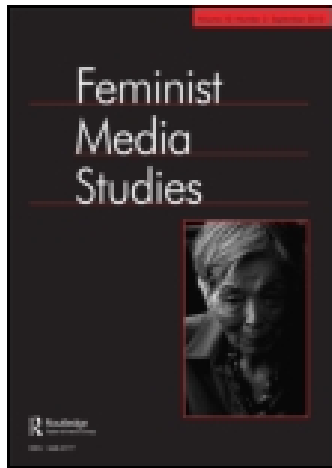


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Feminist Media Studies

Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:

<http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/rfms20>

Commentary and criticism

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Published online: 21 May 2009.

To cite this article: Kumarini Silva & Kaitlynn Mendes (2009) Commentary and criticism, *Feminist Media Studies*, 9:2, 243-262, DOI: [10.1080/14680770902814926](https://doi.org/10.1080/14680770902814926)

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/14680770902814926>

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COMMENTARY AND CRITICISM

INTRODUCTION

Women, Migration and the Media

Kumarini Silva and Kaitlynn Mendes

In an increasingly globalized world, the movement of bodies from geographical location to location occupies a great deal of our popular imagination, as well as our socio-political and economic lives. As nation states are reconfigured and renegotiated within this process, and bodies are marked only to either disappear into a labyrinth of red tape or become contested spaces of identity, we felt it was timely to explore the intersections between women, migration, and media in this issue's "Commentary and Criticism" section.

In our call for papers, we contextualized this topic through the example of Elvira Arellano, a Mexican immigrant who gained considerable notoriety in the United States by taking refuge in the Adalberto United Methodist church in the Humboldt Park area of Chicago, in protest of her deportation from the United States. Arellano's struggle to remain in the country of her son's birth became national news, raising considerable awareness about women's experiences in migration and immigration processes. Because of people like Arellano, in the last several years, women and migration has become a topic that is drawing increased interest and visibility among academics (e.g. George 2005; Hussain 2005; Segura & Zavella 2007; Shohat 1998). But, as women's bodies move across borders, discussion about the *representation* of female experiences in the migration process still remains somewhat mute. While migration is discussed as a process, the gendered aspects of the experience, and the representations of such, is often ignored or overlooked.

In this issue, Nicholas De Genova sets a foundation for us to understand Arellano's struggle as symbolic of a greater socio-political discourse surrounding women and migration in his essay titled, "Sovereign Power and the 'Bare Life' of Elvira Arellano." We feel this context of a broader discussion of women's bodies and migration provided by De Genova is very necessary in order for us to transition into a discussion of mediated images, or media practices connected to gendered migratory processes. De Genova starts by explaining the mediated representational popularity of Arellano's inclusion in *Time* magazine's list of people who mattered in 2006. While De Genova doesn't make an explicit claim here, it is interesting to note the media spectacle that culminated in Arellano's selection, and the implicit relationship between mediated spectacle and gendered bodies. De Genova then provides an interesting theoretical foundation for understanding gendered bodies in the migratory process by carrying out an analysis of Arellano through the concept of "bare life," and the politicization of Arellano through both containment and

exclusion—a reduction of her life to this particular politicized representation. Indeed, this reduction of women's bodies to simple binaries, especially *vis-à-vis* the media, becomes a recurring theme in other contributions as well.

In their contribution, titled "Gender and Ethnicity in the German Mass Media: Current Research on the Representation of Female Immigrants," Margreth Lünenborg and Annika Bach argue that while there is a significant amount of research done on media and migration, especially in Germany, there still remains much work to be done. For Lünenborg and Bach, one of the primary criticisms of existing research about German media representations of women migrants is that, similar to De Genova, they see immigrant women reduced to essentialist binaries. Focusing primarily on German newspaper research, they argue that the representation of immigrant women is expressed as struggles between east/west, north/south, and in many instances and in keeping with current global political discourses, Christian/Muslim. According to the authors, this limited representation and subsequent discussion is not exclusive to media outlets, but also circulates within communication scholarship. In order to overcome this, they propose that new scholarship on women, migration, and the media should take place on three essential levels: (1) media analysis, (2) production analysis, and (3) reception analysis. Ultimately, Lünenborg and Bach argue that there is a need for a more holistic and integrative approach that acknowledges the diversity of women, both as gendered beings and as migrants.

Iñaki Garcia-Blanco and Karin Wahl-Jorgensen provide a similar critique of media representation of migrants from the UK perspective in their contribution, "Migrant Women and the Representation of Immigration." Looking at several news/media outlets, including *BBC News*, *ITV News at Ten*, and *The Guardian*, Garcia-Blanco and Wahl-Jorgensen argue that media coverage tends to dehumanize and un-gender the process of migration while at the same time emphasize the economic costs of an abstract immigration process. In addition to this, the authors also posit that the media sets up a proverbial "clash of civilizations," especially between Islam and the West, which ignores Britain's multicultural history. Garcia-Blanco and Wahl-Jorgensen argue that such representations are especially harmful to women who more commonly wear the physical accoutrements of cultural belonging. They conclude by arguing that it is more important for the media to cover the actual lived experiences of migrant women, rather than positioning them within pre-immigration discourses of culture that work against bringing communities together and limit the visibility and voices of minorities and other social groups in contemporary culture.

Shifting the conversation from traditional media, and to a different locale, Celianny Rivera-Velázquez and Tanya L. Saunders direct us to how performance, media, and migration interact in the arts to create moments of resistance and empower women. Through their essay, they interrogate how cross-border alliances between female artists continue once they migrate to other locations and how these relationships further their activism. Through their work, Rivera-Velázquez and Saunders highlight the diversity of media, migration, and gendered performances, giving us much to think about.

Collectively, these essays, covering different geographies and genres, highlight the diversity and breadth of work focusing on women, migration, and the media at the same time as they highlight the necessity, and perhaps even the urgency, for more engagement in this area of feminist inquiry.

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SOVEREIGN POWER AND THE “BARE LIFE” OF ELVIRA ARELLANO¹

Nicholas De Genova, Columbia University

Elvira Arellano would appear an improbable candidate for *Time* magazine’s list of “People Who Mattered” in 2006. Previously deported in 1997, and then arrested during an immigration raid in 2002 at Chicago’s O’Hare International Airport, where she worked “illegally” cleaning the passenger cabins of commercial airliners, Arellano was counted alongside George W. Bush (as well as Dick Cheney, Donald Rumsfeld, and Condoleezza Rice), Hugo Chávez, Pope Benedict XVI, and Kim Jong Il, among others. In addition to her lowly status as a “deportable alien,” Arellano was indeed a tireless spokesperson in campaigns against deportation, but even her previously diminutive public life as a local political activist seems unlikely to have ever garnered Arellano such mass-mediated renown. On August 15, 2006, however, in defiance of a final order to report to the US Department of Homeland Security for deportation to Mexico, Arellano (with her 8-year-old son, a US citizen) publicly took refuge in Chicago’s Adalberto United Methodist Church, where it was proclaimed that she and her child would be provided “sanctuary.”² Arellano’s humble but courageous act of civil disobedience forcefully challenged immigration authorities to storm the premises—and apprehend her.

Arellano remained confined to the storefront church and a small apartment above, as well as its modest enclosed parking lot and garden, for the year that followed. Her captive deportability arose amidst a spectacular escalation of workplace and community immigration raids (initiated in April 2006 in response to the mass protests in defence of “immigrants’ rights,” and unabated during the subsequent year). Moreover, Arellano’s public act of defiance flagrantly spited the US immigration authorities’ bombastic declaration of an avowed but absurdly implausible mission “to remove all removable aliens” (US Department of Homeland Security, Bureau of Immigration and Customs Enforcement [USDHS-ICE] 2003, p. ii). Much as it may seem paradoxical, the deportation regime in which Arellano was embroiled nonetheless reserved its sovereign prerogative during the year that ensued, to look the other way and bide its time. Confronted with an audacious affront to its juridical order, the sovereign power of the US state was pressed to decide upon the

remarkable quandary presented by one Elvira Arellano. In response, the authorities tacitly instituted a peculiar state of exception whereby the law was suspended rather than enforced (Agamben [2003] 2005). What appeared, however tentatively, to be Arellano's de facto immunity from deportation was indubitably a testament and a tribute to the vitality and potential volatility of the mass social movement from which her bold but desperate act of insubordination arose. It was likewise a measure of the state's prudent assessment of that movement's demonstrable success at garnering significant public sympathy.³ Undoubtedly, the state's reluctance signalled a palpable gain for that movement, and also a definite victory (albeit only in the strictest and most narrow sense) for a person prepared to make extraordinary sacrifices in order to *not* be deported. Nonetheless, Arellano incurred not merely a dramatically more excruciating kind of deportability but also a radical *immobilization*—a veritable encirclement, an asphyxiating abrogation of her freedom of movement.

If the law regarding Arellano's actionable deportation was at least temporarily set aside, therefore, the norm of her *deportability* remained rigorously in force (De Genova 2002, 2005, p. 8). For, if the state's seeming *indecision* may yet have been apprehensible as a kind of decision, might we not detect that the efficiency of Arellano's deportability was exorbitantly enhanced, under these exceptional circumstances, by the deferral of her actual deportation? Upon the one-year anniversary of her defiant custody, Arellano announced in a press conference that she would soon abandon her church sanctuary in Chicago by travelling to Washington DC to participate in an immigrants' rights protest as an anti-deportation activist. She then momentarily returned to public life by surreptitiously travelling to Los Angeles, where she addressed a similar rally and then was swiftly apprehended—now as a “high-profile criminal fugitive alien” (USDHS-ICE 2007)—and summarily deported. Arellano's deportation came, notably, only once she had violated the tacit terms of her voluntary internment.

What, we might ask, do examples such as Elvira Arellano's besieged condition of deportability serve to illuminate, if not the outright and agonistic *politicization* of her (bare) life?

The concept of *bare life*, elaborated by Agamben ([1995] 1998), is only apprehensible in contrast to the plenitude of ways in which human beings really live, namely, within one or another ensemble of *social relations*. Bare life, then, is a conceptual foil for all the historically specific and socially particular forms in which human (biological) life is qualified by its inscription within a socio-political order. Agamben's poignant formulation of bare life has enjoyed an increasing prominence in critical scholarly discourse, but the concept of bare life has been too presumptively reduced to a figure of mere “exclusion.” Agamben's conception is rather more subtle, however, as it revolves around “the zone of indistinction between outside and inside, exclusion and inclusion” ([1995] 1998, p. 181) whereby bare life is literally *produced* by sovereign (state) power.⁴ As a “threshold of articulation between [human life as] nature and [human life as] culture,” it must be perennially and incessantly *banned* from the political and legal order which is enacted through the state (Agamben [1995] 1998, p. 181). Nevertheless, this banishment or abandonment of bare life by sovereign (state) power, which excludes it from all political life and denies it any juridical validity, implicates it in “a continuous relationship” (Agamben [1995] 1998, p. 183) as the “originary political element” (p. 181). Indeed, inasmuch as it is precisely the regimentation of our social relations and identities by state power that radically separates the phantom of our naked (animal) life from the real (social) lives we lead, bare life perfectly “expresses our

subjection to political power" (Agamben [1995] 1998, p. 182). And how better, moreover, to capture that precise point of articulation between the "natural" life of the human species—our animality, as it were—and the historical specificity of our particular socio-political formation than through the resplendently gendered and sexualized subjection of the procreative powers of a woman's body?

Surely, the politicization of Elvira Arellano's combined condition of deportability and containment did not evoke the iconic figure of bare life that Agamben identifies in the space of the Nazi concentration camps ([1995] 1998, pp. 166–180). Nor did her insubordination resemble at all the "brain-dead" medical patient rendered the prospective object of euthanasia (Agamben [1995] 1998, pp. 136–143, 160–165). Much less may we discern any correspondence between her quite outspoken and passionate condition and that of the "living dead" (*Muselmänner*) whose utter loss of sensitivity and personality literally embodied the ultimate unspeakability of the Nazi extermination camps (Agamben [1999] 2002, pp. 41–86; cf. Agamben [1995] 1998, pp. 184–185). Nevertheless, here, in this Mexican undocumented migrant worker/mother's life, was indeed a life in its barest rudimentary outline, reduced to the most elementary facets with which human existence (as we presently know it) must, under ordinary circumstances, *sustain itself*—which is to say, through its sexual reproduction and by its labour. And here likewise was the unrelenting and unforgiving politicization of that life. What was at stake, after all, was whether Arellano would be allowed to simply live her life, mother her child, and earn her livelihood without exceptional obstructions and intrusions by the state—whether she would be left alone to eek out her subsistence within the wider (global) regime of the (patriarchal) market, that is—or on the other hand, whether this individual migrant woman, whose real infraction was simply her free (transnational) movement and her "unauthorized" labour, would be coercively removed from the space of the US nation-state.

Such a politicization of bare life, for Agamben, marks the defining "threshold" where the relation between the living (human) being and the socio-political order becomes substantiated and where sovereign state power therefore presumes to decide upon and inscribe the humanity of living women and men within its normative order ([1995] 1998, p. 8). If Agamben therefore posits as his most elementary conclusion the proposition "that the inclusion of bare life in the political realm constitutes the original—if concealed—nucleus of sovereign power" ([1995] 1998, p. 6), then such an inscription is fundamentally an *incorporation* while nonetheless a negation. Surely, *illegalized* migration enacts exactly such a constitutive contradiction. The "illegal" migrant's ever-vexed placement within the juridical order of citizenship, while always by definition outside of it, precisely as its most abject "alien,"—her peculiar social relation of juridical non-relationality—is the material and practical precondition for her thorough-going *incorporation* within a wider capitalist social formation—as *labour*. It is precisely their distinctive legal vulnerability, their putative "illegality," and official "exclusion" that inflames the irrepressible desire and demand for undocumented migrants as a highly exploitable workforce—and thus, ensures their enthusiastic *importation* and subordinate incorporation. And this is above all true because of the discipline imposed by their ultimate susceptibility for deportation, their deportability (De Genova 2002; 2005, p. 8).

And yet, the sheer autonomy of migration (Mezzadra 2004), and especially of "unauthorized" mobility, remains a permanent and incorrigible affront to the sovereign power of the state to manage its social space through law and the violence of law

enforcement. A regime of deportability—enacted (albeit comparatively sparingly) through actual deportations—is, indeed, a premier means for perpetrating, embellishing, and reinstating a “threshold . . . that distinguishes and separates what is inside from what is outside” (Agamben [1995] 1998, p. 131). Nonetheless, if “bare life” is the vanishing ground of the citizen in the state’s disappearing act of “sovereignty,” it is no less the foundational element of sovereign power that obstinately *resurfaces* in the figure of the *non*-citizen. As Arellano remarked on the eve of her arrest, “I’m not challenging anyone. I’m just bringing to light what those who are in power don’t want to see” (Olivio 2007).

In the United States, historically, the figure of the Mexican/migrant “sojourner,” was always gendered as male, and the effectiveness of his exploitation relied upon the maintenance of relatively low “reproduction costs” due to the prearranged separation of (migrant) working men from the women (and children) who remained in Mexico (Chock 1991, 1995; González & Fernández 1979; cf. Burawoy 1976). The historical production of the racialized and gendered figure of “the Mexican”—as (heterosexual) male “sojourner”—came, moreover, to be increasingly rendered synonymous with the figure of the “illegal alien” (De Genova 2005, pp. 213–249). By the century’s end, however, the dominant politics of immigration in the United States had come to be obsessively articulated as a raciological anxiety over changing “demography” and the prospect of burgeoning new racial “minorities,” through the increasing equation of permanent (family) settlement with undocumented migrant *women* (Chock 1995; Roberts 1997). Chock poignantly identifies the pervasive presumption that “a natural relationship between babies and mothers [blurs] lines of rights and responsibilities mapped by the state between two categories of people (citizen and alien),” such that undocumented women’s *fertility* is understood to multiply “the risk to the nation” (1995, p. 173). Thus, “illegal aliens” finally came by the 1990s to refashion the conventional assimilationist question of migrant “settlement” with a palpable nativist vengeance (De Genova 2005, pp. 56–94). Notably, by this time, legal arguments to disenfranchise the US-born children of undocumented migrants of their birthright citizenship had been translated into concerted political campaigns, which sought to deny rudimentary civil rights and public services not only to migrants but also to their citizen children. The fertility of “illegal” migrant women was thus conscripted to represent the premier threat of impoverished and racially subjugated denizens who inevitably could only multiply and reproduce their marginalized condition in a permanently disaffected and criminally inclined “underclass” of abject citizens. Furthermore, this menace could only be amplified, as in the case of Elvira Arellano, when it coincided with the loathsome figure of the sexual autonomy of the single “unwed mother” (cf. Bridges 2008).

It is no mere contrivance or exaggeration, therefore, to say of the “deportable alien” that—like the exiles and bandits, to whom Agamben analogizes the figure of bare life ([1995] 1998, pp. 183–184), excluded from all political life, disqualified from any juridically valid act, and yet in a continuous relationship with the power that banishes it—no life is more “political” than hers.

NOTES

1. This brief essay is adapted from my "Theoretical Overview" for *The Deportation Regime: Sovereignty, Space, and the Freedom of Movement* (De Genova forthcoming). I am grateful to Josh Price for calling my attention to this call for papers.
2. Arellano was charged with and convicted for a federal felony, on the basis of having secured employment with a fraudulent Social Security number (a commonplace practice among undocumented migrants in the United States), and having done so specifically at a major airport, targeted by a highly publicized national enforcement sweep against "security breaches" at airports following the events of September 11, 2001. Having been previously deported, her re-entry was also classifiable as a felony.
3. Indeed, Arellano's act of defiance provided that movement with new inspiration. Members of seven organizations, representing twelve religious traditions from eighteen cities, convened in Washington DC on January 29, 2007, to establish a "New Sanctuary Movement" for migrants seeking refuge from "unjust deportations"; see New Sanctuary Movement website; see also Abramsky (2008).
4. Butler, for instance, over-simplifies and misreads Agamben in her emphatic repudiation of the pertinence of the concept of bare life with regard to state actions and formations of coercion "designed to produce and maintain the condition . . . of the dispossessed" (Butler & Spivak 2007, p. 5); Butler here equates "bare life" with being "outside of politics" (Butler & Spivak 2007, p. 5) and juxtaposes this with the situation of those who are "without legal recourse" but "still under the control of state power," whose predicament she describes as "a life steeped in power" (p. 9). Yet, for Agamben, this is precisely what "bare life" is intended to name.

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GENDER AND ETHNICITY IN THE GERMAN MASS MEDIA: CURRENT RESEARCH ON THE REPRESENTATION OF FEMALE IMMIGRANTS

Margreth Lünenborg, Freie Universität, and Annika Bach, Freie Universität

Introduction

Whilst there has been an impressive increase in the amount of research in the field of media and migration in German communication research since the 1990s, a comprehensive intersectional analysis of gender and ethnicity in media has yet to be done. There are merely a

few empirical studies, which are concerned with the specific representation of gender *and* ethnicity in German mass media and in the field of journalism. In the following article we will show that, within German communication and media research, the analysis of female immigrants in the media plays only a minor role, with much work left to be done. The research project “Female Immigrants in the Mass Media”¹ (Lünenborg & Bach forthcoming) at the University of Siegen (Germany) made an evaluation of this area of research. Its task was to explore the specific ways in which female immigrants are described and depicted in German journalism, specifically raising the following questions. When do female immigrants appear in the news? In what context are they subject of the reportage? And how are they described and depicted?

Theoretical Premises

To understand the relevance of an analytic view on the connection between gender *and* ethnicity in the media representation of women immigrants, it is first necessary to examine their theoretical groundings. It has been shown that gender and ethnicity can be seen as culturally practiced ways of constructing identity, which happens on both an individual level and a broader social level (Knapp 2008). There is no essential way of *being male or female* any more than there is an essential way of *being black or white*. Gender and ethnic identity are culturally and historically constructed in relation to the mainstream ideology and its hegemonic power. At present, the most pertinent example of this can be seen when we look at one almost iconic image in the media today—the veiled Muslim woman. Here, both gender and ethnicity are being used to construct the narrative of an “Other.” Media play a dominant role in this process of constructing criteria for inclusion and exclusion within modern societies. In this context, the concept of “cultural citizenship” can be useful in describing an:

[E]ssential dimension of citizenship in the media society. It entails all those cultural practices which allow competent participation in the cultural resources of society, and which unfold under the conditions of unequal power relations. Mass media is both an instigator of, and actor in the processes of self-making and being-made, in which people acquire their individual, group-specific and social identities. (Elisabeth Klaus & Margreth Lünenborg 2004, p. 200; authors’ translation)

Through this broader framework, we argue that there must be an examination of the role of female immigrants in the media by asking important questions on at least three levels:

- (1) Media analysis—how are female immigrants represented by the media? Specifically, what types of images or stereotypes emerge and which ones are missing?
- (2) Production analysis—how much and in what way do women immigrants participate in the production of media? Where do we find female journalists of ethnic minorities?
- (3) Reception analysis—how do women migrants, as members of the audience, interact with the media repertoires? How do they deal with the images of migrants offered by the media?

Current Research

Since the 1990s, the amount of research into media and migration has been growing continuously.² German communication research has carried out some major theoretical

and empirical work in this field (Butterwegge & Hentges 2006; Geißler & Pöttker 2005, 2006; Schatz, Holtz-Bacha & Nieland 2000). These studies, however, do not take into account the specific intersectional connections between ethnicity *and* gender in media representation. Therefore, little research into the journalistic representation of female immigrants exists. Since the middle of the 1990s, only a few studies have explored the impact of gender on journalistic reporting of immigrants and immigration. Although the first studies were based on very few media examples, they nevertheless played an important role in exploring the field and raising challenging questions for the first time (Röben & Wilß 1996). While setting this significant foundation, most of these early studies examined the (under)representation of female immigrants only in print media. And within this medium, the weekly news magazine *Der Spiegel* (which plays a major role in Germany's political communication) has been scrutinized most often and most thoroughly (Farrokhzad 2002, 2006; Hentges 2002; Huhnke 1996; Röder 2007). These early studies clearly show that female immigrants are: (a) almost invisible in the news and (b) only appear in very limited and stereotyped roles. In *Der Spiegel*, migrant women in Germany are presented in either sexualised roles or as veiled, religious Muslims (Farrokhzad 2002, 2006; Hentges 2006; Huhnke 1996). And, for the most part, it is immigrants from Eastern Europe and Africa that are contextualised as prostitutes. In comparison, women in veils from Turkey and Arabic countries are shown as being oppressed within the traditional family structures represented by their husbands, fathers, brothers, and sons. Mostly through discourse analysis, it becomes apparent that these women are predominantly presented in subordinate roles. Thus, the news constructs them either as victims of traffickers, pimps or Muslim patriarchs (Hentges 2006). Therefore, most German readers experience immigrant women in their constructed role as unfortunate and/or helpless. As of yet, however, no representative study has been conducted on broader empirical data, which would answer the question as to whether or not these representations of women in subordinate and stereotyped roles is true of all German media representation of female immigrants.

Within the study of the representation of female immigrants, the representation of Muslim women is particularly prominent. The majority of studies focus on the specific depictions and descriptions of women with a Muslim background (Farrokhzad 2002, 2006; Hentges 2006; Paulus 2007; Röder 2007). Here, discourse analysis proves to be a useful research method and elucidates how the body of the Muslim woman is being used by the reportage to highlight what is perceived as Christian by contrasting this against Muslim values. The paradigmatic picture of a veiled, anonymous woman serves as a screen to promote a modern, western lifestyle, as opposed to traditionalistic, religious-based values. As Paulus (2007) shows, veiled women are only described in terms of their relationship with something (or someone) else. They are either victims of their restrictive environment or have been able to emancipate from it. Paulus explains how this construction of Muslim women cannot be perceived as, nor can be represented as independent individuals in the German media. The Muslim religion serves as a constant point of reference for the journalistic narrative. Therefore, reports about immigrant Muslim women in Germany are set up within the framework of the opposition between modernity and progress and traditionalism and conservatism. However, it is not only the media that focus on Muslim women: we could argue that even the German communication research also has the tendency to focus on Muslim women and their representation as "Other." The construction of a difference with the help of gender, ethnic and religious identities is unwillingly supported by media research itself.

Table 1
Overview of empirical research on the representation of migrant women in the German media

Media	Author	Method	Material
News magazine/ magazine	Huhnke (1996)	Discourse analysis	<i>Spiegel</i> (weekly news magazine) not systematically chosen examples 1980 until 1992.
	Farrokhzad (2002*, 2006*) Hentges (2006*)	Discourse analysis Discourse analysis	<i>Spiegel</i> (weekly news magazine), <i>EMMA</i> (feminist magazine), no systematic collected database, many examples. <i>Spiegel</i> (weekly news magazine), systematically collected data base, 2001 and first quarter of 2002.
	Röder (2007*)	Quantitative content analysis	<i>Spiegel</i> (weekly news magazine), systematically collected database, 1975–2005.
Broadsheet	**	**	**
Local newspaper	**	**	**
Tabloid press	**	**	**
Television	Bulut (2000) Paulus (2007*)	Content description Discourse analysis	21 movies and TV production over 30 years, no systematically collected database. TV documentaries on Public Service Television, 2000–2006.
Radio	**	**	**
Internet	**	**	**

* Studies focus specifically on the representation of Muslim women.

** So far no research has been conducted in this field.

Table 1 shows that besides the one-sided studies on German print media, there is a lack of content analysis of television, radio, and the Internet. In addition, as yet we have no indication as to how the immigrant women living in today's Germany perceive the media pictures and narratives that are circulated about them. Therefore, there is a great need for reception analysis of the migrant women themselves.

Need for a Holistic and Integrative Approach to Communication Research

Migration and its social impact are two of the major issues in today's society. It is not, however, only political and economical refugees from the poorer southern countries that are at the heart of the global migration process—an inaccurate impression that might be given by the media images. Many immigrants into Germany are well-educated and actively take part in Germany's economic system. Therefore, we believe that it is important to have communication/media research projects, which examine all aspects of (female) migrant life and which focus on all forms of representation in the media. It is not only journalistic texts and images that must be scrutinized, but also fictional narratives and other products of popular culture.³ The specific impact of gender and ethnicity must play a bigger part in integrative communication research, including all forms of intersectional analysis. In addition, we also need more reliable information about the media reception of images of female immigrants in order to understand how these women themselves interpret the pictures and ideas that are circulated in the media about them.

NOTES

1. German title: "Migrantinnen in den Medien—eine systematische Literaturstudie" (2008). For further information in German and English please go to <http://www.polsoz.fu-berlin.de/en/kommwiss/institut/journalistik/porschung/migrantinnen.html>. In the second part of the research project we are going to conduct a systematic content analysis and focus on group interviews with migrant women.
2. In this article only the most relevant studies on female immigrants in the German mass media are listed. Studies that lack a broader empirical database or a thorough methodology have not been included. The complete list can be found in Lünenborg and Bach (forthcoming).
3. For example, the TV serial *Turkish for Beginners* (in German: "Türkisch für Anfänger") would be interesting for a further research. It is produced by WDR and has been successful in terms of its viewership and critical acclaim in Germany, having won the highly renowned Adolph-Grimme-Award in 2007.

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MIGRANT WOMEN AND THE REPRESENTATION OF IMMIGRATION¹

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There is a long tradition of research works criticising the under- and/or misrepresenting cultural and ethnic differences (see, e.g., Downing & Husband 2005; Philo 1999) and gender diversity (see, e.g., Gallagher 2005; Spears & Seydegart 2000) in the media. The media coverage of migrant women could thus be thought of as conditioned by, at least two vectors of misrepresentation: that of conceiving migrants as a (menacing) cultural other and that of ignoring women and their gender-specific circumstances (if any).

Drawing on the daily monitoring of the coverage of *BBC News*, *ITV News at Ten*, *The Daily Telegraph*, *The Sun* and *The Guardian* to issues concerning migration and cultural and social diversity from April 15 to October 10, 2008,² different conclusions can be reached regarding the coverage of migrant women in British media. First, migrant women are subsumed under the non-gendered discussion of (*im*)migration as an abstract issue. This is the case for most relevant news items, insofar as they tend to dehumanise (and therefore, to un-gender) the phenomenon of immigration. There is not a particular gender perspective—neither masculine nor feminine—in the news. This is particularly the case of news items presenting population or economic statistics, addressing regulations affecting immigrants, or informing about the *additional* costs immigration poses to public services. No special awareness of gender diversity is found in any story covering the countries of origin of immigrants (Kirkup 2008), migrants' preferred countries of destination ("Migrants love UK" 2008), or the UK government's additional funding allocation "to mitigate the extra burden on public services of sudden waves of migration" (Travis 2008, p. 11). A slightly more gendered representation of migrant women is almost inevitably adopted when *The Daily Telegraph* presents the beneficial effects of migrant women on the UK's population growth, as statistics show that two thirds of the babies born in the UK were born to women originally from overseas. Still, this article only mentions "the tendency for foreign-born mothers, particularly from the Indian sub-continent, to have large families" (Tibbets

2008, p. 1), showing a total unawareness of the gender, structural or cultural circumstances that might lay behind this observed tendency.

The second conclusion would indicate that migrants (regardless of their gender) belonging to certain cultural/ethnic/religious groups tend to be classified according to those belongings rather than by their status as migrants. In spite of the cultural, ethnic and religious diversity that has characterised British society since the second half of the twentieth century, the us/other dichotomy structuring the discourse of the analysed British media is based on the idea of the clash of civilisations, especially between Islam and the West. This construction stresses the intrinsic evilness of Muslims and their inexorable will to annihilate Britain, portraying migrant and British-born Muslims as equally dangerous.³ This is particularly the case of *The Sun*, where these discourses are normally found in letters (or mobile text messages) to the editor, such as “Surely we are the only country in the world that allows our enemies to claim benefits and preach war against us at the same time?” (Roberts 2008, p. 39).

Women are particularly affected by this construction, as they wear visible marks of cultural or religious belonging (veils, headscarves, burkas, bangles, and so forth) more often than their male counterparts, constituting both a symbolic representation of the cultural/religious division and a debated issue in and of itself. In this sense, we find affirmations like Adam’s SMS text to *The Sun* (May 30, p. 43): “We can’t go into shops with helmets on but Muslim women can with veils,” or an opinion article titled “Why I Prefer Bazookas to Burkas,” supporting the paper’s topless Page 3 girl as a sign of women’s emancipation by criticising Islamic oppression over women:

Many people are scared to criticise the worst excesses of Islamofascism while being hysterically sensitive to the perceived wrongs of our own culture, especially when it comes to the oppression of females . . . where there is no public female nakedness you will find zero rights for women. Where the female body is forcibly covered in public, you will find mass sexual enslavement. (Julie Burchill 2008, pp. 30–31)

However, the under- and/or misrepresentation of migrant women in the media does not only take place through explicit discourses. The main othering process in this regard concerns the silenced experiences of immigrants themselves in the news. During the five analysed months, only four stories actually gave voice to immigrants themselves⁴ (three of those gave voice to women). As a consequence, media discourses about migration are articulated through axes defined according to the exclusive (and exclusionary) interests of the *welcoming* society, such as the menacing effects of immigration over labour and economic stability, or over public services.

The media’s selection of issues, actors, and sources in their coverage of migration, together with the controversial opinions conveniently expressed by readers in their letters play an active role in the legitimisation of certain discourses that contribute to constructing immigration as a problem, instead of advancing discourses raising awareness about the difficulties migrants face themselves as a social problem. Further, the media’s selection of issues, actors, and sources also play an active role in determining who is entitled to participate in the mediated public debate, and, therefore, qualified to identify problems and construct them as debatable and solvable issues.

Overall, gender was conspicuous by its absence in the analysed media texts, which did not raise any problems that particularly affected migrant women during the covered period, other than the ones migrant women already suffered before they emigrated

because of their cultural/religious upbringing. A journalistic approach that actually *covered* migrants and migrant women—and not just discourses about them—could probably contribute to achieving two normative roles of the media that are often presented as mutually exclusive: the role of binding society together and their obligation to represent—and give voice to—the minorities and social groups we find in contemporary societies. There are no reasons suggesting that the former could not be achieved through the latter.

NOTES

1. Research undertaken within the framework of “Eurosphere. Diversity and the European Public Sphere. Towards a Citizens’ Europe,” integrated research project funded by the 6th Framework Programme of the European Commission.
2. Excluding the period from August 1 to August 31.
3. This is to such an extent that a letter to the editor of *The Sun* considers that Muslim women already living in the UK are a national threat: “Anjem Choudary’s [a Muslim preacher] plan for a birth explosion to let followers of the Islam take control of Britain is no idle threat. If the Islamic population becomes a new majority even with no new immigration, how will you get Britain back then?” (Kumar 2008, p. 39).
4. A report on the health hazard that certain migrants affected with tuberculosis pose to society (Gould & Wearn 2008); a story celebrating the cultural integration of a Polish couple that immigrated to the UK after Poland’s accession to the EU (Harvey 2008); a piece on an Afghan woman and her seven children living on council benefits in a house costing £170,000 a year (Willets, West & Hughes 2008); and a news item on the suicide of a Polish couple who did not succeed in the UK as they expected (Parker 2008).

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CANTA COMO CELIA Y BAILA COMO JUANA: LA PRIMA AND THE QUEER TRANSNATIONAL (RE)ENACTMENT OF BLACK FEMALE CUBAN STARDOM

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La Prima travels with *Las Krudas*.
She unleashes the show.
(Wanda Kruda 2009)

Newspapers, magazines, film, television, and photography provide us with a montage of hijacked planes, makeshift rafts, asylum seekers, and images of border patrols surveilling contemporary processes of migration at every step of the way. These audiovisuals rarely address the issues faced by third-world women migrants nor do they present a comprehensive picture of migrants, which includes those who are politically conscious social activists. Addressing this, this essay explores the nuanced ways in which a group of feminist, Black, queer women from Cuba have transformed the melancholia of migration into social justice-driven performances.

Las Krudas, a feminist hip hop trio that recently emigrated from Cuba to the United States, has garnered international recognition for their use of rap, poetry, and theater to address issues of race, gender, and sexuality. As Spanish speaking immigrants, *Las Krudas* have been able to continue their trajectory as socially conscious entertainers by highlighting, through theatricality, their identities as Black, fat, lesbian, immigrant, feminist cultural workers. Their work and story, like that of many other resilient and resourceful women immigrants, exemplifies the ways in which queer immigrant women of color grapple simultaneously with patriarchy, xenophobia, and homophobia. The body-centeredness that distinguishes *Las Krudas'* artistry allowed them to translate the Afro-centric feminist grounding of their critique to both the globalized context of the city of Havana as well as to the other transnational crossroads ahead of them.

In Cuba, *Las Krudas* held two separate artistic careers: as street theater actors since 1996, and as underground hip hop artists since 1999. Now from the United States, they

have managed to combine both artistic forms, as a means to reach a wide range of audiences despite cultural and linguistic challenges. This paper discusses the creation and evolution of the fictional character of La Prima, one of the post-migration theatrical strategies that *Las Krudas* have incorporated as a bilingual prelude to their all-in-Spanish hip hop performances.

La Prima's Origin

La Prima emerged when its creator, Odalys Cuesta-Rousseaux (a.k.a. Wanda Kruda), started impersonating Celia Cruz in Austin, Texas, circa 2005. Celia Cruz (1925–2003) was a Cuban icon internationally known as the “Queen of Salsa.” Although she spent most of her career living in New Jersey, USA, as an exile, she is deemed as one of the most influential figures in the history of Cuban music. Like Celia, Wanda is also a Black woman, musician/artist who left Cuba for the United States in hopes of continuing her career as an artist and activist. After a decade of continuous collective creation with *Las Krudas*, when Wanda decided to leave Cuba for the United States, it was the first time the trio—composed of actual and chosen family members—separated. Wanda left Cuba with the hope that she would eventually reunite with her sister Odaymara Cuesta-Rousseaux (a.k.a. Pasa Kruda) and with Olivia Prendes-Riverón (a.k.a. Pelusa Mc) outside of Cuba. After being in the United States for only a few months Wanda decided to continue her work as a performance artist, but struggled to reinvent herself as a performer while the other two members of *Las Krudas* were still in Cuba.

It was in this liminal space, between communities, cultures, and identities, that she decided to become “La Prima de Celia Cruz” (“Celia Cruz’s Cousin”) as a means to survive materially and spiritually in Austin, Texas, a city popularly known as the live music capital of the world. Reconciling the confusing transition from being considered a Black woman in Cuba, to being considered a Black Spanish-speaking Latina in the United States, she quickly realized how cultural and linguistic boundaries profoundly affected her self-representation as a socially conscious and independent artist. The extravagance for which Celia Cruz was known allowed La Prima, though, to blend comedy, queerness, and camp as a means to showcase herself as Celia’s compatriot who just so happened to have a similarly enchanting raspy alto voice.

From Celia’s repertoire, La Prima became a hit by simply evoking the 1974 classic “Quimbara,” the 1998 hit “La Vida es un Carnaval,” and the double Latin Grammy Award winner in 2002 and 2003, “La Negra Tiene Tumbao” among others. La Prima was booked as Master of Ceremonies in many private parties and multiple entertainment venues in and outside of Austin. Much of the humor that La Prima practiced on stage was language-based. The difficulties that she experienced speaking English on stage made her whole shtick about huge international fame, busy schedule and endless performance commitments risible. This was regardless of the level of familiarity that different audiences had about Celia Cruz or any of the other Cuban black women celebrities that La Prima embodied throughout the show.

Celia Cruz’s popularity as the only Black Cuban female icon that a substantial amount of Americans recognized, allowed La Prima’s characterization to engage with the audiences of the new county through the embodiment of a hyperfeminine and extravagant celebration of Cuban femininity and blackness. The creation of La Prima represents the first major shift in *Las Krudas*’ trajectory and identity. In between 2005 and 2006, while Pasa and

Olivia were still in Cuba grappling with being considered the lesbians within the Hip Hop movement, Wanda in the Southwest of the United States wrestled with becoming “queer,” strived to build solidarity with “people of color” and quickly learned the politics of being “Blacktina”—a term that *Las Krudas* heard in passing and embraced as their own. For *Las Krudas*, the term refers to living at the intersections of blackness and Latinidad in an American context, where both terms are seen as mutually exclusive (Rivera 2003).

How to express all these struggles at once on the stage? Satire. If comedic disidentification, as Muñoz argues, accomplishes important cultural critique while providing a cover from scenarios of direct confrontation with phobic and reactionary ideologies (1999, p. 119), then La Prima completely employed her own “disidentification” as a motor of empowered laughter, recreation, and self-invention. Her veteran command of the stage, allowed her to improvise gracefully. In any case, whatever she could not say, she sang and performed. For example, the following:

¡Ay! no hay que llorar,
que la vida es un carnaval
es más bello vivir cantando
[¡Ay! no need to cry,
that life is a carnival
and its more beautiful to live singing]
(Excerpt, “La Vida es un Carnaval”)

La Prima’s Evolution

Since the arrival of Odaymara Cuesta-Rousseaux (a.k.a. Pasa Kruda) and Olivia Prendes-Riverón (a.k.a. Pelusa Mc), the other two members of *Las Krudas*, to the United States in 2006, the relationship of “La Prima” to the trio has been reconfigured. Considering that “La Prima” was a key part of Wanda Kruda’s survival as a Black Cuban performer in the diaspora, the character’s struggles easily fit the Black feminist rhetoric put forth by the underground hip hop group. Nowadays La Prima’s character continues to transform the melancholia of migration into a parody act that recovers the voices of famous Black female Cuban singers born in 1920s–1930s Cuba and plunges them into the contemporary.

The character’s kinship to Celia Cruz, thus, has expanded to include Celeste Mendoza, La Lupe, Juana Bacallao, Rita Montaner, and Mercedes Valdes as the other “primas” of La Prima. Wanda says the following about the evolution and political significance of La Prima:

La Prima represented a woman who arrived to try to learn language etc. I began to look for the stories of others [Black Cuban women artists] who had arrived here and began to unite all of these women into one . . . I talked about all the different experiences they had . . . they were all singers of different genres. I talk about the stories of Cuban women through La Prima and in the story “I am the cousin their cousin.” They are all Black women. As time went on, I started to be more identified as the cousin of Celia Cruz . . . I am doing more research on her because it would be great to know more about her. Celia Cruz was most known [of all the performers] so I primarily identify with her . . . For example one time I went into an Arab store. I said, “I’m from Cuba.” And they said: “Celia Cruz, Fidel Castro!” Everybody knows Celia Cruz and Fidel Castro . . . So I want to know more about her . . . she has a voice and musical experience that endure for decades . . . So now my English is

better, I want to do more with music and theater, especially politicized ... political theater ... and I want to incorporate more of my experiences into La Prima as a way to explore my experiences and my personal contradictions. (Wanda Kruda interview 2009)

By the time the audience gets to hear *Las Krudas* perform, La Prima has already primed the audience with Afro-Cuban chants and with a sample of the songs these women popularized. The audience has not only been entertained, but it has also been educated through a dose of Black feminism, comedy, and parody—Cuban style.

There is something to be said about the hyperbolic kinship that La Prima builds with the charismatic personas of Celia Cruz, Yolí Raymond, Bacallao, and Valdes—all Black female Cuban entertainers that were deemed extremely talented, but also extremely extravagant. However, as Ferguson (2004) as well as Muñoz argue (1999), discourses of racial difference inherently contain politicized articulations of sexuality. It is at the intersections of race and extravagance, that *Las Krudas* also have been able to represent themselves as queer. Through disidentifying with dominant discourses that presents Cuba as either repressive or a utopia, or discourses that construct Black women as outside of Latinidad, or hegemonic discourses that construct Latina/Blacktina immigrants as illegal, criminal, and socially degenerative, *Las Krudas* is picking and choosing which symbols to invoke, subvert, and destabilize as a means to level their social critique, which is based on their experiences as Black women in various cultural contexts.

We have noticed multiple crossings in between the histories of the personas La Prima pays tribute to and the professional paths that *Las Krudas* have taken as well. We especially see an importance in the shared border-crossing practices in between all these women, and feel that it is important to analyze how notions of the spectacular bodies of artists of color inform the re-presentations of these experiences. The ability of *Las Krudas* to improvise gracefully, despite adversity, helps us to think more concretely about the intersections of performance, migration, Latino and Black aesthetics in the bodies of migrant woman doing media in the United States. More specifically, as La Prima demonstrates, the usage of media and the arts as one of the ways in which women, seemingly powerless, have been able to transverse various cultural contacts, and still act as empowered autonomous subjects who work for social change.

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