

**This item is the archived peer-reviewed author-version of:**

Women at the table : female guests and experts in current affairs television

**Reference:**

Dhoest Alexander, Panis Koen, Paulussen Steve.- Women at the table : female guests and experts in current affairs television  
Journalism practice - ISSN 1751-2786 - Abingdon, Routledge journals, taylor & francis ltd, 2020, p. 1-18  
Full text (Publisher's DOI): <https://doi.org/10.1080/17512786.2020.1807392>  
To cite this reference: <https://hdl.handle.net/10067/1706110151162165141>

**Dhoest, A., Panis, K. & Paulussen, S. (2020) Women at the table: Female guests and experts in current affairs television. Journalism Practice. DOI: 10.1080/17512786.2020.1807392**

dr. Alexander Dhoest (corresponding author)

Department of Communication Studies, University of Antwerp, Antwerp, Belgium

alexander.dhoest@uantwerpen.be

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6656-6125>

Twitter: @ADhoest

LinkedIn: [linkedin.com/in/alexanderdhoest](https://www.linkedin.com/in/alexanderdhoest)

dr. Koen Panis

Department of Communication Studies, University of Antwerp, Antwerp, Belgium

koen.panis@uantwerpen.be

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3433-4466>

Twitter: @koenpanis

LinkedIn: [linkedin.com/in/koenpanis](https://www.linkedin.com/in/koenpanis)

dr. Steve Paulussen

Department of Communication Studies, University of Antwerp, Antwerp, Belgium

steve.paulussen@uantwerpen.be

Twitter: @stevepaulussen

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1188-3980>

LinkedIn: [linkedin.com/in/stevepaulussen](https://www.linkedin.com/in/stevepaulussen)

**Word count: 9070**

## **Women at the table**

### **Female guests and experts in current affairs television**

#### **Abstract**

While the topic has been on the agenda for decades, women continue to be underrepresented and represented in problematic ways in the media. In news and current affairs programs on TV, female guests and experts are still a minority while they are also often pigeonholed in gender-specific roles and addressed in gender-specific ways. Based on a qualitative analysis of 25 programs made by Flemish public service broadcaster VRT, we aimed to explore good practices as well as lingering problems in order to answer our first research question: How are female guests and experts represented in VRT current affairs programs? To support our analysis, we also conducted two focus group interviews with twelve gender experts, addressing the question: How do gender experts assess the representation of female guests and experts in VRT current affairs programs? Our findings show that many of the critiques identified by previous research are still valid, although we do see clear signs of improvement. However, female guests still constitute a minority, which particularly creates problems when they are part of a male dominated panel. Based on these findings, we formulate a number of recommendations to help journalists in developing more gender sensitivity.

#### **Keywords**

gender representation; women; television news; expertise; sources; public service media

## **Women at the table**

### **Female guests and experts in current affairs television**

#### **Introduction**

The equal and balanced representation of women on television has been a topic of media and journalism research for decades, yet it continues to be a challenge. While they constitute a demographic majority, in quantitative terms women continue to be underrepresented on television while in qualitative terms, they continue to be approached and represented differently compared to men. Progress has been made, varying across countries and broadcasters, and the most blatant forms of stereotyping have been eradicated, but many problems persist (Byerly, 2013; De Vuyst, 2020;). One genre in which the unequal treatment of men and women is conspicuous is that of news and current affairs programs (Cann & Mohr, 2011; Niemi & PitKänen, 2017). As will be discussed below, the number of female interviewees and guests is rising, but they remain a minority and are still treated differently.

Focusing on the case of Flemish public service broadcaster VRT, this article analyses the representation of female guests and experts in current affairs television. Beside the qualitative analysis of 25 programs by the authors, two focus group interviews with twelve gender experts were used to enrich our interpretations and to add more experience-based insights. Rather than purely academic, this research is also oriented towards practice as it is part of a four-year project commissioned by VRT, each year analyzing the representation of a social group and using the results in diversity trainings for journalists. This has consequences for the mode of sampling and analysis, as will be explained below.

Before we start, it is worth giving some context on Flemish broadcasting. Since 1953, VRT (operating under different names over the years) has been the Flemish public service broadcaster, modeled after the BBC. While it first had a broadcasting monopoly, since 1989 it faced commercial competition and struggled to keep its viewers (author). From the mid 1990s, after some major changes, it started to become successful again and at the

time of writing, it is the Flemish market leader for television with a market share of 35% in 2019. While its main channel Eén has a market share of 29.6%, its main commercial competitor VTM only has a market share of 19.3% and all other commercial channels have much lower market shares (VIER 7.7%, the others 5% or below) (CIM, 2020). The strong position of public service broadcasting is not unusual in the European context, but vastly different from most of the rest of the world, where commercial broadcasting tends to be dominant. As market leader, VRT's practices in terms of diversity are particularly significant in the Flemish context, and as a case study, our study is most directly relevant for similar markets with strong public service media, but we believe our recommendations are also applicable beyond this context.

Part of the overhaul of Flemish public service media in the 1990s constituted of a reorganization, VRT now operating under five-year management contracts with the Flemish government (author). Beside a number of targets in terms of reach and performance, these contracts also stipulate public service duties, including a focus on diversity. At the time of writing, the 2016-2020 contract mentions several diversity tools and policies such as a Diversity Charter, a mission statement regarding diversity that should guide all activities, as well as targets for onscreen diversity (see below) (VRT & Vlaamse Regering, 2016; author). Representing diversity is an explicit goal and even obligation for VRT, which again justifies our focus on this particular case: VRT's practices are expected to be exemplary.

In this article, we will first review the international literature on the representation of women on television, where possible also referring to Belgian research. Then, we will discuss our own empirical case study, based on qualitative content analysis and interviews with gender experts. In the conclusion, we will reflect on the broader implications of our findings and offer practical recommendations, applicable beyond the Flemish context.

## **Representing women on television**

### ***Underrepresentation***

Although our research is qualitative, it is important to start by sketching a quantitative context. The underrepresentation of women on television has been documented across time, countries and TV genres (Signorielli & Bacue, 1999; Sink & Mastro, 2007). The limited onscreen presence of women reflects their underrepresentation in the workforce. In an international study encompassing 59 countries, the International Women's Media Foundation identified underrepresentation of women in the journalism workforce across the world, women constituting on average one-third of the full-time journalism workforce (IWMF, 2011). In the US, the Women's Media Center found that women constituted 37% of the reporters during evening broadcasts (Women's Media Center, 2019).

In Flanders, the 2016-2020 management contract between VRT and Flemish government mentions goals for the onscreen presence of women, 33% by 2016 and 40% by 2020 (VRT & Vlaamse Regering, 2016). The Diversity Monitor, an annual quantitative content analysis, shows that the share of women on television, across all channels, was 41% in 2019 (VRT Studiedienst, 2020). This is within the range of a number of other public broadcasters in Europe, for instance 35% on the Dutch public channels in 2015 (Commissariaat voor de media, 2015), and 42% across public and commercial channels in France in 2018 (Conseil supérieur de l'audiovisuel, 2019). However, the variation across genres is significant, non-fiction genres in particular performing less well. In non-fiction, the share of women on the first public service channel Eén in 2019 was 38% and on second channel Canvas only 32% (VRT Studiedienst, 2020).

In news programs, the share of women is growing (33% in 2019), but this is partly due to the stronger presence of internal actors such as journalists and presenters; women only constitute 25% of external actors, i.e. guests and experts (Pauwels, 2019). For current affairs programs, the total share of female actors gravitated around 40% in 2019 (VRT Studiedienst, 2020). Dutch research finds similar shares, between 22% and 32%, with a peak of 38% across four talk shows (Meijers, 2019; van Joolen, 2015; Verheggen, 2016). Women are particularly underrepresented in the role of experts, not only in Flanders (Pauwels, 2019) but also internationally (Desmond & Danilewicz, 2010; Koeman, Peeters & d'Haenens, 2007). Howell and Singer (2017) showed that on British radio and TV in 2012, there were four male experts for every female expert. France does significantly better, the number of female experts on public channels ranging between 34% (France 2) and 56% (France 3) (Conseil supérieur de l'audiovisuel, 2019). In the UK, the BBC

program *Outside Source* aimed for an equal share of female experts in 2018, the 50/50 challenge (BBC, 2018). This initiative was followed by a large number of other programs, raising the share of programs with an equal share of male and female experts from 27% to 74% in one year's time (BBC, 2019a, 2019b, 2019c).

### ***“Feminine” topics and stereotypes***

Within this context of underrepresentation, a number of further problems persist. One of those is the *association of certain news topics with women*. Topics such as politics, the military, economics and sports are traditionally considered to be “masculine”, while topics such as health care, social issues and education are seen as “feminine” (De Swert & Hooghe, 2010). There is a quantitative dimension to this issue: Flemish research consistently shows that women are more often connected to “feminine” topics (Vos et al., 2012), as does research in other countries (Atria, 2017; Cann & Mohr, 2011; Segijn et al., 2014). There is also a qualitative dimension at stake, related to the ways in which women are pigeonholed and stereotyped. Research, often combining quantitative and qualitative methods, shows that women tend to be presented stereotypically in reports and studio talks. For instance, Gobyn (2012) found that women in Flemish current affairs programs are more often portrayed in a domestic context, also putting more emphasis on their family and the combination of work and family life. Truyts (2016) found that women in current affairs talk shows more often get personal questions, and that they are more often invited to weigh in on gender-related topics beyond their expertise.

This is in line with international research. For instance, Ross et al. (2013) found that women are more often addressed in gender terms. Specifically concerning scientific experts, Kitzinger et al. (2018) found that newspapers more often refer to the physical appearance of women, also questioning their status as scientists when they are presented as “sexy” or “glamorous”. However, Mitchell and McKinnon (2019) observed some progress as “masculine” characteristics such as persistence and excellence are increasingly assigned to female scientists, although the focus on the combination of career and family persists. Similarly, in reporting on business women the focus is more often on their gender, physical appearance and family life (De Anca & Gabaldon, 2014; Krefting, 2002; Lee & James, 2007).

### ***Talking to and about women***

Language is another point of attention. To start, research has shown that women are often *addressed differently*. For instance, Dutch research by Smelik (1999) showed that women are more often addressed informally, which in Dutch is done by using the more informal “jij” instead of the formal “u” (both translatable as “you”). Women are also more often addressed by their first name only, or in diminutive and trivializing terms (Verbiest, 2000). Flemish research by Gobyn (2012), however, showed that female and male guests in the studio of current affairs show *Terzake* were generally addressed in a similar, formal way as men, although women were occasionally addressed more informally. Truyts (2016) equally found limited differences in the way men and women were addressed in Flemish current affairs programs, finding more differences between formats as well as between internal actors (e.g. fellow journalists) and external ones, the latter being addressed more formally. In a checklist of its diversity service (VRT Diversiteit, s.d.), VRT recommends to address men and women in the same way, and not to address women more informally.

Beside being addressed differently, women also tend to get *less speaking time*. Research shows that women who appear as sources in news or talk shows tend to get interrupted more often, are generally given less speaking time, and are less likely to be directly quoted as primary sources (Cukier et al., 2016; Ross & Canter, 2011). Another linguistic issue is *androcentric language use*, which betrays a world view where masculinity is the self-evident norm (Ehrlich & King, 1992, Vandekerckhove, 2018). Thus, for instance, generic terms for professions are often based on the male form of nouns (Doyle, 2005; Martin & Papadelos, 2016). This becomes most apparent when the word “female” is added, leading to “marked language” and asymmetric word use (e.g. president vs. female president; Sneller & Verbiest, 2002). While this feminization does recognize the presence of women in certain jobs and positions, it does at the same time linguistically “mark” an exception, thus highlighting the male norm (Martin & Papadelos, 2016). Even when there are male and female variations of words referring to professions (e.g. “directeur” and “directrice” for “director”, in Dutch), linguists point out that the female form is often seen to be inferior and less competent (Jule, 2017; Verbiest, 2000). As a consequence, there is a lot of debate over the question whether generic professional titles should be used (which are generally based on the male form), in the hope of reducing their male associations, or female forms



(which present women as the exception), in the hope of making women more visible in certain roles (Jule, 2017). This also depends on the language: while French and German have male and female forms for most professional titles, English does not have many gender-specific forms, and Dutch takes up a middle position which makes it very hard to follow a strict line. VRT aims to use the gender-neutral form of job titles, unless a commonly used female form exists (VRT Taal, s.d). However, it is hard to determine when a female form is commonly used, which leads to inconsistency.

### ***Explanatory factors***

While our focus is on issues of representation rather than explanations, it is relevant to briefly reflect on possible causes for the patterns identified above, as this can also inform recommendations. To do this, we will distinguish between a broader, cultural level as discussed in gender and feminist media studies, and a more concrete level, related to the particular genre of news and current affairs TV.

On the broader, cultural level, there is a rich tradition of gender and feminist media research. Mendes and Carter (2008) explain that from the 1970s, gender studies in communication investigated how media contribute to the construction and spread of fixed and binary gender roles. Early research often used content analysis to explore the representation of women, Tuchman (1978) using the term 'symbolic annihilation' to address the underrepresentation and narrow representation of women in entertainment media, often limited to domestic settings and subordinate roles. Later research also used more critical approaches, often inspired by cultural studies. The rise of feminist media research, also from the 1970s onwards, is closely tied to second-wave feminism. This line of research critically analyses the reproduction of hierarchical gender relations in media production, representation and use, striving for structural change (Mendes & Carter, 2008). Although there are a number of competing feminist approaches to media, all are driven by a political and activist stance (Van Zoonen, 1991). Underlying this research is a strong sense of social injustice, women being relegated to a secondary position in a patriarchal society. Media are seen as reflecting and reinforcing these power inequalities, not only in the way they represent women but also in the limited involvement of women in media production (Krijnen & Van Bauwel, 2015).

On a more concrete level, related to the specific representation of women in news and current affairs programs, the literature suggests explanations on three levels: the position of women in society, journalistic routines, and the attitudes of female guests and experts (Howell & Singer, 2017; Vandenberghe, d'Haenens & Van Gorp, 2014). At the most macro level, the representation of women in media partly reflects their *social position*. This is particularly relevant for non-fiction genres such as news and current affairs, where the underrepresentation of women in elite social positions (e.g. politics and business) has consequences for their appearance in media. When women are used as sources, journalists are likely to attribute less importance to their expertise and more to their personal experiences, thus reinforcing associations of women with “soft” topics, the private sphere and non-leadership positions (Howell & Singer, 2017; Ross, 2007). The underlying issue, here, is whether media should reinforce these social imbalances or, to the contrary, symbolically redress them.

A second level of explanation is that of *journalistic routines*, in particular in relation to the selection of guests and experts. Research shows that editors are often mindful of diversity issues, but that other considerations take precedence, in particular finding people who have an informed opinion about a particular news item. Vandenberghe, d'Haenens and Van Gorp (2014) found that time pressure and the priority of bringing a clear news story tend to make journalists fall back on people they have worked with before. As a consequence, recurring (mostly male) guests tend to make frequent appearances in news and current affairs programs, which makes sense from a production perspective because these more experienced guests are perceived to be more predictable and communicative (Howell & Singer, 2017; Niemi & Pitkänen, 2017). Journalists also like to invite confident experts who are not afraid of making strong points, characteristics they associate more with men (Howell & Singer, 2017).

A final explanation for the lower and different representation of women as experts is connected to *female guests and experts themselves*. According to many journalists, women tend to be less willing to participate in interviews and debates. The journalists interviewed by Howell and Singer (2017) stated that women tend to be less confident about their expertise. Indeed, a common excuse used by journalists to justify the lack of female sources in news is that women often decline the invitation to be a guest in a talk show, connecting this to the “imposter syndrome”, i.e. women often feeling someone else

has more expertise to talk about a certain issue (Cukier et al., 2016). Beyond these psychological explanations, journalists and editors also refer to the mode of interaction (or 'culture') in talk shows and debates, which often thrives on strong opinions and contradictions (Cukier, Jackson & Gagnon, 2019). The reluctance of female experts to appear in TV programs is not only caused by a lack of self-confidence but also by risk of harsh judgements by others, for instance on their physical appearance or 'pushy' behavior (Howell & Singer, 2017; Cukier et al. 2016).

### **A qualitative case study**

Based on these insights, our research aims to analyze the representation of women as guests and experts in current affairs programs on VRT, asking two questions:

*RQ1: How are female guests and experts represented in VRT current affairs programs?*

*RQ2: How do gender experts assess the representation of female guests and experts in VRT current affairs programs?*

It is important to repeat that this research was done for (but independent of) VRT, which explains its unique focus on public service television as well as a number of other methodological choices. Thus, both the methods and the samples corresponded to earlier, similar projects we did for VRT on different topics, to create comparable insights (see also author).

Addressing RQ1, we used *qualitative content analysis* to complement the quantitative content analysis of the annual Diversity Monitor mentioned above. While the term "content analysis" is mostly associated with its quantitative variant, qualitative content analysis refers to the purposive, systematic "reading" and interpretation of media texts, based on a specific question (Wester & Pleijter 2006). As VRT itself identified problems with its current affairs programs, we decided to focus on current affairs shows with studio guests, defining expert guests as guests talking from their professional expertise (Gobyn, 2012). To get up-to-date insights, we analyzed programs broadcast for a full year preceding the start of the analysis in July 2019, i.e. from 1 July 2018 to 30 June 2019, on VRT's main channel Eén and its second channel Canvas. To get a good sense of the different contexts and approaches, we aimed for a diversity of programs, topics, and settings in terms of the number and gender of guests. Hence, our sample is not

quantitatively representative of the broader VRT offer, but it is qualitatively representative of the different ways female studio guests are portrayed. We limited the selection to talk shows and current affairs programs produced by or for VRT, focusing in particular on the treatment of external actors (so not VRT reporters or journalists).

This led to six programs, of which we selected an uneven number of episodes, reflecting their importance in the schedules as well as the variation in setups they presented, leading to a total of 25 episodes. Most current affairs programs are scheduled on the second, more serious channel Canvas. Thus, *Terzake* (To the point) is a current affairs program broadcast every weekday at eight, in which the presenter interviews one or two guests; we selected four episodes to represent the variety of constellations. In the schedules, it is followed by *De afspraak* (The appointment), a current affairs talk show with four guests joining the presenter at the table, which leads to more variations in terms of guests, so we selected seven episodes. *Nachtwacht* (Nightwatch) is a late-night weekly debate show with three guests, of which we selected two episodes. On first channel Eén, the main current affairs program is *De zevende dag* (The seventh day), broadcast on Sundays, and we selected five episodes as this is one of the most important Flemish current affairs programs, with two hosts and many guests. *Van Gils & gasten* (Van Gils & guests) is a lighter talk show scheduled Monday to Thursday on Eén. Multiple guests join the table, and we selected five episodes to capture the different variations in this show. Finally, *De markt* (The market) is a weekly economic program, broadcast on Saturdays with a fixed set-up, so two episodes sufficed to analyze its dynamics.<sup>1</sup>

For each of these episodes, the first and second author systematically analyzed the episodes using a coding scheme. We focused on the issues addressed in the literature review: the introduction and description of female guests; references to gender, physical appearance and private life; linguistic aspects of the way women were addressed; the number of men and women on a panel, and the dynamics of the conversation. For each program (or conversation, if an episode contained multiple conversations with different participants), a grid was filled with detailed notes on these aspects, describing the actual content of the fragment, as well as the way it was presented (e.g. use of language and images). While we focused on the issues addressed in the literature, we did keep an open mind for additional insights, which we noted in an “open” box in the coding scheme. After the first, rather descriptive round of analysis, the information in these coding schemes

was interpreted more deeply, contextualized and linked to existing research, at which stage the third author also joined the analysis.

To answer RQ2, we organized two *focus group interviews* with gender experts working for a wide range of feminist and equal opportunities organizations. This modus operandi corresponded to the wishes of VRT, aiming to complement our insights with those of people more actively involved in the topic on a daily basis. Moreover, as an all-male research team we wanted to also talk to female experts. This is not to suggest that women should have more expertise on this topic because they are female (a problem which was actually addressed in the focus groups, see below), but to redress the balance. Focus groups are particularly suited to explore opinions on a particular topic within a group of people, using the group interaction to bring out shared meanings as well as divergent opinions (Bryman, 2004; van Selm & Wester, 2006). After a wide consultation, we ended up with twelve gender experts, all female, who participated in two focus groups (of five and seven participants, respectively) conducted in October 2019 by the second author. For reasons of confidentiality and to allow the participants to speak out freely, their names and those of their organizations are not disclosed here.

In a first part of the interviews, we talked about their general perception of the representation of female studio guests on VRT. This was an open discussion, not focusing on the topics and problems we identified in the literature or our analysis, to allow new insights to come up. In a second part, we watched and discussed five clips from the episodes we analyzed, showing a mix of genres, settings (in terms of number and balance of male and female guests) and topics.<sup>2</sup> Again, at first, we kept the discussion open, asking about strengths and weaknesses in these clips. Subsequently, however, we also explained why we chose these fragments, in order to run our own interpretations by these gender experts. The focus group interviews were fully transcribed and qualitatively analyzed, all three authors linking up the participants' comments to the issues identified in our qualitative content analysis. Because of the close connection between the focus groups and content analysis, we will discuss findings of both research stages together.

## **Findings**

### ***“Feminine” topics***

As our sample was not very large nor random, we cannot make any firm statements on the degree to which VRT programs connect female experts to “feminine” topics. Still, it is noticeable how easily female guests are invited to talk about *“feminine”, “soft” topics*, connected to the traditional nurturing and caring female role. In our sample, women discuss food, education and health, a perception that was also confirmed in the focus groups:

That's strongly connected, what women talk about. If it's about defense or nuclear physics, I seldomly see a woman.

However, some focus group participants saw gradual improvement and indeed, we also found a number of instances where women were invited to talk about *“hard”, “masculine” topics* such as justice, politics and economics. While these women are mostly interviewed exclusively about their expertise, occasionally the focus does divert onto their gender and private life. For instance, in an episode of the economic current affairs program *De markt*, almost all questions to the female managing director of a steel company deal with her position as a woman. In other programs, female experts are interpellated about their choice for “hard”, technical and mathematical professions, for instance in the Sunday news show *De zevende dag* where two young female researchers were invited, the male presenter remarking:

Well, you're clearly women. And we know the term “boys and science”. “Girls and science”, that's less familiar. Is that still difficult, girls, young women, and science? Hard science?

While women are indeed underrepresented in STEM research (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) and other “masculine” fields, this clip does confirm the problem of addressing female experts mostly in gender terms, as discussed in the literature review.

Most striking is the predominance of female guests in discussions on *gender-related topics*, such as gender-neutral bathrooms, the glass ceiling, and #metoo. Again, up to a certain level this makes sense, as women are (also) involved in these issues, but it is

striking that men are hardly involved in these discussions, and that the female guest's gender is often explicitly addressed, even if it seems irrelevant to the discussion – while men are hardly ever explicitly addressed as men, in connection to any topic. Moreover, questions about women and gender issues are also asked to women without any expertise on the topic. Thus, the female director of a steel company in *De markt* gets a number of questions on gender quota, although she is not a gender expert, which the participants in our focus groups lamented:

What you often see in media, if they invite a woman, that this woman is almost forced to also answer questions about gender. [...] Then you have a woman who's there to discuss her new book, but then she has to have something to say about women. It's not because you are a woman that you are a gender expert.

### ***Stereotypical (re-)presentations***

Beyond the association with certain “feminine” topics, the literature discussed above distinguishes (at least) three forms of stereotypical introductions and representations.

First, research has shown that there are more *explicit references to the female guests' gender*, introducing them “as women”. However, in our sample we found very few references to the guest's gender, with the exception of discussions on gender-related topics, and the presence of women in “typically male” working environments. The latter is most clearly the case when the first female head economist of a Belgian bank is introduced as a guest in the popular current affairs talk show *Van Gils & gasten*, which makes sense as this is a first – although the economist herself does express her surprise that the media focused so much on her gender. Participants in the focus groups agree that this is often over-emphasized:

[This is often presented] as if it were exceptional. That's also something you often see in media, “the first female this or that”. Then it seems like the glass ceiling is shattered, while I think this doesn't have to be so strongly emphasized.

Second, research has found that the *physical appearance of women is more often emphasized* (and criticized), but again, in our sample we found only limited instances where that was the case. Reference to physical appearance mostly occurred in lighter,

more entertaining programs such as *Van Gils & gasten*, for instance when the above-mentioned economist is confronted with pictures of her different hairstyles during her previous 20 year-long career as an economic news anchor. Similarly, when introducing three young radio presenters, talk show host Lieven Van Gils makes a joke about their hairstyles, while we did not come across any references to men's hairstyles or other aspects of their physical appearance in any of the programs we analyzed.

Thirdly, a recurrent point of critique are the persistent *references to women's private lives and families*. By mostly asking women about their partner and/or children, and their work/life balance, TV programs confirm the view that it is (only) women's responsibility to take care for the family. In our sample, the guests are generally not asked about their private life or they refer to it themselves. Occasionally, however, the hosts do introduce such questions, which is more problematic. For instance, in *De markt* the female director of a steel company is not only asked about the professional glass ceiling, but the (female) host's final question also asks about the gender division at home:

Host: I know you have a family with young children. I'm NOT going to ask if you can combine all of that with your young family. But I will ask: does your partner combine that with you?

Guest: Of course. He also has a very busy job, and we divide the tasks. But indeed, I'm also very happy that you say you WON'T ask this, because I think it is time this question is also asked to men. That way, they may feel supported in taking up half of the domestic duties.

This clip was strongly criticized in our focus groups, where participants called it a piling up of stereotypes.

Participant 1: I don't understand it very well. First, she is very cautious in saying "I'm not going to ask about your private life." But then she does ask it. (...) It's about the private sphere again, and a man wouldn't be asked about this.

Participant 2: In fact, she should have completely left out this question. (...) Whichever way you ask it, you end up in that stereotype. You only ask this to women because it's supposedly their task, you're not going to ask it to a male CEO.



Overall, however, in most of the programs we analyzed, the women were only addressed as experts and asked questions about their professional lives, not their personal lives.

### ***Addressing female guests***

Another set of issues relates to language use. A first observation here is that female guests are less likely to be introduced by their *professional role or title* than male guests. For instance, in *De afspraak* two advertising experts are invited, but while the male guest is professionally introduced as “former advertising professional”, the female guest is introduced in much broader terms, “from advertising agency X”. It is a small difference, but it is striking that men are often introduced differently within the same program – so taking into account the differences in tone between programs. One expert in the focus groups suggested to give more, and equally detailed, information on the professional background of all guests, regardless of gender.

Secondly, in relation to *androcentric language use*, we observed very few “marked” female forms of professional functions and titles (“marked language”). Occasionally such forms did appear, for terms like scientist (“wetenschapster”), specialist (“specialiste”) and expert (“experte”), but in those cases they were often used interchangeably with the “neutral” (male) form. This led one focus group participant to wonder whether there are actually guidelines in relation to language use (which there are, as discussed above), weighing the relative advantages of the female form of “director” over the male form:

If you would use the (feminized) term “directrice”, that title would get more status [...] But there are women who prefer to be addressed as “directeur” because “directrice” implies a sort of undervaluation. As a program maker, you could ask her if she objects to being called “directrice”.

Overall, what is most noticeable is the inconsistency in use of male or female forms of professional functions and titles.

Thirdly, in relation to the *formality of the mode of address*, as expressed in the use of different forms of “you” (see above), we observed a variety of approaches across and within programs. Most important, in this context, is the fact that variations seem not to be systematically related to the guest's gender. In some programs, such as *Nachtwacht*, all

guests are addressed informally. In other programs, such as *Terzake*, a more formal address is the rule, with the sole exception of fellow journalists who are addressed more informally. Most programs, however, switch according to the social role and status, age, and familiarity of the guest. Thus, female politicians are mostly addressed in a formal way, as are women representing important institutions. Athletes and media professionals, on the contrary, are mostly addressed in a more informal way, regardless of their gender. Older guests are mostly addressed more formally than younger guests. If male and female guests are addressed differently, this seems mostly due to different degrees of familiarity. Although previous research suggests that women are more often addressed informally, we did not observe this in the programs we analyzed and we actually found a few examples of the contrary, where the more informal address of male guests by the male host suggests a chummy atmosphere from which the female guest is excluded.

### ***Conversational dynamics***

While analyzing the programs, we noticed the importance of one dimension we have not discussed so far, the dynamics of the conversation in relation to the number and gender of the guests. While most of the programs we analyzed had multiple guests, some had only *one guest* and these were generally less problematic, particularly if the guest was purely addressed in relation to her expertise. Such one-on-one talks are ideal for newer, inexperienced experts as the setting is less imposing and there is more room for their personal style of interaction. One focus group participant indicated that the dynamics in such one-on-one talks are different, “as you're not overwhelmed by three other men sitting at the table with you.” This setting also leaves more room for depth:

In *Terzake* they give (the expert) much more time. I'm happy when they have female guests and they give female experts the time to explain things.

A number of episodes we analyzed had *one female and one male guest* talking about a particular topic. In this case, we investigated whether the man and the woman were treated in a similar, equivalent way. For instance, one episode of *Van Gils & gasten* dealt with veganism during and after pregnancy. In a typical division of roles, the female guest, a famous singer, talked mostly from personal experience and the male guest, a dietician,

talked from his professional expertise. However, we also witnessed the opposite, when a female sleep expert talked about insomnia from a scientific perspective, while two male celebrity guests gave only personal anecdotes. We also found examples where the female and male guest were treated in a very similar way, for instance a discussion in *De markt* about the success of organic products. Both guests, the female director of a professional organization for organic farming and the male spokesperson for a supermarket, are addressed in the same, formal way, they get an equal amount of questions and speaking time, and they are only addressed in relation to their expertise.

Most of the programs we analyzed worked with multiple guests, invited to talk about the same or different topics, sharing a table. A common critique, also in the focus groups, is that you typically get *one “token” female guest surrounded by multiple male guests*. In our sample we did find a number of such panels, although we also found instances of two or more female guests, yet we hardly found all-male panels. The main risk of a single female guest is that she is pigeonholed in the role of “the woman”. For instance, in an episode of *De afspraak*, with female host Phara De Aguirre, the single female guest has to wait to talk about her topic of expertise until a male guest gave his opinion. She also is the only one getting a gender-related question, and she is frequently interrupted by the (older) male guests with more media experience who were invited to talk about other issues. The host tries to involve the female guest in discussions on other topics, but the male guests swiftly interrupt, so that the female guest only gets limited speaking time. This clip led one focus group participant to the following remark:

The problem with interrupting is that it has more impact on women than on men. Men continue talking or start to talk louder, women can't [or don't] do that.

A similar instance occurred in *De afspraak*, where male host Bart Schols leads a discussion about a gender-related issue between a male and a female advertising professional, surrounded by two more male guest. Here, we clearly see the female guest is put in a minority position and is continuously pushed in the defensive. This was also commented upon in the focus group discussions about this clip:

Participant 1: You invite a man and a woman to discuss this topic. First you let the woman talk, and then you immediately ask the two other men at the table. [...]. I

think that's just very strange. It's also clear the woman is not at ease. [...] Because she immediately starts by apologizing.

Participant 2: That also says something about the fact that she's very conscious, as a woman, that she's cast in this (gendered) role.

It is also noticeable that, instead of protecting the female guest as in the previous example, the host actually takes the side of the male guest, something the focus group participants also criticized. Having a single woman at the table often had this effect of “pigeonholing” the female guest and putting the “burden of representation” on her shoulders: as the token woman on the panel, she is expected to talk for all women (Ross, 2004). In the focus groups, a gender expert stated that the dynamics in a conversation change if more women are involved:

There are studies indicating that the dynamics in a conversation only change when 30 to 40 percent of the participants are women. And you clearly see that, because when you're on your own (as a woman), you're in a difficult position.

In our sample, we found several instances of *multiple female guests* discussing a particular issue. For instance, in *Van Gils & gasten* a female school director and a female child psychiatrist discussed gender-neutral bathrooms. Although they did not agree at all, they did respect each other's views, which some focus group participants called a “female” discussion style:

I often moderate debates with men and women, and it strikes me that I hardly have to intervene with women. They wait for their turn, and respect their speaking time. Men often start talking simultaneously. If one exceeds his speaking time, others also do, and in the end, you get an atmosphere where women don't say anything anymore.

However, it is reductive to only attribute this to the guests' gender, as there are also important differences between female guests. For instance, in a debate in *De afspraak* an assertive, experienced female politician regularly interrupts another, less experienced

female guest who needs the help of the (female) host to get speaking time. Similarly, in an all-female panel on colonialism, the two most experienced guests, a politician and a journalist, dominate the discussion while two others, an academic and a young black activist, hardly get a word in. A focus group participant commented:

You notice that some people are more used to appearing on TV. They get a much more assertive style of debating. [...] Those are reflexes you teach yourself. If you appear on TV often, that becomes a sort of coping mechanism. It's sad that this is necessary. Women also start to do that, otherwise they can't say what they want to say.

Another participant commented on the double bind situation women get caught in:

You're damned if you do, and you're damned if you don't. The big disadvantage is that when women use an aggressive communication style, they are much more negatively assessed than when men do that.

Nevertheless, women using a more assertive debating style are more easily invited again, as many formats are based on creating sharp debate, a format many women may not feel comfortable in, as one focus group participant states:

Of course, you have a number of programs emphasizing such an aggressive style of communication. Program makers also stimulate that, because it works well with the audience.

## **Conclusion**

Our case study, using a mixed-method design, allowed us to explore the current state of affairs in a specific broadcasting context, using qualitative methods to complement the predominantly quantitative research on this topic. It was particularly productive to complement our own qualitative content analysis, inspired by academic literature, with the readings and interpretations of gender experts, with a more practice- and experience-based background.

Reviewing the evidence, we can conclude that our research confirms most of the critiques identified in the literature review, although we do see clear signs of improvement. While our research is not quantitative, the continued predominance of male guests is noticeable. Women are often invited to talk about “softer” topics, although we do see conscious attempts to reverse the roles. Female guests are generally only addressed in their professional expertise, although in some cases they do get questions related to their gender and family life. In particular, they are too easily assumed to be experts in gender issues. Although they are generally introduced and addressed in similar ways as men, in some instances their professional titles are not mentioned. Most striking, in terms of language use, is the inconsistent use of “neutral”, male or “marked”, female forms of titles. While their physical appearance is generally not focused upon, in some (more entertaining) shows this does occasionally happen.

While all-male panels are rare on contemporary Flemish public service television, female guests still constitute a minority. In one-on-one interviews, this creates few problems as there is mostly a good balance and interaction between the host and guest. In discussions between a female and a male guest, there is a risk of perpetuating the opposition between the male expert and the female guest talking from personal experience, although we also found very balanced talks as well as talks reversing this power dynamic. The most problematic scenario we observed is the presence of a single female guest among multiple male guests. Particularly in gender-related discussions, this almost automatically puts the female guest in the position of “the woman”, expected to talk from that position. Moreover, the host has to strictly monitor the female guest's speaking time, as male guests tend to take over the discussion. This is not only related to gender but also to discussion styles; while a more assertive style works better in many TV formats, this should not be a condition for women (or men) to appear on TV.

Based on the existing literature as well as our own content analysis and focus groups (also including insights not mentioned in this paper, as the original research for VRT was more extensive), we formulated a number of recommendations for policy makers and producers. While these were originally addressed only to VRT staff, we do believe they are valid beyond this context and may be useful for other public as well as commercial TV producers across the world:

1. Continue to strive for more women in (debate) programs.

2. Aim for more diversity among female guests; avoid inviting predominantly young white women.
3. Challenge editorial teams to invite more women; support bottom-up initiatives.
4. Be aware of a possibly bigger restraint to appear in TV panels among women, and facilitate their participation.
5. Break down stereotypical gender roles: don't reinforce them and occasionally reverse them.
6. Particularly with gender-related topics, be alert not to confirm traditional gender roles and clichés.
7. Avoid gender-based differences in the way guests are addressed.
8. Be consistent in the use of professional titles, particularly within the same program.
9. Do not (only) address female guests as women, just like you do not (only) address male guests as men.
10. Avoid androcentric language use, which takes the male form as the norm.
11. Be aware that certain women, but also certain men, may not feel comfortable in certain (aggressive) debate formats.
12. Take the different degree of assertiveness between your guests into account.
13. Make sure female guests get an equal amount of speaking time as male guests, and that male guests do not dominate the conversation.
14. Make sure that any guests who constitute a minority are not marginalized or tokenized in the conversation.
15. In case of doubt, ask yourself: would I treat a male guest in the same way?

### **Funding details**

This work was funded by VRT, the Flemish public service media company, to support their diversity policies, but was executed independently in full academic freedom.

### **Acknowledgments**

We would like to thank the VRT diversity team for supporting this research and the participants in the focus groups for sharing their insights with us.

## References

- Atria, Kennisinstituut voor Emancipatie en Vrouwengeschiedenis. (2017). *Representatie van vrouwen in de media*.  
[https://www.womeninc.nl/Uploaded\\_files/DownloadLinks/representatie-van-vrouwen-in-de-mediaatria.165bfe.pdf](https://www.womeninc.nl/Uploaded_files/DownloadLinks/representatie-van-vrouwen-in-de-mediaatria.165bfe.pdf)
- BBC. (2018). *BBC seeks gender balance on expert contributors with 50:50 Challenge*.  
<https://www.bbc.co.uk/mediacentre/latestnews/2018/50-50-challenge>
- BBC. (2019a, 5 May). *BBC sees rise in female expert contributors*.  
<https://www.bbc.com/news/entertainment-arts-48271117>
- BBC. (2019b). *50:50 Project*. <https://www.bbc.com/aboutthebbc/reports/policies/5050>
- BBC. (2019c). *50:50 Project*.  
<http://downloads.bbc.co.uk/aboutthebbc/reports/reports/5050-may-2019.pdf>
- Bryman, A. (2004) *Social research methods (2nd ed.)*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Byerly, C.M. (2013). *The Palgrave international handbook of women and journalism*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Cann, D.J. & Mohr, P.B. (2001). Journalist and source gender in Australian television news. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, 45(1), 162-174. DOI: 10.1207/s15506878jobem4501\_10
- CIM (2020). *CIM TV Marktaandelen Noord - 2019*.  
<https://www.cim.be/nl/televisie/openbare-resultaten>
- Commissariaat voor de media. (2015). *NPO haalt afspraken, maar nog steeds te weinig vrouwen op televisie*. Geraadpleegd via <https://www.cvdm.nl/nieuws/npo-haalt-afspraken-maar-nog-steeds-te-weinig-vrouwen-op-televisie/>
- Conseil supérieur de l'audiovisuel. (2019). *Rapport relatif à la représentation des femmes à la télévision et à la radio*. Geraadpleegd via <https://www.csa.fr/Informer/Collections-du-CSA/Travaux-Autres->



publications/Rapports-au-gouvernement.-parlement.-etc/La-representation-des-femmes-a-la-television-et-a-la-radio-Exercice-2018

- Cukier, W., Jackson, S., Elmi, M., Roach, E. & Cyr, D. (2016). Representing women? Leadership roles and women in Canadian broadcast news. *Gender in Management*, 31(5/6), 374-395. DOI: 10.1108/GM-04-2015-0035
- Cukier, W., Jackson, S. & Gagnon, S. (2019). Representation of women and racialized minorities as expert sources in Canadian public affairs TV shows. *Canadian Journal of Communication*, 44(1), 25-42. DOI: 10.22230/cjc.2019v44n1a3321
- De Anca, C., & Gabaldon, P. (2014). Female directors and the media: stereotypes of board members. *Gender in Management: An International Journal*, 29(6), 334-351. DOI: 10.1108/GM-07-2013-0079
- De Swert, K., & Hooghe, M. (2010). When do women get a voice? Explaining the presence of female news sources in Belgian news broadcasts (2003-5). *European Journal of Communication*, 25(1), 69-84. DOI: 10.1177/0267323109354229
- Desmond, R., & Danilewicz, A. (2010). Women are on, but not in the news: Gender roles in local television news. *Sex Roles*, 62(11-12), 822-829. DOI: 10.1007/s11199-009-9686-5
- De Vuyst, S. (2020). *Hacking gender and technology in journalism*. London: Routledge.
- Doyle, M. (2005). Introduction to *The A-Z of non-sexist language*. In D. Cameron (Ed.), *The feminist critique of language: A reader* (2nd ed) (pp. 149-154). London: Routledge.
- Ehrlich, S., & King, R. (1992). Gender-based language reform and the social construction of meaning. *Discourse & Society*, 3(2), 151-166. DOI: 10.1177/0957926592003002002
- Gobyn, W. (2012). *Genderrepresentatie in Ter Zake. Een kwantitatieve en kwalitatieve inhoudsanalyse*. [unpublished report, VRT].
- Howell, L. & Singer, J.B. (2017). Pushy or a princess? Women experts and British broadcast news. *Journalism Practice*, 11(9), 1062-1078. DOI: 10.1080/17512786.2016.1232173
- IWMF. (2011). *Global report on the status of women in the news media*. Available at: <https://www.iwmf.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/IWMF-Global-Report.pdf>

- Jule, A. (2017). *A beginner's guide to language and gender* (2nd ed.). Bristol: Multilingual Matters.
- Kitzinger, J., Chimba, M., Williams, A., Haran, J., & Boyce, T. (2008). *Gender, stereotypes and expertise in the press: How newspapers represent female and male scientists*. UK Resource Centre for Women in Science, Engineering and Technology and Cardiff University. Geraadpleegd via [http://orca.cf.ac.uk/28633/1/Kitzinger\\_Report\\_2.pdf](http://orca.cf.ac.uk/28633/1/Kitzinger_Report_2.pdf)
- Koeman, J., Peeters, A. & d'Haenens, L. (2007). Diversity Monitor 2005: Diversity as a quality aspect of television in the Netherlands. *Communications*, 32(1), 97-121. DOI:10.1515/COMMUN.2007.005
- Krefting, L.A. (2002). Re-presenting women executives: valorization and devalorization in US business press. *Women in Management Review*, 173(4), 104-119.
- Krijnen, T. & Van Bauwel, S. (2015) *Gender and media: Representing, producing, consuming*. London: Routledge.
- Lee, P.M., & James, E.H. (2007). She'-e-os: gender effects and investor reactions to the announcements of top executive appointments. *Strategic Management Journal*, 28(3), 227-241. DOI: 10.1002/smj.575
- Martin, P., & Papadelos, P. (2016). Who stands for the norm? The place of metonymy in androcentric language. *Social Semiotics*, 27(1), 39-58. DOI: 10.1080/10350330.2016.1145371
- Mendes, K. & Carter, C. (2008). Feminist and gender media studies: A critical overview. *Sociology Compass*, 2(6), 1701-1718.
- Meijers, J. (2019). Aan tafel! Over het al dan niet problematische gebrek aan diversiteit onder talkshowgasten. *Ombudsman NPO*. Geraadpleegd via <https://ombudsman.npo.nl/uitspraken-en-columns/hoe-gaat-het-met-de-diversiteit-in-talkshows>
- Mitchell, M., & McKinnon, M. (2019). 'Human' or 'objective' faces of science? Gender stereotypes and the representation of scientists in the media. *Public Understanding of Science*, 28(2), 177-190. DOI: 10.1177/0963662518801257

- Niemi, M. K., & Pitkänen, V. (2017). Gendered use of experts in the media: Analysis of the gender gap in Finnish news journalism. *Public Understanding of Science*, 26(3), 355–368. DOI: 10.1177/0963662515621470
- Pauwels, T. (2019, 9 November). Waarom 75 procent van de sprekers in “Het Journaal” mannen zijn. *VRT NWS*. <https://www.vrt.be/vrtnws/nl/2019/11/09/waarom-75-procent-van-de-sprekers-in-het-journaal-mannen-zijn/>
- Ross, K. (2004). *Black and white media: Black images in popular film and television*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Ross, K. (2007). The journalist, the housewife, the citizen and the press: Women and men as sources in local news narratives. *Journalism*, 8(4), 449–473. DOI: 10.1177/1464884907078659
- Ross, K. and Carter, C. (2011). Women and news: a long and winding road. *Media, Culture & Society*, 33(8), 1148-1165. DOI: 10.1177/0163443711418272
- Ross, K., Evans, E., Harrison, L., Shears, M. & Wadia, K (2013). The gender of news and news of gender: A study of sex, politics, and press coverage of the 2010 British general election. *The International Journal of Press/Politics*, 18(1), 3-20. DOI: 10.1177/1940161212457814
- Segijn, C., Bartholomé, G., Pennekamp, S. & Timmers, M. (2014). De afbeelding van statusverschillen in sekse en etniciteit in Nederlandse non-fictieprogramma's. *Tijdschrift voor Communicatiewetenschap*, 42(3), 305-320.
- Signorielli, N., & Bacue, A. (1999) Recognition and Respect: A Content Analysis of Prime-Time Television Characters Across Three Decades. *Sex Roles*, 40, 527–544. DOI: 10.1023/A:1018883912900
- Sink, A. & Mastro, D. (2017). Depictions of Gender on Primetime Television: A Quantitative Content Analysis. *Mass Communication and Society*, 20(1): 3-22.
- Smelik A. (1999). *Effectief beeldvormen: theorie, analyse en praktijk van beeldvormingsprocessen*. Assen: Van Gorcum. 210 p.
- Sneller, A. A., & Verbiest, A. (2002). *Bij wijze van schrijven: Over gender en trefzeker taalgebruik*. Den Haag: SDU Uitgevers.

- Truyts, A. (2016). *Vrouwen op het scherm: De genderrepresentatie en beeldvorming van vrouwen bij de openbare omroep. Een kwalitatieve analyse van het beleid en de praktijk*. [Unpublished MA dissertation]. Brussel: Vrije Universiteit Brussel.
- van Joolen, E. (2015). *Gasten in talkshows*. [Scriptie]. Groningen: Rijksuniversiteit Groningen.
- Vandenbergh, H., d'Haenens, L., & Van Gorp, B. (2014). *Staat diversiteit op de journalistieke agenda? Verkennende analyse op basis van diepte-interviews met Vlaamse krantenjournalisten*. <http://www.steunpuntmedia.be/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/Nieuwsmonitor-19.pdf>
- van Selm, M. & Wester, F. (2006). Focusgroep-onderzoek. In: F. Wester, K. Renckstorf & P. Scheepers (eds.) (pp. 541-559). *Onderzoekstypen in de communicatiewetenschap*. Alphen aan de Rijn: Kluwer.
- van Zoonen, L. (1991) Feminist perspectives on the media. In: J. Curran & M. Gurevitch (eds.) *Mass communication and society (2nd ed.)* (pp. 31-52). London: Edward Arnold.
- Verbiest, A. (2000). Verwoording van literair-wetenschappelijke teksten. In A. Sneller & A. Verbiest (Eds.), *Wat woorden doen* (pp. 149-158). Bussum: Coutinho.
- Verheggen, P.P. (2016). *Talkshowgasten: facts and figures. Motivaction research and strategy*. <https://xs.motivaction.nl/fileArchive/?f=105087&o=5880&key=7222>
- VRT & Vlaamse Regering (2016). *Beheersovereenkomst 2016–2020 tussen de Vlaamse Gemeenschap & VRT* [Management agreement 2016–2020 between the Flemish Community & VRT]. VRT. [www.vrt.be/nl/over-de-vrt/beheersovereenkomst](http://www.vrt.be/nl/over-de-vrt/beheersovereenkomst)
- VRT Diversiteit (s.d.). *Checklist vrouwen*. <https://www.vrt.be/nl/over-de-vrt/opdracht/omroepthema-s/diversiteit/gender/>
- VRT Diversiteit (s.d.). *Genderneutrale functietitels*. <https://diversewoordenlijst.vrt.wordpress.com/category/2-gender/>
- VRT Studiedienst (2019). *Monitor Diversiteit 2018*. [unpublished report]
- VRT Studiedienst (2020). *Monitor Diversiteit 2019*. [unpublished report]
- VRT Taal (s.d.). *Genderneutrale functietitels*. <https://vrttaal.net/taaladvies-taalkwestie/genderneutrale-functietitels>

- VRT Taal (s.d.). *Vrouwelijke functieaanduidingen*. Geraadpleegd via <https://vrttaal.net/taaladvies-taalkwestie/vrouwelijke-functieaanduidingen>
- Vos, D., De Smedt, J., Hooghe, M., & Walgrave, S. (2012). *Nieuwsmonitor 9. Vrouw gezocht. Vrouwen in de Vlaamse televisiejournals (2003–2011)*. [http://www.steunpuntmedia.be/wp-content/uploads/2012/06/Nieuwsmonitor\\_9.pdf](http://www.steunpuntmedia.be/wp-content/uploads/2012/06/Nieuwsmonitor_9.pdf)
- Wester, F. & Pleijter, A. (2006). Inhoudsanalyse als kwalitatief-interpreterende werkwijze. pp. 575-599 in F. Wester, K. Renckstorf & P. Scheepers (Eds) *Onderzoekstypen in de communicatiewetenschap*. Alphen aan de Rijn: Kluwer.
- Women's Media Center (2019) *The status of women in the U.S. media 2019*. Available at: <http://tools.womensmediacenter.com/page/-/WMCStatusofWomeninUSMedia2019.pdf>

<sup>1</sup> In the original research, we also analyzed three episodes of human interest shows as well as 15 episodes of 5 radio shows, but for the sake of coherence and brevity these are not included in this article.

<sup>2</sup> We showed two clips from *De afspraak*, and one each from *Terzake*, *De markt* and *De zevende dag*. A sixth clip, from a human interest show, was also shown but will not be discussed here.