Analysis of the Gender Gap Experienced in the Media

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**Abstract**

This project investigates the role of women in media and the gender gap experienced. The most substantial information about the gender gap in media is from the Mentoring Inspiring Women in Radio organization (MIW) who conducted a 2018 gender analysis study. This study supports the overall theme of the lack of female representation in the media field and solely focused on the radio industry. Another resource utilized in this research will be from the nonprofit organization Women’s Media Center’s which was founded by Jane Fonda, Robin Morgan and Gloria Steinem in 2005. The Women’s Media Center organization released a 2019 study of the Status of Women in U.S. Media which also supports the lack of female representation in the media industry. This analysis also includes the examination of social media resources from the Mentoring Inspiring Women in Radio organization, Women’s Media Center, and Women in Radio.

**Literature Review**

The analysis of the gender gap experience in the media is truly about the imbalance of men and women. This literature review will present information that examines the media gender gap as well as the articles that emphasize the importance of social media for strategic communication for global audience.

The articles reviewed by Canady (2017), Crawley (2018), Farhangi, Abaspour, Farahani, & Ghasemi (2014), Nel (2017), and Smith (2015) confirm that there is not one multipurpose approach to social media for global audience. In addition to Christensen & Titley (2014), Fang (2018), Goldstein (2004), Spredfast (2018), and Vaagan (2017) focus on the importance of social media for strategic communication for global audiences. Also, reports by the Mentoring Inspiring Women in Radio (2019) and the Women’s Media Center (2019) which has evidence of the media gender gap inside their yearly study of the media industry.

The manner in which consumers communicate globally has exploded because “37% of the world's population—a whopping 2.8 billion people—use social media” (Spredfast, 2018, para. 1). These numbers are on the rise constantly and “social media, unlike any other communication platform, has the ability to bring together people from all over the world – instantly. Social Media makes it so much more powerful than just a way for friends and families to keep in touch with each other. The digital landscape also provides businesses with an unmatchable opportunity to reach potential customers – both locally and internationally” (Nel, 2017, para. 10). Reaching consumers has various avenues for exposure through social media outlets such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and more.

The social media landscape has practically changed the outlook for organizations and consumers in how they do business due to the fact that “social media from 2000 onwards have vastly accelerated the pace of globalization and transcultural exchange” (Vaagan, 2017, pg. 4).

Social Media at one time was only used for social interaction among family and friends but “this dynamic media landscape that blurs professional and personal interests into an uncertain media environment poses a peculiar challenge to strategic communicator and strategic communication research. Namely, social media presents an unequaled opportunity for strategic communicators to pursue organizational objectives in a direct and targeted way, but the personal nature of the medium simultaneously limits communicators' abilities to be promotional and strategic” (Smith, 2014, pg. 272). The impact of social media on consumers and their buying power “requires focusing on improving quality of products, company services and presenting them with logical and competitive process to the customers to attract customers' satisfaction of products and services, to form a positive attitude toward company and to broadcast positive verbal advertisement in social media” (Farhangi et. al, 2014, pg. 5).

From a global perspective, in the country Germany, “Facebook is the undisputed leader of German social media, with a market share of over 90% and more than 27 million users” (Fang, 2018, para. 3). The digital landscape involves social media and “the widespread use of the Internet and direct communications in general, has been an emerging strategy adopted by public relations strategists for reaching their publics without the intervening filter of news media” (Goldstein, 2004, pg.22). Accepting the ideal that there is not one multipurpose approach to social media for global audiences you can avoid “the mistake of focusing only on local audiences at the expense of having a wider impact. An important ingredient for success comes from first recognizing that there is no global one-size-fits-all approach to social media. Each region has its own unique business needs” (Canady, 2017, para. 7). Businesses should understand the global landscape because of the power that social media yields for organizations and consumers. It is good to remember that “time is money, so be as strategic as you can to return a profit — whether that’s an increase in sales or more support for your cause. If you can devote a bit of time to each of these items, you’re off to a good start. If, however, that feels like a stretch right now, then take it one step at a time. Above all, be deliberate in your approach. Don’t just post for posting's sake. If you can remain focused on reaching specific goals, your social media activities will be worth the effort you put into them” (Crawley, 2018, para. 17). Through these article reviews I felt that the empowerment of social media for strategic communication for global audiences was driven by “technologically mediated forms of communication shape social relations, but the extent to which this results in “empowerment” must be assessed in terms of geopolitical situatedness, historical contingency, and the range of conjunctural elements” (Christensen et. al, 2014, pg. 207).

The composition of the media industry includes television, radio, film, podcasting, social media, video games, print, and other media sources. To provide a narrative of the alarming gender gap in media, the MIW- Mentoring Inspiring Women in Radio (2019) and the WMC - Women’s Media Center (2019) both conductive studies of the media industry. The MIW study focused exclusively on the radio industry while the WMC focused on all traditional forms of media excluding radio.

The MIW- Mentoring Inspiring Women in Radio is an organization that The MIW Gender Analysis Study has been released since 2000 and uses the Precision Trak organization to conduct the survey. The 2018 report was released in March of 2019 and reviewed 11,225 AM and FM radio stations across America” (MIW, 2019, para. 2). This study follows the trajectories of female radio professionals holding General Manager, Sales Manager, and Program Director positions. In comparing 2017 to 2018 the study found women in General Manager positions had grown by one percent and that “19.05% (2,081 stations) had women holding the General Manager position in 2018.  Notably, this number continues to show consistent growth from 2004, when the percentage of female general managers was only 14.9%” (MIW, 2019, para. 3). Looking over the Sales Manager area of the study it showed that “overall, the best management opportunities for women in radio continue to be in sales management. 32.6% (3,481 stations) had a woman sales manager in 2018, and that number is up slightly from 31.9% in 2017” (MIW, 2019, para. 5). For women that serve as Program Directors, the MIW viewed this category has the “greatest challenge for women in radio management continues to be in the area of Program Director. Women currently program only 10.6% (1,139 stations) and that percentage has basically remained flat for the last twelve years” (MIW, 2019, para. 7).

The WMC - Women’s Media Center is very passionate about the imbalance of portrayal of women in media. The nonprofit was founded in 2005 by Jane Fonda, Robin Morgan, and Gloria Steinem with the purpose to ensure the representation of women in the media. The theme of the Women’s Media Center is to diversify media in the representation and content. The Divided 2019: The Media Gender gap research project included “analysis of 52,584 pieces of content from September 1 to November 30, 2017. Selected media include the top 14 national newspapers by circulation, four evening news broadcasts on major broadcast networks; two news wires, and eight major Internet news sites” (WMC, 2019, para. 18).

**Television**

Americans watch a significant amount of television even with having interaction with the various digital and social media platforms. In fact “viewing didn’t peak until 2009-2010, when the average American household watched 8 hours and 55 minutes of TV per day” (Madrigal, 2019, para. 2). This large amount of television viewing should encourage the industry to provide an equal depiction of male and females to constituents of that media and the content it develops. In the analyzation of the data in reference to television the discovery was that “men overwhelmingly dominate sports coverage, while women are more likely to report on lifestyle and leisure” (Chancellor, 2019, para. 12). Breaking down the male versus female ratio further “63 percent of TV prime-time news broadcasts feature male anchors and correspondents; 37 percent feature women” (Chancellor, 2019, para. 2). These statistics more than prove that there is indeed an imbalance of genders in television media.

**News wire services and online news**

The conduit to receive your news has most definitely changed over the years and now “about four-in-ten Americans often get news online” (Mitchell, 2016, para. 1). The news wire services have alarming gender gaps as well noting that “at Reuters, the men’s share increased from 61 percent to 68 percent, with a corresponding drop for women from 39 percent to 32 percent” (Chancellor, 2019, para. 11). More people are using on line services to obtain news and information. However, on line media services experienced the leading gender gap at “The New York Times, where men wrote 67 percent of articles and women 33 percent” (Chancellor, 2019, para. 11). The percentage differences between men and women in the news wire services and on line news outlets give an example of the gender media gap.

**Print-Sector**

The least used media is in the print sector because “as of early 2016, just two-in-ten U.S. adults often get news from print newspapers. This has fallen from 27% in 2013” (Mitchell, 2016, para. 2). The portrayal of imbalance has the “widest gender gap was at USA Today, where 69 percent of articles were written by men and 31 percent by women” (Chancellor, 2019, para. 10). The ease of electronic devices, digital sources, and social media platforms speak to the younger generation and since 2016 “only 5% of 18- to 29-year-olds often get news from a print newspaper” (Mitchell, 2016, para. 3). The print sector statistics demonstrate the widest imbalance of genders in media.

The purpose of this literature review is to demonstrate the importance of social media for strategic communication for global audience in relation to the analysis of the gender gap experience in the media. The global perspective is important in order to achieve the necessary shift in media to achieve gender parity. In addition to achieve a balance within the media industry by bring awareness to the gender gap in the media.

For the purpose of this research project, I will be using the Grounded Theory method of inquiry to answer the following research questions:

1. What themes, if any, emerge from the content analysis of the gender gap experienced in the media?
2. What do these themes suggest about the challenges for women in media?

**Methodology**

The data set used for this paper was located at the following sources: Women’s Media Center and Women In Radio in conjunction with their website, Facebook Page, Twitter Feed, and Instagram Feed. Specifically, the posts and comments made in reference to gender gap and women centric radio stations. The hashtag discovery will include Gender Race Bias, Media Gender Gap, Pay Gender Gap, and Women in Media. The date range will be from January 2017 until April 2019 which included approximately two hundred to two hundred and fifty posts or comments. The data set is a topic of interest because of my connection to the radio industry for twenty-seven years. The gender gap in the media industry was highlighted by a study that the Women’s Media Center conducted which is “The Status of Women in the U.S. Media 2019” that was published on their website and social media platforms. The gender gap in the radio industry and media impacts women on a local, regional, national, and global level. To discover the dataset the interested party would need to conduct a search of the Women’s Media Center and Women in Radio sources website, Facebook Page, Twitter Feed, and Instagram Feed. Duplication of exact data would be permissible because the search engines would provide exact direction to the sources and topics. The examination of the data will be collected by capturing screenshots of the posts to include the date, graphic, and commentary. This date will be submitted into a word document to preserve the authenticity of the information.

**Procedure**

In using ground theory, I agree that the “methods move ethnographic research forward through combing useful data collection and analytic strategies” (Charmaz, 2006, pg. 42). The first step I will take is to gather rich data by reviewing the Women’s Media Center and Women In Radio for posts and commentary. Then I will review the Twitter and Instagram Feeds for commentary. Then finalize my review with the specific hashtags commentary. I gathered vital information by memo writing and I went through the data set, posts, and commentary from all the sources. This data was captured by words, lines, and segments. I remained open to the information that was collected from the data because “by remaining open to the setting, its members, and their individual and collective actions, ethnographers have the opportunity to work from the ground up and pursue whatever they find to be of the greatest interest” (Charmaz, 2014, pg. 36).

Next, I advanced to the focus coding stage where it “directs our analysis early in the research process and helps us evaluate the directions we take without embarking on a path of no return” (Charmaz, 2014, pg. 138). The rationale is to use the coding for the critical review of the collection data which is large in quantity and be able to sift, sort, and synthesize the information. In addition, using the following questions provided by Charmaz (2006) help determined the focused codes which are Gender Race Bias, Media Gender Gap, Pay Gender Gap, and Women in Media.

* What do you find when you compare your initial codes with data?
* In which ways might your initial codes reveal patterns?
* Which of these codes best account for the data?
* What do your comparison between codes indicate?
* Do your focused codes reveal gaps in the data? (p. 140)

Within focused coding it could lead to new ideas and discovery. This area of coding also brings you to the analysis stage of the project.

For this project, the next step is axial coding which “helps to clarify and to extend the analytic power of your emerging ideas” (Charmaz, 2006, pg. 149). This process instigated further review of the data and I was able to place the discovery and started subcategories for the topics that further detailed the information. In the investigation of the data collected I then exhausted all possibilities and any new discoveries which led me to saturation of my data set. To ensure that I reached the exploration of saturation I used the line of questioning from Charmaz (2006)

* Which comparisons do you make between data within and between categories
* What sense do you make of these comparisons?
* Where do they lead you?
* How do your comparisons illuminate your theoretical categories?
* In what other directions, if any, do they take you?
* What new conceptual relationships, if any, might you see? (pg. 213-214)

**Results**

Numerous themes developed from the review of initial categories, data set examinations, and further exploration of the data set which included Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and various website blog posts. The central categories of the data were expressed into the themes of Gender Race Bias, Media Gender Gap, Pay Gender Gap, and Women in Media. I have retained all original comments, writing, and images to preserve the legitimacy of the statements.

**Gender Race Bias**

The category of gender race bias is about having a predisposition favor for or against a particular gender, race, or gender and race combined. Gender and Race Bias is having an unequal treatment and/or privilege-based preference and twenty percent of the data set referenced this category. The data in this category are statistics rooted in the difference of employment, pay, promotion, benefits, expectations, and privileges based on gender, race, or gender and race combined.

## An example of this data that would fall into this category is an Instagram post from the organization [www.MomsRising.org](http://www.MomsRising.org) which was “Unequal Pay for Women in 2019” that was reposted by @joanna\_mcclinton. This post included a graphic design listing the shape of a man along with female shapes with various ethnicities and their pay rate compared the male pay rate. The post included the statement by Joanna McClinton (2019) “Happy [#EqualPayDay](https://www.instagram.com/explore/tags/equalpayday/) - WE HAVE SO MUCH FARTHER TO GO LADIES!!!!! In [#2019](https://www.instagram.com/explore/tags/2019/) - there’s still [#unequalPAY](https://www.instagram.com/explore/tags/unequalpay/) and for all of us who are women of color it’s even worse.” This post highlights the glooming differences of pay between men and women, especially women of color.

## The second example for this category is from the @womeninradio Instagram page in response to the posted question “Do you believe there is a difference in pay between men and women in radio? Why?” There were many comments but one in particular by Jahaira Michelle (2019) referenced gender race bias. In her response she noted “It’s very frustrating to see because women are just as knowledgeable and talented as their male counterparts. But my experience in radio, I was passed up a producer position because I was a woman, and it was given to a guy instead. It wasn’t clear why I didn’t get the position, but we both had the same qualifications for the job. Oh, and race also places a factor in it as well.” This post gives a real-world example about the gender race bias experienced in the field of radio. It also received many further comments and favorable likes.

## Media Gender Gap

## The media gender gap category references the absence of women in the media sector. This sector includes television, radio, film, podcasting, social media, video games, print, and other media sources. It is also encouraging the promotion of gender equality in the various media outlets and ninety percent of the data set referenced this category.

## An example stems from the Women’s Media Center and their Status of Women in U.S Media 2019 study and report which was included as a post on their Facebook page. The study included information about gender imbalances in media. One particular post highlighted a portion of the study demonstrating the imbalance from journalists in the Twitter forum where women did not receive the adequate recognition for their creative efforts like their male counterparts. [Angel Vasquez](https://www.facebook.com/angeldfoto)  (2019) confirms the study’s findings in her statement “It’s why I hide my identity on my social media. Many assume I’m a man.” This activity expresses how male journalists ignore their female peers and that is an unnecessary behavior which further perpetuates the gender imbalance in media.

## A secondary example of the Media Gender gap is an alarming statistic that was discovered by the Women’s Media Center Status of Women in U.S Media 2019 study that men dominate the U.S. media in credits and news bylines. In the Facebook post Women’s Media Center President Julie Burton (2019) reports that the "Media tells us what is important and who matters, and when the wires assign 69 percent of the stories to men, the message is clear where women stand. A cultural, systemic shift is necessary if U.S media is to achieve gender parity — and move toward a world where stories fully represent the voices and perspectives of women." These statistics prove that there is a Media Gender Gap and that women are not afraid to acknowledge this gap between the genders.

## Pay Gender Gap

## The category pay gender gap describes the inequality of pay between men and women who are working often for the same work. It demonstrates that women are most often paid less than men. The statistics showcase the pay difference between men and women and fifty percent of the data set referenced this category.

## An example of the pay gender gap is demonstrated by the T Sheets division of Quickbooks and their Facebook (2019) post about their 2019 equal pay survey which stated that “92% of business owners are taking steps to improve pay equity but 55% have an equal pay policy in place.” On the Facebook post J[asmine Mirajkar](https://www.facebook.com/ishikahem) (2019) responded “Great article! Thank you for posting. Equal job requirements/responsibilities need to generate equal pay. We aren't talking about a neurologist vs. a High School teacher. We are talking about a male neurologist vs. a female neurologist and a male teacher vs. a female teacher. EQUAL work = EQUAL responsibility = EQUAL pay.” This statement puts the equality into a perspective from a female point of view that supports equal pay for women and men.

## A second example of pay gender gap is from the Women in Radio Facebook page where they asked women to comment about their feelings about the pay difference in radio between men and women. Kat Vance (2019) shares her perspective with her comment in which “the male counterpart who hasn't been there as long as I have made more money than me. We do the exact same job. Both PDs, both on air both great ratings. I've worked for the company 4 years longer than he has. When asked about this while negotiating my contract I was told you can't compare 2 different people.” There are many similar stories to the one that Ms. Vance has experienced in same role but not equal pay where the male counterpart receives more compensation.

## Women in Media

The categoryforwomen in media is a classification that expresses women that either participate or are portrayed in media. Media is an umbrella term for television, radio, film, podcasting, social media, video games, print, and other media sources. The data in this category reveal statistics that establish the existence or lack thereof women in media and ninety-five percent of the data set referenced this category. The data also serves has an empowering phrase and positioning statement for women that serve in the various forms of media.

An example of women in media using some form of the category name as an encouraging hashtag stems from a Twitter post discussing a Forbes article about the world’s highest paid radio hosts of 2018. Rachel G of WCIL (2018) reposted the article on Twitter and tweeted “What’s interesting is that it is all men. Ladies, let’s change that. #WomenInRadio.” The hashtag Women in Radio has been an extension of the hashtag Women in Media. These hastags serve has a connection between women in the same form of media.

Another example of women in media using the resources to portray women in all categories is when Kate O’ Halloran WRRR host (2019) utilized Twitter to post facts about women in sports and tweeted that “women authored just 12% of sports articles and are quoted as sources just 5% of the time in sports. The issue is not a lack of willing journalists or sources. It's ingrained sexism in the sports journalism industry. From the 2019 women for media report [#womeninsport](https://twitter.com/hashtag/womeninsport?src=hash) [#womeninmedia](https://twitter.com/hashtag/womeninmedia?src=hash).” This tweet was retweeted 176, liked 284 times, and had 28 comments.

**Discussion**

The emergent themes from the data point towards confirming that there is indeed a gender gap in media. Social Media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram which were utilized in this research identify that “social media experiences are, by design, both public and easy to share. This creates a compounding impact on positive experience” (Eckstein, 2019, para. 23). Pushing for positive experiences for women in media are driven by groups such as the Mentoring Inspiring Women in Radio organization, the Women’s Media Center, and Women in Radio. These organizations have dedicated their resources towards the empowerment of women in media and achieving progress in closing the gender gap in media. The overall theme of these groups is to strive to increase awareness about the lack of women representation and attempt to find ways to increase women’s representation in all forms of media. This research is important because “despite increasing criticism and attempts toward improvement in recent years, the representation of women in media – along with the media's portrayal of women – remain some of the biggest problems of our field in the 21st century” (Altay, 2018, para. 1). The basic ideal is that there is a lack of female representation in media which perpetuates the gender gap in media along with other themes such as the gender race bias, pay gender gap, and women in media.

**Limitations of these studies**

There are certainly limitations to the study and analysis of the gender gap experience in the media. The primary limitation to the media gender gap discussion is the interest level by women in media, the media in general, media professionals in executive positions, and media organizations. Research indicates that the concept of women in media has momentum, but the gender gap discussion has been viewed to be old news and in reality, what can be done about it. For example, the gender pay gap may have improved but in 2018 “women earned 85% of what men earned” (Graf et. al, 2019, para 1). The gender imbalance continues with media outlets where “the starkest disparity in the TV news outlets it examined, where women — counting anchors and on-air correspondents — reported only a quarter of the news” (Wang, 2017, para. 4). Therefore, there certainly is an interest in highlighting women in media is but the concerns for the gender gap discussion is relevant since there appears to be no forward motion as research has shown either stable or no statistical improvements.

**Demographic limitations**

The analysis of the gender gap experience in the media is very broad as it covers all forms of media. Media outlets and platforms includes but limited to television, radio, film, podcasting, social media, video games, print, and other media sources. In having such a broad resource group it is possibly that there are limitations in obtaining accurate percentages of women verses men in various media groups. Also, engagement with women in the media is spread out based on the number of women in media, those that use digital platforms, those that use social media outlets, and those that have a vested interest in the gender gap issues. There could be women that miss messaging about initiatives because of the lack of resources, knowledge, and/or interest.

**Modality limitations**

The media gender gap is a movement under the umbrella of women in media who use this name to promote equality in the media industry. The modality limitations within this research and ongoing research would be the actual interest level from women in media, the organizations that support equality in the media, media executives, and media organizations. For example, Australia news outlet ABC news after doing their own personal study of the stories they cover and those that report the stories they found the women were not represented fairly in comparison to men. They now are “making greater diversity a requirement, aiming for 50/50 male/female representation in order to accurately reflect the population. We are talking more about the issue internally and externally, including being transparent with our numbers” (Morris, 2016, para. 16). The participation like Australia’s ABC News and other media outlets should keep those involved engaged with interest about the challenges of the media gender gap.

**Conclusions and Future Study**

In summary, through this analysis there is a documented gender gap experienced in the media. As of April 2017, “the United Nations estimates the number of men to approximately 3,776,294,273 while women are estimated to be approximately 3,710,295,643” (Misachi, 2017, para. 2). This statistic demonstrates that there are more men than women but it’s not a huge difference. This should demonstrate to the media industry to have an equal balance of women and men in media and the content it provides the population. Factors to consider for this disturbing media gender gap are the executives in position to control the balance of women in media, the content that is distributed, and how women are portrayed in the media. A suggestion for a future study would be to analyze those in decision making positions and their choices in gender for particular roles, gender pay gaps in media, and resources to recruit and train women in the media field.

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