

The Gender of Journalism

The Structure and Logic of the Field in the Twentieth Century

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Abstract

The basic theme of the essay is gender and power in the field of journalism in Sweden. It is not controversial to assert that journalism, historically speaking, evolved as a male-dominated field. Despite the high level of gender equality in Sweden, however, this pattern remains the case. Drawing on Bourdieu's theories on habitus, capital and field and Toril Moi's "appropriation" of Bourdieu, the article looks at the structure of the field of journalism during three periods: the Era of the token woman (1900-1950), the Era of the critical mass (1950-1985), and the Era of feminization (1985 onwards). The field of journalism is defined at the nexus of three overarching social forces – political, economic, and professional forces and dynamics – and the gender order of the field reflects the relative weight of these forces at any given point in time. The empirical analysis of the field is centered around four main questions: (1) which positions men and women have been given access to during different time periods, (2) what forms of capital have men and women accumulated, (3) how images and perceptions on what constitutes "good" journalism have become gendered over time and which positions, media, and genres of journalism have been associated with status/prestige as well as to what extent this social status branding is gendered, and (4) to what extent the struggle in the field has been gendered and what strategies and tactics have been employed in that struggle. Inclosing, the article discusses some conclusions about the gender logic of the field of journalism. The main finding is that status, prestige and power have been associated with conceptions of masculinity and these conceptions, in turn, have been associated to the beliefs that underpin the field – the image of the journalistic "mission".

Key Words: gender and journalism, journalism history, field of journalism, Bourdieu, gender-typing, feminist analysis, Sweden

Introduction

The influence of women in journalism is one of the most central problem areas in feminist media research.¹ In international overviews, Sweden and the other Nordic countries are often held forth as pioneers on questions relating to gender equality, not least in the field of journalism. True, women made up fully half of the profession in 2005, but the feminization of journalism has hardly been achieved without a struggle.

This essay considers the issue of power and gender in Swedish journalism from a historical and feministic perspective.² The links between field, power and gender are a

central theme in Pierre Bourdieu's analyses of the conditions applying to women and men in society.³ The analysis of power and gender in journalism presented here is therefore inspired by Bourdieu's theories of gender and the reproduction of social power.⁴ The feminist interpretation of Bourdieu's general theories primarily draws on Toril Moi's "appropriation" of Bourdieu in the book, *What Is a Woman* (1999).⁵

As Bourdieu defines it, a social field consists of a system of competing social relations, where individuals and institutions compete for the same stakes. The actors use different strategies to acquire positions and influence. What is at stake is success, prestige, status and, ultimately, the power to decide who shall be recognized as a member of the profession and what constitutes 'good' and valuable journalism.⁶

In all fields there is an ongoing struggle for hegemony. One must have resources to attain a position – that is, have access to the kinds of capital that are valued in the field. Capital, in Bourdieu's view, is more than an economic phenomenon. On the contrary, whatever is valued and striven for in any given field may be regarded as capital, e.g., symbolic (status, prestige, legitimacy), cultural (education, *savoir faire*, titles, distinctions), and social (family, personal contacts). Moi observes that Bourdieu never considers social class as a field in its own right, nor does he speak of "class capital". Gender is treated in the same way: as a part of the general social field. Gender varies socially and culturally; it is a combinatory category that infiltrates and influences every other social category. In Moi's view, gender, too, is a form of symbolic capital, having different value in different fields.⁷ Where femininity has negative symbolic value, a woman may compensate for it by acquiring other forms of capital: professional, cultural, economic or social. Thus, the central thesis in this chapter's feminist analysis of a field is that journalism – like all other fields – is gendered, but that the meaning and implications of gender vary between different media and over time.

The essay starts with an analysis of the *structure* of the Swedish field of journalism in a historical perspective. The development of the field through the 1900s is treated in terms of three periods: the era of the token woman 1900-1950, that of the critical mass 1950-1985, and that of feminization 1985 and since. The basis for this grouping is a historical overview of changes in the power bases in Swedish journalism. The field of journalism may be seen to occupy the intersection of three fields of forces: the political, the economic and the professional. The strength of the respective fields has waxed and waned, for which reason the power bases in journalism, too, have shifted – a factor that has been of central importance for the gender order in the field. Taking its starting point in Bourdieu and Moi, the essay addresses four central questions or themes. The first is, what places and positions have men and women, respectively, occupied in the field of journalism. The second concerns recruitment to the profession and the kinds of capital women and men have accumulated. The third question is the degree to which the definition of 'good' journalism is gendered. Which professional positions, media and genres have conferred status in the different periods, and has this status had a gender dimension? The fourth question concerns the forms the struggle between men and women in the field has taken; what strategies have proven effective? Have there been 'battles of the sexes', and if so, what were the issues involved?

Finally, conclusions about the nature of the *logic* of the journalistic field in Sweden are considered. The question of the implications and meaning of masculinity and femininity, respectively, in the field, and how status, prestige and power in journalism relate to different conceptions of gender is problematized.

The Structure

Bourgeois *Öffentlichkeit* and the arenas for opinion formation that emerged in Europe of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries are closely bound up with the emergence of the modern newspaper. Bourgeois *Öffentlichkeit* was male. Just as other spheres of power in society – e.g., politics, the clergy, and science – journalism originated as a male domain, to which women were denied access.⁸ The first Swedish women to engage in the newspaper business were a number of widows of master printers who took over their husbands' businesses and managed their newspapers.⁹ Their access to the field was by inheritance, but their position was also founded on a specific idea about gender, namely, that widows were considered more highly developed women, “nearly” men. Consequently, widows were allowed to function as interim custodians of the trade and the skills involved.¹⁰

In the latter half of the nineteenth century, women had somewhat broader access to publishing and journalism, but women in newspaper journalism were still very few. The first real breakthrough for women in Swedish journalism came in the early 1900s.

The Era of the Token Woman 1900-1950

The first decades of the twentieth century were years of frenetic modernization. The women's rights movement grew strong, and women won suffrage and were able to vote in the elections of 1921. The pace of progress was rapid, especially in the field of technology. Radio was one of the icons of the 1920s that nourished a strong faith in progress and modernity. But, the expansive 1920s ended abruptly with the stock market crash in New York and the worldwide depression that followed it. The depression hit Sweden and the rest of Europe in the early 1930s and its effects cast a pall on the entire decade. Swedish historian Yvonne Hirdman describes the 1930s and 1940s in terms of the Swedish gender system as the “age of the Housewife contract”. Modern social policy was designed on the presumption of ‘the man of the house’ as sole breadwinner, but with a public welfare system as a guarantor of families' social security.¹¹

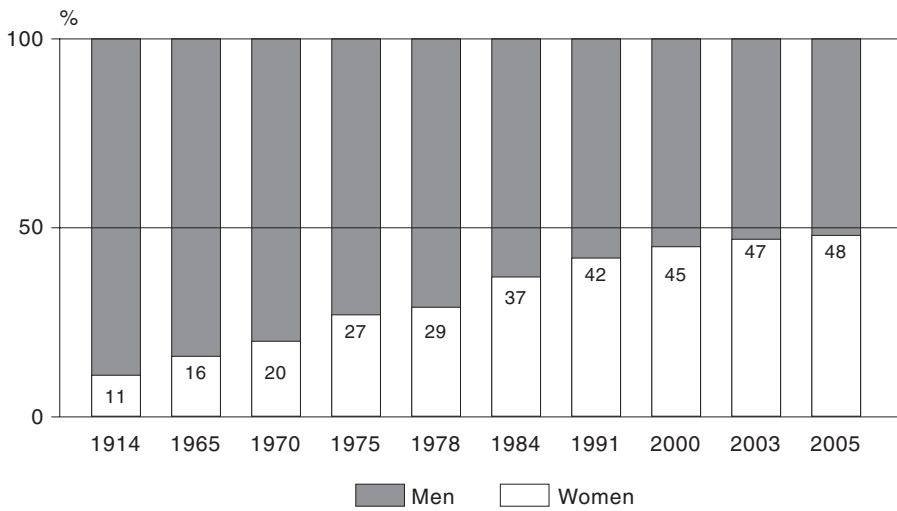
As for the media, in Sweden and the other Nordic countries the period saw the emergence of a strong, locally rooted party press. Newspapers were started with the purpose of promoting a political tendency or ideology; they served more or less as megaphones for the parties in public political discourse. Mass movements and political organizations tried to get their messages across, not only through organizational periodicals, but by founding newspapers, as well. The daily press was important, not least for the labor movement and the Social Democratic Party, but each of the parties had a paper that represented their point of view in all the major towns and cities of Sweden.

Radio assumed a different role than the daily press, and far different from radio's role in the USA, where the medium was commercial from the start. In Europe, radio was developed in the form of publicly regulated non-profit institutions that subsequently became known as “public service”. In Sweden, nationally distributed Radiotjänst came on the air with a single channel in 1925.

Male dominance in the media was unchallenged in the early years of the twentieth century. In 1914, when the earliest available statistics were compiled, 11 per cent of the journalists in Stockholm newspapers were women (Figure 1). The 1910s saw the formation of “Ligan” [The League], an informal network of women journalists in Stockholm, the capital.¹² The presence of women in the provincial bourgeois press and the Social Democratic press was much weaker, with only a few per cent in each.¹³ Thus, it was via

the non-socialist metropolitan press that women entered into Swedish journalism. On the new medium, radio, women's presence was considerably weaker than in the press. The first generation of managers and producers were, without exception, men. Only after years of pressuring were two women producers hired in the early 1940s. They were responsible for women's programs and children's programs, respectively.¹⁴

Figure 1. *The Shares of Women and Men among Swedish Journalists 1914-2005 (per cent)*



Sources: Berger 1977, p 136. In the case of 1914, the figures refer to Stockholm only. In the next-largest cities, Göteborg and Malmö, the share of women was only 4 per cent, in the provinces even less. The figures for 1965-2005 are based on membership statistics in the journalists' union, SJF (www.sjf.se).

The growth of popular magazines up to mid-century was another important platform for women in journalism. A number of magazines that addressed 'ladies' and housewives employed a good number of women writers. They carried material on fashion, house-keeping and family, as well as current events and educational non-fiction.

Positions of power in broadcasting and the press were virtually totally male-dominated. Only five women were among the 353 people who were registered as editors-in-chief in Swedish newspapers in 1925.¹⁵ Twenty-five years later the situation was the same: of the 294 editors-in-chief in the Swedish press in 1950, only one was a woman. Most recruitment opportunities for women were instead to be found in the weekly press and ladies' magazines.¹⁶

Gendering and Status: New Women's Rooms in Journalism

Newspaper journalism was clearly gendered in the early years of the past century, with certain positions and areas of coverage designated for men and women, respectively. Early women journalists were well-educated and had a command of foreign languages, which recommended them for translating material from the foreign press. Sensational news from abroad – scandals, murder and other kinds of criminality – written up in bulletin form became a women's domain.¹⁷ Other women's specialties were writing columns and serial fiction. When women's pages were introduced, women journalists supplied the content, which included items about home-making, housekeeping and child

care, but also consumer affairs and women's rights issues. The pioneers among women journalists also contributed to the development of new genres, such as the interview and reportage. Ester Blenda Nordström, member of the above-mentioned "Ligan", won renown for her Wallraff-style reportage, where she assumed various roles in order to get an insider perspective. In one case, for example, she took a job as a domestic servant in order to be able to write about servants' working and living conditions.¹⁸ Most other areas of journalism were male-dominated, particularly the realms of business news and domestic politics, plus international affairs, which gained in importance with the Great War (1914-1918). The Arts was also a high-status and largely male-dominated domain.

Positions of power and influence were closely linked to the central opinion-leading role that newspapers were expected to play. Leading publicists were generally active members and public spokesmen for the parties with which their papers were affiliated. Thus, the power bases in the newspaper business were controlled by the owners, which in turn had strong ties to the various political parties.¹⁹

Programming in public service radio differed from newspaper content. Programs were imbued with a didactic ideal of public enlightenment. A distinctly bourgeois lifestyle and rhetoric characterized the programs. Learned lectures were an important genre in early radio days, and the lecturers were generally men.²⁰ Only during the second world war were female voices allowed on the air on a regular basis. Female lecturers were recruited with a view to engaging women in the program of austerity that the war entailed. Thus, broadcasting established a feminine *Öffentlichkeit* on the air waves. There had, however, been programs for housewives from the start. Programs stressed women's essential role as homemakers; important themes were the professionalization of home-making, and civic education of women.

Capital and Recruitment: Class Position as Ticket to the Public Sphere

Positions of power in the radio organization were reserved for a male elite richly endowed with cultural capital. The male editors-in-chief of bourgeois newspapers had similar social and cultural assets; they were from upper-class backgrounds and/or were highly educated, often with postgraduate degrees, including doctorates and professorships. The editors of Social Democratic newspapers followed different routes into newspaper journalism. Many came from working-class families, they were recruited from the union movement and working-class political organizations, and they seldom had a secondary school diploma or higher education. The majority was recruited from posts as functionaries in the Social Democratic Party or one of the unions.²¹

The male editors-in-chief of popular magazines were of more varied backgrounds. A study of the social backgrounds of editors-in-chief of Sweden's leading magazines in 1925 and 1950 found that several were 'self-made men', having worked their way up from very modest circumstances. The women editors-in-chief tended, by contrast, to come from middle-and upper-class backgrounds and possessed considerable social and cultural capital.²²

The recruitment of journalists followed similar patterns. Radio hired a group of "hand-picked voice-tested gentlemen".²³ Cultural capital in the form of *Bildung* (education, a good all-round orientation, a cultivated manner) was an important selection criteria, as were the voice tests. The male voice was the norm in Swedish radio. Women's voices were not considered appropriate for broadcasting, at least not for reading news. When Swedish radio in 1938 for the first time carried news read by a woman, it provoked a storm of protest. Critics thought it inappropriate for a woman to speak of

war and other gruesome subjects. A couple of decades would pass before the experiment with a woman newsreader was repeated.²⁴

As for newspapers, recruitment patterns and the social bases on which recruitment took place differed radically between Social Democratic and bourgeois papers. In most cases journalists favored the political views that the newspapers represented. Professional training generally took the form of work as a volunteer for little or no pay. No academic training in journalism existed, and the profession did not confer much in the way of social status.²⁵

Personal contacts – social capital – were also important for those seeking employment as journalists, in radio and print media alike.²⁶ The first women journalists in the newspaper industry had a lot of social capital, and other forms of capital, as well. Those who first took their places in the public sphere were women of the upper-middle class; they were the daughters of fathers who favored the idea of women having a profession; they had influential friends, and, frequently, they married successful colleagues. They were at once examples and proponents of ‘the new woman’, a new feminine ideal that conceived of women as independent, equals to, and friends with men.²⁷ Many of these pioneers were also active in the women’s movement. Their class position and all the capital that came with it were important in their gaining access to the public sphere.

The Ground Battle: Segregation and Peaceful Co-existence in the Field

Early women journalists had no access to the profession’s organizations. When founded in 1874, Publicistklubben, a professional society for all those working in Swedish media, owners, publishers, editors or journalists, was strictly a gentlemen’s club. The journalists’ union, SJF, was also heavily male-dominated, with only two women – both active in the Stockholm press – among its founding members in 1901.²⁸ Instead, a number of networks of women journalists, both formal and informal, were established in the first half of the 1900s.²⁹

In the early days of broadcasting the prevailing idea of gender conceived of women and men essentially as mutually dependent opposites. This idea of harmonious complementarity made room for women, but only in positions and areas that were considered “feminine”. The gender segregation in news desks was virtually total. The prevailing peaceful co-existence should not be taken to mean that male dominance, both among staff and on the airwaves, did not provoke friction. “The Radio Committee of the Swedish Women’s Associations”, uniting fourteen leading women’s organizations, protested against the paucity of women lecturers on the radio. Their protests succeeded, and the number of lectures given by women tripled between 1932 and 1936.³⁰

Newspapers came under fire, as well. “Ligan” produced a spectacular film criticizing the differences in salary and working conditions offered men and women, respectively. Although the great majority of women journalists had to work with low-prestige “ladies’ pages”, a number of women ‘soloists’ managed to make a name for themselves and become ace reporters for their papers.³¹

Political and economic factors combined to enable a growing number of women to enter newspaper journalism. First, the branch expanded, and as the number of positions increased it became easier for women to find work in the field. Secondly, increasing commercialization gave rise to a demand for content that appealed to female readers. The women’s movement had been established, women had won the right to vote and access to several different social fields, and “the new woman” represented a new ideal of the independent, self-reliant woman.³²

The fact that women were few at media news desks seems to have meant that they were both marginalized and privileged. The pioneer women in newspapers, radio and later, in the 1950s, television were often what Rosabeth Moss Kanter in her classic study, *Men and Women of the Corporation*, refers to as “tokens”.³³ Their “uniqueness” gave them notoriety and even special appreciation, while it also meant that they remained outsiders. Early women in journalism did not feel hindered or actively discouraged; on the contrary, many say they experienced no such problems, but found their male colleagues both friendly and helpful.³⁴ One explanation for the lack of open rivalry might be that men and women did not compete for the same stakes. Women’s entry into the field of journalism took place on terms set by men, a fundamental premise being that the women would complement rather than compete with men’s knowledge and competencies. The areas valued highest by the party press, political and opinion-leading journalism, remained unchallenged male domains.

The Era of the Critical Mass 1950-1985

The first decades after the Second World War have often been described as the era when the Swedish welfare state was constructed. Even if the idea was much older, the concept of the nation as a “home” has come to epitomize the postwar phenomenon of the welfare state.³⁵ Consumerism was born, homes were modernized, faith in the future budded and bloomed. Alongside Switzerland – another country that had escaped the ravages of war – Sweden attained the highest standard of living in the world.

Women’s roles in Swedish society changed. The 1950s was the decade of the housewife, but because Sweden experienced a labor shortage there was a growing demand for women on the labor market. Major campaigns were launched to attract women to working life outside the home, and the share of women in the labor force climbed rapidly from 15.6 per cent in 1950 to 36.7 percent in 1965.³⁶ This was facilitated by the public sector’s assuming more and more responsibility for childcare.

The welfare state meant an expansion of the public sector, particularly in the 1960s. Traditional patterns of family life began to be questioned, and the institution of matrimony, sexual mores and women’s part in working life were all subjected to critical debate. Two breadwinners in the household began to be the norm. In the 1970s joint income tax returns were abolished, maternity leave was replaced by a parental leave that could be shared by mother and father, and women’s right to abortion was introduced.

The media landscape underwent fundamental changes, as well. Many provincial newspapers ceased publication in the 1940s and 1950s, often leaving only one paper in the community. These local monopolies meant that the remaining papers had to broaden their appeal and cross party lines so as to serve the entire community. In the course of the 1950s, public service radio expanded its services to three channels, and an entirely new medium, television, came on the air in 1956. Television was incorporated into Radiotjänst, the same public service broadcasting institution as radio. The tabloid press had its heyday in the postwar decades, which precipitated a rapid expansion of the field of journalism. In 1954 the journalists’ union, SJF, had 2,500 members, in 1976 somewhat more than 9,000, and in 1985 about 12,000. Newspapers continued to dominate the field. A study of the profession of journalism in 1969 found that 67 per cent of all Swedish journalists worked for newspapers (44 per cent in provincial papers, and 23 per cent in metropolitan papers); only 5 per cent worked in radio and television.³⁷

Even early in the century there were signs of a trend toward professionalization of journalism. Journalists were expected to be better educated and have specialized knowledge, and professional organizations – The Press Council (Publicistklubben) and the union, SJF – were founded. But it was not until the 1950s that professionalism gained real momentum. An important indicator of this trend was the founding of academic training in journalism. The closure of many newspapers and professionalization combined to reduce the degree of partisan bias in news selection and analysis. The thriving tabloid press introduced a more informal style, with emphasis on popular features like sports news, photojournalism and sensational news. Metropolitan newspapers' news values became the norm for radio, as well, which became less paternalistic. Entertaining content like sports events, drama and 'human interest' news stories occupied more airtime, and didactic programming less. The overall homogenization of news values and norms may also be seen as an effect of professionalization, inasmuch as professions are based on shared professional norms and ethical codes.³⁸

As professionalism in program production grew, the norms and ideals of journalism gradually changed. By the end of the 1960s, consensus was no longer the basis for good journalism. Both journalists' conceptions of their readers and audiences and their thinking about the purpose of journalism had undergone a radical transformation, especially in broadcasting. Journalism now should be activist, it should arouse, disclose, advocate. Journalism was a mission, a duty to act as a third estate, to scrutinize holders of power and to expose iniquities, injustice and misdoing in high places.³⁹

Together, the fading of newspapers' party stripes, professionalization and the expansion of public service broadcasting meant the emergence of new power bases in the field. These were not directly linked to formal positions, but were rather based on symbolic capital that individual journalists garnered through notoriety and professional recognition, where the criteria of quality tended to be defined by colleagues in the field.

The so-called watchdog function of journalism was considered most important, and investigative journalism was accorded special status. The Watergate scandal of 1972-1973 in the USA was the result of relentless investigative journalism on the part of two young journalists, Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein, at *Washington Post*. The reporters earned cult status within the field and inspired journalists worldwide. In 1973, a Swedish political magazine, *Folket i Bild/Kulturfront*, in a similar fashion disclosed the secret registration of union activists' political sympathies by the Social Democratic Party. The disclosure caused a major scandal, known as the IB Affair, and the affair epitomized the new role of journalism. The two Swedish journalists were jailed for "espionage", but for one of them, Jan Guillou, it was the start of a career that would make him one of Sweden's most renowned publicists. The Shooting Iron – the fearless journalist who stands up to power figures, dares to interrupt them in interviews to point out inconsistencies, etc., in search of the truth – became a metaphor for the new journalism.

The number of women in journalism grew, but the ratio of women did not improve as quickly. Like radio before it, television in early days was heavily male-dominated. The only departments where women were well-represented were children's programs and programs relating to 'home and family'.⁴⁰ The first, and for several years sole, woman in the television news department was hired in 1960; Swedish radio hired their first female reporter in 1964. In 1965, 16 per cent of Sweden's journalists were women (Figure 1); in 1978 the figure had risen to 29 per cent. Meanwhile, the share of women journalists was much greater in magazine publishing than in other media. Male dominance continued in Swedish television even after the second non-commercial public

service channel started up in 1969. Women made up nearly half (43 per cent) of those who applied for positions as journalists or producers with the second channel; only 21 per cent of those hired were women.⁴¹

Despite an increasing number of women in the field, there were still very few women in management positions in journalistic media. As late as 1975 there was not a single woman in an executive position in the entire Stockholm morning press.⁴² Nor was the situation much better in broadcasting; the only women in leading positions were to be found in the departments for children's programming and 'home and family'.⁴³ Male dominance was total among news desk chiefs on all channels through the 1970s.

Gendering and Status: 'Soft News' was Women's Domain

In the 1950s, the idea of women's and men's complementarity in journalism still prevailed.⁴⁴ This was achieved through a gender-based differentiation of positions and areas of coverage. Homemaking, parenting, and relationships became women's domains, but they had low status. In the areas that conveyed high status – politics, economics and world affairs – men predominated. By the mid-1960s gender segregation had chinks in it, but hierarchies in the newsroom were still distinctly gendered. In television all the desk chiefs were men, and the more prestigious, domestic news and foreign news desks, were entirely male. More women journalists had joined the organizations, but they were confined to the rank and file of all-round reporters.⁴⁵

In the 1970s the environment, social issues (the schools, health and geriatric care) and consumer affairs moved up on the agenda, in the press as well as in radio and television. As these subjects emerged as typical fields of expertise for women journalists, they were commonly bunched up and labeled "soft news". In newspaper journalism the most male-dominated desks were sports, business, world affairs and domestic politics – termed "hard news" – where men wrote nine out of ten articles. Social issues and consumer affairs were the only areas where women were in the majority.⁴⁶ This pattern of gender-typing was also noted in radio and television.⁴⁷

Recruitment and Capital: Professionalization no Boon to Women

The professionalization of Swedish journalism changed the patterns of recruitment to the profession, which also influenced women's opportunities in the field. Journalists' political leanings were no longer necessarily a merit in employers' eyes. The cultural capital that professional training represented was a new asset that opened doors to aspiring journalists; while social capital in the form of one's personal network and professional capital (journalistic experience) were important for advancement in one's career. At top levels, too, experience in the field and editorial leadership grew in importance. In radio and, later, television, recruitment paths began to resemble those in the newspaper industry. In the era when radio had a more official role and tone, most of the staff was male graduates in the Arts and residents of metropolitan Stockholm; in the course of the 1960s recruits to Swedish radio and television were primarily college-educated newspaper journalists with a background in the social sciences.

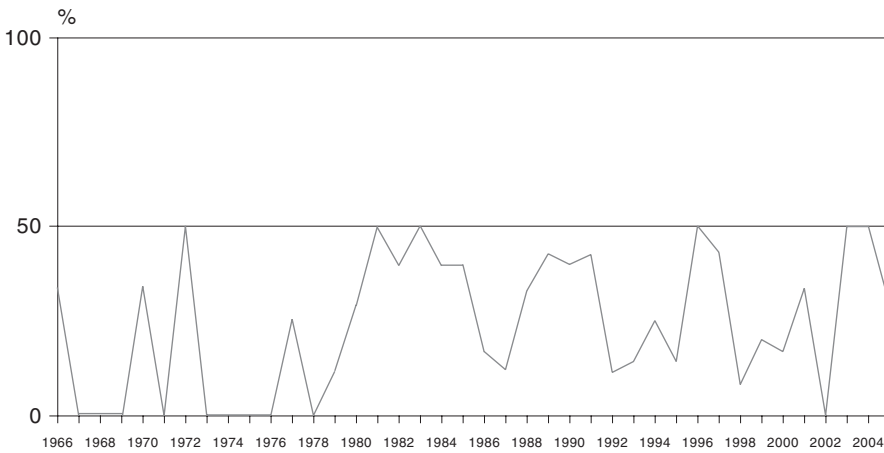
At the outset professionalization worked to the disadvantage of some women in the field. For example, in early days of television newsreaders were women who doubled as program announcers. When management decided in the 1960s that the news bulletins should be read by "professional journalists", the announcers lost a portion of their jobs.⁴⁸ Nor was the introduction of professional training in journalism immediately an

asset for aspiring women. The first schools of journalism received applications from many women, but accepted very few.⁴⁹

The number of women in journalism grew, and professional training in Journalism became an increasingly important ‘ticket’ to the field. A survey of Swedish journalists in 1969 found that women journalists tended to have more formal education than their male colleagues.⁵⁰ As for social background, most journalists were recruited from the middle class; 40 per cent had at least a secondary school diploma, and half of these had some college education, as well. Forty per cent had some form of training in Journalism.

Awards and prizes based on colleagues’ recognition may also be seen as a sign of professionalism. The Great Journalist Prize was instituted in 1966 by Bonniers, the largest media group in Sweden, to recognize outstanding achievement in journalism, and the Golden Pen award was first awarded by the Press Council [Publicistklubben] on the occasion of the society’s centennial in 1975.

Figure 2. *The Share of Great Journalist Prizes awarded to Women 1966-2005 (per cent)*⁵¹



Source: www.storajournalistpriset.se

At the start, the Great Journalist Prize had only two classes: newspaper journalism and other periodicals. Subsequently, radio, television and new media were added. The first year one woman and two men were awarded. Four years were to pass before another woman was awarded the prize. All in all, women made up 25 per cent of the prizewinners between 1966 and 2005, but the numbers varied greatly from year to year (Figure 2). Until 1980, women laureates were exceptions to the rule. For the most part during the professionalization phase, men accorded recognition to men.

The Ground Battle: Open Conflicts Between Men and Women in the Field

Like most of Western Europe, Sweden experienced a wave of egalitarian radicalism in the 1970s. Unionism and issues relating to working life came to the fore, with stronger demands for more democratic decision-making processes, flatter (or no) hierarchies, revolving and collective leadership, etc.⁵² These overall trends influenced journalism, as well. Gender equality was linked to democracy in the workplace and working conditions. Open conflicts between women and men became more frequent. Women’s dissatisfaction gave rise to a number of campaigns on the part of women journalists at

metropolitan newspapers like *Aftonbladet*, *GT* and *Dagens Nyheter*. Protests were raised within public service radio and television, as well. The issues concerned working conditions, the climate at the workplace (sexist jargon, alcohol, gender discrimination and low salaries for women) as well as male privilege regarding the definition of professionalism.⁵³ Women now made up a critical mass in many media companies; there were enough of them to have an impact.⁵⁴

Together, these factors meant that the debate began to have concrete effects. One consequence was the start of several Women's desks.⁵⁵ The journalists' union, SJF, also got involved in the gender equality debate.⁵⁶ In 1978 the first gender-based statistics was introduced.⁵⁷ These showed that women now made up 29 per cent of the field in Sweden, and that women were now in the majority at the country's two academic Schools of Journalism. The tabloid press was a male bastion (80 per cent); the magazine branch was the only branch in which women were in the majority (53 per cent). Only 9 per cent of managers and editors were women.

The radicalism of the era and the emerging national political debate on gender equality made it possible for the first time to discuss issues of power imbalances and newsroom segregation in a serious fashion. Feminine journalism was launched as a critical alternative that would focus on the realities of women's day-to-day lives and the so-called private sphere, put events into broader context, consult women as news sources, stress how events and processes relate to and impact on women's lives, and allow subjectivity, empathy and emotions a place in journalistic work. The object of criticism were male ideals of professionalism, i.e., the norms of a focus on conflict, factuality, objectivity, dispassionate perspective, and neutrality, and the status accorded male elites and political and economic reporting.

Feminine journalism was formulated in the intersection of the ideas current in the international women's movement ("Private is political") and a critical attitude to mass media, voiced mainly by young, academically trained journalists. Influenced by the radicalism of the day, they were critical of the so-called Establishment and conventional journalistic norms. A number of radio and television programs sought to combine class and gender perspectives.

Some of the main objectives of the work relating to gender equality were (1) to raise the status of the world of women by raising the status of what was regarded as women's or "soft" subjects and (2) to see to it that women got access to positions and areas of coverage that traditionally had been male preserves. In the early 1970s, a number of specialized reporters, women having education, housing and social issues as their specialties, were hired. Many younger women journalists were also eager to work to make more room in the media for the subjects and issues that were important to women. Social issues were therefore more in focus, while they also became an area in which women predominated.⁵⁸ Thus, the predominance of women around so-called "soft news" was a consequence of both gendered hiring policies and women journalists' own preferences. The power struggle in the field revolved less around *whether* the purpose of journalism should be to critically scrutinize society and train spotlights on social ills than around *which areas* and phenomena deserved scrutiny.

The Era of Feminization, 1985 –

The issue of gender equality came to fruition on a broad front in the 1980s. Characteristic of Sweden and the other Nordic countries was the incorporation of feminism into

the established political parties, a phenomenon sometimes referred to as “state feminism”.⁵⁹ Women’s representation in politics expanded, and the first gender-balanced Cabinet (having a 50:50 ratio of men to women) in Swedish history took office in 1994. Until the 1990s, most gender equality efforts aimed at eliminating outright discrimination; in the new millennium gender mainstreaming, i.e., the principle that gender equality perspectives should imbue all sectors of Swedish society, has become the rule.

These advances notwithstanding, the debate on gender equality has not subsided. A feminist political party, Feminist Initiative, was formed in 2005 and issues regarding women’s situation on the labor market, domestic violence and the sexualization of the public sphere were given significant attention on the public agenda.

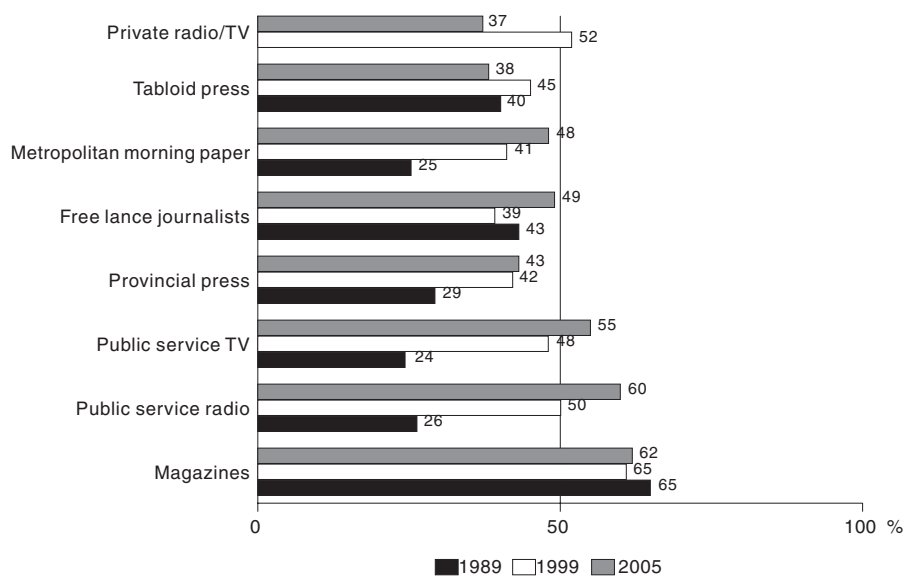
Starting in the early 1980s, the logic of the market has won ground in Swedish mass media, due in part to increasing competition and internationalization of media markets. The media landscape changed, and the broadcasting sector mushroomed when the monopolies of public service radio and television were broken, and commercial, advertising-financed channels came on the air in the late 1980s. Concentration of ownership in the newspaper industry continued, chains were formed or extended.

These changes in the media landscape were reflected in journalism, where particularly the broadcast media expanded. In 2005, the journalists’ union had 18,000 members. Of these, just over 30 per cent worked in the provincial press, and just over 25 per cent in radio and television. The public service channels dominated the latter category, but one-third of the journalists in broadcasting were employed in the new, privately owned commercial broadcasting sector.⁶⁰

The share of women journalists continued to grow (Figure 1). The biggest wave of entries occurred in the 1980s, during which period women’s numbers rose from 30 per cent of all journalists at the start of the decade to 42 per cent at its end. In 2005, 48 per cent of Swedish journalists were women. Studies of the profession in 1989, 1999 and 2005 show variations in the proportions of women among different media sectors (Figure 3)⁶¹ As earlier, women dominated in magazine publishing in 2005, but they formed a majority of the journalists in public service broadcasting, as well. The lowest frequencies of women journalists were noted in commercial radio and television news departments, and in the tabloid press. These latter branches were also the only ones that showed a decline in the shares of women journalists between 1999 and 2005. The figures suggest that there is still a great deal of turbulence in terms of gender in the journalistic field.

The recruitment of women to executive positions in the media was in no way commensurate with the number of women in journalism. In 1989, only 15 per cent of executive positions were held by women.⁶² Despite several important breakthroughs in the 1990s, male dominance in the top echelons of the media industry was still strong in 2001: three out of four were men.⁶³ The highest share of women in top positions was noted in magazine publishing (59 per cent), followed by public service radio and television (44 per cent). Newspapers, the specialized press and commercial radio all had 15 per cent women in top positions. All in all, 89 per cent of CEOs were men, and two out of three heads of desks/departments were men. Thus, women had much less access to formal positions of power in the media, and when they did have such access, it was primarily a question of editorial power. Economic power remained in male hands.

Figure 3. Share of Women among Swedish Journalists by Media Sector in 1989, 1999 and 2005 (per cent)



Note: The numbers of respondents varied between 29 (magazines press) and 286 (provincial press) in 1989, between 53 (private radio/TV) and 349 (provincial press) in 1999, and between 39 (tabloid press) and 286 (provincial press) in 2005. There were no private radio/TV channels in Sweden in 1989.

Recruitment and Capital: Women with Capital of their Own

A study of the profession in 1989 found that the social base had hardly changed since 1969.⁶⁴ The level of formal education was higher, but journalism was still a solidly middle-class occupation. As previously, the women in the branch possessed more capital on average than their male colleagues. They tended to have more formal education and came from a higher socio-economic background. The pattern persisted into the 2000s.⁶⁵ However, among those in top positions there were no differences between the sexes with respect to levels of education or class background.⁶⁶

Gendering and Status: Investigative Journalism = Status = Male

The gender-typing of areas of coverage and subject matter subsided under the 1980s and 1990s. A study of news desks at Swedish public service television (SVT1 and SVT2), found no such gender differences in the period 1985-1995.⁶⁷ Toward the end of the 1990s, however, the degree of gender-typing in news journalism increased again, on public service television and the commercial rival, TV4, alike. The backlash was unmistakable. Gender-typing was still apparent in Swedish newspapers in 2000, as well. Sports journalism, business and the economy, crime and op-ed journalism (editorials, commentary) were still male-dominated, whereas women predominated in areas of coverage like social issues, consumer affairs and homemaking/family.⁶⁸

The increasing differentiation of the media system had an impact on the content of journalism, not only in Sweden and the Nordic countries, but also in most of the western world. Tabloidization and popularization are terms frequently used to characterize the new style of journalism, whose principal features include intimization, where the boundaries between public and private become fluid, personification, with a focus on

individuals' emotions and experiences; and greater emphasis on relevance to daily life and readers' and audiences' needs and interests in news selection. Thus, the new journalism shares many of the traits that characterized what once was termed feminine' journalism. This is one of the reasons why feminist journalism research speaks of a "feminization" of journalism in the 1990s.⁶⁹

Meanwhile, investigative journalism still had the most prestige in the field. In surveys of Swedish journalists in 1999 and 2005, that asked how journalists defined their role or purpose, "critical scrutiny of holders of power" took top priority among all categories of journalists, women and men alike.⁷⁰ In the 1990s, investigative journalism was recognized as a specific genre, and special news desks were formed for the purpose. In 1991, a prize for investigative reporting, "The Golden Spade", was instituted.⁷¹ In the first decade of its existence the prize was awarded mostly to men; among laureates and journalists recognized with 'honorable mention' only one in four was a woman.

The news desks that received the greatest number of Golden Spades between 1991 and 2001 were those behind two programs carried on public service television: *Strip-tease* and *Uppdrag: Granskning* [Mission: Investigate]. In interviews the journalists did not shy away from asking provocative questions or even badgering their quarry. Especially one of the more high-profile journalists, Jan Josefsson, made a name for himself as one of the country's most controversial reporters. Highly partisan reportage and controversial methods, coupled with a persuasive narrative style made him one of the most debated – and revered – figures in Swedish journalism. Swedish journalists gave Josefsson, alongside the above-mentioned Jan Guillou, top ranking. A question put to all journalists in 2000 inquired about role models; Josefsson and Guillou were mentioned most frequently. Investigative journalism was synonymous with high status and masculinity.

The Ground Battle: The Logic of the Market Leads to More Gendering

Commercialization implied a shift in the power base in the field of journalism, from the professional (editorial) to the economic field of power. Recent generations of media owners have assumed the role of CEO rather than publisher or editor.⁷² Those who wield economic power have advanced their positions.

What effect did the growing influence of commercial considerations have on the gender order? In the literature on the consequences of commercialization the question has been pivotal. Does the market favor women?⁷³ There is no simple answer. On the one hand, "feminine" realms of experience, perspectives and interests have received more attention; women journalists have more leeway; the boundaries between the private and public spheres are transcended. That is to say, women's public space expanded. On the other hand, women's progress in journalism was harshly criticized by dominant men in the field, who complained that experienced and respected (male) journalists were being replaced by (female) "bimbo reporters". This coupling of poor quality and women can be seen as a typical example of symbolic violence, which buttresses male hegemony.⁷⁴ What is more, increased market sensitivity has entailed a major increase in sports news, economic news and crime news – traditionally male subjects and interests. The content of economic news reporting and the new business publications were characterized by a massive predominance of men.⁷⁵ Men also predominated among the CEOs and boards of directors of media companies, as they did in the media facing keener competition (with the exception of popular magazines, where women predominated). Men's predominance was least in the non-commercial public service broadcasting com-

