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Gender, Citizenship and Newspapers

Historical and Transnational Perspectives

Jane L. Chapman

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Gender, Citizenship and Newspapers

Historical and Transnational Perspectives

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To two Kates
Kate Allison and Kate Lacey
each in their own way essential to this book

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Preface

Tracing histories of the engagement between media and disempowered people – in this case women – is never going to be easy. There is no one central record, no archives of audience or systematic market research, as exist today. There are no folders or boxes (let alone digital items) marked 'women and newspapers' amongst relevant archive holders. The connections between gender, citizenship and newspapers from a transnational historical perspective are not obvious. Yet people who struggle for social and political inclusion have always needed to communicate as widely as possible, and to create public discourses by whatever means possible. As soon as the press is acknowledged as an agency for communication, the historical theme of women and mass circulation dailies becomes an obvious one. How to tackle it is less obvious, and this study does not take an easy route.

From its very inception, the research in the pages that follow attempted to fill gaps in scholarship, and this motivation mushroomed. It started with a relatively modest ambition, endorsed by a British Academy grant – to investigate the feminizing influence on the growth of mass circulation dailies in Britain and France in the late 19th century. We set about newspaper analysis in detail, and the findings are included later. The importance for this wider study is that the empirical data came first. The experiment was repeated, once more over a two year period, this time for an ESRC (Economic and Social Science Council) grant, featuring gender in the colonial world, entitled 'Women, Press and Protest in British and French India, 1928–48'. Again, the empirical enquiry came first, but the seeds of comparative method had already been sown, and needed to grow. The media related activities of British suffragettes provided the stimulus for further attempts to compare and contrast.

Of course, all of this primary record collection across continents and countries (we visited 13 different libraries and archives in India alone) was underpinned by theorizations on class, gender and counter hegemony, but the relevance of the concept of cultural citizenship only became obvious at the data analysis stage, when comparing and contrasting the experiences of women and their representation in newspapers. It emerged as a shared historical experience, part of the process of collective action, as a social and political impact relating to public communication.

Perhaps that is the way it should be – a practical outcome of public discourses relating to struggles to change disempowerment, rather than a preconceived theory. Yet some scholars may find that the empirical findings do not fit their theorizations. This is a high risk strategy, but also an attempt to face the music. The introduction addresses potential criticism: why compare colonial with non colonial, why choose mass circulation dailies in the case of Britain and France, why select different episodes and points in history?

Taking women as readers, news sources, and journalists, the point is also to explore some confluences of influence: between consumerism and citizenship, between demands for constitutional reforms and direct action protest, between ideology and economics, between continuity and change. These are not always straight binaries, but rather mosaics with uneven contributory pieces, varying according to country, context and periods of history. Amongst the fluidity there are constants, however – issues of class and performance as they impact upon gender, for instance.

Among the complexities the reader will also discern empathy. We need to restore a place in history to those who tried to communicate in the public sphere, but were frequently forgotten almost as quickly as their ephemeral newspaper pages were. In 1937–8, some 10,000 Tamils fled from Pondicherry across the border to escape gangs of bandits who were setting fire to their homes at night, but female collective action emerged, and was communicated in the public sphere. In British India many women were jailed for protest, as well as suffragettes in imperial Britain. Their bravery acts as a motivation to restore the media record of such acts, and of many others that are mentioned later.

Newspaper records are not always complimentary, and could be damaging to campaigns for different forms of citizenship, but they act as a reminder of the potency of gender discourses, and of the fact that many issues are still live today. This is not dead wood history, but a continuing relationship in the public sphere between action and interpretation. Above all, this study uncovers some of the neglected workings of female influence on counter hegemonic communications. There is more to be uncovered. If others are motivated to elaborate on, or to contradict, the analysis and interpretations presented here, then all of the attempts to find gendered needles in haystacks will have been worthwhile.

Acknowledgements

The period of gestation for this book has been a long one, dating back to 2007 when the British Academy first decided to fund one of my projects. Thus, it is difficult to express thanks for the long trajectory of support without adopting some well-worn terminology, such as 'without whom this work would not have been possible', but these words are literal in every sense. Without the support of Lincoln University, the School of Journalism and Dean of Faculty John Simons, I would never have submitted grant applications and without funding from the British Academy and the Economic and Social Science Research Council (ESRC), research assistants Kate Allison and Piers Clarke I would never have been able to visit archives in France and India. In addition, John Tulloch joined our ESRC team to contribute research on F.W. Wilson and Kate Lacey at Sussex University kindly contributed time and ideas during the early stages of the book project. At Lincoln University Ann Gray continues to provide vision and Rebecca Hewson-Heathorn organizational support, for which I am grateful.

At the time of writing, digital archives do not exist for most of my sources, so most of the primary work involved research on location, and thanks go to all the archivists in various parts of the world who helped my teams. This included visits to France's Bibliothèque Nationale, Archives Nationales, the Museum of Paris and the labour history archives at Roubaix. I spent considerable time at France's colonial archives in Aix-en-Provence. In India we visited the Nehru Library, the National Library and Archives in Delhi and Calcutta, the Regional Archives in Pondicherry and Allahabad, the State Archives in Lucknow, Chennai and Pondicherry, the French Institute in Pondicherry, and the offices of AITUC (All India Trade Union Congress), who kindly donated a large number of pamphlets, copies of theses and other material in Tamil. We visited *The Pioneer* headquarters and *The Indian Express* newspaper contributed articles. In the United Kingdom, I am grateful for the continuing support of the Cambridge University Library and the Centre of South Asian Studies in Cambridge, the British Library at St Pancras and Colindale. Archivists at the British Library's African and Indian section deserve much gratitude for kindly allowing us to consult uncatalogued (for reasons of conservation) versions of *The Pioneer*. Special thanks to Kate Allison for compiling the data sets (that are publically available due

to the efforts of ESRC) and thanks also to Piers Clarke for compiling the website of visual evidence, http: www.pressandprotest.com

During all of this time, my continuing visiting fellowship at Wolfson College, Cambridge and the Centre of South Asian Studies, Cambridge has been invaluable, as has the support of Macquarie University, Sydney, where I am an Adjunct Professor. Members of the Macquarie Department of Modern History, the Centre for South Asian Studies, Cambridge, the History department at University College, Dublin, Women in French, and the French Media Research Group (ASCMF) all contributed feedback at presentations of the findings, which has been really helpful.

It was at Macquarie's art gallery that I helped to curate, with Rhonda Davis and Leonard Janiszewski, an exhibition of some of the research, entitled 'India, Past, Present and Abroad'. Their enthusiasm, along with that of Bridget Griffin Foley and her Media History Research Centre, has been constantly energizing.

I must underline the importance of support from Sandy Wilkinson at University College, Dublin for his unwavering faith in the project, along with the other series editors. At Palgrave Michael Strang, Jenny McCall and Clare Mence, along with production staff, have been constantly helpful and enthusiastic. The incisive comments of peer reviewers have contributed more than they will ever realize.

The essential support of the following journals and publishers has allowed re-publications of sections from articles and one of my earlier books, for which sincere thanks are due:

Journalism Today (2011)*: A Themed History* (Malden, MA: Blackwell-Wiley) – Chapter 3 reproduces sections on New Journalism and on Ida Tarbell.

'A Business Trajectory: Assessing Female Influence and Representation in *Le Petit Journal,* Europe's First Mass Circulation Daily' in *Parcours de femmes – Twenty Years of Women in French* (2011, Peter Lang, Oxford & Bern) pp. 41–57. Chapter 2 reproduces some parts of this article, on the theme of business.

'Female representation, readership and early tabloid properties' *Australian Journal of Communication*, 2011, 38, no. 2, 53–70. Chapter 2 reproduces some sections on tabloidization and quantitative tables relating to *Le Petit Journal*.

'The origins of a public voice for marginalized workers and anti-colonialism in French India, 1935–37', *Web Journal of French Media Studies* (WJFMS), 2010, no.8, ISSN 1460-6550 single author http://wjfms.ncl.ac.uk/splash.htm

Chapter 4 reproduces some sections on private versus public in French India.

'Women and the press in British India 1928–34: a window for protest?' *International Journal of Social Economics (IJSE)*, 2011, 38, no. 9 (July), 676–92, co-author Kate Allison. Some sections, including quantitative tables are reproduced in Chapter 7. www.emeraldinsight.com/journals.htm?articleid=1938131&ini=aob

Finally, thanks to my long suffering family and friends who have always had to endure my continuing obsession with research, writing and talking about it!

Jane Chapman, Cambridge, 2012

Part I
Setting the Parameters

1
Introduction
Tracing Patterns, Linkages and Evidence

Boundary Crossing

Contemporary sources between the 1860s and the 1930s point emphatically to the existence of wider debates not only about the changing role and attitudes towards women, but also concerning the nature, influence and role of the press. Gendered analysis of this adds to our understanding at a time when conflicting, multifaceted ideas and female images were emerging within the public sphere, but a connection needs to be made between press and social attitudes, between media development from a gendered standpoint and wider trends in society. How such trends or strands, as expressed and mediated in newspapers, contributed to the process of cultural formation forms part of our general appreciation of modernity.[1]

This is an integrated exploration of: women's representation in the press; their role as news sources and their professional activity; women as an influence on editorial matter; how women were perceived as a readership and/or as consumers by newspapers; and how through their actions in the public sphere they sought and received coverage.[2] These are the traces from the past of female influence in the relationship between newspapers and society that are analyzed through examples of print mass communications across continents, empires and periods. Arguably, historians do not know enough about the connections between women's emerging citizenship and the communication of that process by the public press and other communications distributed to the wider polity. Every example presented in this study focuses on the issues of press and democracy, press and change, and press as a vehicle for the articulation of female citizenship. This historicization addresses the extent to which newspaper mediation and women's attempts to

influence public opinion for political demands constituted a form of citizenship specific to the process of knowledge and information production.

This text focuses on the phenomenon of *cultural citizenship*, associated newspaper-related consumerism and the relationship between ideology and economics as evidenced through the communication of women's protest in the public sphere and the way it impinged upon newspaper commercial considerations. The approach is a comparative historicization of the concept of cultural citizenship, revealing aspects of its origins and development transnationally as these related to the agencies of gender and print communications. How female citizenship was framed and evolved through the prism of the public press is analyzed with examples taken from the 1860s through to the 1930s. The development of newspapers as mass communication systems in several different countries provides the framework for a series of detailed cameos of usage, representation and influence at selected formative and critical periods within media history. For Britain and France, this was the second half of the nineteenth century and the early twentieth century – the 'golden age' of newspapers. For India it was during the 1920s and 1930s.

The years between the1860s and the 1930s are examined thematically, with chapters on developmental aspects of cultural citizenship. The aim is to trace patterns, linkages and evidence of gender through and in newspapers that existed in places and in ways that are not immediately obvious.

Choice of trends and 'moments'

Moments

The task is addressed via a collection of selected aspects and moments transnationally that provides insight into the process of negotiation between women and some organs of communication, in varying contexts. This is a mosaic of complementary and conflicting influences that are explored in detail, each contributing to an evolution in the manifestations of female cultural citizenship, but in different ways at differing periods of modern history, according to the country studied. Any emerging patterns are uneven.

Van Zoonen, referring to media as part of feminism's material and cultural struggle, reminds us: 'Mass media are central sites in which these negotiations take place, evidently at the level of media texts, but also at the level of the other "moments" of the mass mediated production of meaning' (1994: 148). Selection of 'moments' in this study has been

made around some dates and events that were important as *turning points*, although not necessarily successful ones. These include, during Europe's 'golden age' of the press: the launch of Europe's first mass circulation daily – *Le Petit Journal* – followed by the launch of Britain's first mass circulation daily – *The Daily Mail* – to cater for women by acknowledging them as a readership; the launch of two separate, and very different dailies – *La Fronde* and *The Daily Mirror* – run by and aimed at women; the adoption of direct action as a tactic by British suffragettes; and the peak years of militant violent agitation for the female franchise.

In a colonial context, the criteria for the study was also to look at local press, rather than those produced in metropolitan France or imperial London. Counter citizenship is traced through the launch and struggle for survival in the face of censorship of an indigenous paper in French Indian territory – *Swandanthiram* – that, at the time of writing, still exists. Most other contemporary journals were short lived. In British India, a local colonial daily – *The Pioneer* – has been selected because it supported women's emerging citizenship in a period of heated politics during the twilight of empire when constitutional negotiations and the economic effects of pro-independence protest were making headway. The moment selected coincides with a crucial change of editorship.[3]

Trends

These 'moments' have been selected because their significance goes beyond the event itself, allowing for wider contextual analysis. For example, Part II addresses the way in which pioneering popular dailies in Britain and France catered for women. A theme that emerges is a wider tension between the old and the new, between commercial considerations and political content. As people became defined not only by production but also by consumption, women were acknowledged as a market for newspaper consumerism. Although circulation doubled between 1896 and 1906 and then doubled again by 1914 (Williams, 1961: 203–4), by and large female oriented content was still decided upon by men on behalf of readers belonging to the opposite sex. Perceptions about the nature of this communication were challenged by some women, who had a different vision of both content and operation.

Part III identifies a parallel formative experience for women who participated in labour organizations in Britain and in French India, where they were able to acquire experience of collective activities in the public sphere that were rooted in class actions. The emergence of subaltern women from private to public sphere in French territory is significant in timing because it heralded the origins of an independence movement.

Part IV continues the study of female activists by addressing the effectiveness of women's interactions with the media in Britain and in British colonial India when it came to protests and other direct action tactics, as opposed to more peaceful lobbying and 'educational' activities. Many women took to the streets, using newspapers to disseminate specific messages to a wider polity, seeking publicity for social and political reasons, important also because of the organizational and leadership experience that they gained and for their impact on the development of the media.

In Part V, the conclusion, attempts to draw together some common transnational experiences, continuities over time and the identification of similar processes across class, cultures and time periods.

Scope and positioning

For the purposes of this study, a distinction should be noted on the one hand between 'feminist' publications, sometimes but not exclusively allied to progressive organizations or groups with a structured membership who aimed to achieve the emancipation of women in some way, and on the other hand what British suffrage supporters called the 'public press'. Scholars have studied the way in which campaigners used the former – that is, specialist publications – and also the general trend for the nineteenth century and earlier, focusing on individual pioneers, female journalists, feminist writings and/or social movements (see for example Mills, 1998; Onslow, 2000; Gleadle, 1995, 2002; DiCenzo, 2011).

There were also commercial publications, mainly dailies, which aimed to bring news and features to a wider 'public' audience (usually national) of women and men, but recognizing the female interest within that large audience[4] – mass dissemination is the focus here. Within this area of research there is still inadequate understanding by scholars about the ways in which people, usually organized into their own interest groups and specific communities, aimed to influence the 'public press'. At a time in history when opinion management was largely unprofessionalized, with 'PR' and corporate lobbying very much in their infancy, records of attempts to influence press coverage have to be sought elsewhere. We are mostly dependent on anecdotes from individual memoirs, internal administrative communications (such as reports from colonial officials to their ministers), the coverage itself, reader letters, 'op-ed' and other newspaper editorials commenting on the views of competitor journals and the discursive press environment more generally at the time.

Women's history and gender studies are now well established at the cutting edge of new approaches in many fields of study, yet there is still a need for more in-depth, cross-disciplinary understanding of the role that gender considerations played during the development of mass communications from the second half of the nineteenth century. Although working-class people and women constituted a new readership in the Western world from the second half of the nineteenth century onwards, press historians still know very little about the details of how the new market for popular daily newspapers became more female oriented. It is acknowledged that the popular press contributed to the expansion of public discourse, but the precise nature of representation of women in its pages is less clear. A process of 'feminization' of the British popular press has been identified during the 1880s and 1890s (Holland, 1998: 19) but the full details of how this development evolved have yet to emerge. This book adds some comparative, transnational pieces to the historical jigsaw, for it was not confined to Britain. While this study focuses on neglected areas of scholarship, it nonetheless builds on research in allied fields that has helped to prepare the ground by challenging generalizations concerning how far women were restricted to the domestic sphere (DiCenzo, 2011: 10).

The potential for newspapers to act as an efficacious tool for democratic expression in the discourses of the public sphere has been an ongoing theme throughout the history of communications (Chapman and Nuttall, 2011[5]). As Holland points out, 'Women's democratic participation, and the role of a newspaper in furthering democratic involvement, is also an issue. A democratic press must also appeal to women and, by the end of the nineteenth century, women were already demanding the space to express their public concerns. Democratisation *entails* feminisation' (1998: 18). Unfortunately attempts to examine this tend not to be transnational: Bingham's (2004) study of the popular press and gender, for example, deals uniquely with Britain between the wars; that of Rogers (2000) is also uniquely British. Sometimes studies concentrate on different time periods (for instance Holland deals with the 1970s onwards) or do not address the topic from the standpoint of institutional development of the press.

These research findings contribute to the ongoing task of feminist historians and their work.[6] This has raised awareness of gender difference in a variety of ways across a full range of aspects of life. The effort is being redefined constantly, for discussions on women are germane to literature, anthropology and sociology where for some time there has been interest in historicizing fields of study and opening up to

interdisciplinarity, exemplified, for instance, by the work of Clifford Geertz (1983: 30) and Michael Schudson (1982: 97–112). Equally, 'New Cultural History' has been influenced by literary studies, resulting in close examinations of texts (Hunt, 1989: 22). Yet an acknowledgement that the relationship between gender and communications is primarily (although not exclusively) a cultural one, made by scholars such as van Zoonen (1994: 148) does not necessarily mean that research has connected historical aspects of gender and media. In fact, the attention given to topics relating to women, media and politics has not been proportionate to their societal relevance (Krijnen et al., 2011: 5).

Although media history tends towards boundary crossing, mainly between media studies and history (O'Malley, 2002: 170), it is still a relatively new field,[7] which may account for the shortage of gendered analysis of mainstream communications. Furthermore, interdisciplinarity has sometimes been neglected in gender studies (Krijnen et al., 2011).

However, the task is not merely to fill important gaps in knowledge: it is also, to borrow a now famous phrase from John Berger, to record a different way 'of seeing'. Joan Scott summarizes the challenge in her reappraisal of gender and history in the light of deconstructionist theory: 'Feminist history [then] becomes not the recounting of great deeds performed by women but the exposure of the often silent and hidden operations of gender that are nonetheless present and defining forces in the organization of most societies'(1999: 27). The way that other historians have come to accept the need for such an approach, and how this has transformed the field of study, has been elaborated by Laura Lee Downs (2010). While she draws on cultural and social analysis to explain the move from women's to gender history and the poststructuralist challenges to that history, the issue of media agency is left out in the cold.

Defining cultural citizenship

Over recent years there has been a considerable revival of interest in citizenship, a concept that can be broadly defined as encapsulating shared rights, responsibilities and symbolic aspects of membership within a polity. For John Corner, culture centres on 'the conditions and the forms in which meaning and value are structured and articulated within a society' (1991: 131). It is a shared experience involving symbolic forms, as defined by John B. Thompson: 'patterns of meaning embodied in symbolic forms, including actions, utterances and meaningful objects of various kinds, by virtue of which individuals communicate with one

another and share their experiences, conceptions and beliefs' (1990: 132). Nick Stevenson elaborates on the significance of 'meaning': 'in the interpretation of an event it is the meanings that become attached to the "event" that are crucial for understanding its significance' (2003: 17). In fact, the 'public press' developed its own organizational methods to produce distinctive categories of representation, knowledge and power as a form of interpretation and influence by women: these are analyzed here as the symbolic media category of gendered cultural citizenship. In a present day context, Jan Pakulski (1997) argues that cultural citizenship can be seen as satisfying demands for full social inclusion. Cultural citizenship encapsulates activities conducted in the public sphere for political and/or social ends, in this case articulated through or by the media.

The concept is a relatively fluid one – it can involve difference as much as sameness (Stevenson, 2003) and is interpreted in a range of different ways by scholars, witnessed by its hybrid location at the intersection of diverse fields of study that include the sociology of culture and of art, cultural studies, social and political theory, international relations and multicultural studies. Therefore, it impinges upon social phenomena that are bigger than the constituent parts as evidenced in the pages that follow.[8] For Stevenson, 'cultural citizenship is overwhelmingly concerned with communication and power', and should be considered within 'the context of social transformation' (2003: 33).

In fact, cultural citizenship can be discerned both inside and outside formal structures of power, for questions of exclusion and inclusion are central. Media manifestations of cultural citizenship were not confined to formal rights such as the vote, although that is an important aspect. Research in this study addresses marginalization, stereotyping, lack of visibility, concurring with Renato Rosaldo who argues that cultural citizenship is about 'who needs to be visible, to be heard, and to belong' (1999: 260). In terms of this particular historicization, a number of different strands of developmental explanation are examined: business factors, labour movement roots, direct action protests, questions of entitlement, women participating in representational politics and 'educational' or peaceful persuasion for reforms, sometimes as journalists themselves. More generally, this involves an enquiry into how mediated cultural citizenship encapsulated ways in which, in their movement from private to public spheres, women wanted to be perceived by others. Cultural citizenship addresses attitudes such as 'the degree of self-esteem accorded to . . . [the citizen's] manner of self-realization within a society's inherited cultural horizon' (Honneth, 1995: 134).

The concept is also applied in this study as a normative phrase to describe the effect and the process of engagement in newspaper publicity by women. Cultural citizenship emerged as part of the act of press mediation – an ever changing phenomenon – and as a phrase that encapsulates a mobile process, as it became embedded within civil society and public consciousness. It has been assumed in the West, for instance, that the widening of audience and new products catering for the working class and women for the first time were necessarily positive developments, because of the democratizing tendency that the trend represented. Most French historians believe that popular newspapers encouraged isolated communities into a new, common identity as an integrated nation (Delporte, 1998; Kalifa, 1995). This argument is an extension of the Benedict Anderson (1991) thesis on 'imagined communities', supported by Jean-Yves Mollier when he refers to 'a silent cultural revolution' (Rioux and Sirinelli, 2002: 73, 114).

Generally, what can be called 'positive democratization theses' tend not to adopt a gendered perspective and underestimate process, tone, and effect of representation, so some qualification is required. At the same time as providing criticism, this study seeks more generally to avoid an overtly celebratory approach to gender enquiry. The examples presented started in mid-1860s France, with the first mass circulation daily in Europe to eventually reach sales of 1 million. *Le Petit Journal* was clearly a pioneering initiative in newspaper publishing, but it did not contest bourgeois societal values. The paper was ahead of its time in terms of targeting a new readership of women and peasants, but the recipe for this was a diet of snippets of information and crime stories, recognized by the proprietors as a sure seller. This male assessment of what sold newspapers was by no means new: there was a shared transnational interest, at least to some extent, in crime coverage. In terms of content analysis of the daily newspaper, it is possible to differentiate between subject matter involving women and aimed at female readers that involved some form of interest in citizenship (public sphere activities, charity and community work), as opposed to consumer oriented articles – but consumer issues can be highly politicized.

Cultural citizenship acts as the defining force that emerges in this study, but there is a precursor in the form of cultural consumerism in the Western world. For instance, by the Edwardian period in Britain, 10,000 people were employed in advertising as part of the 'Retail Revolution' (Searle, 2004: 111). The phrase cultural consumerism is defined here as consumerist values and content that are featured in media and public communications, developing a style and form specifically in such