

Women in the lockdown in Europe. Media representations of gender differences in “phase 1” of the coronavirus pandemic*

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How have women been portrayed during the initial phase of the coronavirus pandemic? What issues were discussed across European newspapers when women were at the center of the narrative during the lockdown? This paper aims to provide some initial answers to these questions by looking at a bulk of 462 articles collected across 5 different European countries during the so-called “phase 1” of the COVID-19 pandemic when strict stay-at-home policies were imposed to contain the spread of the virus. Results show that four frames were mostly used by the media: women as a vulnerable group, women as actors in the pandemic, women’s health, and women as a transformative force in society. Implications of these findings will be discussed and the emergence of a “women’s narrative” in the coronavirus crisis will be proposed.

Keywords: Women, Gender inequality, Media representations, COVID-19, Lockdown

Never, since the end of the Second World War, have women been so forcibly pushed out of the public space as during the so-called “phase 1” of the COVID-19 health emergency. Yet, unlike what happened in the 1950s, women’s withdrawal from public life during the pandemic came with what initially appeared to be some relevant differences. First of all, the COVID-19- associated state of confinement was enforced suddenly and abruptly, with schools, workplaces, parks and other public spaces closed down by emergency regulations in a matter of weeks, if not days. Second, the COVID-19 lockdown was presented as an extreme and temporary measure enforced by national governments to contain the virus. The underlying assumption was that once the emergency had been overcome, daily life would go “back to normal”. Third, possibly for the first time in recent history, men and women were apparently treated equally, with both genders being subjugated to the same sets of rules and norms imposed by social distancing and home confinement. Women and men seemed to be equally struck by the crisis, living apparently under the same circumstances while sharing similar experiences.

Yet, this idea of gender equality in the lockdown was short-lived as it almost immediately became clear that the restrictions imposed by the pandemic were exacerbating inequalities for women. In the confinement of their homes, women were taking up more family and domestic work than their male counterparts, often reducing their professional working hours to support and take care of their home-schooled children (Alon, Doepke, Olmstead-Rumsey, & Tertilt, 2020; Minello, Martucci & Manzo, 2020). Moreover,

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trapped inside and separated from others, women were more at risk than ever before of experiencing domestic violence and abuse (Agüero, 2020; Bradbury-Jones & Isham, 2020; Van Gelder, Peterman, Potts, O'Donnell, Thompson, Shah, and Oertelt-Prigione, 2020). It soon became evident that women's capacity to go back to "normalcy" under the same (unequal) conditions as before was neither obvious nor necessarily possible, with a substantial risk of women entering lockdown in the 2020s and emerging from it back in the 1950s.

The COVID-19 pandemic has been defined (Alteri, Parks, Raffini, & Vitale, 2020; Corlianò, 2020; Demertzis & Eyeran, 2020) as a 'total social fact' (Mauss, 2009) since its outbreak has had powerful ramifications permeating every aspect of society. However, as Turina (2020) points out, the state of exceptionality produced by the pandemic cannot be separated from the social dynamics and processes already at play in the social world. The health crisis might have accelerated or even influenced these dynamics and processes, but it did not determine them. Pre-existing social stratification and inequalities linked to age, gender, race, socio-economic status, and education, just to name a few, played a fundamental role in determining how social actors experienced the pandemic and the consequent restrictions imposed by it. In other words, the pandemic hit society in a totalizing way, but it did not hit all social groups alike, with some being more vulnerable than others in the face of the health crisis. Older adults, women, children, workers in the service industry or employed in the informal economy and people living in poverty or with a chronic disease or condition all developed specific needs and demands connected to the many fallouts of home confinement. These concerns were consequently pushed to emerge and gain recognition (Hilgartner & Bosk, 1988) in what appeared to be a highly mediatized public arena already permeated by a pervasive narration of the pandemic (Pedroni, 2020) that made the competition among "peripheral issues" extremely fierce.

As such, this paper aims to provide a preliminary examination of how women, a traditionally disadvantaged group in society, have been represented in the mediatic arena of six European countries (France, Germany, Great Britain, Italy and Spain) during the so-called "phase 1" of the COVID-19 pandemic when strict stay-at-home policies had been enforced by local governments to contain the spread of the virus. The idea that underpins this work is that, especially during the lockdown period, the media played a fundamental role in providing much-needed information on the development of the crisis, but also in offering specific representations and understandings of a social world (Tuchman, 1978; Lalli, 2005) seemingly unintelligible because physically unreachable, and organized around unfamiliar rules and regulations. The initial research questions of this work were: how were women represented in that specific moment of the health crisis? What needs or demands were interjected by the press and, if any, what representations emerged from the media discourses when women were discussed? Were there any significant differences in women's representation in European countries where different types of lockdown were enforced? While mostly discussing the first and second research questions, the results will show that the discussion of the experience of women in the lockdown has been capable of activating specific frames (Goffman, 1975) in the newspapers analyzed, thus establishing

the presence of what could be defined as a “women’s narrative” in the mediatic coverage of the pandemic.

Methodology

This study draws on a corpus of 462 news articles retrieved online from 10 newspapers distributed over five different European countries. The newspapers' selection was determined after conducting eight interviews (two for each country, except for Italy) with country-based informants who were familiar with at least one of the specific national media contexts under consideration. In particular, the newspapers were chosen due to their circulation, but also to maintain an equal distribution across a broad liberal to conservative political spectrum. As the aim of this study was to gain a broader understanding of how women have been thematized during the lockdown, the selected newspapers' websites were searched by running a query for the word “women” in their internal search engines. Articles were searched in each newspaper between the date of the third confirmed death caused by COVID-19 in the corresponding country and the end of the lockdown period (Table 1).¹

<i>Nation</i>	<i>3d confirmed death</i>	<i>End of “phase 1”</i>	<i>Total days</i>
Italy	25th of February	18th of May	83
Spain	6th of March	24th of May	79
France	3d of March	11th of May	69
UK	9th of March	13th of May	65
Germany	12 of March	24th of May*	73

(Table 1. *Collection period*)

Once the query was launched, the headlines of all the retrieved articles were screened for eligibility. To overcome language barriers, the results of all the articles in languages other than Italian and English were converted into English using Google Translator. As recent studies have proven (De Vries, Schoonvelde, & Schumacher, 2018; Reber, 2018), machine translation services offer a robust and reliable tool for conducting comparative communication research when different languages are involved. To be included in the analysis, the articles needed to satisfy at least one of two strict criteria: either the main focus of the article had to address specifically an aspect of the experience of women in the health emergency, or the news had to be centered on a female figure. Stories that discussed the pandemic without providing a specific angle on women (i.e., news reporting on daily coronavirus deaths) were not included in the analysis (Table 2). Once the data set was built and organized, each news article was analyzed with a qualitative thematic approach. In particular, recurrent themes named or implied in the news were identified,

coded, compared, and regrouped into specific categories of meanings. The coding hierarchy was progressively updated to include new concepts identified during the analysis.

Nation	Newspapers	Items for “women”	Total
France	Le Figaro'	28	67
	Le Monde	38	
Germany	Frankfurter Allgemeine	19	64
	Suddeutsche Zeitung	45	
Italy	La Repubblica	71	127
	Corriere della Sera	56	
Spain	El Mundo	55	89
	El Pais	34	
UK	The Guardian	68	115
	The Daily Telegraph	47	
Total			462

(Table 2. Distribution of articles among newspapers)

Throughout this process, a small number of frames (Goffman, 1974) were identified, and consequently isolated from the corpus (Table 3).

Frame	
Women as a vulnerable group	Articles discussing women discrimination in society Articles discussing violence against women Articles discussing prostitution
Women as actors in the pandemic	Articles presenting stories of women working in the health crisis Articles presenting stories of women in the pandemic Feature interviews to female politicians and experts discussing their work in the pandemic Hard news having women as central focus
Women and girls' health	Articles discussing women's' health issues Articles discussing women's' reproductive rights Articles discussing pregnancy and giving birth Articles discussing the alleged better resistance of women to covid-19
Women as a transformative force in society	Articles that identify in women and feminism as a potentially transformative force of society Articles discussing women's leadership

(Table 3. Identified frames)

Finally, the frames identified were tested in the different newspapers to verify if any substantial difference emerged from the mediatic agenda-setting of the countries under consideration (Table 4).

<i>Frame</i>	<i>Country</i>	<i>Items</i>	<i>Total</i>
Women as a vulnerable group	France	28	190
	Germany	36	
	Italy	44	
	Spain	32	
	UK	50	
Women actors in the pandemic	France	24	110
	Germany	9	
	Italy	34	
	Spain	20	
	UK	23	
Women and girls' health	France	9	98
	Germany	14	
	Italy	22	
	Spain	21	
	UK	32	
Women as a transformative force in society	France	3	51
	Germany	6	
	Italy	25	
	Spain	10	
	UK	7	
Others (residual)			13
Total			462

Results

According to our analysis, all the frames identified were employed in the totality of the newspapers analyzed for this research, with no overall significant differences emerging on how women's issues were discussed across the different countries during the lockdown. The specificities of each frame will be addressed in the following sections.

Women as a vulnerable group

The vulnerability of women amid the coronavirus pandemic represents the main topic of discussion of the largest group of news articles (190) analyzed for this research. According to the media discourses, women faced a substantial risk of experiencing significantly greater social inequalities and a higher level of violence during confinement compared to their male counterparts. Among other elements, social distancing, school closures, and stay-at-home policies were presented in the news as issues posing considerable threats to girls and women's wellbeing. In particular, the higher risk for women of experiencing violence, their inability to ask for help when confined inside their homes alongside their perpetrators, the hardships faced by those in women's shelters, and the possible solutions identified by local and national governments to support women living in violent households were all issues discussed at length in 110 articles in this study.

The campaign promoted by the government to combat what risks becoming an emergency in the emergency starts today: violence against women at the time of Covid-19 forced cohabitation. (Repubblica, March 20, 2020)

Home is not a safe place for many women during coronavirus - even the police agree (The Telegraph, April 9, 2020)

Structural violence experienced during the pandemic by sex workers (Farley, 2020) was also addressed in the media. Notably, 13 news stories reported on the hardships faced by sex workers struggling to make ends meet after the sudden and dramatic loss of income determined by the restrictions imposed on personal movements, while also confronting social marginalization and institutional lack of recognition.

The corona crisis has exacerbated the situation for people in economic emergencies - this also applies to parts of the red light district. "We are of the opinion that there is an urgent need for emergency aid for prostitutes facing poverty" said Encarni Ramírez Vega, deputy managing director of the advice center "Women's Rights is Human Rights". (Süddeutsche Zeitung, May 9, 2020)

Structural inequalities in the distribution of care work inside families, occupational instability, and the expendability of women in the job market, as well as the possible negative consequences of a financial crisis on female employment (67) were also topics discussed in this set of articles.

The coronavirus crisis will have a devastating impact on the labor market in Spain, as advanced by the last Labor Force Survey (EPA) published just a few weeks ago. Taking into account these statistics, the Csiif union (Central Sindical Independiente y de Servants) assures that the worst part will fall on the shoulders of women, as their situation is of "special vulnerability" in this pandemic (El País, May 11, 2020)

The analysis shows that when parents have to step in when daycare centers and schools are closed, mothers bear the brunt of the burden. In households with at least one child under the age of 14, 27 percent of women, but only 16 percent of men, reduced their working hours to ensure childcare. The

discrepancy is even larger for households with lower or middle income (around 12 and 14 percentage points, respectively). Families with little money could often not afford to forego the mostly higher salary of the man, was sad in justification. (Frankfurter Allgemeine, May 14, 2020)

News stories of this kind often built upon research data on gender inequality in the workforce, pointing out how the COVID-19 crisis disproportionately exacerbated existing gender inequalities in the workforce, thus exposing women's vulnerability and their economic and financial disadvantages.

As far as the distribution, data show that news reporting on women's vulnerability counted everywhere for more than a third of the total coverage of the articles considered, with the exception of Germany where this frame applied to more than a half of the retrieved news for the country. Articles addressing domestic violence and the discrimination of women in society were evenly distributed across the different countries, with the only notable difference arising from news discussing the vulnerability of prostitutes. As a matter of fact, just two countries (Spain and Germany) counted for more than half (9) of the articles addressing the aggravated precariousness of prostitutes amid the COVID-19 crisis, while the issue did not rise particular interest or attention in the other ones (1 article published in Italy and France, 2 in the United Kingdom).

Women as actors in the pandemic

Women's daily contribution to the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic was the prime focus of 110 news articles analyzed for this research. Mostly framed as featured stories, these articles provided the readers with a closer look at women's lives during the crisis by approaching the topic from various angles. In particular, several articles (41) recounted the ordeals faced by female first-aid workers, doctors, caregivers and volunteers, in their daily struggle against the virus. Female workers appear to be often hyper-humanized in this type of news, with the articles focusing their storytelling on the impact the crisis has had on their lives, on their attempt to keep up with their daily routines and tasks despite the lockdown, or by reporting, on occasion, on their hopes and dreams for a future in which the pandemic will finally be defeated.

"Having treated patients with Covid-19 and having had it myself, it just hits home how real it is. I have been in my bubble of looking after people. But when I am away from that, it is overwhelming just how big this is. It is much more of a marathon. It is important that we all play our part; we all have our role to play," she says. (Telegraph, April 6, 2020)

Yari comes from Nicaragua, she arrived in Italy not even a year ago, she is married to an Italian boy named Walter and is Diana's mother, two years old. When they asked for volunteers on the antiviral front, she was among the first to say yes. "That evening I went home and I said to my husband: you and Diana are my life, this country is my home. I want my daughter to grow up knowing that helping others is essential" (Corriere della Sera, April 20, 2020).

24 articles were dedicated to stories on how women were experiencing the pandemic. These news reported, for example, on campaigns promoted by female celebrities or royals, or on impromptu trends emerging from social media calling for women solidarity. A residual group of “hard” news (23) reported on specific circumstances or events that had women as the main protagonists such as crimes, deaths, or arrests. Feature interviews with female politicians, as well as with female experts, scholars and scientists (21) discussing their professional activities in relation to the pandemic were also included in this group.

Valérie Pécresse: "We are in a race against time". INTERVIEW - While the coronavirus epidemic is spreading very strongly in Île-de-France, the president of the region calls on all nursing students in the Île-de-France region to come in support of public and private hospitals. (Le Figaro, March 24, 2020).

Meet Sarah Gilbert, the female scientist leading Oxford vaccine team - and about to make history. (Telegraph, April 23, 2020)

Although low in number, these types of interviews are particularly important in establishing women's contribution to society as they allowed women to provide their own interpretations or explanations of specific events, thus giving to their opinions and expertise public relevance and recognition.

Among the different countries considered for this research, France and Italy were the ones dedicating more attention to this frame. In particular, both countries gave considerable space to female experts and politicians (8 articles each) and the stories of women working amid the health emergency (14 and 12 articles, respectively). In comparison, the United Kingdom and Spain published more hard stories having women as the main protagonists (10 and 7 articles, respectively).

Women's health

As the lockdown period represents the outcome of a medical crisis, health-related issues have received intensive coverage by the media. Epidemic diseases are biological phenomena and, as Moeller (1999, p.61) points out, when lots of media attention is given to "how the disease functions, and how the medical and political response teams are working," health becomes an inevitable topic of discussion. As a result, women's and girls' health issues represented the focus of many (98) of the articles analyzed for this research. In particular, the largest group of news stories (50) focusing on women's health was dedicated to how confinement policies impacted pregnancy and childbirth protocols.

How the virus itself affects the bodies of pregnant women and unborn babies is not clear. After all, Covid-19 has not been around for long, and few babies have been born whose mothers were infected at the beginning or in the middle of pregnancy. Data from China give hope, but they are based on very few cases in late pregnancy. (Süddeutsche Zeitung, March 30, 2020)

In contrast, others (25) discussed the negative effect that the crisis has had on women's claims over their reproductive rights, pointing out the difficulties in gaining access to contraception and abortion during the stay-at-home period.

Marie Stopes International warned on Friday that travel restrictions and lockdowns could have a devastating affect on women as they struggle to collect contraceptives and access other reproductive healthcare services, such as safe abortions, across the 37 countries in which it works. (The Guardian, April 3, 2020)

Nearly all of these articles focused their attention on the most substantive consequences of the pandemic while also presenting actions taken by institutions to mitigate the negative impacts of the restrictions imposed by the lockdown. Conversely, another group of news discussed women's and girls' health in relation to the overall epidemiological framework (15), reporting on open questions surrounding the functioning of the disease that specifically related to women. In particular, most of the stories in this group reported on gender differences in mortality from the coronavirus, as research and epidemiological data seemed to suggest that women could be less impacted by the virus than men.

The blood of men has higher levels than that of women of the angiotensin II converting enzyme (ACE 2) used by the new coronavirus to infect cells. This enzyme allows the coronavirus to infect healthy cells, which may explain why men suffer from Covid-19 more than women, according to a large study carried out in Europe and published by the European Heart Journal. (El Mundo, May 12, 2020)

Finally, a smaller set of articles (8) discussed the challenges posed by the COVID-19 epidemic in relation to other ongoing medical research significant for girls and women (i.e., ovarian or breast cancer), as well as how the crisis impacted other relevant social determinants of health (i.e., level of access to general health-care assistance by vulnerable groups).

With the exception of Germany, the data shows that women's and girls' health was a topic consistently discussed across the media analyzed for this research, with no distinct differences emerging among the countries considered. However, while women's reproductive aspects connected to pregnancy and childbirth received considerable coverage (almost all the countries dedicate more than half of the articles of this frame to this theme), the articles on reproductive rights were everywhere less frequent in number. Finally, among all the countries taken into consideration, Italy and the United Kingdom were those paying more attention to the alleged resistance of women to the covid-19 virus (6 and 5 articles respectively).

Women as a transformative force in society

The transformative potential of women and their role in determining the rise of a more equal and ultimately better society emerged as the focus of the discussion of 51 of the news articles analyzed for this research. Women's rights movements, policies designed to support gender equality, and even feminism were discussed in 37 articles as crucial

ground for determining a potentially fairer and sustainable new world order stemming from the COVID-19 crisis.

For the feminist collective Doce Miradas, "a global pandemic has revealed what feminism has been warning for so long: that our world cannot be sustained without care (our own and community care) and that these support it, in a majority and overwhelming, women". (El Mundo, May 1, 2020)

Some articles specifically reported on the claims that groups of women in different parts of Europe were compelling institutions to include more female experts and scientists on their advisory boards as women provide diversity and better decision making. Building on this idea, and on an editorial published on Forbes magazine entitled "What Do Countries With The Best Coronavirus Responses Have In Common? Women Leaders", 14 articles discussed in particular the positive impact that female leaders had in managing the health emergency.

What do Germany, New Zealand and Taiwan have in common? Well, they've all got female leaders and they're all doing an exceptional job in their response to the coronavirus crisis. (The Guardian, April 11, 2020)

On the peculiarities of female leadership perhaps because it is still an exercise in the imagination in much of the world, there are many theories. A practical test case today seems to be the Covid-19 pandemic. What do countries that have responded well to the coronavirus have in common, asks a *Forbes* magazine editorial? The answer: women in government. (Corriere della Sera, April 15, 2020)

According to these articles, female leaders worldwide proved to be more successful in handling the pandemic than their male colleagues, both at national and local levels. In particular, Angela Merkel in Germany, Jacinda Arden in New Zealand, Tsai Ing-wen in Taiwan were described as examples of women successfully in charge of the management of the pandemic.

As far as the distribution across different countries, the analysis reveals similar media attention levels over female leadership. On the contrary, the attention paid to the necessity to tackle women's inequality to promote a better society showed a more unbalanced distribution of the articles. In particular, Italy emerged as the country where this theme received the highest level of attention (22 articles), probably due to different social initiatives launched in the country during the lockdown calling for equal inclusion of women among the experts advising the government on the pandemic.

Discussion

Although additional analysis is needed to further consolidate these initial findings especially in terms of prominence (Graber, 1988), the recurring presence of all the four frames across the newspapers considered for this research suggests that a "women's narrative", focused on a narrow set of shared themes, did emerge in Europe during the so-called "phase 1" of the coronavirus pandemic. Women were successful in entering the

mediatic arena during the initial stage of the health crisis, even going as far as, at least on some occasions, catalyzing their own narratives in the way their own specific needs and issues were framed in the media. As a result, women were concurrently presented by the media as one of the most vulnerable social groups amid the health crisis, but also as a crucial driving force behind the battle against the virus. Their health was mostly discussed concerning their natural predisposition for childbearing (De Beauvoir, 1999), but gender equality and feminist perspectives were discussed as fundamental starting points in the narrative, largely adopted during the lockdown period, that defined the pandemic as an unprecedented opportunity for long-due societal changes (Pedroni, 2020; Vanzulli, 2020). Weakness and strength, biology and culture, tradition and innovation are all elements that keep intertwining in complex and often contradictory ways in the mediatic representation of women during the lockdown, showing how much the pandemic was intersecting social dynamics already existing in society previously to its outbreak.

In this scenario, the discussion of women's vulnerability during confinement probably represented one of the most important counter-narratives that emerged during the lockdown in contrast to the overwhelming idea of the home as the safer place for people to be during the health crisis (Pedroni, 2020, p.32). While inviting everyone to stay at home, the media across all Europe also continuously reported how national and local governments, women's organizations, and women's shelters were all strenuously working to find potential solutions and strategies to support women in danger to *leave* their homes and find protection *elsewhere*. Media accounts reported how confinement policies made violence against women impossible to detect and to prevent. In a moment in which society was undergoing a strenuous battle to detect and isolate the virus, to make it as visible as possible via the provision and distribution of countless swabs and serological tests, women were risking disappearing from society's radars, concealed in a private domain represented by the media as impossible to reach and to control. Similarly, the media's increased focus on the exacerbation of gender differences as a result of the economic crisis opened up by COVID-19 showed, once again, the difficult relationship that women have with the domestic domain. In an economy eroded by the pandemic, women appeared to be greatly at risk of losing their employment, facing poverty and being forced back to the private domain of their homes to take care of their families. Despite not being directly connected to policies designed for the containment of the virus, the presence of a narrative problematizing the idea of women "going back to their homes" openly contributed to casting more than one doubt over the fairness of the implemented policies and the different impact that they would have had on different social groups.

Women's capacity to lead the implementation of the needed social and economic reforms directed at creating a more just and sustainable world order was another important counter-narrative emerging from the mediatic construction of the health crisis. In particular, women leaders were represented all over Europe as more capable of handling the pandemic's complexities than their male counterparts, obtaining better results for lesser social and economic costs. This narrative was supported by the perceived discontent with male leadership in the management of the pandemic, but it was also one important success for women's long-lasting struggle to obtain more recognition as a valid alternative

to male leadership (Cherneski, 2020), thus setting an important milestone towards the achievement of a more balanced gender representation in politics (Piazza & Diaz, 2020). Yet, many problems persisted in the way the media framed women inside the pandemic, with their marginalization in the experts' realm representing probably one of the most substantial ones. Women's knowledge and expertise were mostly exclusively presented by the media as what Schutz (1971) would describe as the "educated common sense" of the well-informed citizen. Women were mainly interviewed to discuss their participation in the crisis as caregivers or as essential workers, to describe their efforts to reconcile work and family-life, to explore their preoccupations as mothers, and even to review their lockdown beauty routines and comment upon recent social media trends. Little room was given in comparison to female scientists, virologists or academics to express their opinions and to participate in the decision-making processes. Knowledge control during the most acute phase of the epidemic was firmly in the hands of men, while women appeared to be the champions of everyday life. Women's movements, already operating before the crisis, intercepted this disparity and advocated for a change that mostly never came despite some minor improvements.

Conclusion

A well-known saying states that "within crisis are seeds of opportunities". When this paper was written, only a few months after the lifting of "phase 1" and while the world was getting ready to face the surge of a possible second wave of the pandemic, most of the optimism for a "new society" at the end of the lockdown period had already faded away. As scholars in the social sciences well know, social change does not happen overnight, and the social problems that were weighing upon society before the beginning of the pandemic were still there, unresolved. Media attention, during the period of home confinement, focused on a small number of recurring frames and narratives (Boni, 2020; Pedroni, 2020), pushing several issues abruptly to the margins of the public agenda while pulling a few others towards the center of the public debate. It is indisputable that a "women's narrative" also existed before the breakout of the pandemic, but news concerning the condition of women under the restrictions imposed by COVID-19 had consistent coverage in the media across all Europe. Opposition to violence against women, the struggle to obtain gender equality in the workplace, the demand for an increase of female leadership were all questions that strongly connected with several of the narratives already explored in the media during the lockdown, offering a vivid and unusual condensed representation of how the pandemic and women's issues connected and interrelated with one another. The overall effect of this visibility upon women is uncertain and hard to predict. Nonetheless, some scholars are speculating that, despite short-term repercussions that will deepen the gender gap by disproportionately hitting women, the COVID-19 crisis has the potential to bring about a substantial improvement in the condition of women in the long run, challenging cultural and social practices that situate women in a disadvantaged position in society (Alon et al., 2020; Cherneski, 2020; Pizza & Diaz, 2020). In a moment when the future appears

painfully uncertain, the only certainty is that women were not marginalized in the media discourse at the beginning of the pandemic. Even if often represented in contradictory ways, women in society were presented by the media as firmly established in the public as well as in the private realm, with their withdrawal from public life appearing as being neither negotiable nor sustainable.

Nota biografica

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Note

¹As Germany did not enforce a strict national lockdown, it was decided to set the end of the detection period for this country as the same date of the last country of those examined exiting the so-called "phase 1".