

Introduction

IAMCR and the scholarly agenda for the Global Alliance on Media and Gender

Aimée Vega Montiel

The 1995 Beijing Platform for Action proposed strategies that would enable women's human rights to find allies in media and information technologies. 'Chapter J' identified core areas for the gender and media agenda.

The Platform was a catalyst for feminist research. Since then feminist scholars from all regions of the world have acted – at times individually, at other times collectively and together with feminist activists, advocates and with women media workers - on three levels: providing knowledge, setting the public agenda on gender and communication debates and formulating policy.

At present international core initiatives are taking place to prompt review of the main advances and remaining challenges in the areas identified by the Platform. One of these initiatives is the UNESCO campaign 'Global Alliance on Media and Gender (GAMG)'.

IAMCR was invited to take part in this initiative. We considered this an opportunity to act collectively, by contributing as a community of scholars to the development of the debates on Media and Gender.

Some action has been taken since. The first was related to collecting thoughts and proposals from members to define priority themes that the GAMG should address. Some ideas surfaced during the Special Session on this issue was held at the 2013 IAMCR Conference in Dublin. This session was fruitful, proposing strategies on how to act collectively – and wisely – and making the knowledge scholars produce useful, particularly for debating with those actors that play a key role in this area – international organisations, governments, media organisations, advocates and NGOs.

The result, ahead of the Global Forum on Media and Gender, to be held in Bangkok, Thailand in December 2013, is this book prepared by IAMCR, with the support of UNESCO. The aim of this publication is to show some of the most significant scholarly contributions related to both knowledge and action towards expanding women's human right to communicate. It is to apply the political weight of feminist theory toward the real-life practical advancement of women in society. As a community of scholars, we expect this publication will serve to make a statement about the role UNESCO has to play to firmly advance the improvement of gender and communication at global, regional and national levels.

Three of the main topics we initially chose to address through the GAMG initiative were violence against women and media, women's access to media and gender media policy.

A fourth emerged during the discussions in Dublin: gender, media and information literacy strategies and the role of feminist media and communication scholars as educators.

Thus, this volume is divided into four main sections:

1. Violence of gender, media and information
2. Women's access to media
3. Gender media policy and strategies
4. Gender, education and media and information literacy

As experts on the issues listed in this book, and coming from different regions of the world, the authors have been involved in both scholarly and political actions that have had an impact at global, regional and national levels, on the advancement of gender equality. Their contributions will no doubt make this initiative a historical precedent for how to act together with intelligence and wisdom.

We expect this publication to constitute the contribution of the IAMCR community to the core debate fostered by UNESCO. At the same time, we hope this project promotes a feminist politics of sorority among scholars, based on respect, recognition and collective accountability.

Feminist scholarship and the debates on gender and communication

Margaret Gallagher

Theory, research and activism

The push and pull between theorising, research and activism has always been a feature of feminist approaches to the media. Since its beginnings, a good deal of feminist scholarship has been motivated by a desire for political and social change. One of the earliest, celebrated essays in the field ended with two questions: 'How can the media be changed? How can we free women from the tyranny of media messages limiting their lives to hearth and home?' (Tuchman, 1978, p.38). If today these questions seem naïve, they are an embryonic formulation of the concerns that drive much feminist media analysis almost four decades later. Since the 1970s we have developed more sophisticated approaches to media analysis and theorising, but the fundamental issues at the heart of feminist media scholarship remain the same: power, rights, values and representation. Of course our approach to the study of these issues has vastly changed. The scope of much early research was limited to small-scale analyses of media content, employment structures and audiences. But small-scale analysis could result – at best – in no more than small-scale change. Over the past 15 years in particular, there has been a growing body of feminist work on globalisation, media policy, technology development and political economy. This work has been developed by feminist scholars whose focus is on macro-level change, who have argued that media representations and gender discourses take shape within particular socio-economic formations – buttressed and underpinned by specific political ideologies – which must themselves be analysed and understood before change can be effectively advocated.

The challenges facing feminist media scholarship today are formidable. Women's experience of inequality has changed worldwide since the 1970s. However, it remains unequivocal and substantial. Over the same period, media and communication systems have been transformed. The 'tyranny of media messages' against which pioneers of feminist criticism railed, has given way to something infinitely more complex and sophisticated. Commercial imperatives demand that the media reflect some of the changes in women's position in society. Yet media response to the critique of scholars and activists has been in many ways extrinsic rather than organic. For instance, contemporary media content frequently draws on and invokes feminism itself, and feminist vocabulary, in a conservative narrative that relies heavily on notions of women's individual choice, 'empowerment' and personal freedom. To pinpoint the paradox this presents for critical feminist practice in the 21st century, social theorist Nancy Fraser distinguishes between feminism as a social movement and feminism as discourse. The second is an offspring of the first but, Fraser argues, it has gradually 'gone rogue'. As a result, today's feminist movement is 'increasingly confronted with a strange shadowy version of itself, an uncanny double that it can neither simply embrace nor wholly disavow' (Fraser, 2013, p.224). Feminist discourse has been incorporated in various ways across all media genres – from advertising to newspapers to television. Analysing those global patterns of incorporation is central to a large body of contemporary feminist scholarship (for example Ball, 2012; Bucciferro, 2012; Mendes, 2012).

The lesson of several decades of feminist activism and scholarship is that gender justice' in the media – and in society as a whole – depends on wide-scale social transformation, in which women's rights – and women's right to communicate – are respected and implemented (see Gallagher, 2014, for a fuller discussion). As feminist scholar Rosalind Gill puts it, we need to think of sexism and sexist exploitation as an 'agile, dynamic, changing and diverse set of malleable representations and practices of power', and part of the project of feminist media studies must be to understand and illuminate 'the varied ways in which sexism (and its intersections with other axes of power) operates through the media' (Gill, 2011, p.62). The feminist media critique, therefore, cannot be static. Nor can it be one-dimensional. To be successful in its quest for change, it must link particular local experiences and struggles to the pursuit of global norms and ethics that promise social and gender justice. These linkages between scholarship and activism are fundamental to the wider feminist project, though opinions differ as to how fully they have been realised thus far. Carolyn Byerly argues that feminist media scholars have not sufficiently explored 'the process of struggle represented by women's media activism' (Byerly, 2012, p.15), and that this undermines the

potential contribution of scholarship to social change. On the other hand, Anita Biressi and Heather Nun (2013) conclude that feminism has reaped the benefit of the exchange of ideas, experience and expertise between women in the academy, cultural producers and political activists, and that this has 'contributed to feminism's current confidence, its variegation, its adaptability and its future prospects' (Biressi and Nunn, 2013, p.219). But whether the glass is half full or half empty, it is undeniable that scholarship and activism have intertwined and have informed each other in ways that have helped to shape contemporary debates on, and developments in, gender and communication.

In their study of women's media activism in 20 countries, Carolyn Byerly and Karen Ross (2006) identify a number of 'pathways' through which women's agency has opened up spaces for change. Among these is the pathway of the 'advocate change agent'. This is especially relevant to our discussion of scholarship in that its strategies invariably depend on the use of research. From monitoring and training, through advocacy for regulatory or policy change, to the use of cultural criticism, this path 'holds particular potential to alter women's structural relations to both media and other social institutions' (Byerly and Ross, 2006, p.187).

Signs of progress

One of the most important developments has been the use of research and media monitoring. Early monitoring initiatives by women's groups at national and local level eventually coalesced in what has become one of the most far-reaching collective enterprises of the global women's movement – the Global Media Monitoring Project (GMMP). The significance of the GMMP has been enormous. Every five years since 1995 it has brought together scholars and researchers, activists and lobbyists, journalists and other media professionals – some with considerable research experience, others with none. By putting simple but reliable monitoring tools in the hands of activists, and developing media literacy and advocacy skills through the monitoring process, it has been genuinely transformational. In their analysis of the ways in which transnational networks try to bring about change, Keck and Sikkink (1998) identify four commonly used strategies: information politics, symbolic politics, leverage politics and accountability politics. The GMMP combines all four (see Gallagher, 2014), but accountability politics is at the heart of the GMMP. The consistency of its findings over time, along with the regularity of the monitoring exercise, provides a powerful rationale for periodically reminding media professionals and decision-makers of policy commitments, obligations to their audiences or statements of support for gender equality – and for pressuring them to review their practices². In Latin America alone there are now countless monitoring networks, linked together since 2007 in the Red Latinoamericana de Observatorios de Medios³. Other organisations – including Women's Media Centre in Cambodia, Women's Media Watch in Jamaica, Gender Links in South Africa and many more – combine monitoring and advocacy with a wide range of approaches, including training, policy development and media production⁴.

The entangled relationships between media industry and regulatory bodies present an enormous challenge for feminist scholars and activists, who in many parts of the world consider the development and enforcement of policy standards and codes of practice to be a key strategy in achieving gender justice. Yet there are signs that even in this field sustained advocacy effort can pay off. Since 2000 a number of pieces of legislation – for example in Spain and Latin America (Argentina, Brazil, Mexico) – include provisions to restrain media content that encourages violence against women and, in an innovative departure for legislators, the concept of 'symbolic violence' has been included in Argentina's 2009 Law on Violence Against Women (Gallagher, 2011, p.459). In Southern Africa, the Southern Africa Development Community Protocol on Gender and Development, adopted by SADC Heads of State in 2008, contains a number of articles covering media, information and communication. Feminist advocates – whether of researchers (for example, in Mexico the Red por la Vida y la Libertad de las Mujeres) or of civil society (in Southern Africa the Gender Protocol Alliance) – have been pivotal in securing these advances. Nevertheless, analysis of recent policy processes shows strong resistance to calls for frameworks that recognise the significance of gender in the design and implementation of policy (see Gallagher, 2011 for a detailed discussion; also ITU/UNESCO, 2013 for data on the absence of gender in national broadband plans).

A further example of the impact of feminist scholarship can be seen in relation to the concept of freedom of expression. Historically, there has been a reluctance to acknowledge that gender is a determinant in the exercise of rights and freedoms internationally. Yet profound gender imbalances in media content and decision-making systems documented by decades of research show that women's freedom of expression is severely limited by layers of structural, economic and cultural constraints. It was in direct response to some of that research that Article 19 prepared a policy brief on gender-based censorship in 2006⁵. Within the past five years research and political debate have broadened the conventional definition of freedom of expression as a gender-neutral concept to include an understanding of the role of gender inequalities and discrimination in hindering enjoyment of freedom of expression. For example in 2010 the Special

Rapporteurs on Freedom of Expression cited 'discrimination in the enjoyment of the right to freedom of expression' as one of the ten key challenges to freedom of expression, noting that women and other historically marginalised groups 'struggle to have their voices heard and to access information of relevance to them' (LaRue, Haraszti, Botero and Tlakula, 2010). UNESCO's 2013 report on world trends in freedom of expression pays detailed attention to the gender dimensions of media freedom, pluralism and independence. The 'intrinsic inter-relationship' between gender equality and freedom of expression is also fully acknowledged in the Council of Europe's 2013 Recommendation on Gender Equality and Media.

Future challenges

Developments like these, attributable to decades-long intellectual and political effort by feminist scholarship and activism, may seem like major victories. On the other hand the struggle for visibility, voice and influence is still a formidable one. The issues involved remain marginal not only to the agendas of most political and social movements, but also within academia, where even today there is little conversation between 'mainstream' and 'feminist' communication scholars (Gallagher, 2010). As Gillian Youngs (2006, p.57) has pointed out, the worst misunderstanding about feminist scholarship is that it is 'just about women'. In fact, by moving beyond the abstract, assumed 'gender neutrality' of much mainstream communication theory, feminist analysis aims to show the impact of communication structures and systems on social processes, and on the lives and identities of both women and men.

In her review of the development of feminist politics over the past 25 years, Nancy Fraser concludes that this is a historical moment in which feminists should 'think big'. The crisis of neoliberal capitalism, she argues, opens the way for a new generation of feminist activists and theorists to reclaim ideas that were instrumentalised under the onslaught of neoliberalism. 'Schooled in digital media and comfortable in transnational space ... the young feminists of this generation seem poised to conjure up a new synthesis of radical democracy and social justice' (Fraser, 2013, p.16). A similar sentiment is expressed by Rosalind Gill, who argues for a 'bigger, bolder conjunctural analysis' in future feminist media studies. It is time, she concludes, to get angry again (Gill, 2011, p.68). And Cynthia Carter (2013) contends that the productive use of 'collaborative anger' is fundamental to a surge in online anti-sexism activism projects over the past decade. Certainly, the advent of new media – blogs, videoblogs, podcasting, social media applications – has begun to change feminist activism in ways that are neither better nor worse than in the past, but that are undoubtedly different (Zeisler, 2013). These changes in turn pose new, different questions for feminist scholarship. And increasingly, they will call for new, different articulations between scholarship and activism as we struggle to analyse and change media structures, institutions and practices.

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1 The term 'gender justice' is used increasingly by activists and scholars concerned that terms such as 'gender inequality' and 'gender discrimination' fail to adequately convey or address the ongoing gender-based injustices which women suffer (see Goetz, 2007).

2 For further information, and all of the GMMP project reports, see www.whomakesthenews.org.

3 Not all of the observatories in this network focus specifically on gender.

4 Up-to-date examples of international and national initiatives from Africa, Asia, Latin America and Europe can be found in the *Media & Gender Monitor*, No. 24 (2013), published by the World Association for Christian Communication.

5 The concept of gender-based censorship builds on the concept of gender-based violence against women, which was defined in 1992 by the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) as 'violence that is directed against a woman because she is a woman, or violence that affects women disproportionately' (United Nations, 2006. In-depth study on all forms of violence against women. Report of the Secretary General. A/61/122/Add. 1. para. 33).

Violence against women and media: advancements and challenges of a research and political agenda¹

Aimée Vega Montiel

Introduction

- In Guatemala, two women are killed every day. This country ranks third for murders of women in the world
- Bolivia has the highest rates of domestic violence in Latin America
- In Mexico, more than 1,800 women were victims of femicide in 2011
- In the United States, one-third of women murdered each year are killed by their partners
- In South Africa, a woman is killed every 6 hours by her partner
- In India, 22 women were killed each day in 2007 in dowry-related murders
- Between 250,000 and 500,000 women and girls were raped in the Rwandan genocide in 1994
- Between 40 and 50 per cent of women in European Union countries are victims of sexual harassment in the workplace
- Women and girls are 80 per cent of the people trafficked annually. 79% are trafficked for sexual exploitation (UN, 2011; Observatorio Ciudadano Nacional del Femicidio, 2011).

In most societies, women –regardless of race, nationality, class or age– are victims of physical, sexual, psychological and economic violence, or even of femicide. Gender-based violence is the main obstacle to the achievement of women's and girl's human rights (Amorós, 1990; Lagarde, 1997).

As this is a structural problem, directly linked to the sustaining of patriarchy, international, regional and national organisations have called attention to the responsibility that key institutions have to eliminate gender-based violence. One of these actors are media industries. This is why analysing violence against women in both traditional and new media content as well as the prevalence of violence against women journalists have historically been at the core of the feminist scholarly agenda.

The aim of this paper is to present some of the most significant trends and challenges of feminist communication research of violence against women and to provide some keys to facing these challenges. The final purpose of this chapter is for it to serve as a statement from the IAMCR community about the role UNESCO and all organisations involved in the 'Global Alliance on Media and Gender' campaign have to play to firmly advance in the elimination of all forms of gender-based violence.

Gender-based violence against women and girls

According to the 1993 UN General Assembly, violence of gender against women is defined as 'any act of gender-based violence that results in physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life' (UN, 1994).

Violence against women has its origins in the patriarchal structure that oppresses women (Amorós, 1990). It is the manifestation of the historically unequal power relations between men and women which have resulted in the domination and discrimination of women in society.

As an institutional response, global, regional and national organisations have taken significant steps towards state action to eliminate violence against women.

The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), adopted in 1979 by the UN General Assembly, is the international bill of rights for women. This is the first international instrument to define violence against women and to set an agenda for national action to end such discrimination.