



‘SHAPING THE VISUAL’ OF GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

**How visual discourse on
intimate partner violence and
European anti-violence initiatives
construct accounts
of the social world**

PhD THESIS

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Abstract

Considering the efforts to resolve the widespread societal phenomenon violence against women, information, awareness raising and the role of the media comprise one of the key targets by the most important conventions and declarations to overcome violence against women. The women's anti-violence movement since the 1970s has made essential contributions to the recognition of violence against women as a human rights violation, and is a crucial player in the field of violence prevention and awareness raising issues. Therefore the respective initiatives including the audio-visual material is of major importance, even more so as among the Europeans television counts for the most important source of information about domestic violence against women, the most frequent form violence against women (European Commission, 2010). Looking at the media representations in general, we can observe how different programmes and formats are depicting rather similar (visual) narratives of clichéd imagination on intimate partner violence, whereas the systemic nature of the problem mostly remains hidden (Bonilla Campos 2008; Boyle 2005; Geiger 2008; Lopez Díez 2005; Taylor 2009). Subsequently, there is a lack of clarity within audio-visual media discourse enabling the comprehension of the social complexity of male-to-female intimate partner violence. Therefore, the visual of gender-based violence constitutes a crucial account of discursively created social meaning, emerging from the initiatives to overcome the societal phenomenon as well as from an ongoing and rather clichéd discursive practice in the media.

Accordingly, the imagery disseminated by the players of the women's anti-violence movement constitutes the core object of this PhD thesis, by analysing visual material provided by the anti-violence movement to obtain insights about the supposed alternative representations appropriate for contrasting the 'malestream' gaze of the media on the subject. Recognising the direct, structural and symbolic dimensions of gender-based violence and applying a feminist and dispositive perspective, the contributions to visual discourse through the audio-visual material of anti-violence initiatives will be examined in a five years time period from 2007 to 2011 on the European level, as well as on the country level of Austria and Spain. As the transposition of the complexity, the social roots and contexts of intimate partner violence constitutes a rather ambiguous undertaking, the analysis aims to disclose how anti-violence initiatives shape the social accounts of male-to-female partner violence, identify good practice examples and underlying ideological concepts enclosed in their material.

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