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# A Female Researcher but not a Feminist

The analysis of Herta Herzog's work from the perspective of communication science is still in its infancy. Until now, Herzog's life and scientific works have not attracted much interest although in the German-speaking world, Elisabeth Klaus' article "What Do We Really Know About Herta Herzog" (Klaus, 2008) provided the first comprehensive and critical evaluation of Herzog's scientific work and, at the *Wiener Tagung 2011*, initiated a thorough and internationally cooperative analysis of Herta Herzog (Thiele, 2011).

In this article, first, the premises of feminist science will be presented (1.) in particular those of feminist historiography of that field (2.). The questions they raise and the goals they pursue distinguish them from the typical, male-dominated historiography. I will subsequently address the aspects that characterize Herzog's scientific personality, which are edifying from communication-scientific, historical and feminist perspectives (3.). These include the exceptional position that Herzog achieved as a scholar and market researcher (3.1), the topics of her research (3.2), and her contribution to the development of social-scientific methodology (3.3). Finally, a critical assessment of Herzog's work and its reception will discuss how fruitful the analysis of Herzog and her work is from a feminist perspective (4.).

# 1. Premises of Gender Media Studies and Feminist Historiography

Looking back in history, that is to say, at that which is presented to us as history, it is clear that we are dealing with a meta-narrative shaped by men, with "his story", which is based on an androcentric worldview. The same is true for the history of an academic discipline such as communication science. This, too, is a history of a particular field shaped and related by men (Ross, 2013). Women appear only infrequently, on the sidelines, and therefore their contribution to the development of the disciplines, of its methods and theories, appears to be minor. And yet, their contribution was all but minor. To elucidate this point and to promote the visibility of women as scholars constitutes an important objective of gender media studies, which originated above all in women's studies. In this connection, Lana F. Rakow wrote more than twenty years ago, "We must make it impossible to discuss the history of current state of affairs of the field in terms that make us

invisible" (Rakow, 1992, p. 15). However, the female scholars within the discipline, those who have become professors, are only *one* of the groups that matter. Of equal importance is to look towards female scholars, who have more or less voluntarily left academia, and who were only willing and able for some time to be involved in structures created by and for men.

Besides the academics, the female communicators—journalists, public relations professionals, and all women involved in the creation of the public sphere—are just as interesting for gender media studies as those who use products of the media, the recipients. Thus, an important primary goal of gender media studies in general and of feminist historiography in particular is identified: to promote the visibility of women and their contribution to communication processes.

Visibility alone, however, does not offer protection from marginalisation. The feminist debate is also always concerned with political recognition and sharing in the power (Schaffer, 2008). Understanding gender as a structural category and as a social construct results in the scrutiny of earlier and prevailing (power) structures and—in reference to communication science—the ir-examination of existing knowledge and its origins. Concretely, this means critizising methods and theories as well as the selection of research topics. In this way, the empirical, social-scientific logic of gender media studies, based mostly on dualism, has been criticized in various points—objectivity vs. subjectivity, quantitative vs. qualitative methods, essentialism vs. deconstructivism—and alternatives to the theoretical and methodical mainstream have been developed (Creedon, 1993; Klaus, 1998; Wackwitz & Rakow 2004). Communicator research, recipient and media effects research, as well as media and media content research, have been faced with the demands and results of gender studies. Feminists point out gaps, one-sidedness, and interpretive errors of mainstream research. But besides the criticism of what exists, there are also possibilities for gaining knowledge being uncovered, which arise by integrating gender studies into communication science (Klaus, Röser, & Wischermann, 2001; Lünenborg & Maier, 2013). Seen in this light, gender media studies do not merely represent a "subdomain," or as some scholars of communications understand it, a "secondary battlefield," but a perspective, which, drawing on various theories and using diverse methods, aims to comprehensively change communication science.

The changes aspired to require historical awareness and consideration for the respective societal context need a reflection of one's own standpoint, the willingness to see beyond the nose of one's own discipline and to work in an interdisciplinary setting and use knowledge from other areas, in order to ultimately contribute to the development of a just world. These fundamental convictions of, at once, feminist and critical science are of a normative nature. In the existing scientific world, one refers to what is, but also more to that what should be. "Her story," according to

Claudia Opitz (2008, p. 16), although following the tradition of cultural feminism, has a consolatory utopian component, since at some point in time, "women's" and "men's" history could then be fused into an all-encompassing history.

### 2. Characteristic Features

Based on these premises of gender media studies and feminist historiography, the life and work of Herta Herzog will be explored in the following chapter. We distinguish thereby between Herzog's statements regarding herself, her self-conception (how does she see herself?), and other people's statements regarding Herzog (how do others see her?). It is equally important to consider the historical context: What today seems self-evident from the perspective of communication science and gender studies was by no means so obvious more than half a century ago.

Herta Herzog did not consider herself to be a critical or a feminist scholar. In 1994, Elizabeth Perse asked her about this in a letter, "Gender has never played a role in my professional life. I am not a feminist but I understand if others are" (Herzog, 1994a, cover letter). Herzog preferred not to feature in a treatise concerning the contributions of women in communication science: "If the emphasis of the book is Women in capital letters, I'd rather not be included. I'd understand the omission." Despite this reservation in matters of feminism and gender studies, Herzog occasionally practiced science in a way that can be seen as unorthodox, innovative, or transgressive, which attracted the interest of feminists. There are three notable ways that Herzog contrasted with the male- and mainstream that are worth taking a closer look at: 1. Herzog's curriculum vitae, her minority position as a female scholar and market researcher, and her career in which she succeeded in spite of gender discrimination, 2. who and what she studied, and 3. the scientific methods she preferred.

# 3. A Female Scholar and Market Researcher

In retrospect, Herzog appears to be, on the one hand, a victim of male-dominated academia, but, on the other hand, an exceedingly successful professional, a "grey eminence' of market research" (Herbert Krugman, a colleague of Herzog, as cited in Gladwell, 2009, p. 94). There is evidence for both perspectives.

Her marginalization in the academic world is evident in inequitable pay, career breaks and detours as well as "invisibility" or a limited perception of her work that persists to this day. Herzog, particularly at the beginning of her career, was

<sup>1</sup> The author did not forget a portrait of Herzog after all (Perse, 1996, pp. 202–211).

reliant upon the advocacy and goodwill of others. Thus, she took part in the salary negotiations between Hadley Cantril and Paul F. Lazarsfeld after Cantril offered Lazarsfeld directorship of the Princeton Radio Research Project. In a telegram to the couple, who were spending their 1937's summer vacation in the Austrian mountains, Cantril wrote, "Would you accept full time position beginning September directing Rockefeller Radio Research. Salary seven thousand another thousand Herta. Assistantship two years sure possible four ... Hadley" (Telegram from Hadley Cantril to Paul F. Lazarsfeld, as cited in Fleck, 2007, p. 266). In the end, Cantril even kindly doubled Herta's—a researcher with a PhD—salary, yet it was still far below what an equally qualified male researcher would have received.

In addition to the considerably lower pay for her scientific work, Herzog had to accept that her contribution to publications would appear to be much less significant than it actually was. In 1940, for instance, in the volume *The Invasion from Mars*, she was named neither as the initiator nor as the author or even as a co-editor. Instead, Cantril was given credit as the sole editor "with the assistance of Herta Herzog and Hazel Gaudet," whereby his involvement was no greater than Herzog's or Gaudet's. Because of the lack of distinction his wife received, Lazarfeld's relationship to Cantril deteriorated (Fleck, 2007, p. 299). Lazarsfeld and Stanton, the editors of *Radio Research 1942–1943*, at least mentioned Herzog's input:

This whole work of editorial co-ordination has been done by Dr. Herta Herzog in untiring understanding and conscientiousness. The increased responsibilities of the two editors of the series during wartime were such that without Dr. Herzog's work this volume could not have appeared. (Lazarsfeld & Stanton, 1944, p. viii)

Yet here, too, she was denied the credit of co-editor. The same is true for the development of the *focus interview* method. Although Robert K. Merton had mentioned Herzog's contribution in early publications, these acknowledgments eventually vanished and Merton's name was henceforth associated with the method.

Still, the negative experiences in academia did not politicize Herzog or turn her into a feminist. Instead, in 1943, she ventured to enter the private sector. This proved to be the right decision not only financially but especially in terms of her professional autonomy. However, at the leading agency Tinker & Partners, Herzog found herself in a male-dominated environment, which she came to terms with, ignoring the omnipresent sexism that we are familiar with today from television series such as *Mad Men*.<sup>2</sup> Not unlike many other successful women of her generation, Herzog did not wish to acknowledge this pervasive discrimination. As a researcher, she felt

she was largely accepted. At the time, the qualitative methods she preferred were not considered "soft" or "preferred by women," but rather innovative, a possibility to scientifically examine consumer's motives instead of relying on speculation. To the question regarding gender relations, Herzog replied quite laconically in a letter to Elisabeth Perse, "That most of the division heads in the research department were men was accidental. To my knowledge there existed no gender-related problem for me or them" (Herzog, 1994a, p. 11). It is possible that the situation in the field of market research of the 1960s was in fact very different to the scientific world of the 1940s, that perhaps in the Tinker & Partners think tank there was more openness to new ideas—even if they came from a woman. One way or the other, Herzog was out to impress with her professionalism instead of complaining.

# 3.1 Research Topics

From the perspective of critical theory, the radio broadcasts Herzog studied, for example, the famous radio drama *Invasion from Mars*, the quiz show *Professor Quiz*, or the daily soap operas were mass-produced goods of the culture industry; their countless listeners blindly fleeing to a world of make-believe. That opinion, although Herzog initially "somehow" shared it as Tamar Liebes (2003) shows for Herzog's study "On Borrowed Experiences. An Analysis of Listening to Daytime Sketches" (1941), is discernable only to a minor degree in later studies. And although Herzog, in "What do we really know about daytime serial listeners" (1944), formulated five hypotheses on the different reasons female listeners and non-listeners tuned into radio serials on the basis of critical theory, those could largely not be confirmed. Female soap listeners were neither socially isolated, nor limited in their interests, nor were they less politically interested, more anxious, or more frustrated. They merely had a greater "affinity for radio" overall (pp. 5–6). Herzog's results led her to the conclusion that the radio can be used for opinion-forming not only in wartime but also in peacetime:

We live in a world where the ultimate criterion is no longer what we like to do, but what our duty is. If radio gets into the habit of telling this to large numbers of listeners now, it will acquire a tradition which will make it an even more important social instrument after the war. (Herzog, 1944, pp. 32–33.)

Today, this study is considered a milestone in research on uses and gratifications and is cited notably when reference is made to gratifications sought and obtained, whereby it sometimes falls from view that Herzog was dealing with a frequently disregarded genre, and indeed particularly with its female listeners. Ultimately, she not only prompts the collection of quantitative data on the number of female users and the duration of their usage but also provides the listeners of daytime

<sup>2</sup> In this series, a character named Greta Guttman, who seems to be based on Herta Herzog, appears in the first episode of the first season.

serials with an opportunity to explain why they tune into the radio and what personal use they glean from this and other media products (Brunsdon, 2000, p. 50; Klaus, 2008, p. 238). Herzog (1944) emphasized the service, advisory, and orientation functions of entertainment broadcasts. They gave answers to questions of social interaction. In her opinion, radio was useful not only for entertainment but also for education.

The interest in recipients, or consumers, their attitudes and decisions, is a constant in Herzog's life as a researcher, regardless of whether she was working for a private market research company or doing research at a university, whether she was living in the USA or Europe. Entertainment broadcasts and their success with their audience in particular, remained a topic for her as the studies done four decades after "What do we really know about daytime serials" on *Dallas* (1986) and *Dynasty* demonstrate (Herzog Massing, 1986, 1990). Standing in contrast with these are Herzog's studies on anti-Semitism, which, commissioned by the *Vidal Sassoon International Center for the Study of Antisemitism* in Jerusalem, she conducted in Austria at over 80 years of age (Herzog, 1994b). The link between these research topics, which at first glance seem quite varied, is the recipients and their motives for using certain media.

#### 3.2 Methods

Herzog had been familiar with a range of quantitative and qualitative methods of empirical social science since her time in Vienna. In her doctoral dissertation, she devoted her efforts to radio, a new medium at the time, and studied the effects on listeners of male and female voices on the radio (Herzog, 1933). To this end, she developed a survey that was distributed at tobacco shops in Vienna and was filled out by more than 2700 listeners. One result was that listeners had very specific ideas regarding the age, social status, physical appearance and personality of the speaker (Douglas, 2004). Naturally, in subsequent studies, Herzog combined content analysis, observation, surveys and experiments, and performed methodological triangulation in order to obtain valid results. She was as interested in technical measuring instruments, such as the Lazarsfeld-Stanton Program Analyzer (a small device with buttons to precisely record the emotional responses of research subjects) or eye tracking as she was in technically less sophisticated methods, such as asking respondents to draw pictures (Gladwell, 2009). One of the methods she preferred and refined over the years was the focused interview. This is a relatively open, qualitative method, whereby a group of participants, put together according to their socio-demographic characteristics and consumer behaviour, responds to questions. These questions concern attitudes, opinions, and beliefs with reference to certain products. The interviewers can fall back on interview guidelines but should act flexibly and, if necessary, address and elaborate certain aspects. Generally, though, interviewers are meant to provoke discussion among the respondents and listen to them, in order to find out more about their attitudes. According to Douglas (2004), Herzog used her status as a foreigner to her benefit: "Her trick was to play dumb . . . . Because she had an Austrian accent and was a recent emigrant, the respondents felt they had to explain the semiotics of radio production very carefully to her, sometimes calling her Dearie" (Douglas, 2004, p. 139).

In 1946, Robert K. Merton and Patricia Kendall present the method of the *focused interview* in an article for the *American Journal of Sociology*, mentioning Herzog, who had already put the method to the test:

The focused interview was initially developed to meet certain problems growing out of communication research and propaganda analysis. The outlines of such problems appear in detailed case studies by Dr. Herzog, dealing with the gratification found by listeners in such radio programs as daytime serials and quiz competitions. With the sharpening of objectives, research interest centered on the analysis of responses to particular pamphlets, radio programs, and motion pictures. During the war Dr. Herzog and the senior author of the present paper were assigned by several war agencies to study the psychological effects of specific morale-building devices. In the course of this work the focused interview was progressively developed to a relatively standardized form. (Merton & Kendall, 1946, p. 542)

After the end of the Second World War, the focused interview was applied in market research. Instead of measuring political impressions and beliefs, the focus was laid on customer feedback, new products, and sales methods. Herzog prided herself on having developed and refined this method (Herzog, 1994a; see also Gladwell, 2009, p. 94). In addition, Herzog is regarded as the one who made the term *image* useful for market research. In the letter to Elizabeth Perse, she refers to her Viennese teacher Karl Bühler, "Prof. Bühler had talked about the concept of psychological environment. I was looking for a way how this phenomenological notion could be introduced into market research: the concept of Image seemed to do it" (Herzog, 1994a, p. 7).

Psychological approaches and the use of qualitative methods revolutionized opinion, market, and consumer research. Research was no longer done only on who buys what but also on why certain products "do well." Basically, Herzog was totally convinced that attitudes and needs could be determined with the help of empirical methods, that it is just a matter of finding the right method. As she concentrated primarily on methods and applied research, theoretical questions faded into the background during her time in market research.

# 4. Herzog's Life and Work from a Feminist Perspective: A Critical Assessment

In conclusion, it can be said that even though Herzog was one of the few women in the academic world and in market research, she was certainly not a feminist. By no means should her gender be decisive. Herzog's distance to feminist positions does not preclude her and her work from being an interesting research topic from a feminist perspective. On the one hand, the example of Herzog confirms how difficult it was for women in their professional life, and that they and their work remained largely invisible, on the other hand, she was more than "the wife of". Unlike most of the women of her generation, she was consistently active professionally, partly in management positions. She forged a career and for this reason alone seemed ahead of her time. At Tinker & Partner, one of the leading agencies, she was part of the think tank and managed the research department. In 1986, living again in Europe, Herzog, "to her great surprise and pleasure" was made "Hall of Fame Honoree" of the Market Research Council (Herzog, 1994a, p. 8).

In addition to her professional successes, it is important from a feminist perspective that Herzog was interested in the media use and consumer behavior of women, taking them seriously as a *target audience*. This comprises the analysis of the *products* consumed by women whether radio broadcasts or headache tablets. In this sense, and particularly in an economic sense, a separation between information and entertainment, between high culture and popular culture, was obsolete. Because of this "impartiality," Herzog aroused the interest of feminist researchers. Nevertheless, Herzog's emancipatory aspirations were evidently less crucial to her analysis of women and their shopping habits than the interest of the advertising industry in those individuals, who make dozens of purchase decisions every day.

Herzog's creative and innovative approach to research methods, which were labelled *qualitative*, constituted a further reason to (re)discover her for gender research. After all, it were precisely female feminist researchers who have focused on the link between gender studies and qualitative research (Mies, 1978; Müller, 2010). Qualitative research is seen as more open and self-reflexive on the whole, allowing the distance of the researcher from the object, or the respondents, to be reduced, and aiming not only to explain but also to understand phenomena, not only testing theories but developing them further or even creating new ones (Behnke & Meuser, 1999; Kleining, 1995). Still, it has also been critically noted that qualitative social research is not emancipatory per se (von Kardorff, 1995), and that gender studies could just as well make use of quantitative methods, without reproducing gender dichotomies (Kinnebrock, Dickmeis, & Stommel, 2012).

In the end, Herzog's life awakens the interest of gender researchers because it is not straightforward. The political situation in Germany and Austria in the mid-1930s, as well as private and professional decisions, led Herzog from Austria to the USA and back to Europe again, from academic research to market research and then back to academia (Klaus, 2008). As a female European and American, scholar and market researcher, who employed quantitative and qualitative methods, and studied both media products and their use, Herzog was always present in various worlds. This "not only but also," or "being in-between" raises questions that have no unequivocal answers. In her comprehensive treatise on Herzog, Elisabeth Klaus speaks, with respect to Herzog's professional successes, of her humility and reservation. For Klaus (2008, p. 247), it is unclear "whether this is an expression of uncertainty towards the significance of her own work, reluctance to take a clear position, or perhaps the anticipation of an epistemological position." This ambiguity can be interpreted positively as flexibility, social adaptability and openness to the new. Otherwise, experiences of illness, emigration, and discrimination would hardly have been tolerable. Herta Herzog—to the extent that the existing literature allows this conclusion—never complained about injustices she faced, nor did she even in retrospect characterize her humility as false, as, for instance, the social psychologist Carolyn W. Sherif did.3

A less positive interpretation would be that Herzog had theoretical shortcomings and was too apolitical to take a clear position. Herzog is considered to be the co-originator of the uses and gratifications approach. Tamar Liebes, however, regards this acclaim as false. As a study, Herzog's "On Borrowed Experience" (1941) was clearly influenced by the premises of critical theory, and in "What Do We Really Know About Daytime Serial Listeners", too, this influence is noticeable, "Herzog's work may be better understood within the paradigm of the Frankfurt School, which condemns popular consumerist culture for providing false gratifications to disempowered individuals in mass society" (Liebes, 2003, p. 41). Liebes names various convincing reasons to explain how it could have come to this "misreading as a gratificationist study" (p. 41) and "putting Herzog in with the gratificationists" (p. 40). But is Herzog a proponent of critical theory for this reason? Theodor W. Adorno (1945/1996) believed that "one should not

<sup>3</sup> Carolyn Wood Sherif, a sociopsychologist, famous for the Robbers' Cave Experiments, said in an interview, "In several instances, when Muzafer asked me to appear as coauthor, instead of in footnote or preface, I declined, a tendency that persisted into the 1960s. I would not do so again. I now believe that the world which views me as a wife who probably typed her husband's papers (which I did not) defined me to myself more than I realized" (Sherif, 1983, p. 286).

study the attitude of listeners without considering how far these attitudes reflect broader social behavior patterns and, even more, how far they are conditioned by the structure of society as a whole" (p. 230). And, yet. an explicit, socially critical positioning cannot be found in Herzog's works, and very little is known about her political beliefs. She made a clear distinction between her professional and public activities on the one hand, and her private life on the other. For her, the private side, at least *her* private side, was not automatically political nor could it be generalized.

Ultimately, the analysis of Herzog's work leads to the question as to which of her scientific publications will continue to play a role and be remembered in the future. Can some of them be considered canonical and belong to the canon of communication science and/or gender studies? Such a question is based on the fundamental belief that some publications are so important today that they should be imprinted in our memories. The debate concerning which authors and works constitute the canon of communication science persists (Katz, Peters, Liebes, & Orloff, 2003). There has been criticism from the feminist side since canonization always entails the exclusion of certain theoretical perspectives and their proponents (Rakow, 2008; Thiele, Klaus, & Riesmeyer, 2012).

In the case of Herzog, the problem is that the majority of her work is unpublished, in part because it was done on commission. She refers to this in the letter to Elisabeth Perse, "The research between the forties and end of sixties was client-sponsored and publications not feasible" (Herzog, 1994a, p. 13). Her final scientific study, "The Jews as Others" (1994b), which confirms the persistence of anti-Semitic prejudices, has not received a great deal of attention so far.4 The study that has attained the status of a canonical text and "classic" is "What do we really know about daytime serial listeners?" (Herzog, 1944) It marks, following the preferred reading, the transition from media-centric to recipient-oriented research. From a feminist perspective, the text is important because, for the first time, women and their reception habits were given—by a woman—scientific attention by means of qualitative methods. As far as this one text of Herzog's is concerned, there is consensus in its evaluation as canonical and as a key text, albeit for different reasons. Yet in terms of Herzog's body of work and its significance for communication science, there is a considerable difference between the feminist and the non-feminist perspectives. Still, it seems necessary to point out

women's contribution to the development of communication science and to make it visible. The second step is to review the content of the scientific work, and the impetus it gave. Thus, Tamar Liebes addresses the question as to whether there is a connection, "a matrilineal line" (Liebes, 2003, p. 44) between Herzog's works and those of Janice Radway and Ien Ang. And, according to Susan Douglas, Herzog was "decades ahead of her time in anticipating how poststructuralism, feminism, and postmodernism would inform media criticism and analysis by emphasizing people's ambivalent relationships to media content that was itself filled with contradictions" (Douglas, 2004, p. 144; 2006, p. 48). This is a very far-reaching interpretation. In some respects, Herzog may indeed appear to be progressive and unconventional, especially where she emphasizes the heterogeneity of the media audience. Her theoretical contribution to communication science and to gender studies, however, is smaller than it seems in retrospect and with the knowledge concerning the further theoretical developments within gender media studies; whereby further theoretical developments refer in particular to (de-)constructivist approaches, which understand gender and duality of gender as a social construction, and which fundamentally question the differentiation between male and female. Then again, it is certainly easy to point out omissions in Herzog's work with the knowledge in the matter of doing gender gained over the last decade. Therefore, it is essential to constantly reconsider which impetuses it has given for gender media studies.

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<sup>4</sup> For me, and for everyone interested in Austrian history and current affairs, this study on anti-Semitism is outstanding and could be understood as an impetus to continue studying the nature of prejudice.

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