

Deborah Chambers, Linda Steiner, & Carole Fleming, **Women and Journalism**, London, UK: Routledge, 2004, 288 pp., \$125.00 (hardcover); \$39.95 (paperback).

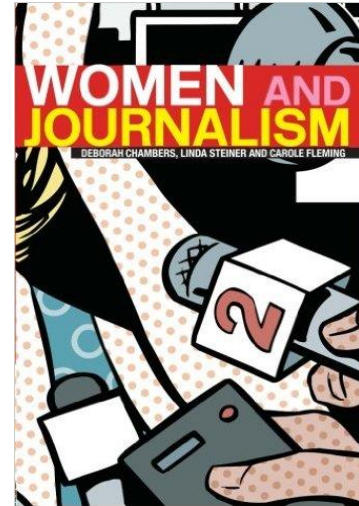
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The goal of **Women and Journalism**, by Deborah Chambers, Linda Steiner, and Carole Fleming, is to explain the struggle of women journalists in American and Britain from the late 19th century to contemporary times. This rich and informative book approaches the discourse of women and journalism to examine the roles, achievements, despairs, and experiences of these women.

In the course of the narrative, the authors provide relevant discussion points and concepts to support the facts presented in the book. Newsroom politics and the notion of not hiring women because they might quit to have children are examples of *stereotyping*. The wide disparity in earnings between men and women shows that males are inherently dominating. This highlights *patriarchy*, as discussed on page 88. Sexual objectification and misogynistic assertions used to discredit women journalists highlight *sexism in professional journalism*, and the demotion of women to prevent them from attaining upper-level positions in the field is an example of *glass ceiling syndrome*.

Feminism is another significant point of discussion throughout this book. Some of the examples cited to highlight the struggle of women journalists to attain equal rights are backed up by later studies. For example, Rosalind Gill notes in her work that “most languages are inherently patriarchal—they divide up the world conceptually in ways that serve male interests and encode male perceptions, making some of the women’s experience invisible” (Gill, 2007, p. 46). The book discusses the general idea of feminism with examples like *Spare Rib*. The magazine took a firm stand against the use of some language they felt was patriarchal. For example, they substituted “herstory” for “history.”

The book contains 12 chapters of extended discussion on women and journalism, each highlighting the struggle of women journalists, ranging from the first chapter, “Early Women Journalists: 1850–1945,” to the last, “Women, Journalism and New Media.” Chapter 1 discusses women in journalism in the late 19th century and how white women got jobs through connections with influential people and through attaining a high level of education. The few women who worked were limited to roles as glorified gossips, mainly covering fashion and domestic news. The chapter also points out that men felt journalism was not meant for women because the profession was dangerous and women would lose their femininity and softness. Be that as it may, the introduction of women in the field brought about a more sensationalistic approach and a focus on human interest stories, which led to positive changes in the



profession. The authors show that in the first 100 years of journalism in the United States and Britain women were able to overcome many obstacles to get into the newsroom.

Chapter 2 offers information about women and journalism in America and Britain after World War II. At the beginning of the 1960s, things began to change, and women started to do more than report on everyday gossip in Britain. Newspapers were trying their best to outshine broadcast stations and they were willing to bring on women to provide that feminine touch. Women at U.S. newspapers were retained more than those in the UK after World War II. The chapter discusses women in radio and television in the 1960s and how women's looks were used against them. One of the narratives used to justify the absence of women in TV news was that women's facial expressions might contradict what they were saying.

Chapters 3, 4, and 5 discuss the beginning of journalism as a profession, women and their position in journalism, and struggles with the glass ceiling. Journalism became a profession in both countries in the 20th century; the first journalism school in the United States was founded in 1908 in Missouri. However, in Britain, graduate diploma courses were offered (discussed in chapter 3). Discrimination against women through organizational bias demonstrated the power of patriarchy. The continuous prevention of women from gaining higher positions was blamed on newsroom culture, family/workplace conflicts, and a weakening economy, which meant fewer jobs and an increase in male chauvinism (discussed in chapter 4). The struggle continued as women feminized the news by making it less formal. There was ongoing debate on whether women's impact on the profession really had a positive change in the newsroom. Despite their achievements, women journalists were still underrepresented in awards and accolades (discussed in chapter 5).

Chapter 6 explores sexism in news organizations and the efforts of women journalists to combat discrimination through organizations, clubs, and unions. Women journalists were harassed when covering sports. However, bills were passed to ease these discriminations. In the United States, the passage of Title VII as part of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 was a step forward for women in journalism and other professions. In the UK, the 1919 Sex Disqualification Act aimed to remove all levels of inequality on grounds of sex, but the movement was slow to produce results. The Sex Discrimination Act of 1975 worked better and it helped achieve equal pay in the UK.

Chapter 7 highlights the beginning of women's alternative news media, most of which were less profitable than mainstream news media and had smaller audiences. Many were short lived, with some lasting only weeks or months because of financial challenges. Chapter 8 builds on the previous chapter and discusses women's alternative print journalism. In the 1970s, magazines, newsletters, and newspapers were widely circulated in both countries. Print media was more successful at spreading the feminist message because, unlike radio and television, it needed little capital investment and few technical skills and had little need for expensive technologies.

Chapter 9 illustrates how women journalists used broadcast media and the Internet to produce news individually and in groups. In the United States, gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transsexual audiences were served with programs like "This Way Out," which lasted for 13 years and was aired on 26 stations. In Britain, women's alternative media such as women airwaves (WAW), pirate radio stations, Fem FM, and

Elle FM were launched, but most of them relied on donations to get funded. Chapter 10 examines the struggle of women journalists in war reporting and how flimsy excuses were offered to discourage women from being war correspondents. They were criticized for risking their lives. Meanwhile, in the UK, there was no reporting done by female journalists on the September 11, 2001, World Trade Center bombing in the United States. However, in spite of all these limitations, women journalists still made a significant contribution to the field by introducing a humanistic style of writing, which made the news more relaxed. In the same vein, a few women attained managerial positions in the United States and Britain (discussed in chapter 11). Chapter 12 discusses the invention of the Internet and its ability to stimulate interactive audience in the news room. Women media practitioners were able to globally disseminate their ideas through the Internet.

The book opens a broad discussion on the marginalization of women in different areas and positions, such as the newsroom, managerial positions, sports reporting, and war and crisis reporting, as well as in the number of accolades they receive. With the example of the 9/11 attacks, the authors highlight the diminished role of women journalists in terror reporting. The discussion complements work like that of Byerly (2004), who observe that Madeleine Bunting, a reporter from *The Guardian*, investigated five British newspapers and perceived a decline in women's views about the attacks. She posits that comments, news, and commentary came predominantly from middle-aged white males.

The book also addresses the marginalization of women journalists in terms of awards. Women are less credited and even when they do get recognition, they do not get the highly valued awards (p. 96). This observation is supported by earlier research on women and media studies. Kay Mills (1990) noted:

The Pulitzer Prize, newspaper's top award, began in 1917. In 1937 Anne O'Hare McCormick of *The New York Times* became the first woman to receive a Pulitzer. By 1987, thirty-three of the prize winners out of 315 in writing categories had been women; no women were among sixty-one cartoonists who had won prizes, and only two women, one of them an amateur, were among sixty-three photo prize winners. (p. 282)

With much optimism, the authors point out achievements of crucial importance to the journalism profession made by women journalists in America. However, David Weaver et al (2007) conclude that "it's clear that women have made significant gains in journalism over the last 30 years of the American Journalist studies. The last decade has seen some change, though perhaps not as much progress as many might have predicted" (David et al, 2007, p. 193).

The nature of the book makes it difficult to come to an overall conclusion, but it contains numerous resources and offers an all-encompassing approach to the roles, positions, and experiences of women journalists. The book opens up broad discussions that are supported by multiple examples, and the assertions in the text are well connected. The book would be beneficial to researchers and students interested in women's studies, media studies, and gender and media studies.

### References

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