



# **PORTRAYING POLITICS**

A TOOLKIT ON GENDER AND TELEVISION

# **CONTENTS**

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<b>INTRODUCTION TO THE TOOLKIT</b>	<b>04</b>
<b>GUIDE FOR TRAINERS</b>	<b>08</b>
<b>1 INVISIBLE WOMEN</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>2 APPROPRIATE ISSUES</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>3 MARRIED WITH CHILDREN?</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>4 EMOTION AND POLITICS</b>	<b>29</b>
<b>5 FRAMING THE MESSAGE</b>	<b>35</b>
<b>6 BEHIND THE SCENES</b>	<b>41</b>
<b>7 THINK AGAIN!</b>	<b>47</b>
<b>8 THINKING FURTHER</b>	<b>51</b>
<b>PORTRAYING POLITICS CREDITS</b>	<b>55</b>

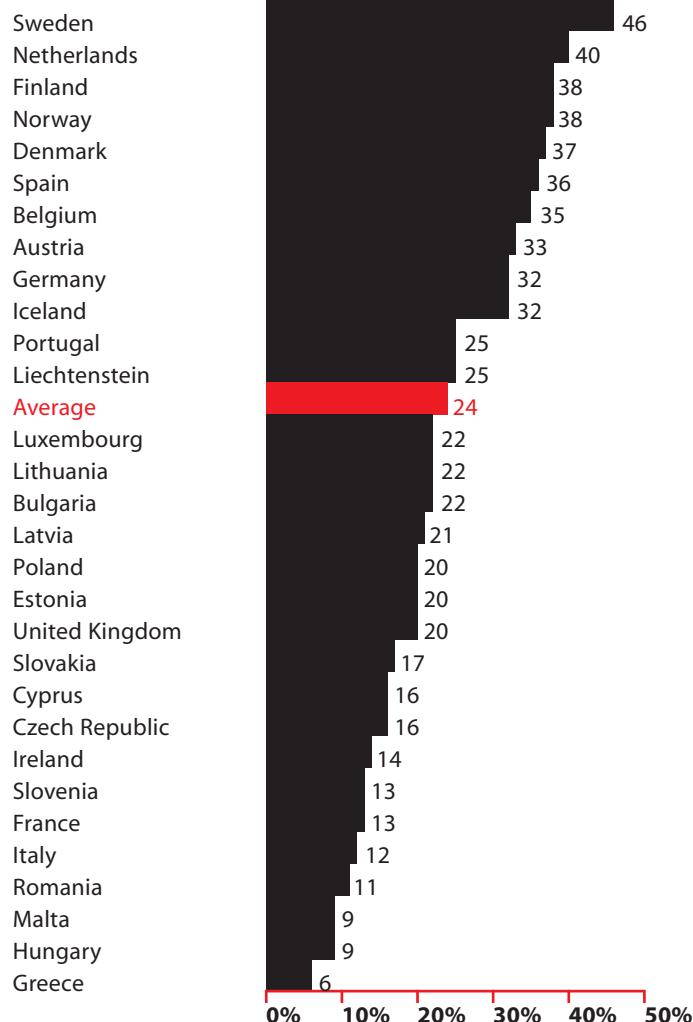
# **INTRODUCTION TO THE TOOLKIT**

## THE POLITICAL WORLD: INSIDERS AND OUTSIDERS

In November 2005 Angela Merkel became Germany's first female chancellor. For months beforehand, Merkel's leadership credentials had been under scrutiny. Some of the debate centred on questions that would be asked about any 21st century political leader - her political style, image, charisma, even her policies. But as Merkel herself acknowledged in an interview with *Der Spiegel* shortly before she came to power, one consideration seemed a 'bigger issue' than others: the fact that she was a woman<sup>1</sup>.

'Miss Germany!' exclaimed (in English) the front page headline of Germany's mass circulation tabloid *Bild*. 'It's a Girl' ('Es ist ein Mädchen') announced the left-leaning *Die Tageszeitung*. A curious way to signal the accession of a major new leader on the European and indeed the world stage. But women are still something of a curiosity in politics. Why is this? With an average of 24% of positions in national parliaments across Europe, women's share of political decision-making is on the increase. In ten of these countries women account for more than 30% of elected politicians. Yet women in politics are frequently treated and perceived as 'outsiders' - deviants in an arena where to be male is the norm. When a man enters public life, no attention is paid to the fact that he is a man. When a woman runs for office, as the Merkel case illustrates, her gender is almost always a focus of debate.

### PERCENTAGE OF WOMEN IN NATIONAL PARLIAMENTS: 30 EUROPEAN COUNTRIES<sup>2</sup>



#### Sources

- European Commission, Database on women and men in decision-making (27 September 2005)
- Inter-Parliamentary Union, Database on women in national parliaments (30 November 2005)

<sup>1</sup> 'I Am Immune to the Seduction of Power': Spiegel Interview with Chancellor-in-Waiting Angela Merkel. 17 October 2005.

[www.spiegel.de/international/spiegel/0,1518,380168,00.html](http://www.spiegel.de/international/spiegel/0,1518,380168,00.html)

<sup>2</sup> Single or lower House.

## THE MEDIATION OF POLITICS

Most people do not experience politics at first hand. Their perceptions of political figures and issues are shaped principally through the news media. So the media have considerable power to frame people's understanding of public life, key issues and the role of politicians - both male and female. Public service television, with its obligation to reflect the diversity and variety of the audience it serves, has a particular responsibility in this respect. It is a responsibility that is not always fully acquitted. Instances of blatant sex stereotyping may be relatively rare - though, regrettably, not entirely absent. However in countless more subtle ways television helps to convey and reinforce conventional stereotypes. These stereotypes undoubtedly affect people's relation to the political realm - whether as politicians, voters, or citizens.

News values and priorities, the choice of language and images, and the overall journalistic framing of individuals and issues all come together in a complex process to produce particular representations of women and men in public life. This project aims to intervene in that process, to make visible the media practices involved in it, and to promote critical reflection and change.

## JOURNALISM, POLITICS AND PORTRAYAL

*Portraying Politics* is not simply about politics and politicians interpreted as 'high politics' - the political decision-making processes of parliament or government. It is concerned with political issues and political representation in a broader sense. For instance the place of politics in everyday life, the relationship of citizens to the political process, the role of journalists in portraying politicians and in interpreting political issues - all these are touched on in the toolkit.

Journalists and programme-makers working on politics and current affairs wrestle with at least two fundamental challenges. On the one hand, there is the question of professional definition. What precisely is political journalism, or what *should* it be? What are the salient issues? How should they be prioritised? Who do they most affect? How should they be tackled - from a top-down, or a bottom-up perspective? On the other hand, there is the question of professional approach. How is the audience to be addressed? What is the best way to encourage people's interest in politics? What should be the mode of address - expository, entertaining, authoritative, interpretative?

Who is the audience - or who should it be? How can broadcasters ensure that their treatment of political issues is inclusive, in the sense of reaching out to women, young people, ethnic minorities? The toolkit provides some points of departure for detailed discussion of these and other professional questions.

The project began with a review of research on gender, politics and media<sup>3</sup>. Its conclusions guided the selection of issues that are covered in the toolkit. As a specific contribution to the project, ZDF carried out a study of women and men in its own newscasts in the summer of 2005<sup>4</sup>. We also had access to the findings of the Global Media Monitoring Project, a 76-country study of women and men that was carried out in 2005<sup>5</sup>. With the findings of these studies as a starting point, the project partners researched and contributed programme examples from their own output and that of some other interested broadcasters. The video clips form the core of the toolkit. They illustrate some of the main patterns and tendencies in television's portrayal of women and men in politics and public life today.

<sup>3</sup> 'Literary review for the project *Gender, Politics and Media: Challenging Stereotypes, Promoting Diversity, Strengthening Equality*', by Mervi Pantti, May 2005; available at [www.portrayingpolitics.org](http://www.portrayingpolitics.org)

<sup>4</sup> 'Die Darstellung von FunktionsträgerInnen in TV-Nachrichten: Eine vergleichende Inhaltsanalyse an ausgewählten Beispielen', by Ulla Dehm, September 2005; available at [www.portrayingpolitics.org](http://www.portrayingpolitics.org)

<sup>5</sup> *Who Makes the News? Global Media Monitoring Project 2005*. by Margaret Gallagher. London: WACC, 2005

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In some respects the toolkit is a sequel to *Screening Gender*, a training toolkit produced in 2000 by six European broadcasting organisations<sup>6</sup>. However, with its specific focus on the world of politics and public life, *Portraying Politics* enters new and, in some ways, more complex territory. As the research and examples in this toolkit demonstrate, unravelling the inter-relationships between gender, media and politics presents challenges that have until now been relatively unexplored.

There are few non-white faces among the people who appear in these video clips. This is largely a reflection of the low representation of ethnic minority groups in the political life of most European countries. For instance in the United Kingdom, where 8% of citizens are from a non-white ethnic background, only 2% of politicians are of black or Asian ethnic origin. But it is not solely a matter of political representation, or the lack of it. There are also questions to be raised about media representation of ethnic minorities in the broader political process. So in the final module of the toolkit we address the issue of diversity in its widest sense, and the need to take a comprehensive approach to the representation of all groups in society.

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*Portraying Politics* is therefore intended to stimulate reflection and debate among journalists, programme-makers and media managers about the many inter-connected factors that link journalism, politics and representation. We hope it will challenge some taken-for-granted aspects of journalistic practice and, above all, that it will provoke creative thinking about how things could - and should - be done differently.

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<sup>6</sup> See [www.yle.fi/gender](http://www.yle.fi/gender)

# **GUIDE FOR TRAINERS**

The toolkit *Portraying Politics* is not a traditional training course with a beginning, middle and end. It is a set of resources, into which trainers, journalists and programme-makers can dip selectively, depending on their needs<sup>7</sup>.

## STRUCTURE OF THE TOOLKIT

The materials are assembled around eight modules, each of which deals with a different aspect of gender, politics and television. The modules consist of video clips - from Finland, Germany, Malta, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Sweden and the United Kingdom - an introduction to some of the issues involved, and discussion questions that can be used to focus debate. The video clips are on the DVD that is included in this package. Where appropriate, the text contains a selection of facts and figures related to the topic of each module. The website [www.portrayingpolitics.org](http://www.portrayingpolitics.org) provides links to research, articles and background information.

These resources can be used in a number of different situations. You can incorporate components of the toolkit in existing courses - for example, on news values, news selection, news production, interviewing techniques and so on. Elements from the toolkit can be incorporated into courses or seminars on political journalism, to raise awareness of the importance of gender as a factor in journalistic choices and in the framing of issues. Individual examples may also be useful as illustrative material in lectures, workshops or conferences.

The sequence of the eight modules is, on the whole, arbitrary. It is not intended that you work your way through them in a strict order. The same is true of the organisation of the video clips within the modules. The modules and the examples can be mixed and matched to suit your specific needs, as and when these arise.

### **Module 1: Invisible Women**

Women are less newsworthy than men. They get less coverage, whether as citizens or as politicians. Why does this happen? Is it inevitable? How could it change?

### **Module 2: Appropriate Issues**

Perceptions of newsworthiness affect not just how often women appear, but the issues that get covered and how they are reported.

### **Module 3: Married With Children?**

A stable family life - with spouse and children - is still widely regarded as the norm for those seeking elected office. But does this have different implications for women and for men in public life?

### **Module 4: Emotion and Politics**

The 'humanisation' of politics. The 'tabloidisation' of the media. Are women and men judged differently when it comes to the display of emotion?

### **Module 5: Framing the Message**

Does the choice of images, language and questions frame female and male politicians in ways that accentuate gender differences?

### **Module 6: Behind the Scenes**

What can broadcasters do to redress the imbalance in male-female representation, and to encourage public understanding of the importance of gender distinctions in public life?

### **Module 7: Think Again!**

The use of commentary and the selection of footage can have a profound impact on the message that reaches the audience.

### **Module 8: Thinking Further**

Balanced representation of women and men needs to be pursued in the context of a comprehensive attempt to ensure fair and diverse portrayal of all groups in society.

<sup>7</sup> Note that use of the video material is authorised exclusively for non-broadcast training purposes.

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Each module consists of the following components:

*Issues for broadcasters*

An introduction to the issues that the module raises for programme-makers, journalists and media managers. This is intended to give you, the trainer, more insight into the topic and help you introduce it to the trainees.

*Video clips*

The video clips were compiled from recent television output. They illustrate various aspects of the subject covered in the module. These clips are the core of the toolkit in that they link the topics of each module to the trainees' day-to-day professional experience and knowledge. Starting with a brief introduction to the module and immediately showing the video clips (if necessary more than once) is a good way to engage the trainees' interest in the topic.

*Discussion questions*

The goal of the discussion questions is to focus thinking on the journalistic and programme-making issues that immediately emerge in relation to each of the modules. So the discussion questions will work most effectively after the video clips have been shown. They can be followed, if time permits, by a more intensive work assignment - for example involving research, writing or production.

*Facts and figures*

Some of the modules include statistics and research findings that relate to the subjects covered in the introductory issues section. They contain references to which you can direct trainees for further research and reading.

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## BUILDING ON THE TOOLKIT

The toolkit is just a beginning. It is unfinished business, to which you will want to add your own examples, data and inputs - materials that will help to anchor the issues in the reality of the specific situations of your trainees. For instance, you will almost certainly find it helpful to seek out - and to ask your trainees to find - examples from your company's current output. This will help to up-date and 'bring home' the issues, and to generate ideas about practical alternatives within your own organisational structure. We hope that the package will be a starting point for this process, to stimulate reflection, discussion and debate on *Portraying Politics*.



**1 INVISIBLE  
WOMEN**



**1 INVISIBLE  
WOMEN**

## ISSUES FOR BROADCASTERS

It is not an exaggeration to say that women are relatively invisible in the news media. The 2005 Global Media Monitoring Project (GMMP) found women were just 21% of all news subjects - those who are interviewed, or whom the news is about<sup>8</sup>. The figure for Europe was absolutely identical to the global average: 21%. In other words, for every woman in the news there are four men. When it comes to politics, women fare even worse. The same global study showed that only 12% of politicians in the news were female. And here Europe actually lags behind the global average: women accounted for a mere 10% of politicians in the European news media.

Why are women so frequently ignored? Even if the topic is clearly of significance to women, or is of central concern to them, they may not be represented. This absence of women is closely tied to ideas about status and importance. In most societies women are still assumed to have less status than men. Hence their views are regarded as less important.

These cultural assumptions link with journalistic practice so as to privilege the male. Sometimes it seems that women's very existence has been forgotten or overlooked in the selection of guests or interviewees. In other cases, although women do appear on the screen, they are not always given an opportunity to speak or to express their views as amply as men. In all cases, choices have been made by those responsible for the programme. Although it may involve a little extra thought, there are few cases in which it is impossible to ensure an equal representation of women and men.

## THE VIDEO CLIPS

### **1.1 Newsnight**

*United Kingdom, BBC; news and current affairs programme; Monday-Friday; 22.30; 50 minutes. Item date 23.02.05*

A report on immigrants to the UK, introduced by presenter Jeremy Paxman. The item begins with a full frame graphic showing passport-sized photos of the people who will be interviewed during the piece. Every one of them is male. In fact, women are the majority of immigrants to the UK.

### **1.2 Sabine Christiansen**

*Germany, ARD; political talk show; weekly (Sunday); 21.45; 60 minutes. Item date 18.04.04*

A popular weekly talk show, in which six guests are invited to debate a topic of current concern. With 10 countries - mainly from Central and Eastern Europe - about to become member states of the European Union, this edition tackles the issue of EU enlargement. No woman is invited to give her point of view.

### **1.3 News**

*Malta, TVM; main evening news; 20.00; 30 minutes. Item date 23.03.05*

A General Worker's Union (GWU) seminar whose topic is women in the workforce. The Secretary General of the GWU is invited to speak. But he uses the occasion to make an extended statement about the union's response to the suspension of energy workers from the Government-owned Electricity Company, Enemalta. Only at the very end of the item does he briefly address the seminar theme.

### **1.4 Hart aber fair (Tough but fair)**

*Germany, WDR; political talk show; weekly (Wednesday); 20.15; 90 minutes. Item date 28.04.05*

The clip shows a discussion between politicians and experts on various aspects of labour market policy. Guests include Martin Schulz and Silvana Koch-Mehrin, both of whom are members of the European Parliament. The debate is in full swing and the guests talk in an undisciplined way. Silvana Koch-Mehrin wants to contribute to the discussion but cannot make herself heard. The host tries to help her.

<sup>8</sup> *Who Makes the News?* op. cit. The Global Media Monitoring Project is an international study of women and men in the news. It covers all media - newspapers, television and radio - and has been carried out at 5-year intervals since 1995. The 2005 study covered 76 countries. See [www.whomakethenews.org](http://www.whomakethenews.org).

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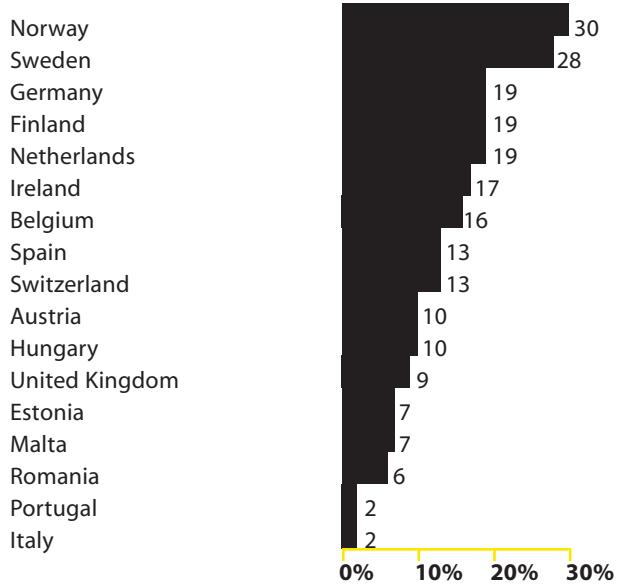
## SOME QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

- Journalists and programme-makers often say that it is difficult to find female participants, and to persuade them to appear on television. Is this what happened in the case of the *Newshight* item on immigration and/or the *Sabine Christiansen* item on EU enlargement? What other reasons might have led to the absence of women from these programmes? What specific steps could have been taken to identify suitably qualified female guests?
  - Is it likely that women would have had different viewpoints from men on either or both of these topics - immigration and EU enlargement? Think about how these issues might impact differentially on women and men. What is the obligation of programme-makers to reflect any gender-based differences of perspective on issues such as these?
  - In the *Sabine Christiansen* item, various categories of guest were included: politicians at state, national and European level, an author and a journalist. Without changing these categories, which offered the production team the most obvious opportunities for finding a female guest?
  - In the Maltese clip we see a classic example of someone who hijacks an event to make a political statement that is unconnected to the topic at hand. What would viewers of this programme conclude about the relative importance of the issue of women in the workforce (the topic of the seminar) and the issue of industrial action (the topic of the speech)? What is the responsibility of the news editor in a case like this? How might the item have been differently structured so as to include the voices of some of the women present?
  - The *Hart aber fair* clip raises a number of questions about gender roles and behaviour. In an otherwise all-male group, the single female struggles to register her point of view. In this example, as a result of the camera framing, even her physical presence is obliterated until she tries to make herself heard. In an effort to help, the host adopts an air of patronising gallantry in giving her the floor. But he then cuts her off abruptly. How well does the host of this show discharge his professional responsibilities? Would the situation have been different if the male-female balance among the guests had been more equal?
  - *Hart aber fair* is a live programme, with a large audience (on average over 2 million viewers weekly), who are encouraged to phone in with their own questions to the experts. A certain amount of unpredictability is therefore inevitable. However, specific production decisions have been made here. To what extent does the entire set-up of the show - the seating arrangement, the selection of guests, the role of the host, the way the shots are framed - prevent the female politician from making an effective contribution? To what extent is she herself responsible for the situation?
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## FACTS AND FIGURES

- The 2005 Global Media Monitoring Project (GMMP) found that the proportion of women among politicians in the news ranged from a high of 30% in Norway to a low of 2% in Portugal and Italy.
- In almost every case, the percentage of female politicians in the news is lower than the percentage of female politicians in national parliaments.
- The GMMP also revealed that expert opinion in the news is overwhelmingly male. Men are 83% of experts, and 86% of spokespersons. Women in the news tend to appear in a personal capacity - as eye witnesses (30%), giving personal views (31%) or as representatives of popular opinion (34%).
- In Germany, a 2005 study of selected ZDF newscasts found that women accounted for 11% of public functionaries or officials (politicians, public servants in fields of culture, science, judiciary etc)<sup>10</sup>.
- In Italy, a 2002 study of six television channels found that they devoted only 79 hours (7.5% of the total) to female politicians, compared with 999 hours (92.5%) to male politicians. There was no significant difference between public and commercial broadcasters<sup>11</sup>.
- A Dutch study of television coverage of male and female politicians who were heading their parties' list of candidates in the 2003 parliamentary elections found that the male politicians received twice as much attention as the females<sup>12</sup>.
- The media tend to focus on those in the higher echelons of political hierarchies. This is often advanced as the reason why women in politics get less airtime than men. But an international study of heads of state (presidents and prime ministers) in the mid-1990s found that male leaders got significantly more coverage than female leaders<sup>13</sup>.

## POLITICIANS IN THE NEWS - THE PERCENTAGE OF WOMEN: 17 EUROPEAN COUNTRIES<sup>9</sup>



### Source

Who Makes the News? op. cit

### Notes

Belgium - Data are for Flemish language media only

Switzerland - Data are for French language media only

<sup>9</sup> Data cover all media (newspapers, television and radio newscasts)

<sup>10</sup> 'Die Darstellung von FunktionsträgerInnen in TV-Nachrichten'. op. cit

<sup>11</sup> *La Donna Invisibile della Politica (The Invisible Woman in Politics)*. Osservatorio di Pavia, 2005.

<sup>12</sup> *Borsten, Billen, Balkenende (Breasts, Butts, Balkenende)*, by Roelien Wierstra. Hilversum: Bureau Beeldvorming en Diversiteit, 2003.

<sup>13</sup> 'Women leaders worldwide: a splash of color in the photo op.', by Pippa Norris; pp. 146-165 in P. Norris (ed.) *Women, Media and Politics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997.





**2 APPROPRIATE  
ISSUES**

## **2 APPROPRIATE ISSUES**

## ISSUES FOR BROADCASTERS

The news agenda is dominated by stories on government, economics, crime and defence. The 2005 Global Media Monitoring Project found that these topics account for 66% of all news stories. By comparison, social issues receive little coverage. Health accounts for 3% of the news, education 2%, human rights 1%. These are the so-called 'soft' areas of news and of politics - the issues that are believed to be of special concern to women because, according to the traditional stereotype, they draw on women's supposed nurturing and caring skills. Yet headlines, item placement and the sheer number of stories all send a clear message that it is the so-called 'hard' issues - economy, defence, foreign affairs - that are more important. These stereotyped beliefs, and the priorities they impose on news agendas, raise a number of questions.

First, what is their impact on the perceived status of women and men in public life? For example, research in the USA suggests that voters respond most positively to candidates who, regardless of their gender, receive the type of coverage usually accorded to male candidates. This typically includes extensive coverage of their stands on 'hard' or 'masculine' issues, such as crime and defence<sup>14</sup>.

Second, to what extent is this traditional male-female stereotypical division reinforced through the selection of news subjects and interviewees in television? For instance, a 2004 study of media and politics in Denmark, Estonia, Latvia and Italy found a similar pattern in all four countries. Female politicians were called on to talk about so-called 'soft' issues such as education and culture, while male politicians were mainly invited to speak on so-called 'hard' issues like economics, foreign politics, and topics such as the EU and NATO<sup>15</sup>.

Despite the fact that women have made considerable inroads into national politics over the past decade, to a large extent television continues to depict public life as a male domain. In this domain women are sometimes permitted to speak - but usually on 'their' special subjects.

This presents a dilemma for women - both as politicians and as citizens. On the one hand it is important that social issues such as education, health, sexual abuse, violence against women and children are brought onto the political agenda and into public debate. Research shows that in general female politicians do place a higher priority on such issues than men do<sup>16</sup>. On the other hand the very fact that these subjects are discussed primarily by women reinforces the stereotype that they are 'women's issues' and therefore less important. The video clips in this module illustrate some of the ways this happens. But we also see how, occasionally, television can puncture stereotyped perceptions about the issues that are considered appropriate for women.

<sup>14</sup> 'Does being male help? An investigation of the effects of candidate gender and campaign coverage on evaluations of U.S. Senate candidates', by Kim Kahn. pp. 497-517 in *Journal of Politics*, 54, 1992.

<sup>15</sup> *The Role of the Mass Media in the (Re)Distribution of Power. A comparative report*, by Inte Brikse, 2004.

<sup>16</sup> *Feminizing Politics*, by Joni Lovenduski. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2005

## THE VIDEO CLIPS

### 2.1 Berlin Mitte

*Germany, ZDF; political talk show; weekly (Thursday); 22.15; 45 minutes.*

*Item dates - Health 17.06.04; neo-Nazis 27.01.05*

Two examples of the introductory sequence of this popular weekly talk show. The first is from an edition about health care and health insurance; the second is about neo-Nazis. In each example, look out for the gender balance among the studio guests.

### 2.2 Landesschau Baden-Württemberg Heute (Baden-Württemberg Today)

*Germany, SWR; regional news programme; Monday to Saturday; 18.45; 60 minutes. Item date 25.11.04; title 'Das Duell' (The Duel); author Silke Gmeiner.*

A news report on a leadership election within the Christian Democratic Party (CDU) to succeed Erwin Teufel as Prime Minister in the state (Land) of Baden-Württemberg. The two candidates - Annette Schavan and Günther Oettinger - make presentations at a congress for CDU members. Schavan advocates the need for fair recruitment of unemployed women, and calls for a discussion of the links between family issues and broader local and national issues. Oettinger talks about unemployment, the economy and the need to create jobs. The report ends with an unexpected reference to Schavan's private life.

N.B. We were not granted permission to use footage of Günther Oettinger. We are therefore unable to include those sections of the report.

### 2.3 News

*United Kingdom, BBC; main evening news; 22.00; 30 minutes. Item date 16.11.04*

A portrait of Condoleezza Rice at the time of her appointment as Secretary of State by President Bush. The item traces her background and her relationship of trust with the President, who has nicknamed her 'Warrior Princess'<sup>17</sup>. The report avoids obvious stereotypes: Rice's gender, marital status and ethnicity are not singled out for special attention. The tone is matter-of-fact. As a profile of a high achiever in a 'non-traditional' political position, her success is depicted as her due reward for loyal service to the Bush administration.

### 2.4 The Daily Politics

*United Kingdom, BBC; political discussion programme; Monday-Friday; 12.00 (mid-day); 30 minutes. Item date 12.04.05*

Presenter Andrew Neil has just had a 10-minute heavy-weight political discussion with the journalist Michael White, about the current standing of the Liberal Democrat party and the personality of its then leader, Charles Kennedy. Neil's co-presenter, Daisy Sampson, sits at the studio desk with them throughout the discussion. When it is over, Neil turns to Sampson and asks her to give an update on the birth of Charles Kennedy's first child.

### 2.5 Xarabank

*Malta, TVM; discussion programme; weekly (Friday); 20.45; 135 minutes. Item date 21.07.05*

Xarabank is the most popular television programme in Malta. It covers current affairs and political events, as well as entertainment items. About 40 editions a year are transmitted. This montage is a promotion for a forthcoming 'Best Of' edition. Although Xarabank does sometimes feature women in serious roles, in this promotion they are seen primarily as decoration. Most of the men featured in the promotion are politicians or experts.

### 2.6 A-studio

*Finland, YLE; current affairs programme; weekly (Friday); 21.00; 30 minutes. Item date 04.08.2000*

An item about the state budget, which will soon be finalised. The interviewee is Mrs Mähönen, mother of four. She is a teacher, currently on vacation, and is also a union representative. She comments knowledgeably on the government's promises about tax relief, relating the proposals to her own family life and expenditure.

<sup>17</sup> President George W. Bush is well known for the nicknames he gives to staff members. For instance Karl Rove, as senior advisor, was 'Boy Genius'; Paul O'Neill, Secretary of the Treasury, was the 'Big O'.

## SOME QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

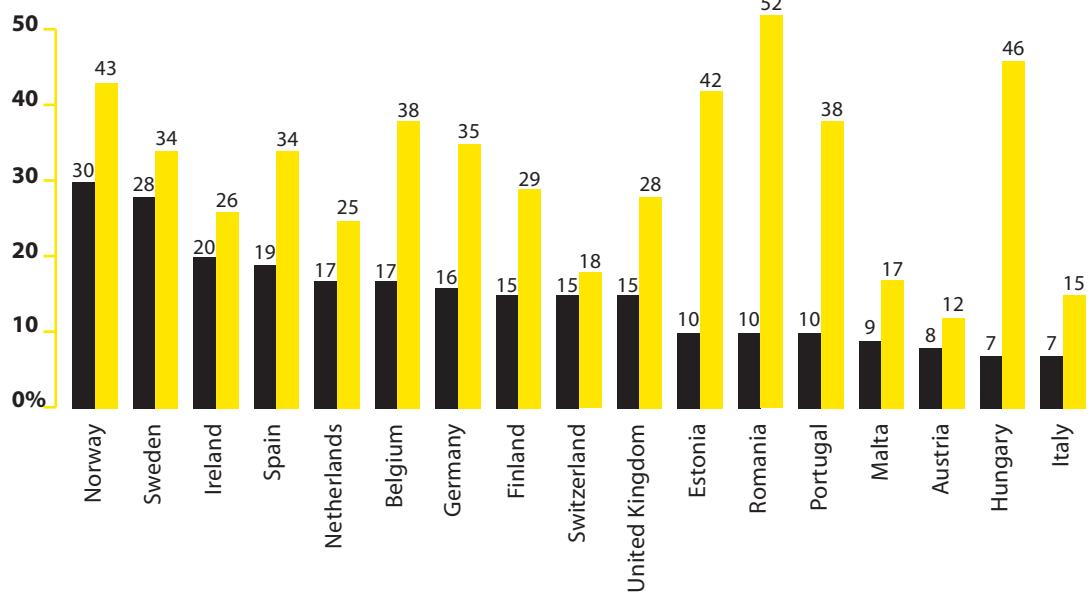
- Gender stereotypes affect the selections and choices made in many of these clips. The *Xarabank* promotional trailer is the most blatant example. The programme itself does include women as politicians, experts and people with points of view. Yet the team that assembled the promotional item made a deliberate choice to show women only as entertainers or as eye candy. On the other hand, this is a well-known way of attracting viewers' attention. In an item intended to advertise the programme, is the strategy justifiable? How might the promo have been structured so as to be eye-catching but not sexist?
- The two examples from *Berlin Mitte* illustrate some of the ways in which gender stereotyping feeds into the choice of guests and experts. The all-male item on neo-Nazis resonates with the assumption that 'violence' and 'social disruption' are primarily male phenomena. The absence of women among the invited guests - who include a student - implies that this is not an issue that concerns women or one on which women have a point of view. In its own way, this is as blatantly stereotyped as the assumptions underlying the *Xarabank* promotion. Did the production team fall into a conceptual trap? How could they have framed the issue in a way that brought women into the picture? Where could they have looked for a female point of view?
- The *Berlin Mitte* item on health is particularly intriguing. Here it would have been easy to compose an all-female panel of guests. Yet there is a gender balance: the guests include three women and two men. Do you think the production team set out to ensure the participation of men, or did it 'just happen' that way? Apart from programmes specifically targeted at women, how often have you seen an all-female panel of experts? Think of a few topics that are frequently debated on television - unemployment, immigration, pornography, climate change, taxation, educational reform. How acceptable would it be to see an all-female panel discuss any of these? And an all-male panel?
- In the *Daily Politics* clip we see gender stereotyping at work among journalists themselves. While the serious political discussion is in the hands of the male, the 'light' item is consigned to the female. How might this affect viewers' perceptions of the status of women and men in the profession? Is it an unusual example, or have you seen a similar task division between journalists in other programmes?
- The item on Condoleezza Rice and the interview with Mrs Mähönen break with the conventional stereotype of what is considered 'appropriate'. The neutral tone of the report on Rice's appointment suggests that there is nothing exceptional in the nomination of a woman as national security advisor. No reference is made to the fact that she is only the second woman to have held the position. What are the arguments for and against this 'matter-of-fact' approach? Is it relevant to remind the public that very few women achieve this level of authority? Or should the issue of gender be treated as irrelevant?
- The interview with Mrs Mähönen is an example of a 'bottom-up' approach to politics, bringing those who are directly affected by policy decisions into the discussion. What this mother of four has to say is likely to strike a chord with many viewers. Her idea about 'channelling' money into areas such as health and education is one that many economic experts also favour. But to what extent does the exclusively domestic setting in which she is shown undermine her credibility? She is a teacher and a union representative. What other options might have been available to the production team in terms of the location and setting for this interview, or part of it? What might this have added to the item?

## FACTS AND FIGURES

- The 2005 Global Media Monitoring Project found that in the European media women are twice as likely to appear as news subjects in stories on social issues than in stories on politics and government.
- In every case, the percentage of women in social and legal stories is considerably higher than in stories on politics and government.
- The same study found that female journalists report just 32% of stories on politics and government, but 40% of stories on social and legal issues.
- In the ARD (Germany) nightly news magazine *Tagesthemen*, journalists are invited to provide a commentary on important topics of the day. Out of 219 such commentaries in 2005, just 40 (18%) were provided by women<sup>18</sup>.

The 2005 study of ZDF newscasts found that women appeared in a narrower spectrum of topics than men (a finding linked to the smaller number of reports in which women appeared overall). Women were reported in connection with three main themes: the upcoming Bundestag elections (including

### PERCENTAGE OF WOMEN IN STORIES ON POLITICAL AND SOCIAL ISSUES: 17 EUROPEAN COUNTRIES



#### Source

Who Makes the News? op. cit

#### Notes

Belgium - Data are for Flemish language media only

Switzerland - Data are for French language media only

Politics & government

Social & legal

the candidacy of Angela Merkel as chancellor), reports from abroad and domestic themes. Men were reported in relation to these topics too, but also on economic policy, culture, sports, traffic, unions, religion and terror<sup>19</sup>.

In Italy, a 2002 study of political television news (RAI and Mediaset) showed that female

politicians were most often asked to speak on education issues. Other political themes typical for or exclusive to female candidates were in vitro fertilisation and child care. Conversely, female politicians were seldom asked about subjects such as party dynamics, international crises or the economy<sup>20</sup>.

A study of press coverage of the 2003 Swiss parliamentary election showed that women candidates were most likely to be reported in the areas of education, culture, and gender issues. They were least likely to appear in stories about EU and foreign policy, and agriculture<sup>21</sup>.

<sup>18</sup> Figures provided by ARD.

<sup>19</sup> 'Die Darstellung von FunktionsträgerInnen in TV-Nachrichten', op. cit.

<sup>20</sup> *La Donna Invisibile della Politica*, op. cit.

<sup>21</sup> 'Doing gender in der Wahlkampfkomunikation' (Doing Gender in the Election Communication), by Sibylle Hardmeier and Anita Klöti, in *Frauenfrage* 2, 2004



**3 MARRIED WITH  
CHILDREN?**

**3 MARRIED WITH  
CHILDREN?**

## ISSUES FOR BROADCASTERS

Marriage and family are still regarded as the norm for people seeking elected office. This is true for both women and men. But there are differences in the way this norm is perceived in relation to male and female politicians. The media image of the 'family man' is a reassuring one, suggesting stability and reliability. But there is no equivalent image of the 'family woman'. A man who says he is leaving office to 'spend more time with his family' may be portrayed (albeit perhaps cynically) as human and caring - as having 'given up' something important. A woman who gives the same reason may be depicted (perhaps subtly) as a failure - or as having come to terms with her real role in life.

Stereotyped assumptions influence not only media critiques of women and men in public life, but also the dilemmas faced by these women and men. For the man, the question of how he manages to combine career and family rarely arises in media debate. But for a woman, this challenge - often presented as a 'juggling act' - is constantly present. Required to show equal dedication to job and home, any hint that she may be privileging one over the other is likely to be judged harshly by the media.

The traditional perception of women as being first and foremost wives and mothers has other implications too. For instance, female political candidates are just as likely as males to make issues a cornerstone of the electoral campaign. But research from the USA found that women seeking political office in 2000 received less issue-related coverage than men did, and tended to be discussed more in terms of their marital and family status<sup>22</sup>. This emphasis can affect the perception of voters, and the likelihood of election.

A related question is the extent to which the media are entitled to intrude on the private lives of public figures. The so-called personalisation of politics means that citizens have come to expect politicians to 'connect' with the electorate as human beings. When people identify with the politician as a person, they are more likely to trust that politician to represent them competently in the political arena. But does this mean that privacy must be totally sacrificed? What should be the role of public service television here? One school of thought holds that people in public life are 'fair game', and that the media have an obligation to inform citizens about irregularities from what is perceived as the norm. But does this mean that single parents or unmarried people should be subject to intrusive reporting that may put their careers in jeopardy when compared with those of colleagues who fit the conventional mould? The video clips in this module are intended to start debate on these and other questions about the mediation of public and private life.

<sup>22</sup> 'Framing the fight: An analysis of media coverage of female and male candidates in primary races for Governor and U.S. Senate in 2000', by Dianne Bystrom et al; pp. 1999-2013 in *American Behavioral Scientist*, 44 (12), 2001

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## THE VIDEO CLIPS

### 3.1 Het Elfde Uur (The Eleventh Hour)

*Netherlands, EO; talk show; weekly (Tuesday); 21.50; 42 minutes. Item date 07.01.03*

Tineke Huizinga is a Member of Parliament for ChristenUnie (Christian Union). It is a small Protestant party that considers family life to be an important issue. In the course of this programme Huizinga talks on various topics including development matters and asylum seekers. However, the very first question she is asked is about the amount of time she spends at work and with her children.

### 3.2 Ländersache (Regional Affairs)

*Germany, SWR; political news magazine from Baden-Württemberg; weekly (Thursday); 20.15; 45 minutes. Item date 18.11.04; title 'Regionalkonferenz' (CDU members' conference); editors Gabi Mönnich, Jürgen Rose.*

Another news report on the leadership election between Annette Schavan and Günther Oettinger (see item 2.2). This item profiles the two candidates, focusing on them as individuals rather than on their political positions. Each of them is shown in their private, home setting. Schavan is single and childless. Her private life 'attracts as much attention as her politics'. Oettinger is married, with a small son. The transition between the two profiles is striking. The section on Schavan ends with her comments on the speculation about her private life. This is immediately followed by a shot of Oettinger collecting his son from school. The commentary notes that 'his family is important to him, even if he has just one day for them at weekends'. We see him playing a board game with his son, speaking about his hobbies: 'I like to do sports, play games, watch a movie, take walks, take bike rides'.

N.B. We were not granted permission to use footage of Günther Oettinger. We are therefore unable to include those sections of the report.

### 3.3 Lørdagsrevyen (Saturday News)

*Norway, NRK; main Saturday evening newscast; 19.00; 45 minutes. Item date 05.06.04*

Each Saturday, after the opening 'hard' news segment, the newscast profiles a person who has been in the news during the past week. On this occasion the person profiled is Marit Arnstad, one of Norway's best-known politicians and a single mother. She is leader of the Senterpartiet (SP, Farmers party) in the Norwegian parliament. Arnstad's announcement that she will not stand in the next election has made headlines. She wants to raise her 5-year-old son outside the city, near her family home in the countryside. She has never revealed the identity of her son's father.

### 3.4 Herbsttreffen der Frauen in den Medien (Autumn meeting of Women in the Media)

*Germany, Phoenix (public affairs and documentary channel; partners ARD and ZDF); panel discussion; one-off programme; 16.00; 60 minutes; 24.11.04*

During this panel discussion, the moderator has asked Annette Schavan (see items 2.2 and 3.2) what it is like for a woman to combine politics and family. Schavan is single and childless. Her answer addresses the 'double bind' faced by women in relation to the issue of the family.

## SOME QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

- The questions asked of Tineke Huizinga in *Het Elfde Uur* might be ones that any good professional would pose. After all, her Party puts a lot of emphasis on the family. And here is a member of the Party apparently transgressing the expected norms for good mothers. Huizinga challenges the preconceptions involved in this, by reminding the host that the children's father also has a role - and one that the children appreciate. Did the host fall into a stereotyped trap, or did he do a good job as a journalist? In your opinion, what will remain in viewers' minds about this exchange? Huizinga's nuanced replies, or the emotive language of the host?
- In the *Ländersache* news report Schavan is shown always by herself. What is the implication here? What is the image that emerges? Why is Schavan not asked about her hobbies? Why is she never shown with other people – friends, a family member? It seems that she is expected to account for her life choices. Would there be a similar expectation of a single, childless male politician?
- The Marit Arnstad report is a sympathetic portrayal of a woman in the public eye who has taken a decision to give priority to her private life. But does it succeed in explaining to viewers - some of whom may be disappointed by her choice - the reasons for the position she has taken? Arnstad's son is now five years old. Is the reporter justified in raising the question of paternity at this stage? Is it likely that such a question would have been asked of a male politician? Why does the reporter not ask why Arnstad has decided to leave politics at this particular point? Her son is already growing up. Norway provides good child-care. In any report, how can a balance be struck between respect for the subject or interviewee and delivery of an item that satisfies viewers' expectations?

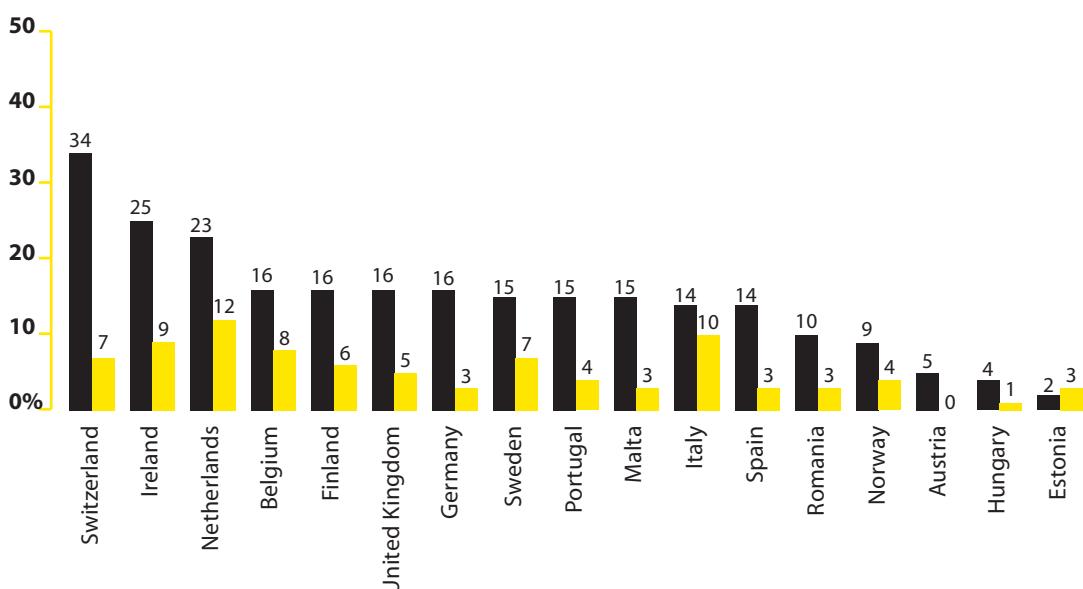
- Think about the difference between the final clip (3.4) and the second one (3.2) in the way that Annette Schavan expresses her feelings about how the media frame the issue of 'family' or 'private life'. What does this difference say about the importance of context or environment in the interview situation? How far should journalists go in providing a context in which politicians speak from the heart, rather than from the head? Which is more important? Which is more reliable?

## FACTS AND FIGURES

- The 2005 Global Media Monitoring Project found that women in the European news media are three times more likely than men to be identified in terms of their family status - wife, mother, daughter and so on.
- In every case except Estonia, the percentage of women identified in terms of family status is considerably higher than the percentage of men identified in this way.
- In authoritative functions of spokesperson or expert, family affiliations are rarely given. Yet the GMMP found that 5% of female spokespersons and 3% of female experts were identified in terms of their family status in 2005. A mere 1% of male spokespersons and 0.3% of male experts were identified in this way.

- So while men are valued as autonomous individuals, women's status is derived from their relationship to others.
- Gender differences also apply to 'memorial coverage' of politicians. A study of the Finnish press showed that murdered Swedish foreign minister Anna Lindh was defined primarily as a

PERCENTAGE OF WOMEN AND MEN IDENTIFIED BY FAMILY STATUS: 17 EUROPEAN COUNTRIES



### Source

Who Makes the News? op. cit

### Notes

Belgium - Data are for Flemish language media only

Switzerland - Data are for French language media only

women

men

caring mother who, despite her brilliant career, always put her children first<sup>23</sup>.

<sup>23</sup> 'Masculine tears, feminine tears - and crocodile tears: Mourning of Olof Palme and Anna Lindh in Finnish newspapers', by Mervi Pantti; pp. 357-377 in *Journalism* 6 (3), 2005



## **4 EMOTION AND POLITICS**

## **4 EMOTION AND POLITICS**

## ISSUES FOR BROADCASTERS

The past decade has been marked by the development of two inter-related phenomena: the personalisation of politics and the popularisation (sometimes called 'tabloidisation') of the media. In the context of politics, 'popular' journalism and 'quality' journalism are often conceived as antithetical. On one hand, popular journalism is deemed to focus on the private, the emotional. It over-simplifies issues and ignores political complexity. On the other hand, quality journalism is believed to deal with serious matters in an informed, rational way. It respects elite sources and values authoritative positions. But at a time when the political participation of citizens (as measured by voter turnout) is on the wane in most countries, how can journalism of any kind help people to identify and engage with the world of politics? Can a balance be struck between the 'human interest' approach and the 'serious' approach?<sup>24</sup> Is it possible to define a type of political journalism that appeals to viewers without substituting emotion for analysis?

Alongside this dilemma is the question of how to deal with the expression of emotion in public life. An important aspect of the personalisation of politics is the display of 'being human', of disclosing one's personal side. Emotionality is one of the most important dimensions on which gender differences have been constructed in politics and in society. Traditional gender stereotypes habitually contrast the rational male with the emotional female. Yet displays of emotion have become increasingly prevalent among male politicians. Bill Clinton's revelations of his own vulnerability, and his ability to 'feel the pain' of others, were generally regarded by the public as signs of humanity rather than of weakness. Increasingly, men are revealing their human side - and reaping the reward of electoral support.

But does this work in the same way for women? Does the 'feminisation' of masculine emotion mean greater gender equality? Or is the public display of emotion evaluated differently in men and women? Is it possible that while for men in power tears may be a sign of sensitivity and strength, for women they may still be a sign of weakness? The clips in this module focus on questions pertaining to the personalisation of contemporary politics, and illustrate some of the ways in which political journalists handle the expression of emotion.

## THE VIDEO CLIPS

### 4.1 NOVA

*Netherlands, NOS/NPS/VARA; current affairs magazine; Monday-Saturday; 22.20; 50 minutes. Item date 10.11.99; segment 'Den Haag Vandaag' (Today in Parliament).*

*Nova* is one of Dutch television's flagship programmes. It attracts a medium-sized audience of viewers who are interested in news and politics. When Parliament is in session, the 15-minute segment *Den Haag Vandaag* reports on the day's parliamentary events. In this item we see the conclusion of a debate about the education budget, and the disadvantaged situation of children from immigrant backgrounds. Karin Adelmund (PvdA, Labour Party), who was then Secretary of State for Education, becomes emotional. After the debate, Adelmund is interviewed. The item ends with a comment from the segment anchor.

### 4.2 Dagsrevyen (Daily News)

*Norway, NRK; main evening news; 19.00; 30 minutes. Item date 07.11.03. Valgerd Svarstad Haugland is leader of the KrF (Kristelig Folkepart, Christian Peoples Party), and a high profile figure in Norwegian politics. Her Party has just fared badly in an election. Shortly before the election, Haugland spoke out in defence of a woman who had accused a local KrF leader of rape. Although the rape case was not proven, the KrF suffered in the polls as a result of bad publicity. A report by Party members has called on Haugland to resign. In this item we see her resignation speech.*

### 4.3 News

*United Kingdom, BBC; main evening news; 22.00; 30 minutes. Item date 15.12.04*

During his tenure as Home Secretary, one of the most important positions in the British government, David Blunkett (Labour) had an affair with a woman who was married. She eventually brought the relationship to an end. An acrimonious and very public dispute followed, in which Blunkett launched a legal action to obtain paternity rights and access to their two-year-old son. In November 2004 it was alleged that Blunkett had abused his position by speeding up the visa application of his ex-lover's nanny. Though there was no evidence that Blunkett was personally responsible, he resigned from the government in December 2004. Here we see him being interviewed by the BBC's chief political correspondent Andrew Marr on the day of his resignation.

<sup>24</sup> See 'What is Quality Television News? A plea for extending the professional repertoire of newsmakers', by Irene Costera Meijer; pp. 15-29 in *Journalism Studies*, Volume 4, No. 1, 2003

#### 4.4 Election Night

*United Kingdom, BBC; special coverage of national election results. Item date 05.05.05*

Following his expulsion from the Labour Party, George Galloway formed a political party called Respect, which campaigned as an anti-Iraq war party in the 2005 national election. Galloway stood as a Respect candidate in a south London constituency where it is estimated that 40% of the population is non-white. His main opponent was Ona King (Labour), one of two black women in the British Parliament at the time. Galloway was narrowly elected. Just after his victory - at 04.40 a.m. - he was interviewed by Jeremy Paxman. Paxman's first question is: 'Are you proud of having got rid of one of the very few black women in Parliament?'

#### 4.5 Hallo Deutschland (Hello Germany)

*Germany, ZDF; popular news magazine; Monday-Friday; 17.15; 25 minutes. Item date 17.11.05*

This report, broadcast just after the SPD (Social Democrat) conference in November 2005, is an observation on the expression of emotion in German politics. Various political figures are seen: outgoing SPD Finance Minister Hans Eichel weeps as he leaves office. Claudia Roth (Green Party) and former chancellor Gerhard Schröder (SPD) are also shown wiping away tears. Helmut Kohl, former CDU (Christian Democrat) chancellor, tangles angrily with people in a crowd who have thrown eggs at him. Angela Merkel (CDU) is nonplussed by a question about her feelings on becoming chancellor. Peter Hahne, one of Germany's top journalists, comments on the phenomenon.

## SOME QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

- The first two examples can be used to analyse the response of journalists to emotional displays, and to reflect on the impact of editorial comment. In both items the female politicians are openly emotional. Yet the mediation - or interpretation - of this emotion is very different in each case. In the Dutch example, think of the interview questions. What message do they convey about Adelmund as a politician? Think of her responses. Why does the interviewer seem to be so irritated by her? In his final comment the segment anchor advises Adelmund to control her emotions. But what of his own demeanour? Does he too display emotion? Would he have chosen to editorialise in this way if the politician in question had been male?
- The expression of emotion in the Norwegian item is presented very differently. The focus is clearly on Haugland and her distress at having to resign from the leadership. But whereas in the Dutch example, Adelmund is blamed for making her colleagues feel uncomfortable because of her outburst, Haugland's emotion is not portrayed as disruptive. Of course the two situations are different, but to what extent does journalistic interpretation come into play in each? Think of the choice of language, the selection of shots - in particular the shots of the women in each report.
- How justified do you think each of these female politicians was in overtly expressing emotion? Is it true that the display of emotion can help to catalyse discussion? At what point does it become counter-productive?

- The two BBC clips provide another set of contrasts. Each involves an all-male emotional encounter, but the two are very different. The Blunkett-Marr interview exemplifies the empathetic style of interview. According to the traditional stereotype this kind of interview would be more typical of women than of men. How well does it work between these two men? To what extent does the interviewer's approach encourage the interviewee to disclose emotions that a more formal interview might have missed? Is this important, or not? What do viewers learn from this interview - about the politician, about the man? To what extent does the interview provide a platform for Blunkett to present himself sympathetically? Is it hard-hitting enough? Is the balance between emotional empathy and analytical rigour satisfactory?
- The Paxman-Galloway interview is a classic example of the confrontational style of interview. Here again, emotion comes into play. But it is 'typical' male emotion and it is tightly controlled. This is a gladiatorial contest - almost a game - which each man is enjoying and which neither intends to lose. What is the rationale for Paxman's initial - and constantly repeated - question? Is it justifiable? Galloway responds that it is 'preposterous'. Oona King, the defeated candidate, later called it insulting, saying 'I think I was an excellent Member of Parliament. I was not defined, or did not wish to be defined, by my ethnicity'<sup>25</sup>. What kind of opening question might have produced greater insight into the motivation for Galloway's campaign in this particular constituency? What do viewers take from this interview? What do they learn about Galloway's political intentions in his new constituency? What do they learn about anything? How often have you seen this kind of interview on television? What does it contribute to citizens' understanding of politics and the political process?

- The final clip from Germany brings into focus the question of the relationship between politicians and journalists. If politicians have learned that the display of emotion is popular with the public, journalists have also learned that revealing the human side of politicians can make a good story. In the words of journalist Peter Hahne, we (journalists) need to distance ourselves from the idea that politics is just serious, emotionless business. But what are the risks involved in this? When does the genuine expression of emotion by politicians become political manipulation of the media? How can journalists guard against that? And how do public broadcasters contribute to rational debate and civic participation while acknowledging that politics is not 'just serious, emotionless business'?

<sup>25</sup> [www.bbc.co.uk/radio4/today/listenagain/ram/today5\\_oonaking\\_20050511.ram](http://www.bbc.co.uk/radio4/today/listenagain/ram/today5_oonaking_20050511.ram)

## FACTS AND FIGURES

- A study of coverage of the murder of Swedish foreign minister Anna Lindh in Finnish newspapers found that male politicians tended to be described as 'moved', 'shocked' or 'struggling to hold back tears'; while women were portrayed as openly 'breaking into tears' when remembering Lindh<sup>26</sup>.
- A 2004 study in Estonia found that female candidates were portrayed as more emotional, unstable and tender than men<sup>27</sup>.
- A 2005 study in the USA concluded that men in politics are given more latitude to express their emotions than women are. The research found that emotional displays by male political candidates on television news were judged more appropriate than similar displays by females. When the candidates showed anger, viewers preferred the male. The display of anger by female candidates caused them to be considered significantly less competent, and as having less integrity and sincerity than the male candidates<sup>28</sup>.

<sup>26</sup> 'Masculine tears, feminine tears - and crocodile tears' op.cit.

<sup>27</sup> *Mass Media in (re)distribution of power*. Ministry of Social Affairs of the Republic of Estonia. Report for the project 'Mass media in the (re)distribution of power' funded by the EU in terms of the Community Framework Strategy on Gender Equality (2001-2005). Estonia, 2004.

<sup>28</sup> 'Perceptions of political candidates: The consequences of emotional expression', by Sarah L. Hutson-Comeaux. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Psychological Association, Washington DC, August 2005



## **5 FRAMING THE MESSAGE**

## **5 FRAMING THE MESSAGE**

## ISSUES FOR BROADCASTERS

The notion of absolute objectivity in news and current affairs has long been consigned to the professional scrap-heap in most broadcasting organisations. Journalists and programme-makers certainly strive for balance, impartiality and fairness within and across their output. But the old idea that television provides a pure, authentic mirror on the world is no longer viable. When constructing a story, the journalist first researches the issue and then dips into a toolbox of possibilities - visuals, questions, interviewees, music, editing decisions - all of which contribute to a particular end result and a particular message. In other words, the journalist or programme-maker starts with a specific frame of reference - based on belief, experience, knowledge, preferences and so on. The selections from the journalistic toolbox support that frame of reference and help to 'frame' the message that emerges.

Traditional perceptions of gender roles undoubtedly feed into the frames through which politics is presented and interpreted in the media. Conventional news frames, for instance, tend to construct politics in typically masculine terms: as if it were a battle or a sporting match. Women, who according to the traditional stereotype are more emotionally involved, modest and co-operative, are thus regarded as unfit for this political world. When they do enter it, they may be treated as novelties or as lonely outsiders.

To counteract the marginalisation that sometimes results from gendered news framing, and to show that they can indeed belong in the world of politics, some women try to emphasise stereotypically masculine traits. They may adopt strong stances on 'hard' political issues, or highlight their toughness. Yet when women do project more masculine characteristics, research suggests that the 'double bind' comes into operation. 'Aggressive' female politicians appear unfeminine and therefore unacceptable, but 'feminine' women are deemed ineffective. With the entry of more women into politics, are things changing? Is the 'personalisation' of politics, discussed in Module 4, part of a more human way of doing things that would traditionally be regarded as typically female? Do women really 'do politics' differently - or would they, if given the chance? Or is this just another stereotyped preconception? The jury is still out. But as the video clips in this module demonstrate, television's framing of politics and politicians is - at least for the present - still largely determined by a set of assumptions that place men at the centre, and women at the margins of political activity.

## THE VIDEO CLIPS

### 5.1 Beckmann

*Germany, ARD; talk show; weekly (Monday); 23.00 (when the items were transmitted; currently 22.45); 75 minutes. Item dates Schröder, 22.11.04; Merkel, 10.01.05*

In separate editions of this popular talk show (average audience 1.8 million viewers), the host Beckmann interviews Gerhard Schröder and Angela Merkel. The programmes were broadcast within two months of each other. Both interviewees were leaders of major political parties - Schröder of the SPD (Social Democrats) until March 2004, Merkel of the CDU (Christian Democrats). Schröder was also Chancellor of Germany, a position later taken over by Merkel (in November 2005). The line of questioning - and the framing of the interviewees - is dramatically different in the two programmes.

### 5.2 ZAPP Medienmagazin (ZAPP Media Magazine)

*Germany, NDR; magazine programme about issues in the media; weekly (Wednesday); 23.00; 30 minutes. Item date 24.10.04.*

Programme host Caren Miosga interviews political journalist Jürgen Leinemann (*Der Spiegel*) about his views on Angela Merkel. In this clip we include all of Miosga's questions to her guest (though not his answers). The questions are framed from a particular perspective, inviting comment on Merkel as an individual and a politician.

### 5.3 Newsnight

*United Kingdom, BBC; news and current affairs programme; Monday-Friday; 22.30; 50 minutes. Item date 06.04.05*

As one of a series of reports about Iraq, *Newsnight*'s so-called Baghdad Blogger - Salam Pax - tackles the issue of women in Iraqi politics. The clip features two very different women, with sharply contrasting public personae. The reporter analyses how one of these women in particular chooses to present - or frame - herself as a public figure in a society where women are not regarded as the equals of men.

#### **5.4 Länderspiegel (Mirror on the Provinces)**

*Germany, ZDF; current affairs magazine; weekly (Saturday); 17.05; 40 minutes. Item date 20.11.04*

A third report on the leadership contest between Annette Schavan and Günther Oettinger (see 2.2 and 3.2). The candidates are seen at a CDU members' congress in Baden-Württemberg, where the members are soon to vote on their preferred candidate through an internal ballot. There can only be one winner, and so there will be one loser. The outcome is not yet known. But in this report Schavan and Oettinger are framed in very different ways.

#### **5.5 NOVA**

*Netherlands, NOS/NPS/VARA; current affairs magazine; Monday-Saturday; 22.20; 50 minutes. Item date 03.02.05*

A profile of Neelie Kroes (VVD, Liberal Party), who has just been sworn in as the new EU Commissioner for Competition. The Competition portfolio is considered one of the most important in Brussels. This is the first time it has been held by the Netherlands, and the first time it has gone to a woman. The appointment has provoked controversy, partly because of Kroes's links with big business. Will she exercise her responsibilities with due independence?

#### **5.6 Jornal da Noite (Evening News)**

*Portugal, SIC; main evening news; 20.00; 75 minutes. Item date 16.02.05*

A day on the campaign trail with Paolo Portas, leader of the CDS/PP (Conservative Party) and Defence Minister in the out-going government. There are three days left before the national elections. His schedule is crowded. He meets voters, exchanges kisses and hugs, and speaks briefly about women in the workforce. The centre-piece of the item is Portas's lunch with a group of business-women.

#### **5.7 Telejornal (Television News)**

*Portugal, RTP; main evening news; 20.00; 75 minutes. Item date 16.02.05*

The same campaign day, the same politician. Though some of the day's activities are covered in both reports, there are differences. For instance, this item questions the use of party funds to pay for Portas's travel; his policy position on remuneration for ex-soldiers is highlighted; he spends less time kissing and more time talking. As in the SIC report, his lunch with the women is mentioned, though without special emphasis.

### **SOME QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION**

- The first two examples centre on the representation of the female politician as an 'outsider', a deviant in a political world that rightfully belongs to men. Contrast the *Beckmann* interviews with Schröder and Merkel<sup>29</sup>. What is the frame of reference that Beckmann employs for each of these interviews? How does he perceive these two people? How does he convey those perceptions? Consider the questions that are asked; the scope that the interviewees are given to display their authority and experience; the framing of the shots; how Beckmann positions himself physically in relation to each of his guests. How do all these come together to portray Schröder and Merkel - both powerful politicians - in such different ways?
- The questions in the ZAPP interview in some ways reflect similar assumptions to those in *Beckmann*. But they introduce a further element - the famous 'double bind'. On the one hand, Merkel is accused of having been 'deformed by power' - of having become 'masculinised'. In this frame, she is blamed for leaving her female side behind. On the other hand, there are still question-marks over her 'toughness'. Is she really the kind of person one can 'have a beer with'? In this frame, her apparent transformation is suspect and her credibility as a leader is in doubt. Lurking underneath, there may still be a woman - for whom one needs to 'feel sorry'. As an exercise, note down answers to the questions (a) from the perspective of someone who shares the frame of reference of the programme host, (b) from the perspective of someone who challenges the host's assumptions.
- The Baghdad Blogger example is very different. It illustrates a rather unusual journalistic approach - one that deliberately sets out to demonstrate how framing works. At the outset the Blogger identifies himself, and explains what his role in the report will be. Here he challenges some generally accepted conventions about reporting. He proposes himself not so much as an investigator, and more as a mediator or interpreter. Does he succeed? Later in the report, he unravels the ways in which the second woman in the clip chooses to frame herself - how she sits, dresses, smokes, speaks. Thus the report demonstrates that 'framing' is not just a journalistic technique, but is also a technique that politicians themselves use. Is there any value in the approach taken in this report? Does it add anything to our understanding of the relationship between media and politics? Is this political journalism, in the accepted definition of the term? In a report

<sup>29</sup> The clips are excerpted from longer interviews that occupied about three-quarters of the programme time. Other questions put to Merkel cover her youth in East Germany, what sort of boys she liked when she was growing up, whether she works better with women than with men, why so many CDU members have left her team, whether she is an effective communicator. In the final segment of each programme, the principal interviewee is joined by a second guest. In the case of Schröder, this is a disabled athlete. In the case of Merkel the second guest is a tailor who brings along sketches of three dresses he has designed for her and on which she is asked to comment.

that tries to explain to a domestic audience the complexities of a very different culture, how important is it to have a reporter who is part of the culture in question? If the reporter had been British, is it likely that she or he would have presented the issues facing women in Iraqi politics differently?

- In the clip on the Schavan-Oettinger leadership contest, we see the two candidates presented very differently. Analyse the example in terms of how it conveys the chances of each candidate. For example: the use of commentary, and of interview quotes; the ways in which Oettinger and Schavan are depicted (in the company of others, alone; addressing the audience, leaving the stage; with widespread support, with a solitary helper). What does the report have to say about the policies of either candidate? Are those policies relevant to the outcome of the contest? Or is it the personalities that matter?
- The item on Neelie Kroes is an example of the framing of a strong female political figure. This frequently presents a dilemma for journalists and programme-makers. Are such women to be depicted as exceptions - sort of male clones - as in the Iron Lady stereotype? Or is their essential, underlying femininity to be brought to the fore - as in, for example, the media fixation with Madeleine Albright's choice of brooches? The Kroes report avoids both of these obvious stereotypes. Yet the choice of footage and commentary suggests some uncertainty as to how this woman should be portrayed. 'No-one doubts her influence', apparently. But what is the function of the image of Kroes on the sailing boat, and in particular the choice of camera angle? Here is a woman who appears to exude confidence and competence. After her appointment she 'immediately raised her voice' - which is what successful politicians are supposed to do. Why is she framed as person who makes enemies - of both individuals (Paul van Buitenen) and countries (England, Germany, France and Austria)?
- The two Portuguese news items provide training material for a detailed analysis of news selection, use of commentary and overall framing in the context of a political campaign. This material will also be useful in discussing the differing roles and responsibilities of commercial and public service broadcasting. There are many contrasts between the two items. SIC is the main commercial broadcaster in Portugal. Its approach is to turn the campaign day into a piece of

entertainment for viewers. Which elements contribute to this? In particular, how is its portrayal of the lunch with business women used to 'pep up' what the journalist seems to have decided was a dull campaign day? RTP is Portugal's public service television organisation. In what ways is its approach different from that of SIC? Is it any more informative? What about its depiction of lunch with the women? How does this differ from the SIC presentation? Which of the two items is more likely to endure in the memory of viewers, and why?

## FACTS AND FIGURES

- Norris's 1997 international study of women leaders showed that the primary descriptor for female politicians is their gender<sup>30</sup>. Women leaders were framed either as outsiders or as agents for change (e.g. cleaning up corruption). Journalists often highlighted what they regarded as lack of conventional qualifications and/or prior political experience among the women.
- Research in the Netherlands has found that journalists are predominantly white (92%), male (two-thirds) and middle-aged (average age 42). When interviewed, most journalists say their reports are neutral. However, content analysis shows that the perspective of the white, middle-aged (married) male frames both the selection and the treatment of stories in the news<sup>34</sup>.
- A 2004 Danish report on press coverage of female politicians found they were framed in the context of a large repertoire of stereotypes: Mother, Blonde, Teacher, Iron Lady, Witch, Ice Queen, Seductress, Old Maid<sup>32</sup>.
- According to 2004 Latvian research, the traditional stereotypes are less likely to be used in relation to women who have been in politics for many years, or who have achieved high political status<sup>33</sup>.

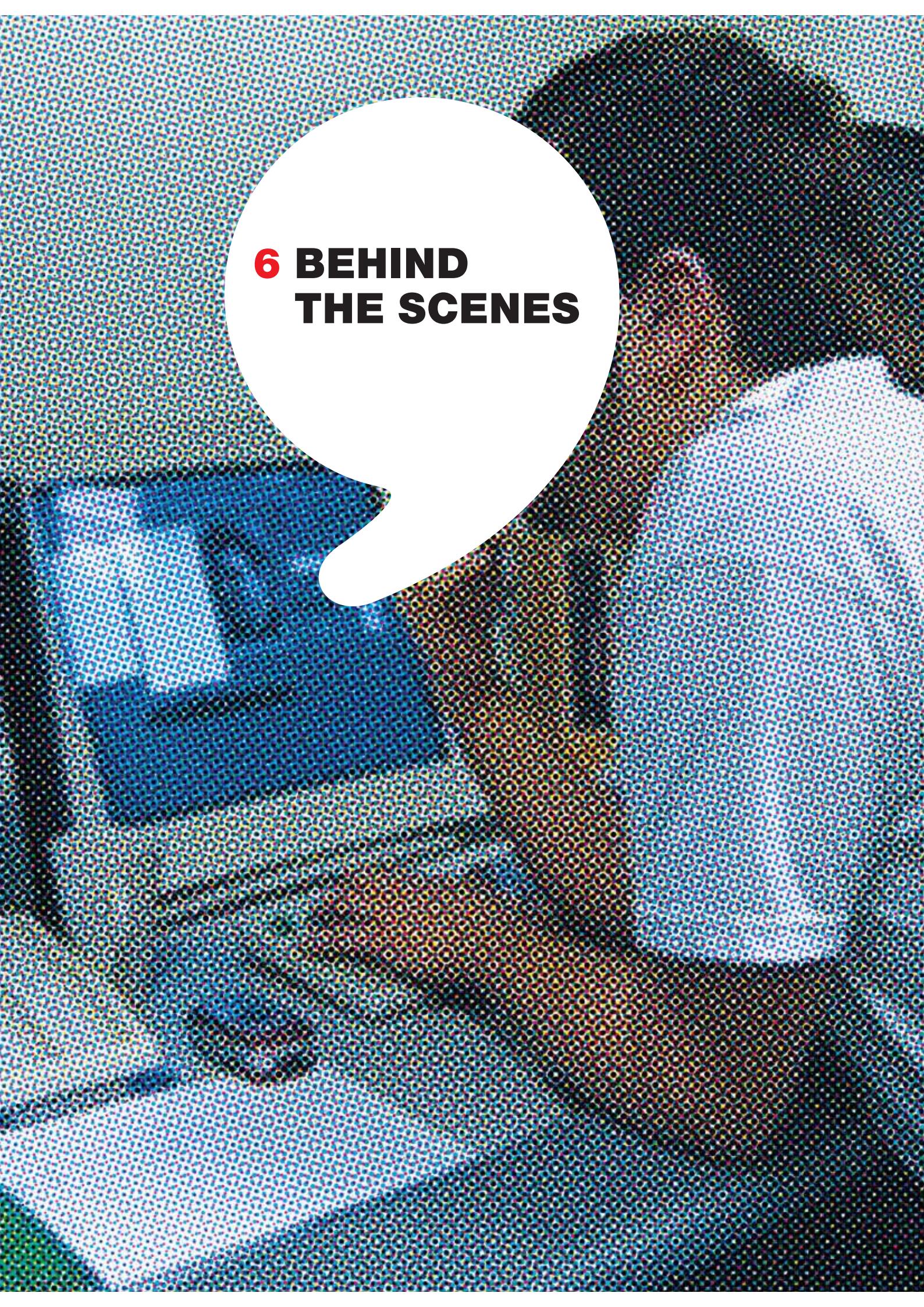
<sup>30</sup> 'Women leaders worldwide'; op. cit.

<sup>31</sup> 'Talking tough: gender and reported speech in campaign news coverage', by Elisabeth Gidengil and Joanna Everitt; pp. 209-232 in *Political Communication* (20), 2003.

<sup>32</sup> *The handbag, the witch and the blue-eyed blondes: Mass media in (re)distribution of power*, by Ulrikke Moustgaard, 2004. Report for the project 'Mass media in the (re)distribution of power' funded by the EU in terms of the Community Framework Strategy on Gender Equality (2001-2005).

<sup>33</sup> *The role of mass media in the (re)distribution of power*. Center for Gender Studies, University of Latvia, 2004. Report for the project 'Mass media in the (re)distribution of power' funded by the European Union in terms of the Community Framework Strategy on Gender Equality (2001-2005).

<sup>34</sup> *Journalists in the Netherlands: An analysis of the people, the issues and the (inter-)national environment*, by Mark Deuze. Amsterdam, Aksant, 2002



**6 BEHIND  
THE SCENES**

## **6 BEHIND THE SCENES**

## ISSUES FOR BROADCASTERS

How are broadcasters to handle the gender issues that arise in portraying politics and public life? For example is it enough to be aware of stereotyped patterns, to try hard to avoid them, to issue guidelines for staff? Commendable as these ideas are, on their own they are unlikely to bring about lasting change. The patterns illustrated in the *Portraying Politics* toolkit are so rooted in the normal, accepted way of doing things - in television, and in society as a whole - that a more fundamental approach is needed.

As far as journalistic and production practice is concerned, broadcasters can systematically examine their own output, set numerical targets for the attainment of equal gender representation, and regularly monitor the extent to which those targets are being achieved. Fair gender portrayal needs to become a matter of editorial policy, and the implementation of that policy needs to be constantly reviewed.

But stereotyped beliefs about gender do not arise in a vacuum within broadcasting organisations. They exist, and affect behaviour, in the wider society and in the daily practice of politics itself. While broadcasters have a responsibility to examine their own practice, they also have a role in bringing to public attention the part played by gender in the political process. Through their programme output, public service broadcasters in particular can highlight the effects of stereotyped assumptions on political practice, and can help to stimulate public debate and understanding of the issues involved.

Here we include examples of these two approaches: the use of editorial policy to improve in-house practice, and the dedication of programme content to an examination of how gender affects political performance.

## THE VIDEO CLIPS

### **6.1 Västerbottensnytt (Västerbotten News)**

*Sweden, SVT. Specially produced information item, 2005*

*Västerbottensnytt* is the regional news programme for Västerbotten in the northern part of Sweden. In 2001 the editorial team set out to achieve gender balance among the people interviewed in the news. By 2005, across the year as a whole women were 44% of interviewees in *Västerbottensnytt* - well above average for television news in Sweden. Women's share of the viewing audience for the programme also increased, with women ahead of men by five percentage points. This short information piece describes why the policy is necessary, and the impact it has had.

### **6.2 RedaksjonEN (Editorial on 1)**

*Norway, NRK; news debate programme; thrice-weekly (Monday, Wednesday, Thursday); 20.25; 30 minutes. Item date 29.10.03*

The subject of the programme is male 'power techniques' in the world of politics. The debate is of current interest because politician Åslaug Haga (Senterpartiet) thinks that Minister of Foreign Affairs, Jan Pettersen (Høyre) has used power techniques against her in a television debate. 'Power techniques' are a tactic that can be used to undermine a political opponent by asking a question or making a statement that throws the other person off guard. The discussion seems to have started in Sweden when, just before a television debate, Prime Minister Göran Persson allegedly confronted politician Maud Olafsson with the question 'Are you having problems with your weight, Olafsson?' In this clip we see several examples of the technique in operation. The guests discuss whether it is something that both women and men do, or whether women are particularly disadvantaged by it.

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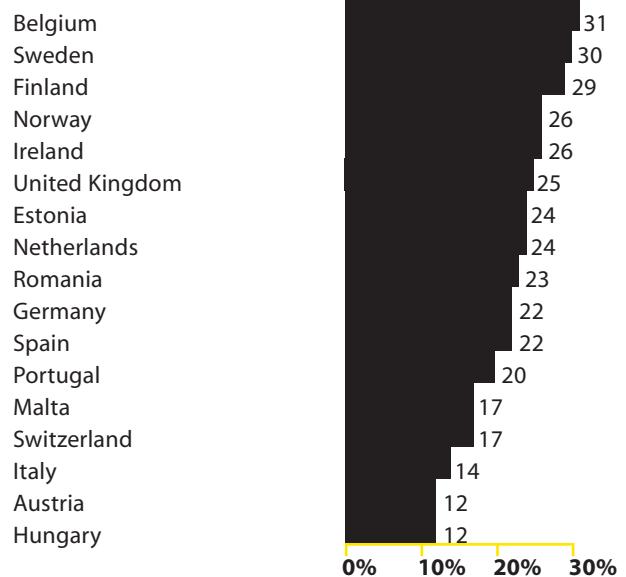
## SOME QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

- The highly systematic approach taken by *Västerbottensnytt* - weekly monitoring, actively seeking out female participants, regular editorial discussions about how well the goals have been met - has worked for this regional news programme. Could it work for a national news programme? Are there any professional risks involved in taking such an approach? What are the professional benefits? How could this approach be made to work in your organisation?
- According to the editorial team of *Västerbottensnytt*, the pursuit of a policy to increase women's presence in the news can have an impact on the news agenda. Sometimes it means thinking differently about which issues should be covered. Is this a good or a bad thing for journalism? Does it broaden the news agenda, or distort it?
- *RedaksjonEN* is made by NRK's news division. On this occasion the entire 30- minute programme was devoted to the discussion of male power techniques. How common is it to see an item like this debated at length in a mainstream news discussion programme? What other issues of this kind could broadcasters help to put on the public agenda?

## FACTS AND FIGURES

- The 2005 Global Media Monitoring Project found that - across all media, world-wide - women are only 21% of news subjects - the people who are interviewed, or whom the news is about. The percentage is highest in television (22%) and lowest on radio (17%). In newspapers, 21% of news subjects are women. The table shows the results for 17 European countries, all media combined.

### PERCENTAGE OF WOMEN IN THE NEWS: 17 EUROPEAN COUNTRIES



#### Source

Who Makes the News? op. cit

#### Notes

Belgium - Data are for Flemish language media only  
Switzerland - Data are for French language media only





**7 THINK AGAIN!**

**7 THINK AGAIN!**

## ISSUES FOR BROADCASTERS

In television, as in every profession, there are accepted ways of doing things. Often these accepted ways work well, but from time to time it's important to put them under scrutiny - to think again! The pressures in today's newsrooms are such that many stories are produced on 'automatic pilot'. In this context, it is often convenient to fall back on taken-for-granted approaches to issues and to people in the news. Frequently this means relying on simple stereotypes to get the message across quickly. The result is sometimes needlessly slanted, failing to meet the criteria of impartiality and balance that are hallmarks of quality journalism.

Commentary and shot selection are two of the most obvious ways in which unconscious bias can creep into news reports. Commentary is seldom neutral. It is one of the simplest ways for journalists and programme-makers to take a position, or express a point of view. Both commentary and shot selection have the potential to influence viewers' perception or interpretation of an issue or a political figure. In this module we include examples that illustrate how the use of commentary and the selection of footage affects the overall message.

## THE VIDEO CLIPS

### **7.1 Die Wahl der Frau Pieper (Mrs Pieper's choice): version 1**

*Germany, MDR; Item broadcast on 07.05.02 in the news magazine 'MDR exakt'; fortnightly (Tuesday); 20.15; 30 minutes.<sup>35</sup>*

Cornelia Pieper is a member of the FDP (Liberal Party) in the state (Land) of Saxony Anhalt. In state elections there she wins 13.3% of the vote - a good result for her Party, which is rather a small one. She would like to become Prime Minister in Saxony-Anhalt. After the elections, the FDP enters into coalition talks with the much larger CDU (Christian Democrats). Friction builds up as Pieper, chief negotiator for the FDP, constantly makes new demands. Then a press report claims that she also wants to become a Federal Minister in the national government (Bundestag). Both the FDP and the CDU in Saxony-Anhalt disapprove of her Federal ambitions, and she is forced by her Party leader to renounce her aspirations to a Federal position. But she will keep her post as secretary general of the FDP, a job with a nation-wide mandate.

### **7.2 Die Wahl der Frau Pieper (Mrs Pieper's choice): version 2**

*Germany, rbb/MDR.*

The same item, with new commentary, specially produced for *Portraying Politics*.

### **7.3 Report on Drug Use: version 1**

*Malta, Super One; Item broadcast on 03.05.05 in the Super 1 evening news; 19.30; 30 minutes*

The launch of a report on drug use, commissioned by the Ministry of Social Solidarity. The report features two female speakers visually but only identifies one of them - the Minister. The other woman appears to be a significant subject, but viewers are not told who she is. Only one person - a male - is interviewed for further comment.

### **7.4 Report on Drug Use: version 2**

The same story, with new commentary and additional visuals, specially produced for *Portraying Politics*.

<sup>35</sup> Music with kind permission of Musik-Edition Europaton/Peter Schaeffers.

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## SOME QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

- Compare the commentaries used to report on Cornelia Pieper. We have isolated five specific points at which the commentaries diverge. These are not the only differences between the items, but they provide a starting point for analysis. Consider elements such as language, phrasing, tone of voice, specific issues that are emphasised. What impression does each report convey about Pieper's personality, her political aspirations, her role within her Party? In what ways does the overall message differ? In what ways is it the same?
  - Consider the two versions about the drugs report launch. What are the differences and similarities between the two, in terms of the information conveyed - about the content of the report, those responsible for compiling it, the role of the government in dealing with the drugs problem? With little time and sometimes very limited resources, opportunities for research or for interviews may be tightly constrained. In such a situation, what is the role of library or archive footage? How successful is its use in the second version? Similarly, what is the importance of interview material? What is its role in the first version? If you were selecting interviewees for the second version, to whom would you give priority and why?
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**8** THINKING  
FURTHER

## **8 THINKING FURTHER**

## ISSUES FOR BROADCASTERS

Journalists are increasingly under pressure to produce more and to produce it more quickly. In this context, how can busy professionals find time to pay attention to gender in their day to day work?

If the issues raised in the *Portraying Politics* toolkit are understood, giving consideration to gender is not an 'add-on' to everything else. It needs to be integrated into the practice of journalism from start to finish. Good, innovative journalists will see the advantage of thinking about gender - in terms of sources, priorities and perspectives - to produce stories that are more rounded, balanced and stimulating. From this point of view, paying attention to gender becomes not an extra burden but a professional imperative.

There is one more thing to consider. Many public service broadcasters in Europe now have policies that embrace not simply gender equality, but also race, disability, age - indeed all the elements that reflect diversity in society. With the best will in the world, journalists and programme-makers often find it difficult to conceptualise diversity in a comprehensive way. There is a tendency to divide up the practice of diversity into separate compartments or pigeonholes - this one for gender, that one for disability, and so on. For instance, a laudable attempt to tackle fair gender portrayal may be open to criticism because it fails to pay attention to ethnicity. And vice versa. While it is not always easy to deal with different aspects of diversity simultaneously, it is a goal that public broadcasters need to work towards.

In this final module therefore we include material to encourage this kind of 'thinking further' about *Portraying Politics*. The toolkit has raised many questions about what constitutes good journalism. As this module illustrates, simply having women in a story doesn't - by itself - make the story better. That comes from paying attention to who the issue is about, who it concerns, and how their voices can add perspective and depth to the story. This is as true of coverage of politics and public life as it is of any other area of coverage.

## THE VIDEO CLIPS

### 8.1/8.2 Live 8: versions 1 and 2

*Material specially produced for the toolkit.*

The BBC 'Africa Lives' series was intended to broaden people's knowledge and understanding of Africa and its diversity. It was linked to the Live 8 concerts that took place in the G8 countries prior to the G8 Summit in summer 2005. One of the criticisms of the Live 8 concert in London was that it excluded African musicians, thus contributing to a perception of Africa as a 'white man's burden'. These two short items both start with the same footage, but they then diverge to illustrate different ways of covering the same story.

## SOME QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

- Compare the two pieces in terms of who is interviewed, their organisational and/or political positions, their involvement with the Live 8 events. What criteria have guided the selection of interviewees in each piece? What are the strengths and weaknesses of the two approaches?
- How memorable is each of the two pieces? Which delivers the message that is more likely to stir the audience?



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SIC



EO



Net TV



TVM



Where's Everybody?



NPS



WDR



YLE



RTP



NOS

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