

International Symposium on Women and News: Exploring Research and Social Change Agendas

Invitation to event on June 18, Dresden, Germany

Rationale and goals for the Symposium:

Feminist media scholarship emerged in the 1970s out of a central concern about the general absence of women in news, the misreporting of women's experiences and roles in society, and the barriers to women's advancement in news industries. All of these issues were understood to be associated with public understanding about women's inequality, and the political discourse needed for women to advance within their societies. Such concerns about the news, shared by women in all nations, also manifested themselves in women's liberation movements both within and across nations during the last three decades, as women sought to expand the amount and quality of coverage on women's issues and social contributions, and to address discrimination in employment. Thus, there has been a longstanding relationship between feminist scholarship on news and political action carried on by women working in popular fronts.

While a large, diverse scholarly and quite international literature examines both the problems and the changes associated with these women-and-news issues, there exists a number of gaps both in what is known and which paths academic research should take to fill those gaps. For example, while the women-and-news research has been international, the literature is weighted toward western nations in Europe and North America and only a few developing nations – India, southern Africa and Taiwan leading the second of these. Therefore, we wish to assess what has been done, what is known, and what should be undertaken to advance new projects within and across nations.

Second, the research has focused disproportionately on the content of news (e.g., women's absence or image), and, though to a lesser extent, on women's employment in the industries. Greatly under-investigated areas include women's relationship to financial structures of the news industry, media policy (national and international), media globalization processes, news audiences, or the relationship between women's liberation movements and changes in news (i.e., the dynamics of news and social change). Therefore, we wish to encourage expanded women-and-news research agendas, using a range of methodologies.

Third, feminist news scholarship has produced almost no new theory specifically related to women-and-news. Instead, feminist scholars have tended to draw on and extend existing theories, most of which were developed by male scholars whose original formulations did not include concerns about gender relations. Some research is not theorized at all. Therefore, we

wish to explore approaches to feminist theory-building for use in new investigations of women and news issues.

Fourth, feminist scholars have increasingly undertaken collaborative cross-national women-and-news research projects but language differences, lack of funding, and other barriers inhibit these developments. Therefore, we wish to explore how to strengthen the infrastructures needed for feminist scholarship on women and news to expand internationally. The discussion will include the identification of resources, existing mechanisms for collaboration, development of new collaborative mechanisms, and the translation of existing research into multiple languages.

Goals for participants attending:

We would like to assemble women and men with academic, journalistic and other affiliations who have a background in women-and-news research or political action, and/or who would like to become involved in such. The goal is to bring participants from as many nations as possible. While the day's events will be conducted primarily in English, an effort will be made to accommodate those of other languages (if such assistance is indicated on the registration form for this event).

Structure of the symposium:

The day's agenda will feature short keynotes, panels, and facilitated working groups – the last of these having the goal of producing action agendas for research and social change.

Symposium outcome:

In addition to working relationships that we expect to be established during and following the symposium, the symposium planning committee will publish a report of the day's events for circulation to participants.

Symposium planning committee:

Dr. Carolyn M. Byerly, Howard University, USA (Contact person, cbyerly@copper.net)

Dr. Danna L. Walker, American University, USA

Ammu Joseph, independent journalist/scholar, Bangalore, India

Margaret Gallagher, independent scholar, UK

Dr. Karen Ross, Coventry University, UK

Dr. Simone Bonnafous, University of Paris, France

Dr. Marlene Coulomb, Toulouse University, France

Dr. Gertrude J. Robinson, McGill University, Canada

Colleen Lowe Morna, Gender Links, South Africa

How to register for this symposium

Please register through the ICA conference website ([\)](#))