CHAPTER 7

Women, Gender, Feminism: Status, Scholarship, and Advocacy

Margaret Gallagher, Louise Luxton, and Claudia Padovani

INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, we look at the trajectory of women, gender, and feminist issues within IAMCR since its birth in 1957. The first section traces the history of women as actors in the association from its earliest days until the election of the first female president in 2004. Next, we consider the research themes that have been the focus of work within the Gender and Communication Section, analysing how these themes have reflected a broadening of conceptual approaches in the field over time. In the third section, we examine the engagement of women and feminist scholars in IAMCR with gender and communication issues within global policy debates, showing how knowledge and scholarship have been used to advocate for change. A short final section sums up the chapter's main themes and the challenges facing the association in this area.

M. Gallagher (✉)
Independent Researcher, Dublin, Ireland
e-mail: Margaret@mgallagher.eu

L. Luxton
Newcastle University, Newcastle upon Tyne, UK
e-mail: L.Luxton1@newcastle.ac.uk

C. Padovani
University of Padova, Padova, Italy
e-mail: claudia.padovani@unipd.it

93

FROM THE MARGINS TO THE PRESIDENCY[1]

Almost half a century after its founding in 1957, IAMCR elected its first female President—Robin Mansell. The year was 2004. At first a reluctant candidate, Mansell later spoke of her "astonishment" at having won. The result was historic not just in returning a woman as president, but in electing women to both of the vice presidential positions. As the all-female top team—Robin Mansell, Divina Frau-Meigs, and Annabelle Sreberny—walked up to acknowledge the results of the vote, they heard a male colleague complain loudly that their election meant "doom" for IAMCR.

Happily, IAMCR survived. Indeed by the end of Mansell's term in 2008, thanks largely to her efforts, it was on a considerably stronger footing. In 2004, the membership renewal system was in deep disarray and income was in dramatic decline. Faced with a tangled internal situation, Mansell set in place a new membership process and system which would later develop into the permanent administrative unit that many in the association had long called for. Between 2004–2005 and 2007–2008, membership income increased seven-fold.

The female triumvirate proved itself a good team, spearheading important initiatives that included the launch of new book series, an International Researchers' Charter for Knowledge Societies, preparations for the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS), and much more. Far from meeting its "doom," the organization flourished under its first female president. As if to underline the point, women would go on to lead IAMCR for three more consecutive terms, with the presidencies of Annabelle Sreberny (2008–2012)[2] and Janet Wasko (2012–2020). But though the electoral barrier had been broken, the breakthrough had been a long time in the making.

Early Days—a Very Male Environment

In its first decade, IAMCR was led entirely by men. Until 1968, all members of both the Bureau and the Executive Committee were male—despite the fact that, even at that time, the field of mass communication research included a small body of notable female professionals. For instance, Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann, co-founder and director of the Allensbach Institute for Public Opinion Research in Germany, presented a paper at the international symposium held in association with the first General Assembly (GA) in 1959. She

---

[1] Unless referenced otherwise, quotes used in this section of the chapter are taken from communications with Marjan de Bruin, Peggy Gray, Cees Hamelink, Ullamaija Kivikuru, Madeleine Kleberg, Olga Linné, Robin Mansell, Kaarle Nordenstreng, Wajiha Raza Rizvi, Gertrude J Robinson, Karen Ross, Ramona Rush, Katharine Sarikakis, the late Annabelle Sreberny, and Liesbet van Zoonen. We are grateful to all of them. Given the mobility of members over time, institutional affiliation and geographic identification are included only when pertinent.

[2] This was also a landmark election, in which two of the three candidates were women, with Divina Frau-Meigs polling in second place.

would eventually become a member of the Executive Committee (later known as the International Council), but not until 1970. Meanwhile, in 1968, Irena Tetelowska, Director of the Krakow Press Research Centre, became Chair of the newly formed Bibliography Section, and thus a member of the Executive Committee.[3]

With these two exceptions, IAMCR documents from the 1960s and early 1970s describe an almost exclusively male world. Jacques Bourquin, in his presidential letter of 27 April 1967, addresses a presumed male membership: "you are all men of science, research men."[4] Women, if mentioned at all in these documents, are routinely denied a professional or institutional title. The presidential letter of 31 December 1971 notes that "member Mrs E. Blum (Urbana)" had contributed to the Bibliography Section. This member was Dr Eleanor Blum, Professor of Library Science at the University of Illinois. To some extent, this effacement of women reflected conventions of the era, but as the 1970s wore on, it began to be challenged.

1972 marked not just the beginning of James D. Halloran's tenure as President, but the arrival on the IAMCR scene of Peggy Gray, then a researcher at the University of Leicester. Halloran asked her to be his administrative assistant for his first conference as president (Leipzig, 1974), and for the next 18 years, she would be conference organizer, problem solver, advisor, and "organisational genius" (Robinson, 1997, p. 43). Though Gray's role throughout the Halloran presidency was crucial, it typified the contribution of many talented women at that time: low-key, behind-the-scenes, and away from the spotlight.[5]

At the 1974 IAMCR GA in Leipzig, plans began for the next conference in two years' time. It would be held in Leicester and was to be called "Mass Media and Man's View of Society."[6] The taken-for-granted male-based normativity of this title did not go unnoticed by some members, and at least one—George Gerbner—spoke out. James Halloran's presidential letter of December 1974 reports that Gerbner cautioned the all-male conference planning committee to take care to avoid a sexist interpretation of "Man's View." The leadership's response was to include a woman—Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann—on the planning committee, and in his next presidential letter (April 1975), Halloran described the conference theme as "Mass Media and Man's/Woman's View of Society." Despite this nod to inclusivity, the original conference title was not

---

[3] Less than a year later, in April 1969, Irene Tetelowska tragically died in a plane crash near Krakow.

[4] All cited IAMCR presidential letters in this chapter are available at https://iamcr.org/node/10510. Accessed 15 June 2022.

[5] Much later, Peggy Gray's immense contribution to IAMCR would be publicly acknowledged. In 2007, at the 50th anniversary Conference in Paris, she was appointed an honorary member of the association; at the 2016 Conference in Leicester, she received the IAMCR Distinguished Contribution Award (see Chap. 34 in this collection).

[6] The title was one of several study themes proposed by an International Advisory Panel on Communication Research set up by UNESCO in 1971. The panel and its work, which continued until 1975, is described in Nordenstreng (1994).

changed. The presence of Noelle-Neumann—not known as a supporter of women—on the planning committee did not upset the male-dominated list of conference speakers: only one of the 14 "main papers" was presented by a woman (Noelle-Neumann herself), and just two of the 17 discussants were women. The planning committee for the following conference in 1978 was again all-male.

Nevertheless, the 1976 Leicester event was a landmark. Ramona Rush—attending her first IAMCR conference, and a discussant in the opening plenary session—had recently completed one of the first studies of women in journalism education for the Association for Education in Journalism (AEJ). She presented some of this work in a workshop paper on "Women and the Media"—the first reported discussion of the topic at an IAMCR conference.[7] And the 22-member Executive Committee (EC) was replaced by an International Council (IC) comprising 28 members (as well as the Section Heads), of whom nine were women (up from two on the EC). They included Anita Werner, a pioneer of gender-sensitive research, as well as strong supporters of women's status and scholarships like Gertrude J. Robinson, Breda Pavlič, Nelly de Camargo, and Olga Linné. Both Olga Linné and Ramona Rush would later run for IAMCR presidency—Linné in 1992 and Rush in 2000. A new generation of women was arriving and change was on the way.

Women Claim Their Space

Madeleine Kleberg joined the Department of Journalism, Media, and Communication Studies at Stockholm University in 1976. By 1980, she had attended two IAMCR conferences—Warsaw (1978) and Caracas (1980)—and was "astonished and fed up with all the males taking the floor everywhere."[8] Just before the Caracas Conference, she and her colleague Anne-Margrete Wachtmeister of the Swedish Broadcasting Corporation (SBC) had been to the non-governmental forum of the UN Women's Conference in Copenhagen, where a vast gathering of activists and academics had debated—*inter alia*—male dominance in communication structures, bias in information systems, and the need for feminist networking. By 1980, there was a vast amount of research, in almost all regions, on aspects of women's relationship to the media.[9] A lot was happening—but not, it seemed, in IAMCR. Talking with other women at the Caracas Conference, Kleberg and Wachtmeister found they were not alone in thinking it was time to act. At a meeting attended by 30 people, a decision was taken to organize a Working Group (WG) at the 1982 IAMCR Conference in Paris, using a newsletter to call for papers. That first newsletter—*Sex Roles*

[7] See IAMCR Presidential Letter, December 1976.

[8] The Caracas Conference was typical of IAMCR Conferences at that time. For instance, the presidential letter of November 1980 reports that all eight papers at the plenary sessions were presented by men.

[9] Documented in publications such as Gallagher (1981), as well as in later accounts of the history of feminist communication scholarship, including Rakow (1992), Rush, et al. (2004).

within the Mass Media[10]—was mailed to a list of 90. The WG on Sex Roles in Mass Media was born.

The WG was headed by Kleberg along with Wachtmeister until 1983, and then with Ulla Abrahamsson, also from the SBC. Within two years, the mailing list included over 200 names; by the time of the last newsletter in 1993, it had reached almost 500. The WG's gatherings in IAMCR expanded quickly. At its first meeting in 1982, there were six papers, on disparate topics, from five countries. By the third meeting in 1988, there were 23 papers by researchers in 17 countries, organized into four themes and presented in two half-day sessions. Kleberg recalls that the announcement of the project in 1980 attracted some demeaning comments—"was this scholarly?"—and there were complaints that the WG work lacked a theoretical framework. But by the second meeting in 1984, a sympathetic male colleague acknowledged that this field of research was "here to stay—and to be developed."[11] And so it proved: the WG's calls for papers, from the mid-1980s onwards, demonstrate the emergence of a feminist consciousness and a search for feminist theoretical models.

As the WG expanded, its identity evolved. In November 1989, the newsletter became the *Newsletter—Gender & Mass Media*. The move from "sex roles" to "gender," said Kleberg and Abrahamsson, was a shift away from terminology that had come to signify "biological determinism" towards terminology that embraced an understanding of "culturally determined patterns and practices."[12] At the same time, a proposal was submitted to IAMCR to transform the WG into a permanent section called Gender and Mass Communication—the title being chosen to reflect the name of the association, then known as the International Association for Mass Communication Research. The word "mass" was dropped by the IC, and the new Gender and Communication Section—to be headed by Madeleine Kleberg—was confirmed by the GA in August 1990.

The 1980s was the decade when women's voices began to be heard within IAMCR. At the 1984 Conference in Prague, for the first time, a feminist analysis was included among the plenary papers.[13] Women's place in the leadership structures of IAMCR was helped by the historic overturning—at the Barcelona Conference in 1988—of IAMCR's established system of elections. As per tradition, the Nominations Committee presented a "slate" of names for the IC, to be adopted by the GA. In an unprecedented move, the GA delegates in

[10] From the outset, the newsletter was designed to reflect a broader constituency than IAMCR itself. It was a truly international resource on women's/feminist communication scholarship. Each of the 13 issues—some of which ran to more than 70 pages—included reports on research projects, books, meetings, and conferences from around the world.

[11] See *IAMCR Newsletter, Sex-Roles Within Massmedia*, November 1984, p. 12.

[12] Discussion on the merits of this move actually began three years earlier in the December 1986 issue of the newsletter.

[13] The paper (Gallagher, 1984)—one of several presented in the first plenary session after the main address by Johan Galtung—was invited at the suggestion of Olga Linné, Chair of the Sociology and Social Psychology Section, and a member of the Conference Planning Committee.

Barcelona rejected the slate, and called for an actual vote. This resulted in the election of eight women to the 30-member IC. The vote, recalls Annabelle Sreberny, was "a pivotal moment in democratising the organisation." Gertrude Robinson, reflecting on the progress of women after Barcelona, saw it as a lesson in the need for transparency: "women's participatory chances were increased as soon as organisational rules were spelled out" (Robinson, 1997, p. 43).

The Barcelona vote—"the first time the organisation had actually voted for anything!" says Sreberny—heralded a new era for IAMCR. The introduction of open electoral processes brought much wider participation in running the organization which, in turn, made space for new ideas. The search for diversity in membership and leadership—until then defined in geographical terms—now expanded to embrace gender as well as age. For instance, section heads were asked to propose papers from potential discussants for the opening plenary of the 1990 Conference in Bled. This led to a gender-balanced discussant slate of three men and three women, the latter comprising Robin Mansell, Trine Syvertsen, and Janet Wasko—two of whom would be future presidents.

The association was changing and another wave of women was arriving—vocal and influential. Among those elected to the IC in 1988 was the late Brenda Dervin. In 1986, she had become the first female President of the International Communication Association (ICA), devoting her inaugural presidential lecture to the subject of feminist scholarship and communication (Dervin, 1987). Feminist scholars were increasingly prominent within the organization. For instance, Liesbet van Zoonen, whose *Feminist Media Studies* (1994) would become one of the most widely read texts in the field, was elected to the IC in 1992. The 1990s was to be a decade of intense organizing, data gathering, and networking that would enhance women's visibility and build women's case for recognition as leaders and scholars.

Challenging the System

By the time of its transition from WG to Section, the Gender and Communication Section had become the forum for analyses of the gender and communication relationship from "different theoretical positions, in contrasting cultural and political contexts and diverse media situations."[14] Liesbet van Zoonen, Chair of the Section from 1994 to 1996, described it as a "haven for young researchers, mostly female at the time." But its focus was still relatively narrow. Marjan de Bruin (Co-Chair 1996–2000) remembers the "excitement of discovering" the section, though she gradually felt distanced from its discussions—dominated as they were at the time by an essentially binary approach to gender and a narrower conceptualization of feminism than was typical of debates in her Caribbean experience.

---

[14] *IAMCR Newsletter*, October 1992, p. 9.

In the next part of this chapter, we analyse how the research focus of the Section has changed over time. This shift coincided with the arrival of a more culturally diverse generation in the Section and its leadership, which for many years had been chaired mainly by scholars from Europe and North America. Among the earliest incomers from other regions were Gita Bamezai (India), Co-Chair 2000–2008, and Aimée Vega Montiel (México), Co-Chair 2011–2012. Also important was Todd Holden, the only man to co-chair the Section (2004–2012). Though American-born, Holden worked for 26 years at Tohoku University in Japan and had a Japanese family. His immediate predecessor Karen Ross (Co-Chair 1996–2004) credits Holden with opening up spaces for non-binary gendered work, as well as encouraging geographically diverse, non-Western scholarship in the Section. More consistent diversity is evident since 2015, after which the Section was led by a succession of scholars—including Wajiha Raza Rizvi (Pakistan), Mehita Iqani (South Africa), Shweta Sharma (India), and Carolina Matos (Brazil)—who put their own stamp on the calls for papers. This produced not only a broader range of topics and approaches but also, says Rizvi, "plenty of submissions from our individual countries." The Section's 2021 pre-conference symposium "Being Marginal— Performing Raced and Gendered Labour" was an indication of the journey travelled since its inception 30 years earlier.

With the advent of the 1990s and the shift from biennial to annual conferences, the Gender and Communication Section became increasingly important as a focal point for women's strategizing to amplify their influence within the association. Karen Ross, whose first IAMCR Conference was in 1995 (Portoroz), says the Section offered not just "opportunities to hear interesting gender-based scholarship but, more importantly, to network and form relationships with other gender scholars." For instance, at the 1996 Conference in Sydney Virginia Nightingale organized a women's dinner—an idea that was adopted for future conferences. The dinners gave women a chance to enjoy each other's company, but also to discuss the changes they wanted to see in the organization, and to plan for them. Out of these and other conversations emerged IAMCR Womennet. Its aim was to collect data on IAMCR's women members and to create a mailing list that could serve as a network to exchange information and discuss issues around women's status in the association.

Womennet was coordinated by Ullamaija Kivikuru with the help of graduate student Henna Tarjanne at the University of Helsinki, Finland. In late 1995, they carried out the first-ever survey of women members of IAMCR. Apart from basic quantitative information, the survey uncovered the frustration felt by many women who were irritated at the time wasted at conferences by the "power struggles of middle-aged men" (Kivikuru, 1996, p. 23). A major impediment to the survey was the absence of a list of female members to guide distribution of the questionnaire. At the initiative of Gertrude Robinson, IAMCR Treasurer at the time, this led to the creation of new membership

forms which, from 1997 onwards, asked for gender identification[15]—a basic element in tracking gender progress and equality within the organization. Using the revised membership base, Karen Ross and Gertrude Robinson went on to produce the 1998 Women's Research Directory—a 30-page indexed compendium of projects and areas for potential collaboration. This was the first directory of members' research interests within IAMCR.

By the end of the 1990s, IAMCR was close to achieving gender balance in the organization's leadership bodies. But this was not reflected in the academic work it chose to showcase at the annual conferences. Despite regular expressions of intent to ensure women's representation among conference speakers,[16] that did not happen and frustration mounted. Marjan de Bruin, who in 2000 became a Vice President and member of the Executive Board (EB), recalls that, at that time, it included "a set of young and outspoken people with innovative perspectives on gender issues." They included Annie Méar (Treasurer), Divina Frau-Meigs (Deputy Secretary General) and Katharine Sarikakis (Vice President). Sarikakis had attended her first IAMCR Conference in 1998 (Glasgow) as a graduate student. Supported and mentored by Ramona Rush, two years later she became the youngest-ever elected Vice President with a remit to increase the number of junior scholars and to widen the participation of women.

In the summer of 2001, Sarikakis launched a discussion via Womennet on what could be done to enhance women's visibility as scholars in the association. The issue of the "unthinking" or taken-for-granted composition of all-male plenaries and panels led to the proposal for an all-female plenary at the next IAMCR Conference (Barcelona, 2002).[17] Titled "Women and communication scholarship" the plenary was organized by Katharine Sarikakis with support from Karen Ross. It was intended to "break the mould" and to make the great and the good within the association "think twice" about the relevance of women's scholarship and its contribution to the field. Sarikakis hoped that, once shown to be possible, the idea would be repeated. This did not happen. However, the "unthinking" selection of all-male speaking lists had been called into question in a memorable way. Two decades later, women's visibility as speakers was not just accepted but expected: the 2018 Conference (Oregon) had a 50:50 gender balance across speakers at its two plenary sessions. Over the same period, plenary interventions by feminists like Taslima Nasrin, Anita Gurumurthy, Fatoumata Sow, and others helped to build credibility for feminist scholarship.

In her presentation to the all-women plenary in 2002, Annabelle Sreberny spoke of the politics of recognition—the process through which achievements

---

[15] *IAMCR Newsletter*, March 1997, p. 7-8.

[16] For instance, the Conference Committee for the 1996 Sydney Conference announced its intention that "women academics play a prominent role in the plenary sessions as speakers, moderators, chairpersons, or all of these": *IAMCR Newsletter,* November 1995, p. 1.

[17] Details of the conference are reported in *IAMCR Newsletter*, November 2002, p. 14.

and status are recognized. The organizational culture of IAMCR, she argued, was among the reasons why women felt unrecognized (Sreberny, 2002). Despite changes in that culture, 20 years later, the struggle for recognition persists. Looking back, Sreberny concludes:

> It's one thing to bring more women into an organisation and support their work. It's a different trajectory to get feminist theory and argument into not only its niche section but integrated as a critical part of our entire field. We probably did much better in the former than the latter (Sreberny, 2002, p. np).

The Gender and Communication Section and its Contribution to the Field

The Gender and Communication Section reflected, in its name, the shifts in gender-based research that had occurred since the launch of the WG on Sex Roles in Mass Media a decade earlier. It also reflected the aspirations of founding members to establish an open space for research into all facets of the heterogeneous relationship between gender and media. In the Section report for the 1996 Sydney Conference, Karen Ross (Co-Chair 1996–2004) celebrates the range and content of that year's papers: "attending to the gender dimension in all academic endeavour, in all research contexts, [and] in every research study is both possible and desirable."[18] This ethos was a driving force in the Section's early years. Over three decades later, we can offer a brief review of its development as both a conduit for and instigator of diverse gender and communication scholarship.

Growth of the Section

A comparison of conference programs from 1992 and 2019 (see Table 7.1) illustrates the expansion of the Section, both in size, but more significantly in research scope.[19] Members of the newly established Section first presented research at the 1992 Guarajà Conference and the program for this inaugural meeting reveals that, at least in its first years, the scholarly focus remained close to that of the foundations of the earlier WG. The Section hosted two sessions of papers relating to the construction of women in mass media and the role of women as recipients of media communication. Additionally, a joint session on feminist theory and political economy was organized with the Political Economy Section, signalling from the outset the Section's wish to collaborate across research disciplines.

---

[18] *IAMCR Newsletter*, November 1996, p. 11.

[19] Comparison is made with the 2019 Madrid Conference as the extenuating circumstances of the virtual conferences in 2020 and 2021 meant the Section hosted only one video session of papers, with members invited to upload conference papers to an online portal for others to comment on.

Table 7.1 Gender and Communication Section Sessions at the 1992 Guarujá and 2019 Madrid Conferences

Guarujá, 1992 *	Madrid, 2019 **
Sessions: • The construction of women in mass media • Combined study of media content and study of women as receivers • Joint session with Political Economy Section: Feminist Theory and Political Economy **Panel:** • Gender, public space, and the medium	**Sessions in English:** • Violence against women (I) • Violence against women (II) • Cyber-femme culture • Boys, men, masculinity • Advertising with/against gender • Queer mediations • Migrations, borders, gender • Experiencing #MeToo (I) • Experiencing #MeToo (II) • Rights and responsibilities • Race and racism • Erasures and portrayals • Marriage and maternity • Storytelling online • Patriarchal power • New feminisms? • Public spheres and gender • Regulations and infrastructure • Gendered technology use • Gender and sexuality on TV **Sessions in Spanish:** • Apropiación del discurso y ciberfeminismo • Perspectiva de género y estudios para la diversidad • Narrando violencias y resistencias • Feminismo y espacio político en medios **Panels:** • Misogyny without borders • #MeToo as a global ontology • Gendered online harassment in journalism. • Communicating gendered luxury in Africa

Source: * *IAMCR Newsletter*, October 1992, p. 9 for Guarujá, 1992; ** IAMCR Madrid 2019 conference program. https://iamcr.org/madrid2019/cfp/gec for Madrid, 2019. Accessed 15 June 2022.

In stark comparison, at the 2019 Madrid Conference, the Section hosted 124 papers across 25 sessions (four of which were in Spanish). Session topics in 2019 ranged from the broad, such as "Gendered technology use," to the specific—for example, "Experiencing #MeToo." Several sessions addressed the interaction between gender, media, and issues that were not gender-specific—for instance, "Race and racism." No joint sessions were convened in 2019.[20]

[20] The number of joint sessions with other WGs and Sections has waned in tandem with the Section's growth. The latest joint session was held in 2015 (Montreal) with the WG on Global Media Policy.

This brief comparison immediately highlights the substantial growth of the Gender and Communication Section and its greatly expanded scholarly agenda.

Reflecting and Shaping Gender and Communication Research

The Gender and Communication Section's development over the last three decades can be understood more thoroughly through a combination of quantitative content analysis and an interpretive review of the titles of the Section's conference sessions from 1992–2019.[21] This longitudinal study produces an overview of the Section's relationship with broader trends within gender and media scholarship. It traces the research themes that have remained a focus since the Section's inception and identifies contemporary themes that have emerged and grown in prominence.

Figure 7.1 visualizes the results of the quantitative content analysis, displaying the 100 most common words in conference session titles.[22] Unsurprisingly, "gender(ed)," "women('s)," "media," and "communication" are among the most common words. "Representation(s)," "violence," "culture," "advertising," and "activism" rank highly as some of the most consistently popular topics of research. The high frequency of "feminism/feminist" in session titles reflects the Section's engagement both with feminist theory and feminism as a political movement. This initial analysis indicates that the Section has a consolidated core of traditional gendered media research themes, such as representation. It also recognizes the Section's feminist consciousness and its focus on gender inequalities and the experience of marginalized communities. An interpretive review of conference session titles paints a more detailed picture of the areas of continuity and change within the Section.

Consistent Themes

Production, Representation, Consumption
The gendered production, representation, and consumption of mass media have been core research themes since the Section's outset and have remained a continuous focus over the last three decades. This is typified in the program of the 1997 Oaxaca Conference, where the Gender and Communication Section organized three sessions titled:

---

[21] Conference programs, calls for abstracts, and IAMCR newsletters were collated, and a database of session titles and paper presentations was produced. Due to a lack of available material, session titles for the following conferences are not included in the quantitative analysis: Budapest, 2001; Porto Alegre, 2004; Cartagena, 2017. In several cases, individual paper titles were instead available and the overall analysis draws together the broad picture provided by session titles with a more nuanced perspective available from the diversity of paper presentations.

[22] Stop words were removed and the frequency of some similar words (for example, "women" and "women's") were combined to provide a summary of the general themes of conference session titles.

Fig. 7.1 100 Most Common Words in Gender and Communication Section Conference Session Titles, 1992–2019. (Prepared by Louise Luxton, 2022)

- Using and producing: making meaning in the media
- Sexing the media: gendered representations in popular media
- Consuming media: new information technologies and women's lives[23]

In terms of production across the years, individual papers have focused on gendered power dynamics in newsrooms, the dearth of female film directors, and women's own media production, including the rise of "mommy blogs." The representation of women and men has been investigated across media, from popular culture to news to magazine advertisements; gradually, papers in this category have adopted an intersectional focus on specific cultures, races, ethnicities, or sexualities. Consumption of media and media effects has been

[23] *IAMCR Newsletter*, November 1997, p. 26.

studied in relation to various groups, including children and teens; these papers have commonly focused on new media technologies, information and communication technologies (ICTs), and social networking. While these three research themes do reflect the traditional concerns of gender and media scholarship, our study shows that Section members have increasingly engaged with them through dynamic analyses typical of contemporary approaches.

Feminism and Activism
The results of the quantitative analysis indicate a long-running interest in the study of marginalized groups and the use of media technologies as tools for activism. Sessions dedicated to research on social activism are often related to the broader conference theme. For example, the 2009 Mexico City Conference theme *Human Rights and Communication* saw the Gender and Communication Section organize several sessions focused on women's right to communication and media representations of women's human rights.[24] Moreover, at the initiative of Aimée Vega Montiel, a member of both the Gender and Communication Section and the 2009 Conference Committee, there was also a plenary presentation on the subject.

Under the umbrella of social activism scholarship, gendered violence, in particular, has emerged as a prominent research theme beginning in the 2010s. Since then, sessions have been organized at several conferences under the broad banner of "violence against women," and members have presented papers on topics ranging from gendered violence within popular culture (and the intersection of race and sexuality in these narratives) to the use of media technologies to aid domestic violence sufferers, and the abuse and harassment of female journalists and political actors.

In part, the emergence of gendered violence as a popular research theme is related to the Section's responsiveness to contemporary issues and debates in the public arena. For example, following the explosion of the #MeToo movement in public discourse in 2017, the 2018 Oregon Conference saw several presentations on the topic; and in Madrid (2019), the Section organized two sessions and a panel to further explore the issue. Other important contemporary issues have included transformations in post-Cold War Eastern Europe, media discourses on HIV/AIDS, and gender issues in the development of internet technologies, such as the growth of internet pornography and the "trolling" of women on social media.

Underpinning this long-running research focus on gendered social activism is an engagement with feminist theory and approaches. Figure 7.1 indicates that many conference sessions have been dedicated to feminist themes over the years and a closer investigation of material finds that individual paper titles containing the words "feminist" or "feminism" span sessions focused on a wide range of topics. This reflects how feminist perspectives are intertwined with

---

[24] IAMCR 2009 Mexico City Conference program. https://iamcr.org/sites/default/files/PROGRAMME-IAMCR2009-MEXICO.pdf Accessed 15 June 2022.

research throughout the Section. However, while Section members evidently interact with feminist perspectives in their research, conference programs show less engagement with feminist theory and feminist methods *per se*. There is space then in the Gender and Communication Section's research agenda for further dialog about feminist epistemologies and methodologies, as well as feminist issues.

Emergent Themes

Masculinities

As a forum for feminist scholarship, the research of Gender and Communication Section members has predominantly focused on women. However, there have been consistent efforts since the Section's formation to include and promote scholarship concerning masculinities. Calls for abstracts as early as 1994 and as late as 2019 request papers on masculinity and communication, recognizing this as an under-represented theme within the Section. For instance, at the Section's business meeting during the 2002 Barcelona Conference, it was agreed "that we would encourage (again!) the widest possible view of 'gender' to include issues of masculinity and sexuality and to encourage men as well as women scholars to present their work in the Section."[25] Gradually through the 2000s, recalls Marjan de Bruin, "more male members attended the Section's sessions"—a development that could be partly linked to the influence of Todd Holden, the only man to date to co-chair the Section (2004–2012).

The 2010s saw a concerted increase in masculinities research, with the Section organizing at least one session dedicated to masculinities at each conference since 2015. Individual papers have addressed issues such as hegemonic masculinity in newsroom cultures, men's fashion advertisements, and constructions of masculinity in the Disney franchise. Although these reflect the traditional themes of production, representation, and consumption, the Section has also showcased research on emergent topics—for example, narratives of toxic masculinity—another illustration of its role in both reflecting and shaping scholarship within the field.

Intersecting Identities

The section report from the 1996 Sydney Conference laments the "absence of papers relating to sexuality and race."[26] From the earliest days, members of the Section and indeed the WG acknowledged that limited accessibility—the fact that a relatively small number of women, mainly from Western Europe and North America, had the means to attend conferences—had an impact on the sharing and shaping of research. The encouragement of research on marginalized communities and the need to diversify the Section's membership were

---

[25] *IAMCR Newsletter*, November 2002, p. 21.
[26] *IAMCR Newsletter*, November 1996, p. 11.

constant preoccupations. Through specific calls for research on intersecting identities and cooperation with, for example, the Ethnicity, Racism, and Media WG,[27] the research output of the Section gradually diversified. For instance, at the 2019 Madrid Conference, the Section organized sessions on "Race and racism," "Queer mediations," and "Migrations, borders and gender" (see Table 7.1). Additionally, it has become increasingly common for the Section to call for papers in languages other than English, particularly Spanish.

Of the emerging intersectional research themes, queer research, in particular, has established itself within the Section. As well as dedicated sessions on queer mediations, individual papers across sessions have investigated the intersection of gender and sexuality in mass media, and the use of social media as a tool to facilitate queer relationships. Since the late 2010s, there has also been a burgeoning interest in transgender identities. However, there remains space for growth on these topics within the Section, as research from the Global North still dominates and only a very few conference sessions have been dedicated to intersections of gender with ethnicity or/and race.

Technology
Since the early days of the Section, digital media technologies have received steady academic attention. A session dedicated to "Gender and new information technologies"[28] was held at the 1996 Sydney Conference, and over the next decade, sessions were regularly organized on gender and new technologies, digital media, and ICTs. Since the mid-2000s, the exponential increase of internet use and Web 2.0 technologies has generated significant research interest in digital media, which has transformed into a substantial sub-field within the discipline and within the Gender and Communication Section.

Scholarly attention to digital media continues to grow as contemporary social issues such as the #MeToo movement intensify the focus on online communication environments. Since 2015, the Section has organized between two and six sessions per year on topics ranging from feminist activism on social media to gender and video games. While broadcast media remains the primary focus of research within the Section, as the study of digital media expands in broader gender and communication scholarship, this is likely to be reflected in even more space for this area of enquiry in the Section's future work.

Looking Back, Looking Forward

This longitudinal analysis of conference material shows that at the heart of the Gender and Communication Section lies a consolidated core of traditional gender and media research themes underpinned by an engagement with feminist approaches and issues. Over the years, emergent discourses on masculinities, intersecting identities, and digital technologies also reflect this feminist

[27] This WG was in existence during the 1990s.
[28] *IAMCR Newsletter*, November 1996, p. 11.

consciousness. This commitment to the diversification of research was an acknowledgement that the Section would benefit from moving beyond its role as a space for women's research by women scholars, towards a platform for gender and media scholarship from a heterogeneous membership. Over time, an influx of new voices spurred nuanced analysis of the cultural processes and intersecting identities of gendered communication. Looking back on the evolution of the Section, Marjan de Bruin (Co-Chair, 1996–2000) recounts how the early focus on "body count" studies gave way to an understanding of the interplay between professional ideologies and practices in reproducing gendered outcomes, and how these discussions were reflected in her later, influential work with Co-Chair Karen Ross (de Bruin & Ross, 2004). Two decades later, other scholars are building new discourses. Looking to the future, we can expect to see an ever-growing and diversifying Section offer a platform for the development of research topics such as queer identities and modern technologies, as well as a space for discussion of pressing social issues in gender equality and women's rights, and a more systematic focus on the contributions of media policy intervention and digital governance to media gender equality.

The Last Decade: IAMCR's International Advocacy on Media and Gender[29]

Gender and communication was a well-established theme of scholarly debate in IAMCR when conditions emerged for the association to engage in supranational debates of the twenty-first century. By engaging in these debates, IAMCR was reprising an advocacy role that it had successfully played on previous occasions. The new context provided a major opportunity to contribute to shaping the global policy agenda on gender inequalities in the media and communication arena.

IAMCR, UNESCO, and the Global Alliance on Media and Gender

In 2013, UNESCO announced plans to establish a Global Alliance on Media and Gender (GAMAG). Its aim was to intensify action on achieving gender equality in media systems, structures, and content. From the outset, IAMCR was invited to be part of the initiative, which was welcomed as an opportunity to establish a group of expert scholars who could build bridges between generations of researchers and across the world's regions. This collective was coordinated by IAMCR Vice President Aimée Vega Montiel (2012–2020), who acted as a focal point between IAMCR and UNESCO. It has grown over time as a strong voice within IAMCR, while also becoming visible in different transnational venues.

---

[29] This section reflects Claudia Padovani's personal account, enriched by a conversation with Aimée Vega Montiel.

The founding moment was a Global Forum on Media and Gender organized in Bangkok, Thailand, as a follow-up to one of the critical areas of concern of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action—Women and Media Diagnosis (BPfA, Section J).[30] A gathering of about 350 people, including media executives, journalists, civil society leaders, researchers, journalism educators, and representatives of government, the Forum aimed to add "momentum to gender equality and women's empowerment in and through the media"—a topic expected to "take marked prominence in the post 2015 Millennium Development Goals (MDG) formulation."[31] A number of IAMCR members were invited to participate, including President Janet Wasko and Vice President Aimée Vega Montiel, together with Karen Ross, Claudia Padovani, and Margaret Gallagher (See Fig. 7.2).

The participation of IAMCR members, apart from contributing to the initial "vision" for the Alliance in its founding documents, emphasized the role to be played by the scholarly community in a global effort aimed at involving a range of stakeholders. The Bangkok Forum marked a new phase of international commitment for the association. Since then, IAMCR has positioned itself in the global arena, to serve as an infrastructure for global-level research on women's structural relationships with media systems, and to highlight the policy relevance and implications of ongoing inequalities.

Fig. 7.2 IAMCR Members at the UNESCO Global Forum on Media and Gender, Bangkok, December 2013. (From left to right) **Aimée Vega Montiel**—IAMCR Vice President 2012–2020, Section Head—Gender and Communication 2012–2014, Chair—Task Force on the Global Alliance for Social and Behavioural Change 2020–; **Karen Ross**—Section Head—Gender and Communications 2000–2004; **Margaret Gallagher**—International Council 1992–1996. (Courtesy of Claudia Padovani)

[30] See https://aibd.org.my/2013/12/16/unescos-global-forum-on-media-and-gender-towards-a-global-alliance/
[31] From the Forum booklet and agenda, p. 2.

After the Bangkok meeting, an International Steering Committee (ISC) was set up to guide the GAMAG. Initially chaired by Colleen Lowe Morna (Gender Links, South Africa), it comprised representatives of media organizations, trade unions, journalists' associations, and NGOs from all world regions. As an NGO affiliated with UNESCO, IAMCR positioned itself in the GAMAG as—

> a think tank that would develop and put forward a research agenda in relation to media and gender, which builds on previous and existing research and develops new areas for investigation in response to challenges emerging from contemporary changes in the media environment. (Padovani Interview)

Thanks to the strategic and sustained support of the association's governing body, in 2014, an IAMCR Task Force for GAMAG was constituted. Seen as an opportunity to re-activate and strengthen the relation between IAMCR and UNESCO, the Task Force was mandated to coordinate the association's activities with the Alliance; and to develop a research agenda to both inform existing research and support actions towards expanding women's communication rights. Aimée Vega Montiel has coordinated the Task Force since its establishment.

In December 2014, members of IAMCR's Task Force for GAMAG participated in the first General Assembly of GAMAG in Geneva, Switzerland. The active role of IAMCR was again crucial in discussions about the structure of the Alliance itself.[32] On that occasion, a Research and Policy Committee was established, to be chaired by IAMCR.[33] Carolyn Byerly headed the committee between 2015 and 2019, followed by Carla Cerqueira in 2019 (to-date). Alongside the GAMAG Assembly, an International Development Cooperation Meeting on Gender and Media was organized by UNESCO. It was open to UN agencies, regional development organizations, and international donors, with the aim of establishing an International Development Cooperation Framework on Gender and Media that could support and finance gender and media-related initiatives, including GAMAG. The event fell short of expectations and no cooperation framework was set in place. Nevertheless, the meeting provided a platform to publicize the establishment of a UNESCO UniTWIN Network on Gender, Media, and ICT (see Fig. 7.3). Initially conceived as an "educational branch" of the GAMAG, it inevitably called on

---

[32] Points on the agenda included overview of GAMAG and UNESCO's role, research agenda, key initiatives, communication guidelines, GAMAG Action Plan, GAMAG structure, GAMAG legal character, and financial responsibilities.

[33] The mandate of the Research and Policy Committee was to establish an online clearinghouse and knowledge community as a central repository on gender and media; to connect other existing platforms; to commission and disseminate research to aid the development of action, including gender indicators to account for the participation of women and girls in the communicative environment; to create regional observatories; to monitor the safety of women working in the media; and to constitute a think tank that would develop and put forward a research agenda in relation to media and gender which develops new areas for investigation in response to challenges emerging from contemporary changes in the media environment.

Fig. 7.3 Founding Moment of the UNESCO UniTWIN Network on Gender, Media, and ICT, December 2015. Aimée Vega Montiel signs the constitutional document. (From left to right) **M. Williams,** Chief Communications & Public Affairs; **A. Shala**, Chair UNESCO IPDC; **Aimée Vega Montiel—**IAMCR Vice President 2012–2020, Section Head—Gender and Communication 2012–2014, Chair—Task Force on the Global Alliance for Social and Behavioural Change 2020–. (Courtesy of Claudia Padovani)

IAMCR researchers to implement its plan of action to integrate a gender perspective in communication and media degrees and courses across the world. Thus, the UniTWIN Network became another space of concrete collaboration amongst IAMCR members. Since then, the network has been actively involved in projects[34] such as assessing the presence of gender perspectives in existing courses in different regions, elaborating educational materials, and organizing training sessions at IAMCR and beyond.[35]

In May 2015, members of IAMCR's Task Force attended the international forum "Gender, Media, ICTs and Journalism. 20 years after the Beijing Platform for Action," convened by Aimée Vega Montiel and held in Mexico City. In fact,

---

[34] Some of these projects have been funded by the UNESCO International Programme for the Development of Communication (IPDC).

[35] The Network is currently co-chaired by IAMCR members Aimée Vega Montiel and Claudia Padovani, together with Lisa French (RMIT, Australia). The network website is accessible at http://www.unitwin.net. Accessed 15 June 2022.

2015 was a special year, as it marked two decades since the adoption of the Beijing Platform for Action and its Section J on Women and Media. Meanwhile, other initiatives, including feminist interventions in the follow-up process to the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS+10) and in the consultations on a post-2015 Development Agenda, were ongoing: by this time, IAMCR scholars were well-positioned to take part in such conversations, and they managed to do so with the institutional support of the association (see Fig. 7.4).

Fig. 7.4 International Development Cooperation Meeting on Gender and Media: Towards a Joint Development Cooperation Framework for the Global Alliance on Media and Gender, Geneva, December 2015. (From left to right) **Anita Gurumurthy**—IAMCR Keynote Speaker; **Aimèe Vega Montiel**—IAMCR Vice President 2012–2020, Section Head—Gender and Communication 2012–2014, Chair—Task Force on the Global Alliance for Social and Behavioural Change 2020–; **Claudia Padovani**—IAMCR International Council 2004–2012, 2016–2022, Co-Chair Publications Committee 2012–2018, Co-Chair IAMCR Palgrave Book Series 2010–2022, Co-Chair of WG on Global Media Policy 2008–2012, 2018–2022; **Karen Ross**—Section Head—Gender and Communications 2000–2004; **Margaret Gallagher**—International Council 1992–1996; **Janet Wasko**—International Council 1984–2020, President 2012–2020, Section Head—Political Economy 2002–2010. (Courtesy of IAMCR)

Research Meets Advocacy at IAMCR Conferences

Since 2014, the Task Force has organized GAMAG-related events at IAMCR's international conferences. Thus, IAMCR's annual conference became the institutional space for elaboration and implementation of a scholarly agenda that would inform the work of GAMAG. This was done both by discussing areas where more research was needed—particularly in relation to local-to-global policy developments, increasing concerns about gender-based harassment and violence in the digital environment, and the need for transnational comparative studies—and by highlighting the challenges of engaging with supranational processes focused on gender communication inequalities. The endeavor thus contributed to an ongoing conversation about IAMCR members' responsibilities as public intellectuals. At the same time, the Task Force has helped to raise the profile of the gender and media agenda within the association, playing a complementary role to that of the Gender and Communication Section.

In 2014 (Hyderabad Conference), a panel titled "IAMCR contribution to the Global Alliance on Media and Gender" was convened. On that occasion, a number of knowledge resources were presented, including a thematic e-book produced by IAMCR and published by UNESCO in March 2014: *Media and Gender. A Scholarly Agenda for the Global Alliance for Media and Gender.*[36] Chaired by President Wasko, the panel speakers were Aimée Vega Montiel, Karen Ross, Carolyn Byerly, Claudia Padovani, and Gitiara Nasreen.

The following year in Montreal, a special session was organized, focused on "GAMAG Research Agenda. The follow up." This was chaired by Vice President Vega Montiel and included the late Indrajit Banerjee (Knowledge Societies Division, UNESCO) as respondent. Members of IAMCR's Task Force Lisa McLaughlin, Claudia Padovani, Karen Ross, Carolyn Byerly, and Kaitlynn Mendes discussed major information gaps and identified priority issues for research, together with representatives from civil society initiatives, such as the Global Media Monitoring Project and the International Women's Media Foundation. This contributed to making IAMCR a space where multi-stakeholder conversations could develop.

A key moment to take stock of all that was happening around gender and media issues worldwide was the IAMCR Cartagena Conference in 2017, where another special session was convened on "IAMCR and GAMAG: Research, Knowledge and Activism." At the time, a number of relevant international activities were shaping up, including the UNESCO UniTWIN Network; the European-funded project "Advancing Gender Equality in Media Industries

---

[36] See https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000228399. Accessed 15 June 2022. The publication was crucial in outlining ideas on emerging research topics. The main themes were violence of gender, media, and information; women's access to media and information; gender media policies and strategies; and gender, education, and media information literacy.

(AGEMI)"[37]; and a Swedish-funded project, "Comparing Gender and Media Equality Across the Globe (GEM)."[38] Guy Berger, Director of UNESCO's Media Development Division, chaired the session, which featured project-focused contributions by Carolyn Byerly, Claudia Padovani, Karen Ross, Aimée Vega Montiel, and Lisa McLaughlin. Once again, representatives from international and non-governmental organizations—Albana Shala (Chair of the UNESCO IPDC at the time) and Sandra Chaher (Comunicar Igualdad, Argentina)—were invited to be a part of the discussion.

The 2018 IAMCR Conference in Eugene, Oregon, featured another GAMAG Task Force special session on "Gender Mainstreaming in Journalism and Communication Schools: towards an engendered media education IAMCR initiative." Here, the focus was on the absence of gender sensitivity in higher education curricula, where future media and ICT professionals are trained. Moderated by Albana Shala, the session explored good practices and new opportunities to face the educational challenge, with presentations by IAMCR members Aimée Vega Montiel, Soledad Vargas, Pilar Bruce, and Carolyn Byerly, all of whom were involved in the UniTWIN Network's activities.

Over the years, research, education, and advocacy initiatives on gender and media issues found in IAMCR fertile ground for intellectual exchange, opening up paths to engage in policy-oriented cross-cultural dialogs and practice. This had become very clear by 2019 when IAMCR met in Madrid. The AGEMI and GEM projects were coming to a close and could present their output (see Fig. 7.5). The UniTWIN had published its syllabus for journalism educators (UNESCO/UniTWIN Network on Gender, Media and ICT, 2019). The GAMAG (with Aimée Vega Montiel as Chair and Sarah Macharia of WACC as General Secretary) was being reorganized and gaining more autonomy from UNESCO. The international community was preparing to celebrate 25 years since the Beijing Conference.

Against this background, several gatherings were held to discuss different aspects of communication, media, and gender.[39] In addition, two important sessions were organized with a view to contributing to the forthcoming global review of Section J of the Beijing Platform for Action and to critically discuss the 2030 Agenda. The first was a one-day pre-conference devoted to

[37] The project was designed and coordinated between 2017 and 2019 by IAMCR members Karen Ross and Claudia Padovani, and the resulting platform includes a database of good practices, a set of learning units, interviews with professionals and experts, and a global interactive map of relevant organizations. All materials are accessible at: https://www.agemi-eu.org. Accessed 15 June 2022.

[38] The GEM project was developed by IAMCR members and ran between 2017 and 2020. The resulting volume edited by Monika Djerf-Pierre and Maria Edström (2020) is available at https://www.nordicom.gu.se/en/publikationer/comparing-gender-and-media-equality-across-globe. Accessed 15 June 2022.

[39] The UniTWIN Network on Gender, Media, and ICTs held it meeting on July 4; the GEM project invited a number of participating scholars to its first public presentation on July 6; and the Advancing Gender Equality in Media Industries (AGEMI) team organized a hands-on workshop to teach how to make use of its online platform and resources on 10 July.

Fig. 7.5 Presentation of the "Comparing Gender and Media Equality Across the Globe" (GEM) Project, IAMCR Conference, Madrid, July 2019. Participants in the GEM Project. (Courtesy of Claudia Padovani)

"Actualizing Section J through Transnational Collaborations: making gender equality in the media and ICT visible in the 2030 Agenda" (See Fig. 7.6).

On this occasion, IAMCR members expressed their concern that media and communication issues were being marginalized in international debates, which were increasingly marked by narrow understandings of gender inequalities in digital developments. Secondly, a GAMAG special session focused on "Gender and Communication: towards the Beijing Platform for Action +25 and the 2030 Agenda +5 global reviews." Chaired by Aimée Vega Montiel, this session involved Claudia Padovani and Lisa French, Carolyn Byerly and Julie Posetti (Reuters Institute, UK), Anita Gurumurthy (IT for Change, India), and Albana Shala. At the session, UNESCO's Guy Berger announced the publication of two volumes resulting from the collaboration between UNESCO, IAMCR, and GAMAG—*Setting the Gender Agenda for Communication Policy*—and between UNESCO and IAMCR members in the framework of the UniTWIN Network on Gender Media and ICT—*Gender, Media and ICT: New approaches for teaching, education & training*[40] (See Fig. 7.7).

This was the last opportunity for institutional, scholarly, and civil society perspectives to be brought together in the physical space of IAMCR Conferences. Then came the COVID-19 pandemic and plans for events at the

---

[40] Both volumes are available on UNESCO website at https://en.unesco.org/gamagandunit-win. Accessed 15 June 2022.
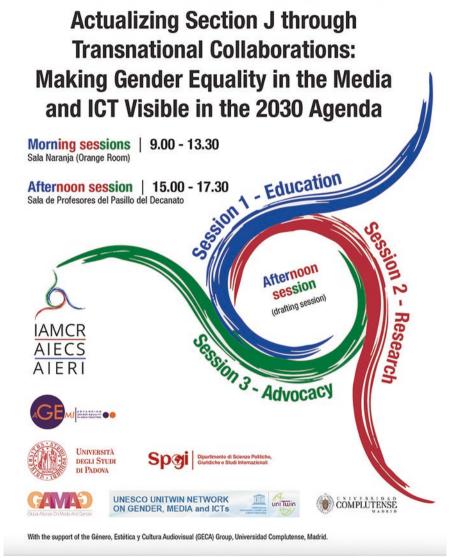
Fig. 7.6 "Actualizing Section J through Transnational Collaborations: Making Gender Equality in the Media and ICT Visible in the 2030 Agenda." IAMCR Preconference, Madrid, July 2019 at https://iamcr.org/madrid2019/actualizing-section-j

Fig. 7.7 UniTWIN Network and GAMAG Chairs Pose at IAMCR with Copies of *Gender, Media and ICT. New approaches for teaching, education & training and Setting the Gender Agenda for Communication Policy*—published by UNESCO. (From left to right) **Claudia Padovani**—IAMCR International Council 2004–2012, 2016–2022, Co-Chair Publications Committee 2012–2018, Co-Chair IAMCR Palgrave Book Series 2010–2022, Co-Chair of WG on Global Media Policy 2008–2012, 2018–2022; **Lisa French**, RMIT; **Aimée Vega Montiel—**IAMCR Vice President 2012–2020, Section Head—Gender and Communication 2012–2014, Chair—Task Force on the Global Alliance for Social and Behavioural Change 2020–; **Sarah Macharia,** WACC. IAMCR Conference, Madrid, July 2019. (Courtesy of Claudia Padovani)

2020 and 2021 IAMCR Conferences, expected to take place respectively in Beijing and Nairobi, were moved online.

Engaging at the United Nations Level

Thanks to the prominent role played by IAMCR Vice President Aimée Vega Montiel (2012–2020), as well as to sustained collaboration with UNESCO, starting in 2015 the IAMCR Task Force was able to participate in sessions of the United Nations Commission on Status of Women (CSW), held in New York. GAMAG and the IAMCR Task Force have come to be recognized as an "epistemic community" by agencies such as UN Women as well as by nongovernmental advocacy networks. This has happened mainly through the elaboration of position papers and submissions in response to the evolving framework for gender and media at the UN level: the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and Agenda 2030, the Beijing+25 review process, and the most recent Generation Equality Forum fostered by UN Women.

In 2015, IAMCR members collaborated with the GAMAG International Steering Committee in drafting a position paper that called on the UN to include a gender lens on media and ICTs in the SDGs. Presented as an "urgent call by 500 media and freedom of expression organisations across the globe to governments … to get gender and the media on the post-2015 agenda before it's too late!" this was a request to integrate media indicators in the existing goals and targets while making their gender dimensions explicit.[41]

In 2018, colleagues from the association gathered in New York for the 62nd CSW, to take part in parallel and side events and to present a series of statements, elaborated by GAMAG and IAMCR members (See Figs. 7.8 and 7.9). "Media and gender" was the review theme of the CSW gathering that year; this offered a space to exert meaningful influence, not only through the organization/participation in official "side events" and NGO events (12 in total), but

Fig. 7.8 IAMCR Members Contributing to the Seminar Jointly Organized by UNESCO and GAMAG, New York, March 2018. (From left to right) **Carolyn Byerly**—Howard University, US; **Guy Berger**—UNESCO; **June Nicholson**—Virginia Commonwealth University; **Aimée Vega Montiel**—IAMCR Vice President 2012–2020, Section Head—Gender and Communication 2012–2014, Chair—Task Force on the Global Alliance for Social and Behavioural Change 2020–; **Sarah Macharia**—WACC. Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) 62 'The Holistic Gender and Media Agenda,' New York, March 2018. (Courtesy of Claudia Padovani)

---

[41] The position paper was the basis for two caucus meetings: one with Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, Executive-Director of UN Women; the second with Saniye Gülser Corat, Director of UNESCO's Division for Gender Equality, both of whom supported the GAMAG position. The paper also allowed GAMAG to make a political statement during the side event on Gender and Media held during the 2015 CSW and to call for media and ICTs to be moved to the core of the gender equality agenda.

Fig. 7.9 Chairs of the GAMAG, the UniTWIN Network on Gender, Media and ICT, and the GAMAG Research Committee at UN Premises during CSW 62, New York, March 2018. (From left to right) **Carolyn Byerly**—Howard University, US; **Lisa French—**RMIT, Australia; **Claudia Padovani**—IAMCR International Council 2004–2012, 2016–2022, Co-Chair Publications Committee 2012–2018, Co-Chair IAMCR Palgrave Book Series 2010–2022, Co-Chair of WG on Global Media Policy 2008–2012, 2018–2022; **Aimée Vega Montiel—**IAMCR Vice President 2012–2020, Section Head—Gender and Communication 2012–2014, Chair—Task Force on the Global Alliance for Social and Behavioural Change 2020–. (Courtesy of Claudia Padovani)

also through the official agreed conclusions adopted by member states.[42] A particularly important event, jointly organized by UNESCO and GAMAG, was the seminar titled "The Holistic Gender and Media Agenda." The wide-ranging agenda covered gender equality in media decision-making positions, media policy, gender and freedom of expression, and the rights of women media workers. Key action areas and practical recommendations for member states, as well as for media and ICT companies, were identified. This was also an opportunity for the UniTWIN Network to advocate for the priority of gender perspectives in media and ICT education globally.

After its General Assembly in Madrid in July 2019, GAMAG started a process towards the 25-year review of the Beijing Platform for Action+25. A set of strategic supranational moments was envisioned between 2019 and 2020 where the Task Force could contribute to regional meetings, CSW gatherings,

---

[42] The Official Agreed Conclusion can be read at https://press.un.org/en/2018/wom2145.doc.htm. Accessed 15 June 2022.

the Generation Equality Forum to be held in Mexico City and in Paris, and the United Nations General Assembly. All such events were inevitably affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, which seriously reduced the possibility for the IAMCR Task Force to fully operate as a collective.

GAMAG engagement continued online, through the elaboration of statements and reports[43] and the preparation of international events. But the main focus of the IAMCR Task Force in this context was the Beijing Platform for Action +25 review process, and the need to keep media and communication on the agenda of what remains the major international mechanism for the achievement of gender equality and women's human rights. To that end, the Task Force joined other GAMAG members to develop national reports, to assess progress and shortcomings in gender and media, and to restate the importance of considering gender, media, and ICT as core to the global discussion on the SDGs.[44]

Women, Gender, Feminism: A Summing Up

It is undeniable that over the past half-century, women's status in IAMCR has changed beyond recognition. That change has been achieved through the struggle of not just the individuals highlighted in this chapter, but through the efforts of countless unacknowledged members who have played important roles in the association and whose contribution is often overlooked. The place of gender issues and feminist scholarship seems assured in IAMCR's work, though it is a moot point whether that place yet enjoys the respect accorded to other academic strands.

As for the GAMAG Task Force and the global positioning of IAMCR advocacy, in spite of some meaningful achievements, the future is not clear. Engaging supranationally is demanding. It requires understanding of complex processes and needs resources—of time, specialized knowledge, and financial support. No *ad hoc* resources were dedicated to the Task Force and its members, who have mostly contributed on a voluntary basis. This has inevitably limited the possibility for wider participation, an aspect that must be considered as the Task Force moves into a "next decade."

---

[43] This included a Report in 2019 on "Violence against women journalists" addressed to the special rapporteur on Violence Against Women, its Causes and Consequences, and a petition in support of Philippino journalist Maria Ressa; a 'Shadow Report' to the 9th Periodic Review of the Mexican Government before the CEDAW; and the coordination of two official sessions on the BPfA Section J at the Generation Equality Forum in Mexico (March 2021). All GAMAG documents can be found at https://gamag.net. Accessed 15 June 2022.

[44] A series of national position papers was then prepared, spanning Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cyprus, Ecuador, El Salvador, Italy, Ireland, Morocco, Romania, Spain, Uruguay, and Venezuela. All national reports can be accessed on the GAMAG website at https://gamag.net/2020/01/22/beijing-25-gender-media-and-icts/. Accessed 15 June 2022.

Connecting research with policy engagement may not be a priority for all IAMCR members, but efforts can and should be made to establish stronger connections between the Task Force as an advocacy body, and the Gender and Communication Section where the scholarly knowledge regularly flows. Collaboration between the two entities, possibly arranging an "in-between space of encounter," could help to strengthen both the research and the advocacy communities.

Finally, it is fair to ask to what extent decades of engagement—from the early days of the WG on Sex Roles in Mass Media, through the wealth of reflections hosted in hundreds of panels coordinated by the Gender and Communication Section over 30 years, to the more recent commitment of IAMCR Task Force in international policy fora—have contributed to the transformation of IAMCR in line with feminist principles and goals. These include mainstreaming gender in communication research and initiatives, critically addressing inequalities, and struggling to transform communication practices and related knowledge. As we move on from revisiting the past, taking stock of the many achievements and changes, it remains crucial to (re)consider the extent to which a gendered lens on media and communication, not just as a specific strand of investigation, but as a perspective for understanding and transforming media ecosystems as well as academic institutions, has really become a shared legacy for IAMCR and its membership.

References

de Bruin, M., & Ross, K. (Eds.). (2004). *Gender and newsroom cultures: Identities at work*. Hampton Press.

Dervin, B. (1987). The potential contribution of feminist scholarship to the field of communication. *Journal of Communication, 37*(4), 107–120.

Gallagher, M. (1981). *Unequal opportunities: The case of women and the media*. UNESCO.

Gallagher, M. (1984). *Communication, control and the problem of gender* (Plenary Paper presentation). IAMCR Conference "Social Control and Global Problems," Prague, Czech Republic.

Kivikuru, U. (1996, November). Glass ceiling found in academy: Big-boy games in the association. *IAMCR Newsletter*, 23–24.

Nordenstreng, K. (1994). The UNESCO expert panel with the benefit of hindsight. In C. J. Hamelink & O. Linné (Eds.), *Mass communication research: On problems and policies* (p. 2–19). Ablex Publishing.

Rakow, L. F. (Ed.). (1992). *Women making meaning: New feminist directions in communication*. Routledge.

Robinson, G. J. (1997, November). Up from the footnote (Speech at the 40th anniversary ceremony of the IAMCR, Oaxaca, 7 July). In *IAMCR Newsletter*, p. 10, 38, et passim.

Rush, R. R., Oukrup, C. E., & Creedon, P. J. (Eds.). (2004). *Seeking equity for women in journalism and mass communication education: A 30-year update*. Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Sreberny, A. (2002, July). *Gender and the politics of recognition* (Plenary Paper Presentation). IAMCR Conference, Barcelona, Spain.

UNESCO/UniTWIN Network on Gender Media and ICT. (2019). *Gender, media and ICT. New approaches for teaching, education & training.* UNESCO Series in Journalism Education. UNESCO Press.

van Zoonen, L. (1994). *Feminist media studies.* Sage Publications.