

## Section Report, Gender and Communication Section

Taipei 2005.

The Gender and Communication Section convened 6 panels over a two day period during the Taipei Meetings. 25 papers were slated, with 19 actually presented. The audience size for each session exceeded 20 and often approached 30. One of the features of this particular convocation was the three special sessions organized under the Gender banner.

The first, "Signs of a New Asian Popular Culture: How gendered is it?", featured a team of researchers from Germany, Japan and South Korea; the second, "Preliminary Analysis of the Global Media Monitoring Project" was originally composed of six presenters but, due to funding, health and logistic problems, ended up entertaining only three. The third, "The Filtration of Gender in Mediated Sports", represented a joint production with the Sport Section. Three more loosely coherent sessions involved the themes of "Gender in Traditional Media", "Public Mediations and Private Perceptions of Gender", and "Gender in Advertising". Below is a brief description of highlights from each session.

### Signs of a New Asian Popular Culture

The "Asian Popular Culture" panel featured presentations by Griseldis Kirsch, Hilaria Goessmann, Eun-Jeung Lee, and Kaori Hayashi, The focus was on the production, content and reception of popular cultural materials – especially television dramas – across, within and focused on various Asian countries. Among some of the important findings reported:

- different societies in Asia are perceived and/or presented as more or less open to women, in terms of agency and opportunity; (Kirsch)
- women are often seen as trying to link with other Asian countries, and they are viewed by the media as the consumption group that is making such ties; (Kirsch)
- comparatively, Korea is constructed as a place where women find happiness as wife and mother; (Goessmann)
- the current idealization of Korean men in dramas popular in Japan

- can be seen as a veiled criticism of Japanese men; (Goessmann)
- media treatment in Japan of the popular (female) reception of the Korean drama “Winter Sonata” saw women as “hysterical” and tended to devalue the phenomenon of Japanese interest; (Hayashi)
- news media operated with a view of “constitutive inferiority” – insofar as it treated women (the major consumers of these dramas, as well as key characters) as unimportant; (Lee).

### The GMMP Panel.

The chance to sponsor a panel detailing findings by the Global Media Monitoring Project was certainly a plum for the Gender basket. The project aims at monitoring the treatment of gender in the media of 102 countries around the world on one day, employing the same standard evaluative tool. Although most involved in the project are women, there are some men; so too is the effort a mix of academics, students and NGOs. The Project’s avowed aim is not only to gain more knowledge, but also to make a difference in the world. The three presentations on this day centered on Israel (by Dafina Lemish), Finland (by Ullamaija Kivikuru) and Japan (by Asuka Tomaru).

Analysis revealed the gender-ignorance in a large amount of reportage. Of note in the Israel data was the association of emotional words and women in headlines; so too a particular way that women were depicted in news stories. The analysis in Finland revealed that despite a gender balance among writers, this is less so among the actors in stories, who are disproportionately male. Further, evaluation of the function of the actors in each story shows that the subject favors men 7:2 and expert commentators are overwhelmingly male. By contrast, eyewitnesses are all woman. One disappointing finding was that, when informed that there had been no change in these finding from the previous GMMP evaluation, journalists treated this as “no news” – a sad commentary on the blindness to gender inequity. For those interested in knowing more about the GMMP and possibly adapting and using the research instrument, they are encouraged to access the following URL: <http://www.globalmediamonitoring.org>

### Gender and Sport

This panel offered three presentations (down from a scheduled five). Papers focused on India (by Nagamillika Gudipaty) and Japan (Rie Ito, Todd Holden), looking at representations of gender in the sports sections of news magazines and TV news and sports broadcasting. The thrust of Gudipaty's paper was how women have belatedly entered the sporting picture in Indian media, based predominantly on the strength of a female Olympic track and field champion. While this has been a positive development, careful analysis reveals ways in which this emergence has been undercut by differential – often sexist – presentations when compared with male counterparts. Ito's paper explored the creation of two "stars" on the Japanese women's national volleyball team by the TV company underwriting broadcasts of the games. Her analysis revealed that not only was there a construction in terms of celebrity, but also in ways that reflected a certain gendered view. Particularly, Ito showed four ways in which the athletes were re/presented in the media: sexualization, color signification, de-emphasis of power, and infantilization. Holden's paper focused on a different dimension of the media/sport equation in Japan: how athletes are employed in both stereotypical, but also on-stereotypical ways to promote the creation of intimacy with the audience. As he showed, although this is a trope common to Japanese television, it is one that is enhanced by the use of definitions, expectations, and significations concerning gender.

#### Gender and "Traditional" Media

There were three papers in this session, looking at beauty magazines in South Korea (Hyun Sook Oh), the representation of male and female politicians in news media in Japan (Sally McLaren), and an oral history of the crime beat in English Canada based on more than 40 interviews with crime journalists who worked between 1950-2000 (Mary Lyn Young). Among the key findings discussed by Oh included the failure of local images of beauty to make it into the foreign magazines that are published locally. McLaren observed that while it is common for gender and media or else media and politics to be studied, it is rare for the three to be combined in studies of Japan. What she was able to show in her preliminary findings of 49 VTR documents produced by TV stations was how male and female candidates and elected officials are often treated differentially by Japanese media. The findings of Young's work shows, in the author's words, "that the relationship between gender and journalism is complex and

informed by class, race as well as cultural and historical contexts.” Contemporary newsroom practices reflect a more subtle form of masculinity, while providing evidence for enduring sexism. The Q and A was very substantive – getting into concerns about coding, readership, and how audiences interpret the images that are shown based on their cultural understandings of sentiment.

### Public Mediations and Private Perceptions of Gender

This panel offered a mix of theory and empirical case studies. This included two rather cerebral looks at often alienated or disenfranchised groups: prostitutes and gays and lesbians. In the case of the former, Yeran Kim considered how public views of prostitution can be assessed in relation to theories of the body; she found that a South Korean law that made prostitution “seen” and “unsilenced”, not only made it conspicuous, but in the hands of media, turned it into a spectacle, marking its otherness. In another theoretical work, Yow-Jiun Wang showed how identity in Taiwanese On-line Gay forums can be understood as constructed by reference to (and limits imposed on) those from the outside – giving rise to a certain “us-them” discourse. One result, her case study shows, is an identity project fraught with antagonism, leading to inter-group conflict. At the same time, online discourse reflects the internal pluralism of an activist body and strategic coalitions for collective action. A third paper, by Ting-Chun Yeh, provided working theorization based on 7 identified cases in Taiwan relating to the public reactions by politician’s wives to claims concerning their husband’s affairs. Stepping away from pre-existing theory that has focused on male utterances in such cases, the author provides a way of typing female self-identity, examining the restraints influencing female roles vis-à-vis social and cultural traditions. A final paper, by Janet Bedggood, provided a highly focused, fascinating look at the first transsexual member of parliament anywhere in the world. Central in this presentation was the reception among media and voting public in New Zealand toward this pioneering female. Differences in public attitudes toward transsexuality, Bedggood showed, are contested in the media, which then becomes the site of struggle between contending movements -- those defending heterosexual normativity and those challenging it.

### Gender in Advertising

Although there were only two papers in this panel, it was well attended, elicited strong interest, and engendered lively discussion. The first paper, by Amit Dinur and Eva Berger concerned images of the family in Israeli advertising. This is actually a continuation of work presented in Porto Alegre in 2004 and is part of a larger work on changing images of family and how this may or may not relate to value shifts in Israeli society. Two TV ads were spotlighted, relating to questions of sexuality among youth, as well as between women. One of the key conclusions by the authors is that not only can one discern changes in the rules, roles, and behaviors within the contemporary family, but one can see certain reversal of value – insofar as personal interest is being put ahead of nationalist collectivism. A second paper by Yoo Jae Song, was drawn from a large, quantitative study of TV ads in South Korea. In this talk she presented a few ads that related to changing images related to middle aged and older women. Issues of the place of the aging in a family, as well work versus leisure, and the sexualization of middle aged women was also discussed. In the 30 minutes of discussion that followed, a major focus was on the bounds between the institution of advertising (as a representative and/or guardian of society) and individual communications that it creates (i.e. the ads, themselves).

### Business Meeting

The business meeting held on the last day of the conference was sparsely attended. A number of items were discussed, including:

1. *Section Election.* It was announced that election for a new Co-Chair would occur in Cairo (July 2006). Because of the rather elaborate system of officers (Staggered Co-Chairs, one Vice-Chair) the Section has in place, we reviewed how the process of nomination and election would transpire. A call for nominations will go out in the mail, as well as be posted on the web site, within the coming months. Nomination (including self-nomination) will be followed by a posting of candidate statements. In Cairo during the business meeting an actual vote will take place. In the case where the Vice-Chair successfully vacates her position to become Co-Chair, a new, on-line election for Vice-Chair will occur sometime after Cairo, much in the way that it was conducted following Porto Alegre. Currently, Ellen Riordan, Vice-Chair has signaled her interest in running for Section Co-Chair. Two candidates at the business meeting, Griseldis Kirsch

and Sally McLaren, have expressed interest in being considered for the Vice-Chair position, should it become vacant following the Cairo meetings.

2. *A logistical assessment of the conference.* This generated discussion about ways to improve registration and contact with the local organizers during the months running up to the conference. Some problems associated with on-line registration were also shared by two attendees, which were passed on to Robin Mansell, IAMCR President.
3. *A substantive assessment of the conference.* Members expressed some dissatisfaction with the keynote speech, feeling that it was condescending. On the other hand, they thought that one area of improvement IAMCR might give some thought to was a workshop for graduate students and/or junior scholars by an established scholar or scholars about the craft of media and communications research. This kind of workshop might be held, as other professional associations tend to do, on the day prior to the start of the conference.
4. *The fate of the Junior Scholars Network.* During the Section Heads and International Council meetings, this topic had been considered, without clear resolution. Junior scholars in the Gender Section appear to favor the idea of “mainstreaming” – avoiding the potential taint of “ghettoization” that some Junior Scholars feel when placed in sessions by themselves. On the other hand, Junior Scholars were receptive to the idea of a featured dinner/reception hosted by IAMCR in which senior scholars would be encouraged – if not required -- to attend. There was a feeling that IAMCR often operates with a clear caste-like organization during its functions and some way should be found to neutralize this.
5. *Shared Sessions.* Gender Section members are in full support of sharing sessions with other Sections. Beyond the two joint sessions that we have been discussing – with Political Communication and Comic Art (see Call for Papers below), future tie-ups with Community Communication was suggested. As for the proposed joint session with Political Communication, the topic currently proposed (“political spouses”) was viewed by those in attendance as overly-narrow. The consensus was that a more open – possibly even theme-less – panel should be formed.
6. *Publishing.* In thinking of the goal of IAMCR’s publications committee to solicit

manuscripts and/or proposals for manuscripts, we discussed whether anyone had thoughts about publishing their work; further, we discussed who might wish to become involved through IAMCR's offices. One member has expressed interest in putting a book together on gender, media and sport. A small group of Gender Section presenters has also been solicited to "package" their papers for a special issue of the journal *Asia Pacific Societies*, focusing on Asian media and Identity.

### **Call for Papers**

IAMCR Gender Section

Co-Chairs: Gita Bamezai ([gtabamezai@excite.com](mailto:gtabamezai@excite.com)), Todd Holden ([holden@intcul.tohoku.ac.jp](mailto:holden@intcul.tohoku.ac.jp)); Vice-chair: Ellen Riordan ([eriordan@gac.edu](mailto:eriordan@gac.edu)).

The Gender Section invites proposals for the IAMCR conference in Cairo (July 23 - 28, 2006). Any proposal addressing the relationship between gender and media or communication will be considered – without regard to empirical, theoretical, or disciplinary approach. Contributions which seek to address the conference theme (as yet unannounced) are especially welcome. Complete panel proposals are encouraged, although individual papers will also be considered.

In keeping with our philosophy of recognizing the multiple points of intersection between gender, communication and other areas of substantive interest to IAMCR's many publics, the Gender Section is actively committed to convening joint sessions with fellow sections. In Barcelona (2002) and Taipei (2005) we jointly sponsored panels with the Media and Sport Section. For Cairo 2006 we have agreed to solicit formation of panels in association with the Section on Political Communication, as well as the Comic Art Working Group.

In the case of the former, a proposal has been advanced for a panel on "political spouses". This could range from the media treatment of spouses in campaigns, to scandals, to the formation of policy; so, too, might this entail the analysis of spouse's campaign speeches, biographies and/or comments and activities in public life. Papers not associated with spouses will also be considered and, indeed,

are encouraged. Inquiries and submissions can be made of Philippe J. Maarek ([maarek@univ-paris12.fr](mailto:maarek@univ-paris12.fr)), Head of the Political Communication Research Section, or Todd Holden ([holden@intcul.tohoku.ac.jp](mailto:holden@intcul.tohoku.ac.jp)), Co-Head of the Gender and Communication Section.

In the case of the latter, any aspect of gender as it relates to any form of comic art will receive warm reception. Inquiries and abstracts for this joint session should be emailed to Todd Holden ([holden@intcul.tohoku.ac.jp](mailto:holden@intcul.tohoku.ac.jp) or [t\\_sensei@hotmail.com](mailto:t_sensei@hotmail.com)).

Inquiries regarding possible themes are welcome; indications of intent to submit would be very much appreciated.

All proposals should include a 500 word abstract, followed by the title, name, institutional address and email address of the author or authors. No biographical notes or references should be included. Submissions of abstracts should be made on or before January 15<sup>th</sup>, 2006. Decisions on abstracts will be made by March 1<sup>st</sup>, 2006. Full papers will be due on June 15<sup>th</sup>, 2006.

Submitted by: Todd Holden