that, I approach ethical trade communication as a project of moral education geared towards rendering the predicament of distant producers as being worthy of attention, emotion and action (see Chouliaraki, 2008).

While the moral outlook proposed by ethical trade communication is a complex combination of various dis-

positions, this article chooses to concentrate on *care* in order to add more nuance to studies of ethical trade that are usually concerned with normative ruminations on the idea and practices of ethical trade (e.g., Adams & Raisborough, 2011; Archer & Fritsch, 2010; Goodman, 2004; Low & Davenport, 2005; Popke, 2006). Valuable as these studies are, they engage in theoretically guided empirical analyses of communication only to a limited extent. The research that looks at ethical trade communication, in its turn, zooms in on fair trade marketing and advertising, and revels in critical readings of representations deployed therein (e.g., Ramamurthy, 2012; Varul, 2008; Wright, 2004). Against this background, this study turns the spotlight away from both the normative assessments of ethical trade and the content of communication. Instead, it spotlights organisations as key actors in ethical trade and focuses on their role as mediators between producers and consumers, the role that Touri (2016) sees as only emerging.

This is important insofar as cultivating a cosmopolitan attitude among the Northern public has proved to be a thorny issue, not least because a singular "Northern" public does not exist. By zooming in on ethical trade in Poland, a country located in the periphery of the "North" and on the outskirts of the international research on ethical trade, I intend to signal the problem with the essentialising "horizontal" metageography of ethical trade. Using the quasi-geographical imaginary to organise the consumers' knowledge of the world (see Lewis & Wigen, 1997), ethical trade draws an equatorial axis between the hemisphere of consumption, wealth and privilege (Global North), and the hemisphere of production, poverty and deprivation (Global South). Even if we leave aside the crucial issue of stigmatisation of the essentialised "South" and its people (e.g., Dogra, 2012), the homogenising image of the "North" is also problematic in that it overlooks the traditional vertical division that splits the "North" into "West" and "East". With that in mind, I seek to show how ethical trade organisations relentlessly discursively rework the idea of a supposedly wealthy and benevolent "Global North" to accommodate Polish society's deeply internalised self-image as "Eastern" and underdeveloped (see Grzymski, 2010; Kuus, 2004). In this context, every call for interest in, or action on behalf of, distant producers demands justification in the eyes of a society that considers itself poor and subordinate (Popow, 2015; Törquist-Plewa, 2002). In relation to that, I analyse the "dialectics of care", inspired by Miller's (2001) "dialectics of shopping", in ethical trade communication. Namely, I examine how ethical trade organisations negotiate in their communication among competing individual, local and distant interests in order to reach Polish society.

With all that in mind, I pose the following research question: *How do ethical trade organisations negotiate between the interests of Southern producers and Polish society in their communication*? Empirically, I concentrate on two interviews conducted with the representatives of (1) a fair trade family business, Pizca del Mundo, and (2) an NGO promoting a human-rights-based approach to development, the Institute for Global Responsibility (IGR). I selected these interviews from a larger pool of ethnographic and social media material due to their divergent rhetoric and the contrasting means of action they propose, whereby they typify two distinct approaches to ethical trade communication: while Pizca del Mundo's communication centres on the caring business relationship between producers and the firm itself, the IGR views trade within the web of global interconnectedness that envelops both producers and consumers (see Polynczuk-Alenius, 2018a). Given the very different statuses of the organisations, it is crucial to note at the outset that my objective is neither to compare nor normatively evaluate their communication approaches.

In what follows, I firstly discuss the notion of the dialectics of care in the context of ethical trade. Secondly, I present an overview of the empirical material and the discourse-theoretical approach used in the analysis. In the following sections, I review the empirically identified articulations of the dialectics of care, and discuss the oppositions and alliances charted in these articulations. Subsequently, I link the findings to the different visions of an individual subject as constructed and addressed by ethical trade organisations. Finally, in conclusion, I point out some contributions that the present article seeks to make to media and communication studies.

2. The Dialectics of Care in Ethical Trade

I conceptualise ethical trade as the North-South trade that recognises itself as a mediated relationship between human actors and is, as such, governed by moral principles (see Goodman, 2004). In global trade, production and consumption have been "radically separated" by an ever-growing physical, economic and moral distance between producers and consumers (Archer & Fritsch, 2010, p. 111). In effect, the interdependence between the affluence in the North and the poverty in the South is erased, as are the processes that cause and deepen the inequalities between the hemispheres (see Tomlinson, 2011). Ethical trade is aimed at reclaiming connections between producers and consumers in the hope of substantially improving the situation of poor and underprivileged working people in the South (see Freidberg, 2003, p. 30). Largely, this reclaiming is done through communication, understood as moral education geared towards rendering the predicament of Southern producers worthy of public attention and action (see Chouliaraki, 2008).

In theorising ethical trade communication as moral education, I lean on Silverstone's (2002, p. 761) definition of mediation as a "transformative [communication] process in which the meaningfulness and value of things are constructed" (see also Carey, 2008). In the same vein, ethical trade communication seeks to re-establish among consumers the moral commitment of *care*, defined as both rationally and emotionally motivated con-

cern and support for distant producers (see Milligan & Wiles, 2010; Popke, 2006), in order to elicit society's support for the cause (see Barnett, Cloke, Clarke, & Malpass, 2005; Tomlinson, 1999). In doing so, ethical trade communication retells the story of how North and South are inextricably connected and how they depend on each other in the global division of labour and elaborate market relations (see Calhoun, 2002; Pirotte, 2007; Popke, 2006). Here, the foundational premise is that care is contingent on the mediated familiarity with, and knowledge of, distant others (see Corbridge, 1993; Smith, 1998). Silk (1998, p. 168) describes this model of care as "third party beneficence", whereby the communication flows of mediated content from content producers to content consumers trigger an action directed at a distant context.

Tying all this together, the care proposed by ethical trade communication is cosmopolitan because it extends beyond the realm of proximate relationships with significant others towards indirect and impersonal relations with distant producers (Raghuram, Madge, & Noxolo, 2009; Tomlinson, 1999). Crucially, however, care is not a unidirectional relation akin to charity (Silk, 1998). Rather, caring relationships acknowledge the agency of Southern producers in both shaping their own lives and influencing global trade (see Polynczuk-Alenius, 2018b), especially so in the context of global interconnectedness and interdependence (Popke, 2006; Raghuram et al., 2009). Caring relationships should also understand that the higher price set for ethical products is not benevolence, but an attempt at justice and fairness under the inequitable conditions of global trade. This call for care as universal justice and fairness might unwillingly pit the interests of distant producers against partiality towards close ones (see Corbridge, 1993; Friedman, 1991; Silk, 1998; Smith, 1998). My approach to care, enacted through the mundane practices of consumption (Raghuram et al., 2009), is inspired by Miller's (2001) "dialectics of shopping" and tries to capture the tension in ethical trade communication.

The dialectics of shopping recasts buying as an inherently moral domain in which one expresses a position towards the world and its peoples, both proximate and distant (Miller, 2001, p. 111). In Miller's view, ethical consumption is subject to haggling between caring for one's close ones, especially family members, and caring for Southern producers as distant strangers. On the one hand, caring for one's family demands careful investment of household resources in value-for-money products (Miller, 2001, p. 126). On the other hand, caring for distant strangers entails purchasing ethically produced goods that are beneficial for producers, but usually more expensive for consumers (Miller, 2001, p. 134).

Ethical trade organisations need to be mindful of this tension and continuously address it in their communication. Here, it is essential to note that while care is an attitude enacted by ethical trade organisations and proposed to consumers, the dialectics of care refers to deliberate communication tactics oriented towards the *harmonising reconfiguration* between care for oneself and close ones, and care for Southern producers as distant strangers. This reconfiguration is often achieved by emphasising global interdependence and interconnectedness (see Calhoun, 2002; Raghuram et al., 2009). In other words, care for distant strangers is often anchored in care for some significant others as well (see Barnett et al., 2005; Smith, 1998, p. 24). In the remainder of this article I look at how two Polish ethical trade organisations engage in the dialectics of care in conceptualising their communication practices.

3. Discourse-Theoretical Interview Analysis

Empirically, this article is based on the analysis of two interviews with the representatives of ethical trade organisations in Poland. Crucially, echoing the mediation theory (see Silverstone, 2002, 2005), I posit that communication is shaped by the social context in which it is carried out. The contours of ethical trade communication in Poland are, then, marked by the prevalent disinterest in, and indifference to, the consequences of consumption (see Boenning, 2009; Koszewska, 2011; Paliwoda-Matiolańska, 2014). This attitude is manifest not only in the minuscule sales of fair trade products totalling some 8 million euros (personal communication with Fairtrade Polska, 2018), but also in a general moral acceptability of unethical products (Paliwoda-Matiolańska, 2014, p. 1209). In addition, the level of consumer activism is one of the lowest in Europe, engaging less than 20 per cent of the population (Stolle & Micheletti, 2013, p. 97). With all that in mind, the interviews focused on communication as a means of engaging consumers with ethical trade and morally educating them to care for Southern producers.

The first interview was conducted with Aga, the owner of the first Polish fair trade brand, Pizca del Mundo. Here, it is crucial to note that I do not equate fair trade with ethical trade. Rather, I regard fair trade as one of the "subtypes" of ethical trade that explicitly has to do with the provision of products: "Fairtrade is an alternative approach to conventional trade and is based on a partnership between producers and consumers" (Fairtrade International, 2018). As a brand, Pizca del Mundo was established in 2012 by a firm that has been operating as a distributor of fair trade products on the Polish market since 2005. By importing fair trade ingredients directly from the certified Southern producers, the brand offers their ethical products at accessible prices. The firm is also a member of a range of associations whose goal is to promote fair trade and educate Polish consumers about global trade.

The second interview was conducted with Tomasz, a representative of an NGO, the IGR. Unlike Pizca del Mundo, which is directly involved in trade, the IGR concentrates on advocacy, campaigning and global education. Although the IGR is not formally part of the ethical trade movement, many of the issues that it deals with

overlap with the themes of ethical trade, including tax justice, bilateral trade agreements and investment partnerships. The IGR combines these concerns with other issues related to global interdependence in a bid to "promote global solidarity and raise awareness about our shared responsibility for the world" (IGR, 2016).

Mindful of the conflictual potential of care that puts at stake the allocation of emotional and material resources among various groups (Milligan & Wiles, 2010; Mouffe, 2005; Popke, 2006), I chose discourse theory as an appropriate analytical approach for studying the interviews (for contributions on discourse theory in media and communication studies see Carpentier, 2017; Carpentier & De Cleen, 2007; Carpentier & Spinoy, 2008). Discourse theory approaches discourse broadly as "a differential ensemble of signifying sequences in which meaning is constantly renegotiated" (Torfing, 1999, p. 85). This openness is due to the permanently unfinished nature of the social and to the radical unfixity of discourses (Carpentier, 2017). Meaning can be partially and temporarily stabilised via "nodal points" (Howarth, 1998), and disrupted and renegotiated through articulatory practices that establish "a relation among elements such that their identity is modified as a result of the articulatory practice" (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985, p. 105; see also Howarth, 1998). Crucially, discourse constructs not only the meaning of social reality, but also subjects to inhabit it (see Carpentier & De Cleen, 2007).

If, applying this frame to the present study, ethical trade communication is treated as a voluminous discourse of moral education that strives to construct its desired subjects, then care is a signifier always already open for rearticulation. With that in mind, I examined the empirical material at three different levels, loosely based on the approach outlined by Carpentier (2017). Firstly, I analysed the dialectics of care deployed by the representatives of ethical trade organisations. Secondly, I identified the relationships (oppositions and alliances) implied in these articulations of the dialectics of care (see Carpentier & Spinoy, 2008, pp. 11–13). Thirdly, I investigated the subject positions constructed for the recipients by Pizca del Mundo's and the IGR's communication (see Carpentier & De Cleen, 2007; Carpentier & Spinoy, 2008).

Importantly, the analysis of this micro-set of empirical material was macro-contextual (see Carpentier & Spinoy, 2008). In other words, the interviews were situated in the wider context of my year-long ethnographic engagement with the ethical trade movement in Poland and Finland. My involvement ranged from performing voluntary work for the organisations to participating in a variety of events, such as workshops and demonstrations, to informal conversations and fully fledged interviews with their representatives, to netnographic participant observation and administration of Facebook fan pages linked to these organisations, to formal and informal communication with ethical consumer activists. Such a deep and prolonged immersion in the movement provided me with the insight into communication practices and conceptualisations that constitutes the empirical macro-context of this article. I selected the two interviews analysed here due to their radically different rhetoric, especially concerning the means of altering the unjust structures of global trade. The findings presented here, though, can be considered illustrative of wider tendencies also identifiable in other ethical trade organisations that I was engaged with during my fieldwork (see Polynczuk-Alenius, 2018a).

4. Renegotiating Care

In this section, I discuss the articulations of the dialectics of care that underlie the communication practices of Pizca del Mundo and the IGR. I begin by presenting Pizca del Mundo's tactic of embedding care for producers into the discourse of product quality. Then, I turn to the IGR's idea of interlocking care for producers with care for oneself, one's family and society through forging connections within the web of the global interdependence.

4.1. Teetering Between Quality and Care

Pizca del Mundo's communication continuously juggled consumers' self-care and/or care for their families and the *firm's* care for Southern producers. While the former was catered for by emphasising product quality (see Levi & Linton, 2003; Low & Davenport, 2005), care for producers enacted by the firm was tightly hooked into the business context of "[fair trade] as trade based on the fact that somebody produces and others buy…Not on a principle that somebody is better, somebody is worse, somebody is poorer, wealthier, whatever". Thus, care for producers was articulated as an inextricable component of the fair trading relationship between equal partners, not as benevolence extended towards objectified victims passively awaiting help and salvation (see Goodman, 2010).

Care was also described both as emanating from within the fair trade actors and as embedded in, and extended through, the certification schemes. For Pizca del Mundo, engagement in fair trade was at first not a conscious tie to an organisation or movement, but an intuitive business ethos: "When we were doing [fair trade] intuitively, we knew that it was something we wanted to do…But we did not know that somebody had named it already, that there were any functional solutions". However, as their network of trading partnerships, not all of which can be personal and intimate, had been growing, Pizca del Mundo benefitted from care guaranteed by formal certifications. In other words, certificates testify to the fact that producer organisations adhere to the fair trade principles, thereby serving Pizca del Mundo as institutionalised extensions of care.

As mentioned above, the consumer demand for fair trade products in Poland is very low, and Pizca del Mundo

is acutely aware of this. Hence, the firm's primary strategy was to attract consumers from the growing "speciality coffee" segment who might buy fair trade as a corollary of their interest in premium-quality products: "I think that if someone chooses the products that we sell, it is because: (a) they are good quality, (b) they are organic, maybe (c) they are fair trade, and maybe even because they are pretty....Certainly, [fair trade] is not the main criterion" (see Radziukiewicz, 2013).

In the pursuit of quality, the firm nevertheless pragmatically assessed the taste preferences and financial capacities of Polish consumers who still valued affordability more than superior quality (see Radziukiewicz, 2013; Szubska-Włodarczyk & Paszko, 2012). Here, it is important to bear in mind that due to fair trade's late arrival on the market at the beginning of the twenty-first century, Polish consumers are untainted by an experience of the low-quality "solidarity coffee" that the discourse of quality in fair trade marketing often seeks to remedy (Renard, 2003).

Moreover, a limit to quality was marked by the financial security and well-being of Southern producers to which Pizca del Mundo aimed to contribute. The limitations placed on the pursuit of quality by care for the producers' welfare were particularly palpable in the disregard for direct trade as an alternative to fair trade: "If the only criterion we care about is that the coffee is very good, then [direct trade] is a neat solution, because you are not tied to a producer whose coffee might turn out worse in a given year". In contrast to direct trade, one of the cardinal objectives of Pizca del Mundo was to support producers within equal and long-lasting partnerships. Thus, in the case of a less successful crop, the fair sourcing of commodities from the producers in the South would take precedence over the commercial imperative to sell a high-quality product to satisfy gourmet consumers in the North.

All in all, in terms of the objectives set for Pizca del Mundo's communication, the firm cared for, and attended to, the conscious needs of personally known producers as business subjects, rather than to an unacknowledged need of anonymous Polish consumers to be educated and moralised (see Boenning, 2009). Thus, the selling of products was communicatively prioritised over the conventional postulate of fair trade communication to "shorten the distance" and sensitise consumers to the predicament of producers. As Aga put it: "Of course we can organise photo exhibitions, lectures and whatnot. But I know [the producers] *personally*, and they could not care less whether we organise a meeting here, because they want to sell products". Having said that, Pizca del Mundo still engaged in raising consumer awareness, but to a lesser extent than it did in marketing.

4.2. Forging Caring Connections

The IGR is an example of an ethical trade organisation whose objective is to influence the structural relationships between the Global South and Global North in a way that empowers and emancipates the former. The principle guiding such efforts is global justice, which Miller (2001, p. 134) describes as "macro-scale care". From the IGR's point of view, the necessary changes can only be realised through and within the political process, thereby downplaying the role of individual consumption (see Maniates, 2002). Rather than endorsing ethical consumption, the representative of the IGR dismissed it as a utopic and exclusive proposition, in the Polish context attainable "only for the rich" (see Boenning, 2009; Koszewska, 2011). Thus, the IGR's communication linked care for distant strangers to more inclusive political activities, such as petitioning and participation in happenings and demonstrations. Yet, the extreme reluctance in Polish society towards politics demanded that the political character of such actions be veiled in the IGR's communication: "We do not call it political activity, although it is indeed political, but in Poland the majority is afraid of politics, deflects from it...Rather, we communicate it as civic actions".

The IGR's operations were highly reliant on public support and mobilisation. My interviewee regarded the IGR's communication efforts as being impeded by the complexity of the "neo-colonial" economic exploitation: the provenance and structure of the economic oppression in the South were not only difficult to present in an accessible form, but also problematic for Polish society to relate to and, consequently, to care for. He argued that, by and large, Poles felt no connection between their own everyday lives and the remote world of sweatshops and coffee farms. The limited awareness of, and interest in, the burning problems facing the Global South can be attributed to both the inadequacy of global education (see Boenning, 2009; Popow, 2015) and, more generally, the changing structure of employment in the modern societies whereby the majority is detached from the situation of farmers and commodity producers (Miller, 2003, p. 363). Crucially, the IGR's representative linked the absence of care for Southern producers to the financial precariousness experienced by a sizeable portion of Poles (see Eurostat, 2017):

> People are self-interested. Life in Poland is difficult. Poland is a country of big social inequalities…People generally tend to their own problems. The problems of some remote countries on other continents are very abstract to them. Foreign, abstract, and they do not feel the connection, they do not feel the shared responsibility.

According to the IGR, then, care for distant strangers was contingent on two things: (1) having one's own and one's family's needs met (see Friedman, 1991), and (2) knowledge (see Corbridge, 1993; Silk, 1998; Smith, 1998). While the IGR might not have a direct influence on the former, my interviewee's conviction was that in the interdependent world the situation in Poland would only

improve as the situation changed globally (see Raghuram et al., 2009), and that their organisation's task was to inform the society about it. Thus, for them, the concern for distant producers was virtually identical to the concern for oneself, one's close ones and proximate others: "We…link it to shared responsibility, that we stand in solidarity with these [developing] countries, because it is also in *our* best interest" (see Barnett et al., 2005; Smith, 1998). Thus, actions both "at home" and "at a distance" were necessary.

5. Charting Oppositions and Alliances

In this section, I map the relationships constructed by two distinct articulations of the dialectics of care analysed above. Two relations that I consider particularly helpful can be termed "alliance" and "opposition". In the context of ethical trade, alliances are established through the "logic of equivalence" whereby different identities are discursively brought together in a caring relationship (see Carpentier & Spinoy, 2008; Howarth, 1998). The forming of such alliances, however, always involves the emergence of a different, negative identity (Torfing, 1999). Thus, the creation of a caring alliance entails the simultaneous construction of an uncaring opposition.

Pizca del Mundo's communication clearly positioned the firm as a primary subject invested in caring for producers (for similar findings in Hungarian fair trade organisations see Dombos, 2008). Care emanated from their moral commitment and guided the fair trade work that they carried out in a close emotional and operational alliance with producers. The degree to which the firm's care for producers was personal depended on whether the relationship involved embodied knowledge of a cooperative or was mediated through certificates issued by fair trade labelling organisations. In any case, care for the welfare of producers was materialised in the form of the fair prices paid by the company.

Pizca del Mundo performed the care work in a more or less tight alliance with other Polish fair trade organisations. This alliance was characterised by the organisations' willingness to compromise and, to an extent, overcome their ideological differences in the name of their shared concern for producers. To illustrate the workings of this alliance, Aga described the setting up of the Fair Trade Coalition in 2009 as follows "I found it very curious that devoted Catholics sat at the same table with leftist anarchists. And they were able to communicate somehow, but in the end, they did not reach an agreement…At the moment, however, we are cooperating". The operations of the alliance were complemented by the presence on the Polish market of distributors and retailers of organic and premium products, some of which might also carry a fair trade certificate. The existence of such "accidental" actors, not invested in the ideal of fair trade, allowed the firm to reaffirm its identity as a caring and ethical subject:

> Maybe it is [about] different priorities, I do not know. I am under the impression that there is a world of these organisations and firms which are engaged in fair trade because it is ethically important to them. When it comes to selling, however, there are also companies primarily concerned with selling organic products which only incidentally sell fair trade products. Or they simply sell premium-quality goods, and fair trade products only incidentally.

Generally, the Polish fair trade market was described as being composed primarily of caring organisations, secondarily of "accidental" sellers, and thirdly of a rather random group of unintentional consumers interested solely in high-quality products. Through such a strong emphasis on their concern with quality and simultaneous downplaying of other possible motivations, consumers were imagined as being indifferent to the predicament of Southern producers. Thus, the firm assigned to consumers an identity that was antithetical to their own caring identity (see Carpentier & Spinoy, 2008, p. 10).

In fact, it seemed to Pizca del Mundo that the only way to trigger consumers' interest in fair trade and in the predicament of Southern producers was through tactical "trickery". In other words, these issues had to be interwoven into topics that consumers were likely to see as more exciting (see Touri, 2016):

> We conduct workshops about fair trade, but we have noticed that it is not a very sexy topic…Even when we talk about the [negative social] effects of our consumption, at the same time we tell people how chocolate is produced, and it might be interesting to them. Maybe even more interesting than the effects of consumption.

This was this kind of pragmatic thinking that also inspired the discourse of quality. Given the competing interests of fair trade producers, i.e. the financial security partially guaranteed by the fair compensation, and of consumers who desired to pay the lowest possible price (Levi & Linton, 2003; Miller, 2003), quality appeared to be the only middle ground where these hardly reconcilable stakes could be negotiated. To be more specific, growing high-quality crops helped producers to secure demand for their products and sell them at a higher price, while premium quality potentially appealed to rational self-caring consumers as an acceptable justification for a higher retail price. Hence, emphasising quality appeared to be the communication strategy that had the potential to enable an agonistic relationship between producers and consumers: even though their conflicting goals could never be fully reconciled, they were both recognised as legitimate (see Mouffe, 2005, p. 20). It is in this context that Pizca del Mundo viewed its role as a caring mediator.

Meanwhile, the IGR's communication proposed a different configuration of alliances and oppositions that built on the vision of late capitalism as being geared to-

wards advancing the position of those who were already privileged at the cost of deepening the misery of those who were deprived (see Miller, 2003). To me, this vision seemed not only political, but also classed (see Mouffe, 1993). It fleshed out the already sharp division between a small group of beneficiaries of the current trade arrangements and a vast and interconnected group of the oppressed. In this setting, the oppressor—and hence, the uncaring opposition—was global capitalism with its trade arrangements, institutions and zealots. In particular, the transnational corporations were singled out as the primary beneficiaries of this system: "[In the issues to do with tax justice] we mainly focus on corporations who profit immensely, but usually do not pay taxes at all in places where they generate the profits".

Against these oppressors, the global alliance was to be formed by the subjugated societies, Northern as well as Southern. This cooperation was important not least because of the capacity of the more consolidated institutions and civil societies in the North to mitigate the adverse effects of the oppression:

> In reality, the [civil] society is stronger here, has a stronger voice and a better developed legal system safeguarded by a variety of institutions, and even though we are affected by the same processes, their effects are much smaller [in the North], because society, press, NGOs will not allow, for example, a corporation to do whatever it pleases. In developing countries, where the state is very weak, [people] are subjected to the same mechanisms, but they simply do not have any defence systems. We are really under the same jackboot.

In order to facilitate the emergence of such an alliance, and acting on the view of Polish society as largely oblivious to the global economic arrangements (see Popow, 2015), the IGR communication focused on exposing and expounding global interdependencies:

> Our idea is to look for connections. To tell that the largest group suffering from hunger in the world are, ironically, smallholder farmers. People who produce food are those who suffer from malnutrition and hunger. And we want to find connections, [show] that they are affected by the same processes, and that the effects of industrial food systems are adverse for both them and us.

The idea here was to use communication to trigger identification and create a shared subject position for the geographically dispersed peoples dispossessed by economic globalisation: a subject position to which a common struggle for redistributive justice could be attached (see Mouffe, 2005). In Poland, the IGR imagined, the society would participate in this struggle primarily through political advocacy:

> Our campaigns are aimed at mobilising the society to take action and pressure the decision-makers. While advocacy identifies needs, opportunities, moments [and] important situations, campaigns ought to mobilise people to amplify the advocacy voice and to generate pressure to force the decision-makers to take actions that are in the society's best interest.

In sum, in the context of global economy and trade, the IGR attempted communicatively to transform the current *antagonism* between care for oneself and one's close ones and care for distant strangers (see Miller, 2001) into a "caring chain of equivalence" whereby care for oneself would *interlock with* care for distant strangers (see Barnett et al., 2005). Consequently, parties vulnerable to the dislocating effects of global capitalism, individuals as well as civil society organisations and states, would form an alliance against the common adversary in the shape of oppressive capitalism (see Carpentier & Spinoy, 2008, p. 12; Mouffe, 1993, pp. 18–19). Such a project would be a micro-scale assault on the global hegemony.

6. Discussion

The forthcoming discussion attempts to do two things. It presents the subject positions constructed for consumers by the two organisations and links them to the vision of an individual subject that each organisation plugged into. It also briefly reflects on how the discursive self-understanding of Polish society impinges upon ethical trade communication.

The dialectics of care articulated by Pizca del Mundo, an organisation dealing primarily with trade and sales, constructed Polish society solely as individualised consumers. To be more specific, the public was addressed as a collection of self-interested individuals whose purchasing decisions were aimed at maximising their own benefit. As buying more expensive fair trade products appeared not to be sufficiently justified by the ethical reasons alone, consumers needed to be "tricked" into supporting Southern producers through harmonising their gain with the benefit of producers. The firm regarded superior quality of products as a feature appealing to price-sensitive and self-concerned consumers (see Levi & Linton, 2003). In that regard, Pizca del Mundo reproduced the self-fulfilling prophecy of the individualistic, rational consumers who unintentionally contribute to the collective good (see Slater, 1997). In short, consumers were addressed as individuals pursuing their own private interests and indifferent to the predicament of producers (see Barnett & Land, 2007). The presence of such a pessimistic view might be quite surprising in a movement that defines itself by its reliance on consumer support (Fairtrade International, 2018).

A similar self-image of ethical trade activists as heroically struggling against the parochialism and self-centrism in their society was previously identified in Hun-

gary (Dombos, 2008). While the Hungarian ethical trade movement constantly reiterated that the "West" was an ideal to pursue and long for, the interview with Pizca del Mundo was devoid of any such references. Rather, the firm was at pains communicatively to convince the society that Poland belonged much more closely to the "West" than commonly imagined, particularly in financial terms. In this light, I maintain that the scepticism of Pizca del Mundo and some other Polish organisations towards the idea of the selfless consumer results from the deeply internalised image that they held of Polish society as being immature and still in transition into a modern, caring society capable of looking beyond selfish, individual and parochial interests (see Dombos, 2008; Kuus, 2004; Popow, 2015).

The IGR's communication, in turn, was devised to address Poles as citizens, albeit functioning in a not yet fully developed civil society (see Makowski, 2010). Unlike consumers, citizens were assigned moral virtues and ethical responsibilities that extended beyond the maximisation of their own profit. A citizen was perceived as a subject located in the political sphere in pursuit of more or less public interest (see Stolle & Micheletti, 2013). From this originated the belief that informing Polish citizens about the interconnections and interdependence that bound them together with Southern producers and workers would potentially expand the horizon of their narrowly formulated interests to incorporate care for distant producers with whom they could empathise (Corbridge, 1993). Here, the capacity of individuals to care for distant strangers was predicated upon political awareness and imagination as well as upon a civic responsibility and capability for public engagement. The potential for care was, however, perceived as being somewhat crippled by the increasing social inequalities and the poverty and marginalisation persisting among lower social classes. While such a perception undoubtedly reflected certain lived realities, I posit that it also hinted at the benevolently and empathically articulated "internal orientalisation", whereby some segments of Polish society were regarded as non-culpable victims of both the post-socialist transition and the global corporate capitalism (Grzymski, 2010, p. 75).

In sum, the communication tactics of the two organisations, although significantly different, both considered the "local moral horizons" and personal experiences of their situated audiences (Tomlinson, 1999, p. 179). They took into account the semi-peripheral position of Poland in the world economy (e.g., Zarycki, 2014) and the associated financial dissatisfaction. Furthermore, their communication was shaped by the threefold social legacy of the relatively recent democratic transition. Firstly, Pizca del Mundo in particular was cognisant of the late arrival of consumerism in Poland (Mróz, 2010) and, therefore, communicated the purchasing of their high-quality, ethical products as "indulgent" rather than restrained consumption. Secondly, both organisations acknowledged the reluctance towards politics and low political participation in the society (Makowski, 2010). While Pizca del Mundo responded by eschewing politics in their communication altogether, the IGR strategically promoted "civic", rather than political, actions. Thirdly, both organisations diagnosed the self-orientalising mindset present in Polish society: an inferiority complex manifest in a self-perception that rests on deep-seated feelings of peripherality, backwardness and underdevelopment (Grzymski, 2010; Popow, 2015; Törquist-Plewa, 2002; Zarycki, 2014). With that in mind, the IGR explicitly focused its communication on raising awareness of global interdependencies and Poland's place therein. For Pizca del Mundo, in turn, education of consumers was a long-term goal, pursued through non-commercial activities such as school workshops. It was also secondary to the financial support for distant farmers that was ensured by ethically sourcing and selling their products.

7. Conclusion

This article used the notion of the dialectics of care, inspired by Miller's (2001) dialectics of shopping, to inquire, by means of discourse-theoretical analysis of two interviews, how Polish ethical trade organisations used their communication to negotiate care for Southern producers and workers. Firstly, I identified two tactics through which care for Southern producers was proposed to consumers: (1) embedding it into the discourse of product quality, and (2) linking it to care for oneself, one's family and society by raising awareness of the global interconnectedness. Secondly, I examined the relationships constructed by these articulations of the dialectics of care. Again, I uncovered two radically different approaches. The first one located Pizca del Mundo in a caring alliance with producers and positioned consumers as the inherently self-interested, uncaring opposition. Here, product quality emerged as the only possible common ground on which the conflicting interests of producers and consumers could be negotiated. In this context, communication served Pizca del Mundo to "trick" consumers into supporting fair trade. The second dialectics of care sought to forge a caring alliance between Polish society and distant producers on the basis of being affected by the same global economic processes and mechanisms, albeit to different degrees. Thus, the goal of IGR's communication was discursively to create a caring chain of equivalence, a global class of the oppressed, uniting Northern consumers and Southern producers in opposition to transnational corporations and other institutions of global capitalism.

This article sought to contribute to the nuancing of the usually normative research on ethical trade (e.g., Adams & Raisborough, 2011; Archer & Fritsch, 2010; Goodman, 2004; Low & Davenport, 2005; Popke, 2006) through empirically investigating how organisations appropriate elements of the discursive repertoire of ethical trade, particularly care and the "Global North", into their actual communication practices. Theoretically, it

proposed and conceptualised care as one of the moral dispositions put forward by ethical trade communication. Thus, instead of assuming that a particular moral outlook is embedded in the idea of ethical trade itself and automatically transmitted through the various practices associated with it, this article inquired *how* care was communicatively constructed and what subjects it called into being. By adopting a firmly empirical approach, this article demonstrated how normative concepts are negotiated in the actual communication practices "on the ground". For media and communication studies, and the ethics of communication in particular, this article reaffirmed the significance of analysing communication in the broadly understood social context in which it is produced (Silverstone, 2005). Finally, given the negligible interest of Polish media in global economy and ethical trade, this study necessarily transposed the ethical notion of mediation to the mundane communication practices of organisations outside the media sector. By removing the concept of mediation from the familiar domain of journalism and media content (Chouliaraki, 2008; Silverstone, 2002, 2005), this study set a modest example for research concerned with ethics of communication beyond media organisations and in the context of niche social causes.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the two anonymous reviewers for their helpful suggestions and encouraging comments.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest.

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Media and Communication (ISSN: 2183–2439)
2018, Volume 6, Issue 2, Pages 210–219
DOI: 10.17645/mac.v6i2.1302

Article

The Meaning of the Feminist T-Shirt: Social Media, Postmodern Aesthetics, and the Potential for Sociopolitical Change

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Submitted: 30 November 2017 | Accepted: 28 May 2018 | Published: 29 June 2018

Abstract
This article examines the potential for political or social change as part of postmodern cultural expression in consumer culture. Throughout the article, I discuss the way sociopolitical messages, circulating in contemporary culture, represent an interesting element in terms of their intertextual referencing and postmodern blurring. Postmodern aesthetic features merge commodifying, resistive, and identifying processes, which can enable sociopolitical messages to spread into new arenas of resistance and fly under the radar, so to speak. In particular, I claim that new forms of engagement in social media communication produce an alternative venue for politics—one created by neoliberalism itself. I explain that sociopolitical messages presented via postmodern aesthetics in consumer culture, particularly when circulated using social media, can function counter-hegemonically, even while using hegemonic structures to gain commercial success. With this, the potential for change can come about; power lies in the hands (or social media accounts) of consumers.

Keywords
consumer culture, postmodern aesthetics, resistance, social media, sociopolitical change

Issue
This article is part of the issue “Media and Communication between the Local and the Global”, edited by Jessica Gustafsson (Sodertorn University, Sweden) and Kinga Polynczuk-Alenius (University of Helsinki, Finland).

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1. Introduction

As I travelled to Umeå, Sweden, my suitcase decided to make an extra layover stop in Stockholm. Scheduled to give a presentation the day after my arrival, I had to rush to the nearest shopping mall in search of something to wear. Somehow, I ended up at Gina Tricot, a Swedish fashion chain, where I found myself face-to-face with a white short-sleeved T-shirt decorated with the phrase “I only date feminists”. As I have a long-standing fascination with sociopolitical messages in consumer culture, this T-shirt called out to me. Also, fresh in my mind was a fashion magazine I had just read. The first page of this magazine showed an image of a tall blond model wearing a T-shirt that stated “We should all be feminists”, presented next to the questions “Can fashion ever be feminist? Or does it hurt feminism by its mere existence?” (Fardal, 2017, my tranlation). That evening in my hotel room overlooking Umeå, I did a quick Google search for “feminist T-shirt”. The search yielded roughly 1,200,000 results! Among these results were images of an ASOS Feminist Floral Print T-shirt Dress and the interesting Boohoo Feminist T-shirt Dress (no pun intended). Some of the search hits also sent me into other circles of information, for instance, the story of Maria Grazia Chiuri (Dior’s first female artistic director) partnering with artist Rihanna in designing the “We should all be feminists” T-shirt. I learned that the cost of the T-shirt was $710(!) and that Dior was giving a percentage of the proceeds from each sale to Rhianna’s charity, Clara Lionel Foundation, which funds education, healthcare, and emergency response programs across the world. My search also provided information on how to purchase Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie’s book *We Should All Be Feminists* (Adichie, 2014), the title of which inspired the $710 Dior T-shirt, in addition to links to the author’s TEDx talk of the same name, from which the personal essay in *We Should All Be Feminists* was adapted. I visited Adichie’s

Facebook page, and while doing so, I "met" several current and previous colleagues who at some point in time had "liked" the page. This slightly elaborate introduction, related to a fashion T-shirt decorated with a sociopolitical message, shows how a shirt's message can be intertwined in intertextual links and references—its message traveling through traditional and new media, via likes/dislikes and sharing, circulating in ways and with speeds that warrant attention from critics.

In this article, I engage with the issue of what it means, in terms of the possibility of sociopolitical change, when a product looks like a fashion item but presents a sociopolitical statement, which then circulates in consumer culture, lubricated by social media opportunities. Feminist T-shirt messages in the context of department stores, TEDx talks, books, magazines, social media, online shopping, and fashion runways, represent something interesting in terms of their intertextual referencing and postmodern blurring. Seeking to contribute to discussions of social activism and political change in the context of consumer culture, as put forth by critical scholars such as Duncombe (2002) and Mukherjee and Banet-Weiser (2012), I argue that this form of message—and the cultural circulation of it—contains an important aspect of power. First of all, the fashion item to which the sociocultural message is attached renders potential resistance vague, ambiguous, and almost invisible, allowing it to reach places other forms of sociopolitical resistance may not be able to. Second, developments in social media make such cultural texts particularly interesting because with social media scholars describe how consumers and other stakeholders can become empowered by engaging in online communication (Bernoff & Schadler, 2010; Gatzweiler, Blazevic, & Piller, 2017; Jæger & Kvidal-Røvik, 2015; Simon, 2011). According to Simon, "these new forms of engagement reveal an alternative venue for politics—one created by neoliberalism itself. As the state seems more remote, many consumers have shifted their political focus from the electoral arena to the market" (2011, p. 150). Even if few critics believe that the Internet can function as a remedy for social and political inequalities, communication continues to change with new developments in media, and consumers are "making themselves heard". Following this, Simon is calling for an increased focus on this situation—what he refers to as "contemporary politics" (Simon, 2011, p. 150).

In the following section, I put forth some traditional critical perspectives on consumer culture before presenting relevant perspectives from cultural theorists who have looked at the ideas of agency and power in consumer culture. Next, I discuss postmodern aesthetics and the accompanying possibility of change, which hinges on a particular media-experienced consumer, before I address how developments within media culture—specifically social media—which play an important role in bringing about change, can function counter-hegemonically in consumer culture, even while using hegemonic structures to gain commercial success. The reflections I present in this article are anchored in interpretive perspectives. More specifically, they are embedded approaches as developed within critical rhetoric (Endres, Hess, Senda-Cook, & Middleton, 2016; Middleton, Hess, Endres, & Senda-Cook, 2015). This means that I make use of my own experiences and interactions with cultural texts as entry points for discussions on broader issues of sociopolitical change and consumer culture. The article speaks to an interest in the potential for political or social change as part of postmodern cultural expression in consumer culture, yet it also brings in another especially interesting dimension, namely, developments in media—specifically social media—and what these developments might mean in terms of the possibility of social and political change.

2. Critical Cultural Perspectives on Consumption and Change

In 2013, H&M ran its "WaterAid" campaign, of which Helena Helmersson, H&M's Head of Corporate Social Responsibility, said: "WaterAid operates in countries where H&M suppliers are located. We feel that it is very important for us to contribute to better livelihoods for people in these regions. We are very proud of being part of making a difference" (Radovic, 2012, para. 3). Strolling through H&M during the time of this campaign, I remember reflecting on the meaning of this statement, thinking that it felt too simplistic and a bit shallow to buy a sparkly bikini and feel like I had made a difference in the world. Could I honestly wear the bikini to a pool party, sit on a green lawn in the middle of what was only a sprinkler system away from a desert (I was in Utah at the time), and tell myself I had made a positive contribution via my purchase? Traditional cultural critics of the Frankfurt School would say "no"; they paint a pessimistic picture of the consumer and modern society, in which market society is seen as an arena of manipulation and enslavement. The consumer is depicted as "a mindless, passive creature, systematically pacified by capital-holders through their propaganda mediums, namely, the culture industries and ideology of consumerism" (Izberk-Bilgin, 2010, pp. 302–303). Leading Frankfurt School theorist, Adorno explains how individuals, unconsciously submissive to a capitalist system, are what guarantees the system's continued existence (Adorno & Horkheimer, 1972). Media reinforce a dynamic in which people are exploited while under the false impression of having "freedom" and "choice". Being part of a consumer culture and critiquing this social order is unthinkable as the power dynamics of market society and the consumerist ideology hinder all sources of resistance. The consumer is trapped in a dominating and manipulative system, and resistance can neither materialize from outside nor within this system. Needless to say, Adorno and his likes would not be impressed by an H&M WaterAid bikini.

Following from this perspective, little room exists for social or political change in the wake of a Dior T-shirt on

the runway, even if the printed message on the front of it appears to be a protest against a hegemonic masculinity. In fact, rather the opposite is true; the shirt can be seen as pulling consumers' attention away from "real" political and social issues. Also, the WaterAid bikini and feminist T-shirts could actually be said to undermine the very causes they speak out in support of. Shugart, Waggoner, and Hallstein (2001) explain how messages of resistance can be coopted and commodified. They argue that what seems to be resistant text may turn out to actually perpetuate the very thing it gives the impression of challenging. Similarly, Ponte and Richey (2014) warn against the potential for change with these types of artifacts. Echoing Hickel (2012), they say that:

> Consumerist activism, development discourse, and pink-ribbon feminism all partake of the liberal fallacy that good will and cooperation and compromise will suffice to fix the intractable problems of poverty and inequality—problems that are imagined to be static and given, as if outside the realm of history and politics. (Ponte & Richey, 2014, p. 83)

In light of these sentiments, the possibility for agency and resistance and the potential for political or social change as part of any commercial cultural expression are hard to see unless, that is, people step outside of the marketplace (Izberk-Bilgin, 2010). Simon (2011) is concerned that the act of buying can become a substitute for politics and that "while buying can make a difference in the distribution of power and buyers can force companies to change how they operate in order to hold onto their market shares, this form of civic engagement can also make dissent fade away" (p. 162). Simon is in line with previous critical scholars who have been concerned that choices related to consumption can mask real political engagement. He is worried that this obscures problematic issues, making real solutions harder to see and taking away an important sense of urgency. He asks:

> Why enlist in a political crusade or a long-term political project if you are already doing something to help the environment or the less fortunate each and every day, like buying a venti skim milk latte from a company that says it makes things better? (Simon, 2011, p. 162)

In other words, one fear would be that someone, through their purchase of a feminist T-shirt or WaterAid bikini, decides "this is it", in terms of political activism on their part and, thus, the consumer's act serves to sidetrack or undermine "real" political acts that might otherwise have taken place.

3. Complicating the Understanding of Consumption

In 2007, Gap introduced its "RED" marketing campaign and the RED organization as a for-benefit brand designed to help eliminate AIDS in Africa. Ten years later, Gap says that the RED campaign has revolutionized the way that non-profits generate donations: "Consumers want to show which causes they're supporting. A fashionable product that backs up a worthy cause with a majority of their profits was an innovative way to get people involved, and one that continues to march on" (GAP, 2017). Sociopolitical awareness combined with consumption, as exemplified by the RED campaign, has been discussed extensively by theorists, often by those with an interest in modes of resistance that include acts of consumption. Several cultural theorists underscore that resistance is closely interwoven with broader issues of social order, agency, and power (Banet-Weiser, 2012; Banet-Weiser & Lapsansky, 2008; Condit, 1989, 1994; De Certeau, 1984; Hebdige, 1988; Jhally, 1990; Skretting, 2004; Sturken & Cartwright, 2001). While still linked with criticism put forth by scholars associated with the Frankfurt School, these perspectives provide a more open approach to dynamics of power and influence in consumer culture. In particular, cultural sociologist De Certeau (1984) provides a sophisticated account of consumption as a potential site of resistance when he theorizes consumers as creative and playful agents, devising innovative tactics that counteract strategic maneuvers of powerful corporate players. He talks about how "users make (bricolent) innumerable and infinitesimal transformations of and within the dominant cultural economy in order to adapt it to their own interests and their own rules" (De Certeau, 1984, p. xiv). Thus, consumption is never a passive enterprise; rather, it is another form of production because it involves the consumers' art of using and making-do. According to De Certeau (1984), consumers are "poachers" who negotiate, reinterpret, and appropriate dominant meanings. This celebratory approach offers an alternative theoretical lens, whereby consumer empowerment manifests through "the creative adaptations and manipulations of the marketer-intended meanings and uses of products and advertisings" (Denegri-Knott, Zwick, & Schroeder, 2006, p. 959). The active involvement of consumers in the process of consumption has also been explored in consumer research, where scholars have put forth interesting discussions about issues like anti-consumption and consumer resistance (Cherrier, Black, & Lee, 2011; Izberk-Bilgin, 2010; Kates & Belk, 2001; Kozinets, Handelman, & Lee, 2010; Varman & Belk, 2009), purchasing power (Denegri-Knott et al., 2006), and brand management as a process that incorporates an understanding of consumers' active agency (Arvidsson, 2005; Holt, 2002) and the possibility of responsive corporate decision-making within a neoliberal context.

Consumer researchers and sociologists of consumption have also been interested in how consumers resist the disciplining power of the market (Denegri-Knott, 2004; Fiske, 1989, 1993; Kozinets & Handelman, 2004). Fiske (1989) argues that popular culture is a site of power relations and that it always bears traces of the constant struggle between power and various forms of resistance to or evasions of it. In line with critical theoret-

ical perspectives, Fiske (1993) acknowledges that viewpoints represented in commercial culture are narrow; however, he says that the commercial culture's reasons for exclusion are generally consistent with its accepted function of making a profit. He makes an especially important and related point when he says that this exclusion is superior to more transparent exclusions from the public sphere, which homogenize and organize cultural representations around the interests of the power bloc. Drawing on Fiske's argument, commercial texts potentially provide *more* room for resistance than more "obvious" public outlets for resistive ideologies. Thus, a T-shirt presented on the runway or an image in a fashion magazine slips under the radar, so to speak, and can move around in arenas where the explicit questioning of social and political issues is usually rare.

4. Postmodern Aesthetics

In 1985, United Colors of Benetton was one of the first companies to challenge the traditional advertising formula when it started referencing issues related to world peace and harmony in its advertising campaigns. The company soon moved on to using more controversial images connected to political and social issues in its ads, arguably inspiring significant changes within the advertising industry (Vézina & Paul, 1997). The company was widely criticized for commodifying social and political issues (Schroeder, 2002; Seppänen, 2001), and the claim can also be made that no other company has managed (or wanted) to create as shocking and provoking images concerning social and political issues as they did. It was the jarring encounter with the United Colors of Benetton ads that first made me interested in postmodern aesthetics and sociopolitical messages in consumer culture.

The word "postmodernism" is, as Docherty (1993) notes, characterized by an ambiguity in that it can refer to an aesthetic style but also a political and cultural reality. Lyotard (1993) provides a pivotal account of postmodernity based on the collapse of "grand narratives" (such as Marxism) and their replacement with "little narratives" in the "wake of *technologies* which have transformed our notion of what constitutes knowledge" (Edgar & Sedgwick, 1999, p. 295, emphasis in original). Jameson (1992) conversely argues that what is known as "postmodernism" is best understood as the cultural logic of late capitalism. Edgar and Sedgwick (1999) suggest that the only thing certain about postmodernism is that "the uses of the word display such a diversity of meanings, that it defies simple definition" (p. 295). Presenting a thorough discussion of postmodernism is beyond the scope of this article; however, I can note that I keep in mind some aspects of the theorists referenced above when I—loosely based on the work of Harms and Dickens (1996)—understand postmodernism as a theoretical/analytical framework critical of totalizing theories, which is based in poststructuralist and deconstructionist approaches (in which knowledge is seen as discursive and subjectivities as fluid). Postmodern styles and aesthetics, however, are at the core of this article and, as such, demand a little more explanation.

In short, postmodern styles and aesthetics include fragmentation, a referencing of other cultural texts, and a blurring of the lines between art and commercialized texts (Hebdige, 1988; Hitchon & Jura, 1997; Moore, 2004). Two of these elements are particularly relevant to this article. First, a central aspect of a postmodern aesthetic is blurring. Fact, fiction, art, commercialism—postmodern aesthetics complicates genre norms and expectancies, appealing to an audience thoroughly steeped in the world of consumption (Sturken & Cartwright, 2001). United Colors of Benetton's sociopolitical advertising campaigns of the 1980s and 1990s provided numerous examples of such *postmodern blurring*. Many different, sometimes conflicting, meanings could be taken from the images used by the company in their campaigns as they "played" with different discursive genres. For instance, in 1989, United Colors of Benetton published an ad that portrayed a black woman nursing a white infant—an image that received responses both in the form of prizes as well as censorship. The breastfeeding ad included visual aspects from traditional advertising, with its crisp colors and slim, spotless "beheaded" female body, but the controversial issue of race (via a black woman nursing a white child), as well as the visual and conceptual contrasts in the ad, were aspects that seemed to align with contemporary art photography. A few years later, United Colors of Benetton began using documentary photographs and genuine images of catastrophes in its advertising. For example, in the spring of 1992, the company launched a campaign organized around what it called "The shock of reality". The seven ads in this campaign were images produced by photo journalists and had already been published in newspapers and magazines, so the postmodern blurring of genres was obvious in this instance. One of the pictures from this campaign—an image of the terminally ill, gay, AIDS activist David Kirby—is one of the few ads still included on United Colors of Benetton's webpage today, where it is described as one of the most important images in the company's many "social campaigns" (Benetton, 2017).

Not long after this ad was released, similar examples of postmodern blurring were used by other brands in their ads. One of these companies was Kenneth Cole. I remember flipping through the pages of a Kenneth Cole brochure before Christmas in 2003 and finding several interesting, and at times troubling, pieces of information about society, which were presented as part of the company's advertising. The information was related to issues like crime, HIV, and plastic surgery. But Kenneth Cole also provided interesting examples of intertextuality, which is the second aspect of a postmodern aesthetic that I want to emphasize.

A specific way intertextuality is expressed is via pastiche, which involves the "imitation or, better still, the mimicry of other styles" (Jameson, 1998, p. 130). This is

the ad that dresses up as art or art that dresses up as an ad; it is the sociopolitical message in ad form or an ad using sociopolitical messages to sell a product. Discussing similar dynamics, some scholars use concepts like double- (or triple- or multiple-) coding to emphasize how postmodern discourse works to "create meaning out of the dialectic generated by juxtaposition and the resulting cognitive tension" (Gude, 1999, p. 22). Pastiche does not stand outside of what it comments on; it does not point fingers and tell jokes but, rather, is a "blank parody, [a] parody that has lost its sense of humor" (Jameson, 1998, p. 131). When the Kenneth Cole ads used pastiche, they brought together fragments from other textual styles into a new textual form. Specifically, Kenneth Cole's pastiche consisted of aspects from sociopolitical messages that encouraged an awareness of HIV and identity theft, in combination with aspects of traditional ads—beautiful, skinny people in stylish clothing.

United Colors of Benetton also produced examples of intertextuality. For instance, a remarkable similarity exists between the ad image of David Kirby and traditional, Western images of Jesus Christ. The ad image as a whole—David Kirby is in bed surrounded by his family—has, in many ways, a strong resemblance to Michelangelo's famous marble statue entitled *Pietà*, which depicts the Madonna holding Christ's (dying) body in her arms. Even if it is unlikely that the image of Kirby was staged with the intention of imitating Michelangelo's *Pietà*, this resemblance and intertextual link is relevant. This link may have played into why this image was originally chosen for publication in the British newspaper, and it may certainly have played into why United Colors of Benetton's art director, Oliviero Toscani, decided to include this image in the company's advertising campaign at the time. While the company never explicitly suggested Kirby's figure should be seen as a reference to Jesus Christ, the ad nevertheless supports these connotations via its intertextual aesthetic. The Christ-like image, combined with contextual knowledge about Kirby, his homosexuality, and his unspeakable disease (at that time), created strong cultural tension.

As part of a postmodern aesthetic, mediated simulations come to seem more "real" than the things they are attempting to portray (Harms & Dickens, 1996; Shugart et al., 2001). Related to this, Baudrillard (1983) introduces the concepts of "hyperreality" and "simulation," which describe a realm in which distinctions between media and reality get destroyed. These terms also refer to the unreal nature that is created by a contemporary culture of mass communication dominated by spectacles and simulations. Reality, thus, is replaced by a more-real-than-real substitute. A postmodern style or aesthetic acknowledges consumers' media awareness by employing intertextuality and playing with fragmentation and genre blurring. Cultural texts' engagement with increasingly sophisticated media and a visually literate audience can be understood as part of a postmodern condition in which audiences do not find reality in itself satisfactory unless it is recast as fascinating narratives in media. According to critical theorists, this need to view reality through the lens of intriguing narration causes a blurring of fact and fiction and a loss of depth, context, and historical sense (Jameson, 1998)—a postmodern loss of reality and history replaced by commodities and commercial texts, which consumers use to create imaginary narratives (Appadurai, 1996).

Debord (1994) explains that, as part of capitalism's consequences of commodification and alienation, everything that once directly lived becomes transformed into representations. This "society of the spectacle" is dominated by consumerist patterns and a monopoly of mass-produced images, which undermine possibilities for critical dialogue. In other words, spectacles that are consumed are strategically created to serve the interests of those in power, and images become the final form of commodity reification. Importantly, Baudrillard (1983) claims that, since we have nothing real anymore, ideological criticism, which seeks to restore and make visible the illusory nature of capitalist freedom—in line with the Frankfurt School—deals with a false problem. The issue is not that media mask oppression and unjust social relations by presenting a false reality, as Frankfurt School critics (and also Debord) would like to argue, but instead that a media-created hyperreality conceals that nothing real exists. Postmodern aesthetics invites reading on the surface. Focusing on the surface becomes a way of avoiding the chaos that seems embedded in ambiguous postmodern messages the ads appear to attempt to communicate. From a critical cultural point of view, commodity texts present something consumers desire in one instance and something they fear in the next. This balance, but also tension, indicates that postmodern aesthetics potentially embody a double-siddedness in terms of fueling and helping to resist the status quo. So, although such texts traditionally present a fantasy of what consumers' lives could be like, as part of dominant culture, the texts are also subject to counter-hegemonic forces (Sturken & Cartwright, 2001). Following this, they can function as a form of resistance "restrained and shaped by the machinery from which it emerges" (Harold, 2004, p. 197).

The employment of aesthetic features, such as fragmentation, intertextuality, and blurring, opens up the potential for interpretations that miss or even counter the hegemonic ideal of consumer dynamics. Specifically, due to postmodernist conditions/aesthetics in which fragmentation, and perhaps confusion, is emphasized, power is not automatically a direct, one-way issue. In fact, Harms and Dickens (1996) say this postmodern fragmentation compromises control. This understanding of a postmodern aesthetic supports a view of postmodern consumer culture as a dynamic process of consumption in which commodities may embody *both* hegemonic and counter-hegemonic meanings. Furthermore, McKenzie (2002) points out that cultural resistance can be performed through parodic appropriations, whereas Ott and Herman (2003) argue that postmodern images can

have resistive functions when they play into "symbolic and material practices that challenge, subvert, or suspend" established cultural codes, rules, or norms (p. 251). On a related note, Harold (2004) emphasizes that postmodern cultural texts can function as resistive rhetorical tools from the "inside" of whatever they seek to comment on, specifically through the "rhetorical process of intervention and invention" of culture jamming (p. 192). This picks up Fiske's (1993) point on how commercial texts can create valuable room for resistance in consumer culture. Finally, DeLuca (1999) points to the resistive potential in the use of jarring "image events" to attract media attention and interrupt the comfortable equilibrium of the status quo.

The feature of fragmentation and the multiple, conflicting interpretations connected with a postmodern aesthetic undermine a simple, hegemonic function of such commodities in that they challenge established cultural codes, rules, or norms. These elements offer the resource to create a consumer identity connected with something else—giving people a way to express their sociopolitical awareness via the consumption of a certain product. Consumers are offered a commercialized way of expressing their political identities by aligning themselves with a certain image or by employing symbolism in such a way as to create an image of sociopolitical awareness. As critics, then, says McRobbie (1994), we need to pay attention to "how the tinsel and the glitter can produce meaning, in a different but no less significant kind of way than the great deep works of modernism" (p. 4). In her view, postmodern conditions such as fragmentation and incompleteness "need not mean loss of political capacity" (p. 50) but can point to new forms of struggle and critical work. By paying closer attention to the social practices of consumer culture, critics are able to gain a better understanding of the significance of popular culture.

So, what does this indicate? What, then, is the meaning of Dior's "We should all be feminists" T-shirt or the more affordable "I only date feminists" alternative from Gina Tricot? And how, if at all possible, could such commodified messages come to function as a form of resistance? My point is that they do not inherently possess resistance in their style and aesthetics, nor does the consumers' act of purchasing equate to resistance. However, along with the postmodern aesthetic that these items represent and the consumer culture they are a part of, a potential for sociopolitical resistance does exist. This might become activated when consumers use the feminist T-shirt as a rhetorical resource. And with social media, the "use" of such rhetorical resources might spread further and at higher speeds than before. This will be explained next.

5. New Media—New Opportunities?

Since its rise in the early 1990s, the world's networked population has grown from the low millions to the low billions (Shirky, 2011, p. 28). And while the Internet is not equally available to everyone, it is used by a growing number of people every day. These individuals make up the engine in a new media world, and their network of friends and acquaintances make up the social dimension of social media (Berthon, Pitt, Plangger, & Shapiro, 2012). With this, the communication landscape becomes denser, increasingly complex, and more participatory. New developments in media, specifically social media, have prompted discussions of consumers' power to influence social orders via the opportunity to engage in online communication (i.e.Bernoff & Schadler, 2010; Fuchs, 2017; Gatzweiler et al., 2017; Gerbaudo, 2012; Labrecque, vor dem Esche, Mathwick, Novak, & Hofacker, 2013; Loader & Mercea, 2011; Mattoni & Treré, 2014; Morozov, 2011; Shirky, 2011; Simon, 2011; Valenzuela, Arriagada, & Scherman, 2014; Valenzuela, Correa, & Gil de Zúñiga, 2018).

Many critics are skeptical of the positive effects of social media. For instance, in a book strikingly entitled *The Net Delusion: How Not to Liberate the World*, Morozov (2011) refers to feel-good online activism as "slacktivism", which holds zero political or social impact. In an overview of research on social media's role in political campaigns and elections, Towner (2017) shows that citizens do not employ social media to become more politically knowledgeable. In the recent book *Social Media: A Critical Introduction* (2017), which provides an in-depth and thorough account of power relations as part of the digital media landscape, Fuchs says that when it comes to assessing whether social media advance or harm the political public, he leans toward the former of these positions (p. 231). Fuchs (2017) connects his skepticism to the fact that capitalism constrains social media, and he points out that social media activity must not be mistaken for more profound forms of protest.

Other scholars express a more optimistic vision of the influence of social media. Discussing blogs, Rettberg (2014) speaks about how some such social media platforms reach far more daily readers in certain segments of the population than most newspapers. Shirky (2011) claims "the networked population is gaining greater access to information, more opportunities to engage in public speech, and an enhanced ability to undertake collective action" (Shirky, 2011, p. 29). Shirky also indicates that social media are powerful because they allow "people to privately and publicly articulate and debate a welter of conflicting views" (Shirky, 2011, p. 34). In line with this idea, Dean (2005) even goes so far as to talk about communicative capitalism that enables statements and singular acts of resistance—which in and of themselves may not be political—to be "articulated together with other struggles, resistances and ideals in the course or context of opposition" (p. 57). Similarly, Labrecque et al. (2013) say that the social media landscape has allowed consumers not only to create content themselves but also to amplify their voices across the globe. As Rettberg (2014) says, today you "don't need to own a printing press, a newspaper or a television station to share your

ideas with the world. Anyone with Internet access can publish whatever they want" (p. 19). Towner (2017) further explains that social media sites are important hubs of political information and activity, which have "transformed citizen-to-citizen and citizen-to-government interaction in a manner not seen before" (p. 167). With this increased access, what we as users do and how we use media changes, and *access* to information becomes far less important, politically, than access to *conversation* (Shirky, 2011). Thus, social media allow for a new kind of participation (Jenkins & Carpentier, 2013).

An active audience, of course, does not guarantee a critical one, and cultural scholars underscore that active media use does not mean that people have much direction with regard to usage (Harms & Dickens, 1996). Mattoni (2016) is correct in pointing out that a celebration of the emancipatory power of communication technologies is of little use in terms of understanding the *use* of these media. In different ways, other scholars put forth similar arguments when they call for a more nuanced approach to the complexities across different social media platforms (Valenzuela et al., 2018) as well as approaches to social media that take into account specific cultural contexts and embedded uses (Gerbaudo, 2012). Towner's (2017) overview of research on social media and political campaigns brings out some of this complexity; even though the overview points out that social media use does not enhance political knowledge, social media use is shown to increase digital engagement and also to increase offline political participation, such as voting and signing a written petition (p. 169). Tufekci (2013) suggests that instead of seeing social media platforms as encouraging "slacktivism", we should examine the ways in which these media mechanisms can allow for public attention to certain causes or campaigns.

I align myself with such understandings, where I view social media as relevant and potentially important when it comes to the capacity for influence, albeit without a guarantee for what it will do. Simon (2011) provides an interesting argument for how sociopolitical resistance *could* come to really matter in the context of social media. He explains that, first, consumers would have to recognize the connection between the things they purchase and the related worlds of production, labor, and exchange, and second, they must see that their purchases matter in terms of people, places, and power. Then, says Simon (2011), the third step in this process would be for consumers to move from politicization to politics. He explains that in order for this to happen, consumers must *talk out loud* about their understanding of the connectivity of an object to other processes:

> They must say to friends on the phone or on Facebook or over email that they are buying or not buying something for a specific set of reasons….This way they make clear in their own words the larger meaning and intentions of their consumer actions. They will own them, therefore, apart from the actions of socially responsible corporations that sometimes sponsor (and co-opt) political buying. (Simon, 2011, p. 163)

Referring to Lawrence Goodwyn (1978), Simon (2011) explains that this last step is the development from consciousness-raising to expression of an autonomous, political sort. Simon suggests that social media is a very important aspect of (potential) change, not because of what social media do but because of what they allow consumers to do, or how they allow consumers to spread the words about what they do and why they do what they do. The Internet, thus, is an important medium because it offers alternative channels to disseminate counter-hegemonic content and prompt instant mobilization (Aouragh, 2016). This underscores that the feminist T-shirt in itself is less interesting, but the postmodern style it represents, combined with the cultural context in which it circulates, is key.

In light of this, sociopolitical messages placed on fashion T-shirts, circulating in the context of social media, can become a rhetorical resource for resistive communication. With a postmodern aesthetic and in light of social media developments, which open up the possibility of playing out political positions in new ways, a *potential for disruptive moments and actions arises*. Understanding this calls for critics who are interested in sociopolitical resistance in contemporary culture to look beyond what is printed on the front of a fashion T-shirt and think about how it circulates in consumer culture. With this in mind, I am arguing for a potential of disruptive moments and actions in the sporting of a feminist T-shirt because of how this "utterance via attire" may spread via social media.

6. Conclusions

I did not purchase that feminist T-shirt in Umeå, Sweden, but maybe I should have as the presentation I was to deliver the following morning dealt with gendered representations from a critical feminist perspective. What stopped me was, perhaps, the fear that my peers would think of my attire as silly, naïve, or trivial, even though, ironically enough, I am interested in the potential for social or political change as part of postmodern cultural expression. Or, to borrow a phrase from McRobbie (1994), I am thinking seriously about the trivial. A feminist T-shirt, presented in a Gina Tricot store, can certainly be seen as "passing" for just another fashion idea. But that does not mean that it cannot also be something else—something more. Had I put my money where my mouth is by wearing such a T-shirt, I could have undertaken another means of addressing the issue of gender inequality. Postmodern aesthetic features enable a merging of commodifying, resistive, and identifying processes; this can allow sociopolitical messages to move into new arenas and fly under the radar, so to speak. They are powerful in that they cannot be controlled and in that they can show up in unexpected places.

All-in-all, resistance that is intertwined with consumption is important to understand because it can reach places where "ordinary" political resistance is prevented from visibility. This is a type of resistance that slides in between the cracks and can potentially carve out a space for deeper, more profound challenges to problems in society. This resistance is also important because, due to the vehicle of consumption rather than the structures of "traditional" political resistance, it can reach groups that are not interested in joining a political party or signing up for a lasting membership in a certain organization that fights for a specific cause. Resistance via consumption, when not marked as "resistance", is also something that can appear less binding. Wearing a T-shirt with the message "I only date feminists" does not require you to "be" a feminist in the same way as signing up as a member of a radical feminist group does, but this does not mean that wearing it cannot be a rhetorical resource for making a contribution toward sociopolitical change in society.

Anthropologist James C. Scott (1985) writes interestingly about "everyday forms of resistance", which can work together in "petty acts of insubordination" carried out by the weak (p. 91). Along with changes in the ways people use media (specifically social media), individuals' engagement with society changes. People's "likes" (and also "dislikes") matter. Following this, commodity culture can be used to resist dominant hegemony while simultaneously taking advantage of hegemonic structures to gain commercial success. In fact, commodity culture can contain "politics that do not look like politics", to borrow a section title from Stephen Duncombe's book *Cultural Resistance Reader* (2002). An opportunity exists for us, as consumers, to make use of devising tactics in order to speak out against something, especially as such protests can be lubricated and reinforced via social media. We can spread information faster and over larger distances. With this, a potential opening for change exists; power lies in the hands, on the T-shirts, and in the social media accounts of consumers.

Acknowledgements

I am very grateful to the editors and peer reviewers, who provided valuable comments and suggestions for this final draft.

Conflict of Interests

The author declares no conflict of interests.

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Media and Communication (ISSN: 2183-2439)

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