Export Report Syndicate 9: Educating journalism students on gender and related inequality issues

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This document offers a quick overview of recent scholarship on the inroads and new threats regarding journalism education and gender. It will inform discussions of our syndicate at the WJEC conference and builds on the same syndicate at the 5th World Journalism Education Congress in Paris in 2019.

Addressing diversity, biases, and structural inequalities remains a critical issue in journalism education (Azanu et al., 2025; Biswas et al., 2022; Geertsema-Sligh et al., 2020; Ross & Padovani, 2020). Sensitivity to gender and inequalities is deemed an essential professional skill (e.g., Contreras-Gómez et al., 2020) and accreditation standards prioritizing diversity are deemed crucial in evaluating journalism education programs (e.g., Moody-Ramírez et al., 2024). However, recent legislative attacks on diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives in different countries —quite prominently in the US— further complicate this scenario and may even have chilling effect on what educators can teach, including issues of gender, race, and inequalities.

Journalism, both as a profession and as an industry, has experienced radical changes in recent years that have important consequences in terms of gender and media (e.g., Baloch et al., 2024; Carter & Ferrucci, 2024; Contreras-Gómez et al., 2020; Govender & Muringa, 2025; Koirala, 2020; Raghunath, 2024). For example, worldwide journalism has become more precarious, resulting in seemingly more flexibility and freelancing opportunities that women and minorities often embrace (e.g., Cohen & Clark, 2023; Guo & Kang, 2023; Marín-Sanchiz et al., 2023). But at the end of the day, this means that more women and minorities are working in an insecure employment situation (Moody-Ramirez et al., 2024).

Education is key in influencing media representation and promoting diverse voices, especially concerning gender roles. Representation and media literacy, or education, affect media coverage, the reading and interpreting of articles, and the consumption of representations of marginalized communities (Boczek et al., 2022; Klaas & Boukes, 2020;

John et al., 2022; Markov & Min, 2022; Moody-Ramirez et al., 2023).

Further, while some authors, often from an intersectionality perspective, celebrate how journalists can use social media to increase their social capital, and revamped curricula usually include units on self-branding and online content creation (e.g., Hedman, 2020; Hossain & Wenger, 2024), there is evidence that women and minorities disproportionately face harmful comments, verbal and physical threats, and harassment online. This has negative consequences for their careers and mental health and can lead to the decision to leave the profession (e.g., Govender & Muringa, 2025; Koirala, 2020; Lee & Park, 2024; Posetti, 2021). It is unclear whether journalism educators are warning their students about such realities, let alone equipping them with the means to protect themselves.

Recent research has also examined gendered and racialized power hierarchies in journalism education and practice from other perspectives, such as technology-based changes to news reporting and the seeming need for data-literate and technologically skilled journalist. But if innovative, modern journalism requires more people with a background in Information and Communication Technologies —a field with important gender imbalances— the hype over centering journalism on data and digitalization might result in new gender divides in newsrooms (see De Vuyst, 2020; Hannaford, 2022).

In sum, new and continuing challenges related to journalism and gender education that this syndicate needs to consider are:

- An increasingly precarious employment situation for men and women journalists, with women impacted disproportionately.
- Emerging mental health issues and gender-specific trauma driven by a global pandemic and sociopolitical climate.
- New gender divides because of the focus on innovation and technologies in journalism.
- A need to confront these issues on multiple fronts.

The significance of these issues increases when young professionals engage in journalistic work and make career choices within an industry that still displays gender-based discrimination (e.g., Govender & Muringa, 2025; Guo & Kang, 2023; Koirala, 2020; Urbániková & Čaladi, 2024). The **central question** the members of this syndicate will discuss and answer is: ***"What, if any, progress has been made over the past six years in educating journalism students globally on gender and related inequality issues?"***

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