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What do women journalists, editors, activists and academics make of the male domination of the Australian media? We asked a group of women in the media for their responses to our findings.

Yesterday, we published part two of our Where are the Women in the Media? series. Our research showed that in a single chosen week, women published just a third of opinion pieces in mainstream Australian publications. Part one of the series was dedicated to the bosses — to the editors and boards who run the media. We found that Australian media companies are overwhelmingly male dominated at the top.

We asked a group of experienced women journalists and others active around women’s issues to respond to the results. Below are responses from Sophie Black, Lucy Clark, Stephanie Convery, Sunanda Creagh, Shakira Hussein, Adele Horin, Amanda McNulty, Louise North, Lisa Pryor, Tracy Rosenberg, Paola Totaro and Elisabeth Wynhausen.

Sophie Black is the editor of Crikey. She is currently on maternity leave.

These results don’t surprise me at all. They show that most political commentary is written by men and that far more women than men still tend to write about gender or relationship.

As a reader, I’ve noted the discrepancy but more interestingly as an editor at times I’ve actually found it difficult to source female writers on particular topics, even when making a conscious decision to do so. I think it’s understandable for women to be drawn to themes around gender and relationship but unlike men who may write about similar subject matter, women tend to be defined by it. Hence the sneering title “mummy bloggers”. Grogs Gamut’s breakthrough blog post centered on the politics around his own personal parenting issue as the father of a child with a disability but he never gets labelled a “daddy blogger”.

The cumulative effect of every male byline/headshot/point of view sends the same signal as any male dominated board room or tv screen — that women and their perspective are in the minority and their views matter less.

I think a scheme that encourages editors to search harder for female voices could be valuable. It’s hard work, especially in fields like economics and politics. But then some of the press gallery’s brightest and savviest are women and your research clearly shows Jessica Irvine punching above her weight. In many equivalent university courses, women outstrip men both in numbers and performance. So what’s going wrong after graduation? Is it the culture of a newsroom putting women off as opposed to the subject matter? Is it the culture of online commentary? Or is it that female by-lines are being overlooked for males by male editors?

Lucy Clark is editor of The Hoopla. She is a journalist and editor with almost 30 years experience in newspapers and magazines in Sydney, London, and New York.

I’m not at all surprised by these findings. It’s the natural trickle-down effect from part one of New Matilda’s findings that men control the upper echelons of the media.

I think a couple of factors are at work here: gatekeepers not prioritising a diversity of voices, and women not putting themselves forward enough. I’ve heard anecdotally that some opinion editors wished they received more submissions from women writers but still overwhelmingly received more submissions from men.

To use a phrase that’s rapidly becoming hackneyed, women need to “lean in” more. They need to sit...
at the table, and put their hands up more often, and try not to be intimidated by an overwhelmingly blokey culture. Easy to say, hard to do.

Before moving to online journalism at The Hoopla I worked in metropolitan daily newspapers for over 25 years and I saw the rate of attrition of women journalists of a certain age. It's the same in many industries — you reach a certain level of seniority and wisdom around the same time you might be thinking to start a family. Often in a newsroom, seniority brings the chance to write on the op-ed pages, which is where the true power lies. So that narrows the female commentariat.

Certainly there’s something wrong with women mainly writing about social issues and relationships: it’s the newsroom equivalent of being relegated to the kitchen making the potato salad while the blokes hang around the barbie.

Of course all of this is predicated on the assumption that women would shape opinion in a different way, which is a complex issue for another time, but that brings us back to the idea that diversity has intrinsic value. Readers like to feel represented, so the only way to achieve that is a plurality of voices, based not only in gender but ethnicity and background too.

Having said all that, a good opinion editor will go for great writing, topicality, and originality of voice every time regardless of who wrote it, and these things shouldn’t be sacrificed for the ticking of boxes, for targets, and quotas. A co-ordinated approach would be better. It’s imperative to keep talking about it to keep the subject front of mind: the gatekeepers must be constantly reminded of the intrinsic value of diversity, and more female opinion-makers need to be found … but they also need to be easy to find.

Stephanie Convery is a writer for Overland journal and a founder of Melbourne Feminist Action.

That mainstream media in Australia is, for the most part, controlled by men at an executive level, and dominated by men in mainstream editorial pages comes as no surprise. VIDA have been regularly showing us similar statistics in literature, and as Sophie Cunningham pointed out two years ago in her speech at the Melbourne Writers Festival, it’s not only in the literary arts that this occurs. Having numbers like this at our fingertips just confirms what feminists have been saying for years: that while things might look better for women day to day, sexism still permeates all aspects of our culture.

However, how we interpret these facts and what we do with that knowledge is equally as important as this research. The fact that the majority of political commentary published in the mainstream media is written by men matters, as does the fact that women dominate only in the fields of gender studies, child-rearing and relationships, because they both perpetuate and reiterate conscious and unconscious biases about what constitutes a “male” or “female” social role.

This obviously provides a buttress for those stereotypes that already exist across society, in all kinds of workplaces across the country. But discussions at the level of representation tend to centre around women who have already staked out business success or a role in the public eye, so what results is more discussion about women experiencing sexism in the boardroom (something that directly affects a tiny number of women) than discussion about, for example, women experiencing sexism from their boss (something that directly affects the great majority of women).

Thus there’s an essential contradiction here. It matters that the majority of commentary in the media is published by men, because it provides that continual reinforcement of sexism more generally. But simply having more women writing on politics isn’t necessarily indicative of progress, if all they are doing is writing to support the conservative and restrictive status quo in all its forms. What makes real difference are changes to the social, economic and political structures that underpin the sexism. Change those structures — and that includes how we organise, create and access our media — and the effects will be felt across society.

Sunanda Creagh is the News Editor of The Conversation. Previously she was a reporter with Reuters and the Sydney Morning Herald and a broadcaster on 2SER.

These findings don’t surprise me. It’s not just a case of overt sexism in newsrooms, it’s much more complex than that.

To start, men are socialised from childhood to have many of the qualities that make a good opinion writer or political journalist: opinionated, confrontational, authoritative, risk-taking, questioning, unwilling to take no for an answer, ambitious and a strong sense of self-belief. Of course, many women have those qualities too, but they have to struggle against a society that often sees women like that as bossy, uppity or a bitch. We saw that when Grahame Morris called Leigh Sales “a cow” for her tough interview with Tony Abbott.

Many women also struggle with imposter syndrome. Where many men go for top jobs knowing they have only some of the qualifications sought for that role, I think women sometimes feel they should wait until they are sure they have all the qualifications needed for top jobs. To generalise: men
self-nominate; women wait to be picked. There are also studies showing men are more likely to
open pay talks and push for more money, whereas women are more likely to accept as non-negotiable
the pay that is offered.

Because of an unequal division of domestic labour, women mostly do the lion’s share of the daily
jobs associated with child-rearing and that impacts their career. Unfortunately, the peak fertility
years intersect perfectly with the years when one’s career really starts to take off. Women who have
a baby often take a year off, then return to work part-time (and very few employers hand out the
payrises and the promotions to part-timers), then perhaps stop again for a second child -- all up she
may have five years or so off full time work. Meantime, her male colleagues continue up and up. At
the same time, her home responsibilities just went through the roof. So many women at this time
trade a skyrocketing, glittering career trajectory for flexibility — a job that pays less, has less of a
profile but is more family friendly, has flexible work hours and a clear delineation between work time
and home time. Senior jobs in journalism tend to require 24-7 availability, a willingness to cover a
story that breaks on a Sunday or at 5pm when many women are getting ready for the daycare
pick-up.

Some solutions: more staff in newsrooms so people can work in “work hours” then hand over to the
person doing the next shift (rather than just be on the job all the time), more family-friendly
workplace flexibility for both men and women, for it to be more socially acceptable for men to leave
work early or take several years off full-time work because of family responsibilities, more and
cheapier childcare, and a total overhaul of the way we teach children what are appropriate “boy
personality traits” and what are “girl personality traits”. I’d also like to see more career ramps back
into the workforce for women who’ve taken time off to have kids — more part time jobs, job-sharing,
pro-rata pay rises for part-timers.

For what it’s worth, I should say The Conversation has been pretty good in offering me flexibility and
a part time role when I returned to work after having a kid

*Adèle Horin recently launched her blog *Coming of Age after a long career at Fairfax Media.*
*She was a senior reporter and columnist for the SMH and a foreign correspondent and
deputy editor of the weekly National Times.*

How curious the figure of one-third recurs no matter what aspect of gender bias in the media is
being examined — from the proportion of front-page stories written by women to the proportion of
women appearing in front-page photos and cartoons. Knowing that, it came as no surprise to me
that women also provide one-third of newspaper opinion pieces.

Does it matter? For me an opinion page that proffers thoughtful analysis and a fresh perspective
can be highly influential in its print and online form even in today’s fragmented media market. It is
the first page I turn to in hope every day. My antennae have long been tuned to the gender balance
on that page and I personally hate an all-male opinion page (rarely is there an all-female page). It’s
not because I think females will give a “female,” let alone feminist, perspective but for the same
reason any all-male institution is bad. It doesn’t reflect the wider society. As a female reader I’m put
on the outer.

It matters that men have a bigger voice because there are brilliant and insightful women in the
community in many fields who are not being heard. Is it that they’re working too darn hard at the
double-shift to do yet another job when the kids are in bed? Twenty years ago I sat next to an
excellent Sydney Morning Herald opinion page editor who aggressively sought new contributors. He
saw as part of his job the need to throw a wide net into the community and academia to catch smart
people who could write but needed encouragement. He didn’t wait for the usual suspects to lob their
pieces. It added at least an extra hour to his day. As far as I recall, he didn’t particularly seek out
females. But I think the remit of opinion page editors today should include actively seeking female
contributors to achieve a better gender balance; this should be part of their performance indicators.
It could be tried before quotas.

In the more equal world many of us aspire to there will be equal representation of men and women
writing on all subjects. But if women still tend to write more about child care or aged care this is no
bad thing. I want these subjects on the opinion pages as much as political analysis.

*Shakira Hussein is McKenzie postdoctoral fellow at the National Institute of Excellence in
Islamic Studies, Asia Institute, University of Melbourne.*

The findings don’t really surprise me. In terms of the proportion of female commentary devoted to
gender issues, I would guess that is partly because we gravitate towards an issue of interest and
relevance to our lives and partly because we are seen as holding an advantage over male
commentators on that particular issue. I’m reminded of the opening pages of Geraldine Brooks’ Nine
Parts of Desire when she talks about being posted to the Middle East with her journalist husband,
her envy as she watches him cover all the exciting “boys stories” until she realises that the story of
Middle Eastern women is a story that is open to her and not to him.
On quotas: a female voice is not in itself a feminist voice, necessarily. Your e-mail arrived as I was writing a paper about women and Islamism in Pakistan, watching a couple of high-profile news stories from female anchors. One involved an interview by a young (incidentally uncovered) female host with a senior male politician (the Governor of Panjab) in which she aggressively questioned his entitlement to come to the defence of a Christian woman who had been imprisoned for blasphemy. The interview is seen as having helped create the mood which led to the Governor's assassination.

In the other story, a female newshost (again with uncovered hair, for what that means) leads a team of what were dubbed "vigil aunts" as they chase young couples around a public park, demanding to know whether they are married and whether their parents know what they're up to.

Some women offset their own transgression into male space by imposing patriarchal discipline on other women.

**Amanda McNulty on behalf of Destroy the Joint.**

Destroy the Joint is an online community dedicated to calling out sexism and misogyny. Our members notice the dearth of women in the media and frequently post reports and personal stories as evidence of the imbalance.

That women journalists are concentrated in areas of the media focused on relationships and social issues is unsurprising because social arrangements still expect that women will take a greater interest in, and responsibility for these areas of life. The findings of the "Where are the Women in the Media?" project reflect statistics on women's participation in the workforce more broadly. However, that cannot be the whole story.

What else hinders women from participating in areas of "hard" journalism in greater numbers? Obvious barriers include male dominance in media ownership and management, sexism in employment etc. In terms of political journalism the collegial relationships between politicians or business executives and journalists, as well as the culture of after hours socialising must generally favour male reporters.

Further though, it is hard to miss the vitriol so often directed at women journalists. Kyle Sandilands' misogynistic attack on Alison Stephenson and Alan Jones' intimidation of Jacqueline Maley are cases in point. Even female commentators seem to reserve their most withering critique for other women. Just last Sunday Miranda Devine sought to belittle the highly respected Anne Summers. Criticism of women engaged in political and economic journalism is too often focused on their physical attributes.

How does this kind of response affect women in journalism? How does it affect the likelihood of women's employment and promotion? How does an overwhelmingly male culture in political journalism affect the way politics is reported?

We need more female political and economic journalists because women are 51 per cent of the population, and their under-representation in the media fails to reflect that. We want to hear women's voices and perspectives.

Quotas or gender based targets are often dismissed as being the means for promoting women ahead of more qualified male counterparts, even though a sexist cultural preference for men does exactly that in reverse. It seems the only way to overcome gender imbalance in any area is to force the issue, because talent just isn't enough.

**Dr Louise North is a former academic and journalist whose research specialised in gender and media in Australia.**

The fact that men's views dominate opinion columns in the mainstream print news media in Australia is certainly not surprising.

Despite decades of feminist activism, government legislation enshrining equality at work, and that 46 per cent of the Australian current workforce is female, media managers (who are typically male) continue to overwhelmingly privilege the opinions of men.

The snapshot provided by the Women in Media team supports data from media scholars around the world, including Australia, that has long demonstrated that men speak most as news sources and opinion writers, and largely reflect the political position of the media organisation. What is new and positive about this project is that the debate about gender bias in the media, in all its forms, is being had in a public forum.

It absolutely matters that women's opinions are so few in the media in general, but even fewer in political opinion and therefore political debate. Why? The answer goes well beyond the rights of women to equal access to the processes of democracy, of which the media's ability to progress and shape political debate is central. As British colleagues Karen Ross and Cynthia Carter have previously noted, when men's views and voices are privileged over women's, it contributes to the ongoing secondary status of women's participation as citizens. The consistent findings that when
women do actually get to have a published opinion it is generally about soft topics or gender issues, simply pigeonholes women as capable of, or interested in, nothing more.

Still, many in the media have responded that because men are typically the experts in many fields, especially business and politics, it logically flows that they will dominate media opinion. But while women have risen up the ranks in all occupations, their public voices do not secure more exposure. The other hard to prove suggestion is that women don’t put themselves forward as often as men. Section editors are time poor and rely on the same names on their contact list, but whatever happened to a diversity of views? Even in gender topics the same names appear. The team’s findings also suggest that many op eds are written by journalists, who may be expert in some areas, but what do the results say about how the media values its women journalists’ views when men dominate so heavily?

Finally, the solution to gender inequity in this area is not about targets to balance systemic and ongoing inequity. It must be about cultural change and that will only occur when the media acknowledges its gender problem, across many levels, and that such change will benefit its bottom line.

Lisa Pryor is a journalist, writer and medical student. She is the author of two non-fiction books and was the opinion page editor of The Sydney Morning Herald, where she also wrote a weekly opinion column.

If there are any surprises in these findings, it is the happy surprise that the proportion of commentary written by women is so high. Past studies have found that women contribute only a quarter of pieces on opinion pages, at least in the United States. In terms of quality, many of our most respected and loved commentators are women, such as Lenore Taylor and Annabel Crabb.

But there is still a long way to go before we see an even split between male and female commentary. And what troubles me most about these findings is the evidence of a purple ghetto, with the project finding women tend to be published on topics such as relationships, parenting and gender itself.

Having edited an opinion page, I can appreciate how this happens. Editors inherit a stable of older male columnists writing about politics – “established voices” or “dead wood” depending on your generosity — so they seek to create contrast with what little space is left. A young woman writing a feminist critique of the latest blockbuster or shock jock outrage does the job. It’s light and bright because it’s about popular culture, it has a little gravitas because it mentions feminism. Been there, run that.

If editors want to break down the purple ghetto, a good start would be moving on some of those “established voices” so there is more room for a greater range of commentators, including female ones.

Just as importantly, editors must broaden the pool of women writing and actively seek out writers from beyond the world of journalism, women who are experts in science, law, business or the arts, for example.

This may take encouragement and cultivation. I volunteer as a mentor-editor for the New York-based Oped Project, which was founded in 2008 with the goal of increasing public commentary by women. I’d love to see a branch of the project open here, to give women the skills and confidence to submit opinion pieces without feeling the need to be invited first. In the meantime, women can seek advice from the website.

Getting more women writing helps build gender equality in the wider world. Opinion pages are places where women who are leaders in their field can build a profile. A profile leads to opportunities in the wider world, such as preselection for political parties, invitations to speak on television and consideration for job opportunities. It matters.

Tracy Rosenberg is the executive director of the Media Alliance in California. MA aims to create a more accountable, accessible and decentralised media.

It's not surprising at all that the authorship of political commentaries remains unbalanced, with two-thirds of pieces in mainstream media written by men. While gender is not the ultimate determinant of point of view, the public conversation, which is largely driven by authorised opinions enshrined in official media, can't possibly represent the full range of opinions present in any society if the ratios are so out of whack. Even with a contingent of determined women writers, their under representation puts forward a distorted view and can make minority opinions seem like majority ones.

I don’t think there’s any question that women write about gender and relationships because these are important subjects and because they have an impact. But the bottom-line effect of topic-selection that steers women towards only these subjects is that many other topics of equal importance are discussed in a gender-distorted way and with severe imbalances.
The remedies have to come from a couple of different places. One is for the women who have consistent access to the opinion pages to be mindful of both self-selection and editorial prompting towards "women's topics" and make an effort to swim against the tide, at least some of the time. Editors, owners and publishers should be accountable for producing statistics about the demographics in their opinion/commentary spaces. Where these statistics show imbalances they should actively solicit new contributors to better match the demographics of the audience.

It's also worth saying that women have sometimes made enormous contributions by sticking to "women's topics", but making the connections between women's issues and the welfare of society at large. The recent discussions about rape culture are an example where a conversation expanded to take on some very important questions about criminal justice, the nature of the media, public safety and privilege.

So it's a double-edged sword: it's both important to resist the marginalisation of gender-based topics AND to insist on robust female participation on the full range of issues.

Paola Totaro is vice president of the Foreign Press Association in London. Former Europe correspondent for The Sydney Morning Herald and The Age, Melbourne and Editor of the The Saturday Sydney Morning Herald, she is currently based in London.

Mortified. With a capital "M". That is my response to New Matilda's findings on the gender imbalance in the Australian media.

Red-faced for my industry, yes. But deep down, not surprised.

Neither by the numbers – on average we women still barely make up one third of bylines, less than a quarter of columnists and far, far less in the hallowed halls of editors and opinion makers – nor by the latest revelations on company-by-company breakdowns.

As a reporter and ex editor, I can imagine that most people's natural assumption would be that Fairfax, traditionally the more liberal of our newspaper groups, would boast a higher proportion of women in editorial leadership or writing opinion and shaping national discourse.

In fact, as an expatriate — and now an equally avid Aussie media observer from afar — I could see that that crown, in Australia at least, belongs to News Limited, usually fingered as the bogey man in such affairs.

They boast more women and more women editors. They employ more women columnists and have more women in parliaments covering state and national affairs in Australia. Perhaps the better comparison however is that only 28 per cent of opinion pieces at Fairfax are written by women while at News, it's 36 per cent. And on weekend papers, 43 per cent of articles on big bad Rupert's papers are written by women compared to 30 per cent at Fairfax.

Of course, the situation is much more complex than sheer numbers. Having more women on the books is not a panacea for the gender imbalances in content and coverage that infect all news organizations. Internal cultures, ingrained over decades - along with editors second-guessing the political agendas of their boards and proprietors – are a powerful force.

But so too is the dominant gender of the expert voices used by newspapers, the sources of knowledge in specific areas who are quoted by columnists and are also regularly used to write newspaper commentary themselves. Yet again, the majority, whether they be from the medical and scientific community, the law or business, most are men. How can news organisations reflect accurately the world outside when there are deep flaws in the mirror they choose to use?

In the UK, the BBC — itself a self acknowledged bastion of ageing, male power (80/20 dominance) — has at last decided to tackle this important influence head on, launching an "expert women" database aimed at helping journalists diversify their sources. A YouTube channel to try and get more expert women an air has been set up too.

Will such affirmative action work? Let's try it and see.

Elisabeth Wynhausen recently launched the blog Backstreetbondi.com. She was a senior reporter for News Ltd's The Australian and is an author whose books include The Short Goodbye, about the impact of the global financial crisis.

The results do surprise me — I thought there would be a smaller proportion of opinion pieces and commentary written by women.

To some extent coverage will depend on who's around, especially now the numbers of journalists available to the news room or on specialist rounds are so depleted. I should admit I don't often read articles about "relationship issues" or about matters to do with family life as such, because I'm more interested in economics, politics, the urban beat if it's done well, and coverage of peoples' working lives. Whether it's women or men writing about relationships and family life, if I were sifting through the articles, I'd be sizing up their particular prejudices and idiosyncrasies and not necessarily
attributing them to gender.

I do think it matters if most political commentary is written by men (though your own results seem to suggest there's not that big a disparity). But if I think back over the past year or so to the political commentators who really stood out, both for their acuity and their willingness to diverge from the press gallery ruck, I'd put Laura Tingle, Katharine Murphy and Lenore Taylor head and shoulders above their colleagues.

I don't think there should be gender-based internal targets. Women are surging to the front anyway. The more significant omission is from the ranks of editors. Women edit magazines but not newspapers. And by and large the women who get into deputy editors’ jobs still get paid less than men in comparable positions.

See the findings of the Women in the Media Project here. Have your say in the comments below.

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duffy

Really interesting to read these opinions. No doubt media is male dominated at the top, but I wonder if this trend is changing?

I'm a young male journalist and I haven't noticed the same gender imbalance in my own work. I recently spent a short time at Ninemsn, and while I was there the editor was male, the deputy ed was female, and the managing ed was also female. Prior to that I worked in a role where female editors outnumbered male editors 2:1.

During Uni I worked for a few papers where the senior roles were male-dominated, but I also interned at Crikey while Sophie was the boss. And for what it's worth, males were usually the minority in my uni classes.

Maybe I've just lucked out, and perhaps this trend will change the longer I stay in the industry.... but I'd like to hear what the gender ratios have been like for other journos, particularly for the whippersnappers.

--Andrew Duffy

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GrantD

Posted Thursday, March 28, 2013 - 16:59

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I think that part of the problem is the strong belief by some people that being equal means being the same - too many women have tried too hard to be the same as men and in doing so failed themselves and feminism. trying to 'insert' more women into the current dysfunctional system won't change the system - look at women in corporate management, heck look at Rebekah Brooks, she had immense media power but her femininity didn't help improve the baseline of media quality. Let's face it, the mainstream news media is dwindling and there is ample opportunity for female journo's to show some entrepreneurial flair, utilise social and other media and bring a balance to the 'media force' - expecting to have a free-ride on the coat-tails of the male-driven media reinforces women as sunserviant and second rate. For crying out loud, we have a female Sovereign, female PM, female Governor Generals, female head of Microsoft, even a female head of YAHOO (who is also a new mother) - stop moaning about not getting a break, pick up you iPad, blog/publish /Facebook newsworthy and interesting info, forget about trying to be like the blokes, define and create your market and usher in the new era of media.

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punch
Posted Thursday, March 28, 2013 - 20:27

It's not so much the gender ratios but control over journalists by powerful owners/employers to tow the line which concerns many. When this happens the words/voices all sound the same. The most obvious example would be the deeply personal aggressive attacks against our PM Julia Gillard by all genders. It's not just 'churnalism' but a collective decision by media owners with vested interests and beliefs to undermine our first female PM because they diametrically oppose the shift towards progressive, modern policies which will diminish their power bases.

The dominant male contempt for our PM repeats itself over and over again across all media by all voices. Yet another dumb follower writes/quotes/claims all the problems are PM Julia Gillards making. Really.

Last nights Shaun Micallef skit where all the various press were brought together and became one voice was a brilliant observation of the problems we face today.

When our female journalists, editors etc are brave enough to stand up for our PM who does not kowtow as she negotiates Australia though difficult changing times with aplomb - then I'll have some respect and maybe consider your gender problems.

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jackal01
Posted Friday, March 29, 2013 - 11:50

When your in a Domestic Violance situation the advice to women in get out.

Well, the Media is shot, corrupt and nothing but a mouth piece for the money changers. The once who turn cash into Gold to avoid inflation on their ill gotten gains in cash.

Time to sink the good ship Lollie Pop and start anew and I agree with GrantD.

Women should be and could be in the forefront here, leading the charge down a completely new road a two way street instead of the one way street we have had for 200 years.

Go for it Ladies, instead of doing the Janet Albrechtsen thing and becoem a cash for comment cow on an old horse for her masters in Israel an American Military outpost in the middle east.
The unremittingly blokey tone of the media is also losing readers. I had a subscription to Crikey and haven't renewed it because I ended up alienated by the pervasiveness of the boys' club mentality. The way Gillard has been talked about is only one example although it is the most destructive or, possibly, revealing of gender roles in Australia. The fact that she was invariably wonderful when she played the wifely role of support and helpmeet to Rudd and was suddenly transformed into the new Lady Macbeth when she did what any male politician would have done without qualm and took up the position that her party offered her reveals their inability to condeptualise women in any other than traditional archetypes. Just compare with the coverage of Napthine's ousting of Baillieu in Victoria and the press gallery's willingness to serve the conservative forces' appeal to misogyny is obvious.

Even lighter pieces like arts reviews seem to be pervaded by the journalist's need to assert his fully paid-up membership of the boys' club. A fairly representative article I read last year spent the first few paragraphs regaling the reader with the writer's drinking prowess and his habit of running multipe relationships with women at once until they found out and dumped him, in the sort of self-deprecating tone that actually invites admiration from more neanderthal males: he drinks a lot, he lies to women and uses them solely as sexual relief: obviously a real man. So often it seems as if it's necessary for journalistic credibility to assert that you're not a poofter, one of those men who actually talks to women at parties. I would have thought his editor might have reminded him that women read papers too and ought to be considered as at least half of the audience for whom you are writing.

I want to support independent journalism but it doesn't seem very independent to me when it just reproduces the journalistic groupthink and blokeyness of the Australian press gallery, which is not to say women journalists are not complicit: possibly it's a condition of survival in the Australian media as it has often been in other professions. I would have thought journalists would have learned something from the huge success of Gillard's misogyny speech but it's just been swept under the carpet. It doesn't have to be like this. When I read the Guardian writers for instance, or the NYTimes, I don't feel suffocated by the writer's gender and have to search for the byline to discover it. I subscribe to the NYTimes online and when Guardian Australia begins I'll be among the first to pay up. I just wish there was a credible, gender-neutral, non-conservative media presence in Australia so I didn't feel its lack as acutely as I do at present.

Absolutely Gracelin,

Today's online Daily Telegraph had a puff piece by Gemma Jones featuring Tony Abbott's daughters telling the reader 'he's a dag but would be a great leader', they were hurt by the Prime Ministers scathing speech in parliament etc. Similar to an earlier puff piece by Peta Credlin 'he kept my eggs in his fridge' so he must be a great guy. People can make their own judgements.

What bothered me; was a link to our PM Julia Gillard's famous speech when she naturally, strongly and accurately confronted Tony Abbott with his past and present attitudes towards women, none of which were misquoted or used out of context. The media have labelled it the 'misogyny' speech but have never reported the facts. The day Tony Abbott used the words 'female genitalia' as a reference to The Speaker Peter Slippers private texts to destabilise our government and try to undermine our PM Julia Gillard was one of the lowest
moments in our parliament to observe. Abbott pointedly used those words because our Prime Minister is female, just as he pointedly used the words ‘die in shame’ as a reference to Alan Jones comments regarding her fathers death and just as he pointedly stood in front of the signs saying ‘Ditch the Witch’ and Bob Browns Bitch’. Just as he has called her a liar and attempted to accuse her of criminality with no evidence.

This is not the usual rough and tumble of politics but the concerted effort by Abbotts LNP and supporters to personally attack and demoralise our feminine, female Prime Minister. It is shrilly reported by the bully-boy press and many female journalists toe the line. Its a national disgrace.

DrGideonPolya
Posted Sunday, March 31, 2013 - 19:18

None of the women commenting on the 2 to 1 male dominance in Australian media opinion making mention the Elephant in the Room reality that Australian Mainstream media are dominated by Neocon American and Zionist Imperialist-beholden prostitutes who dance to the tune of the likes of the Dirty Digger, democracy-by-genocide Apartheid Israel, and the war criminals and climate criminals of the mass murdering, mass paedocidal US Alliance.

One would love to believe that the "missing women" overlooked by the mostly male media managers would be decent, honest, humane, ethical writers but I suspect that they would mostly be unethical prostitutes just like their male confreres who submit so comprehensively to the "narrative" of the lying mainstream media whether Murdoch, Fairfax or the cowardly unethical ABC that sits in between.

The Elephant in the Room realities today are the 12 million Muslims killed by violence or war-imposed deprivation in the Zionist-backed US War on Muslims, roughly half of them females and roughly half of them children. Yet not a pip from the holocaust-denying PC racist Mainstream media hacks, male or female (see "Muslim Holocaust Muslim Genocide": https://sites.google.com/site/muslimholocaustmuslimgenocide/ ).

Yet there are some male and female writers who do tell the Awful Truth such as John Pilger (UK, ex-Australia), Stephen Lendman (US), the late Wilfred Burchett (Australia), Naomi Klein (Canada), Felicity Arbuthnot. (UK), Avigail Ababranel (UK, ex-Apartheid Israel), Dr Vandana Shiva (India), Arundhati Roy (India), Taslima Nasrin (India, ex-Bangladesh) …

Thus, for example, Felicity Arbuthnot (2011): ""Stanley Heller, chair of the Middle East Crisis Committee commented that "this horrific loss of life was ignored for six years until the US ambassador to the UN appeared on [the TV show] '60 Minutes' and admitted the deaths of half a million children. We in the Middle East Crisis Committee call for 12 May to be marked as Iraq Genocide Memorial Day." (Felicity Arbuthnot, “Madeleine Albright and the Iraqi Genocide”, Al-Ahram Weekly, 24-20 May 2012: http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/2012/1099/op3.htm).

Arundhati Roy, Naomi Klein and many equally famous male writers,namely Tariq Ali, John Berger, Noam Chomsky, Eduardo Galeano, Harold Pinter, José Saramago, and Howard Zinn on the Israeli outrage in Gaza (2006): "Each provocation and counter-provocation is contested and preached over. But the subsequent arguments, accusations and vows, all serve as a distraction in order to divert world attention from a long-term military, economic and geographic practice whose political aim is nothing less than the liquidation of the Palestinian nation. This has to be said loud and clear for the practice, only half declared and often covert, is advancing fast these days, and, in our opinion, it must be unceasingly and eternally recognised for what it is and resisted.” (Tariq Ali, John Berger, Noam Chomsky, Eduardo Galeano, Naomi Klein, Harold Pinter, Arundhati Roy, José Saramago and Howard Zinn, “Israel, Lebanon, and Palestine”, Open Letter, 19 July 2006: http://www.chomsky.info/letters/20060719.htm).

Challange: name ONE female writer in the Australian Mainstream media today who would have the honesty and guts to ask OUR child-killing war criminals, male and female, the question put to US UN Rep and later US SoS Madeleine Albright by CBS's Lesley Stahl in 1996: "We have heard that half a million children have died. I mean, that's more children than died in Hiroshima. And, you know, is the price worth it?”, to which Albright notoriously replied "we think the price is worth it." (Lesley Stahl and Madeleine Albright quoted in


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romeosan
Posted Friday, July 12, 2013 - 03:37

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