

# Feminist Interventions in International Communication

*Minding the Gap*

Edited by Katharine Sarikakis and Leslie Regan Shade

ROWMAN & LITTLEFIELD PUBLISHERS, INC.  
Lanham • Boulder • New York • Toronto • Plymouth, UK

ROWMAN & LITTLEFIELD PUBLISHERS, INC.

Published in the United States of America

by Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc.

A wholly owned subsidiary of The Rowman & Littlefield Publishing Group, Inc.

4501 Forbes Boulevard, Suite 200, Lanham, Maryland 20706

www.rowmanlittlefield.com

Estover Road, Plymouth PL6 7PY, United Kingdom

Copyright © 2008 by Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise, without the prior permission of the publisher.

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Information Available

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Feminist interventions in international communication : minding the gap / edited by

Katharine Sarikakis and Leslie Regan Shade.

p. cm. — (Critical media studies)

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN-13: 978-0-7425-5304-0 (cloth : alk. paper)

ISBN-10: 0-7425-5304-3 (cloth : alk. paper)

ISBN-13: 978-0-7425-5305-7 (pbk. : alk. paper)

ISBN-10: 0-7425-5305-1 (pbk. : alk. paper)

1. Communication, International. 2. Mass media and women. 3. Feminism. I. Sarikakis, Katharine, 1970– II. Shade, Leslie Regan, 1957–

P96.I5F46 2008

302.2082—dc22

2007021579

Printed in the United States of America

∞™ The paper used in this publication meets the minimum requirements of American National Standard for Information Sciences—Permanence of Paper for Printed Library Materials, ANSI/NISO Z39.48-1992.



# Contents

Acknowledgments	ix
-----------------	----

## **Part I Revisiting International Communication Studies**

Chapter 1	Revisiting International Communication: Approach of the Curious Feminist <i>Katharine Sarikakis and Leslie Regan Shade</i>	3
Chapter 2	Feminist Issues and the Global Media System <i>Margaret Gallagher</i>	17
Chapter 3	Public/Private: The Hidden Dimension of International Communication <i>Gillian Youngs</i>	33
Chapter 4	Women, Participation, and Democracy in the Information Society <i>Ursula Huws</i>	45

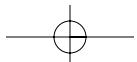
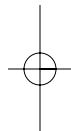
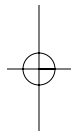
## **Part II Gendering Policy Regimes**

Chapter 5	The Expediency of Women <i>Alison Beale</i>	59
-----------	--	----

## vi ∞ Contents

Chapter 6	Gender-Sensitive Communication Policies for Women's Development: Issues and Challenges <i>Kiran Prasad</i>	74
Chapter 7	The Spectral Politics of Mobile Communication Technologies: Gender, Infrastructure, and International Policy <i>Barbara Crow and Kim Sawchuk</i>	90
Chapter 8	The Global Structures and Cultures of Pornography: The Global Brothel <i>Katharine Sarikakis and Zeenia Shaukat</i>	106
<b>Part III Mediating Meanings, Mediating Regimes of Power</b>		
Chapter 9	Mediations of Domination: Gendered Violence Within and Across Borders <i>Yasmin Jiwani</i>	129
Chapter 10	From Religious Fundamentalism to Pornography? The Female Body as Text in Arabic Song Videos <i>Salam Al-Mahadin</i>	146
Chapter 11	Female Faces in the Millennium Development Goals: Reflections in the Mirrors of Media <i>Nancy Van Leuven, C. Anthony Giffard, Sheryl Cunningham, and Danielle Newton</i>	161
Chapter 12	Deadly Synergies: Gender Inequality, HIV/AIDS, and the Media <i>Patricia A. Made</i>	176
Chapter 13	Online News: Setting New Gender Agendas? <i>Jayne Rodgers</i>	188
<b>Part IV Laboring International Communication</b>		
Chapter 14	Convergences: Elements of a Feminist Political Economy of Labor and Communication <i>Vincent Mosco, Catherine McKercher, and Andrew Stevens</i>	207
Chapter 15	Women, Information Work, and the Corporatization of Development <i>Lisa McLaughlin</i>	224

Chapter 16	Empire and Sweatshop Girlhoods: The Two Faces of the Global Culture Industry <i>Leslie Regan Shade and Nikki Porter</i>	241
<b>Part V Glocalizing Media and Technologies</b>		
Chapter 17	Feminist Print Cultures in the Digital Era <i>Simone Murray</i>	259
Chapter 18	Communication and Women in Eastern Europe: Challenges in Reshaping the Democratic Sphere <i>Valentina Marinescu</i>	276
Chapter 19	GodZone? NZ's Classification of Explicit Material in an Era of Global Fundamentalism <i>Mary Griffiths</i>	291
Chapter 20	Grounding Gender Evaluation Methodology (GEM) for Telecentres: The Experiences of Ecuador and the Philippines <i>Claire Buré</i>	307
	Index	323
	About the Contributors	329





## Acknowledgments

Katharine Sarikakis wishes to acknowledge the support of the British Academy for conference attendance during the 2005 Canadian Communication Association (CCA) conference, which served as a working ground for the preparation of the volume. Many thanks to Sumati Nagrath for her help indexing and May Jacob for researching international communication literature. Katharine also acknowledges the support of the Commonwealth Scholarships that allowed close collaboration between Dr. Kiran Prasad and Sarikakis, and Dr. Prasad's fellowship at the Centre for International Communications Research, Institute of Communications Studies, University of Leeds in 2007, which resulted in, among other things, chapter 6 in this volume.

Leslie wishes to thank Yara Mitsuishi for her research on feminist international communication literature, funded by Concordia University's Humanities Doctoral Program.

We both wish to thank Alison Beale for inviting us, along with Lisa McLaughlin, to Vancouver in March 2004 for a panel on "The Canadian Response to the World Summit on the Information Society," sponsored by the Simon Fraser University Graduate Program in Communication and the Simon Fraser University Library. Thanks to Alison and Duncan for their hospitality on Bowen Island. The genesis of this book was hatched in the Vancouver Airport returning to Montreal, and plotted via email between the UK and Canada, and in face2face meetings at the CCA conference in 2005. We also thank Lisa

## x ∞ Acknowledgments

McLaughlin for her international contacts, and to all the authors for their excellent contributions. Brenda Hadenfeldt, our acquisitions editor, deserves special thanks for her infinite patience. Kudos to production editor Anna Schmöhe, acquisitions assistant editor Bess Vanrenen, copyeditor Holly Hammond, and proofreader Linda Hoffman for their professionalism during the production process. Many thanks to our stellar reviewers who took the trouble to read through the manuscript and support this effort.

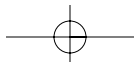
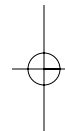
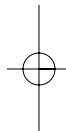
Katharine dedicates this book to her son, Karl George, and his generation. May he live in awareness and justice.

Leslie dedicates this book to her many feminist graduate students at Concordia.



PART ONE

REVISITING INTERNATIONAL  
COMMUNICATION STUDIES



## CHAPTER ONE



# Revisiting International Communication: Approach of the Curious Feminist

*Katharine Sarikakis and Leslie Regan Shade*

International relations scholar Cynthia Enloe (2004) admonishes feminists to be curious about the world around them and to ask questions about their everyday political and social life that not only warrant consideration but that are also often dismissed or ignored by the mainstream media—and often by feminists themselves. Taking the stance of the Curious Feminist(s), this anthology asks why an accounting of feminist activities and theorizations has been typically neglected in standard texts on and about international communication (IC). It undertakes a theoretical accounting of feminist IC, provides a feminist political-economic critique of the current global mediascape, and sheds light into the neglected areas of IC.

Women's use of communication techniques and technologies for development and grassroots initiatives around the world has been flourishing, with concomitant attention paid to policy and programming initiatives that include "gender mainstreaming" by governments and nongovernmental organizations (NGO). At the same time, global media structures and flows have had an enormous impact upon women's lives, through not only their representations of women but also their utilization of women in production and consumption. This runs the gamut from community-based telecenters that encourage Internet use for women's craft entrepreneurialism, to the manufacturing of news reports that perpetuate women as victims of violence or as vacuous celebrities. Media continue to advertise consumer goods through depictions of women's

sexualization, while pressuring them to consume objects and celebrate lifestyles not necessarily in their best interests.

Despite nearly forty years of systematic feminist scholarship and intervention, it is sadly the case that basic political claims about the representation of women or their equal and dignified treatment at work have neither been met by the global media industries nor have they been sufficiently prioritized by national governments or intergovernmental organizations. Mirroringly or unreflexively, scholarly attention to these issues within the context of international communication has not been given its due in the mainstream publications in the field. We, like many feminists before us, ask where are the women and where are women's theorizations and perspectives in our field? Rakow and Wackwitz (2004), referring to the broader field of communication studies, write

That an area of scholarly work is identified by a term such as feminist communication theory reveals as much about nonfeminist communication theory as it does about itself. The field of communication, existing as disciplinary departments in universities and scholarly divisions in professional associations, has largely developed out of the Western worldview, which expresses the thinking of white men and falsely universalizes their particular experiences. Thus despite the potential for communication scholarship to recognize, support, and give voice to the great diversity of human experience, the field, in this regard, is largely marked by failure. (2)

We argue here that the study of *international* communication echoes the same failure. *Feminist Interventions in International Communication* applies feminist political-economic and policy analysis, combined with postcolonial and cultural studies, to explore the dynamics of the globalization of the media industries in selected geopolitical areas in the world, issues of transnational and international policy, questions of women's employment in transnational media industries, and matters of content consumed and produced at a global level. It seeks to make visible the intersections between human experience and global structures by shedding light into the ways in which women's experience through production, consumption, representation, and agency are influenced by and shape international communication processes and cultures. Moreover, the book makes an argument for the revisiting of IC as a field of study by expanding the scope of research into areas such as cultural representation and mediation, pornography, and the construction of girlhood, among others, and by investigating the complex links between the operation of international and global forms of media—and mediated cultures—and the locality (but also transcendent nature) of women's material and immaterial experience. It seeks to move beyond the dualistic thinking of "hard" IC themes such as propaganda, global media ownership, and so on, and "soft" IC foci such as cultural imperialism or flow of mean-

ings. This book's central axis—the recognition of the processual character of IC transformation and phenomena, the role of power, and the inadequacy of rigid scholarship—points to the need for a more comprehensive understanding of the workings of IC.

It is not the intention of this chapter to exhaustively map the territory and development of the field of IC but rather to discuss several major themes in the field as represented through some of the most utilized readings taken up by scholars and adopted in IC curricula. The chapter also highlights feminist contributions to IC, outlines the themes explored in this book, and points to necessary further research in feminism and IC.

### **International Communication, Globalization, and Transnationalism**

The study of international communication has rarely been straightforward (Mowlana 1997). Its development has reflected social, political, and economic issues in world society at large, affecting mass communication and cultures. At an epistemological level, IC is considered to have derived from international relations, itself a once turbulent and “illegitimate” field of study. As such, IC scholarship has concentrated on the ways in which communication among nations has been conditioned and has affected regions of the world, as well as the ways in which communication has been used as a tool of international diplomacy or foreign policy (Taylor 1997).

The field of IC is not uncontested; indeed, Semati (2004) argues that there is probably no such thing as a discipline of international communication, because IC issues have been explored and studied by many disciplines. Semati argues that as a field of inquiry IC is interdisciplinary by nature and that the best strategy for probing and furthering the boundaries of this field is most probably through a new organization of inquiry. Semati thus follows an issues-oriented approach to the study of IC, illustrating how the field is shaped by the concerns and political dispositions of scholars, journalists, and activists, as much as it has been influenced by the role of government or state-driven and -funded research, by the intellectual power of concepts, and by world processes such as modernization and development.

Thussu (2006) is concerned with the economic and political dimensions of IC, identifying a recurrent theme of dependency intertwined with economic and political supremacy of the global North and its effects on the global South. Hamelink (1996) argues that the “international” is better expressed as “world,” whereby world communication is entangled to world politics, and in particular with regulation that affects the everyday lives of billions of people. As he notes, “The politics of world communication determines the variety of contents in the

media, the representation of diverse social interests, the charges for use of telephone and postal services, and the quality of information networks” (2). Downing’s (2000) and Rodriguez’s (2001) work on alternative media and attention paid to “dewesternizing” media theory (Curran and Park 1999) point to the ways in which epistemological questions in IC are intertwined with the quality of our understanding of nondominant media and communication systems and with the ability of researchers and activists to “imagine” and conceptualize communication cultures.

From the “international,” scholarship and activism have moved to address the “global” in communication and politics; this (for some, paradigmatic) shift took place with the influence of various disciplines such as politics, economics, and sociology, through their attention to processes that have been taking place at a global scale. Globalization literature has equally affected our ways of understanding communication processes and structures, as parts of “global” or “world” or “universal” processes, similarly so experienced as well. Rantanen’s (2005) *Media and Globalization* attempts to bring together the study of such experiences by four generations of culturally and nationally distinct families through a century of “globalization” and the study of their use of media and their development during this period.

The study of globalization has led to that of transnational networks, such as diasporic communities and their uses of communication technologies to connect, maintain, and develop cultural affiliations with the lacing of origins and their current locations. Transnationalism, diaspora, and media studies (Karim 2003) explore emerging and understudied conditions in IC, such as patterns of transnational media production and consumption that are attached to growing human mobility; the political and cultural challenges attached to the expansion of diasporic communications for the nation-state and the media industry; and the growing role of the city for mediated communications and political and cultural representation (Georgiou 2006). Transnational communication consists of the interaction among not institutions and systems but rather citizens, social groups, and organizations of a civil society character.

In 1989 a unique anthology on women and international communication, *Communication at the Crossroads: The Gender Gap Connection*, edited by Donna Allen and Ramona Rush, challenged dominant views by arguing that communications globally were at a crossroads due to both women’s difference from men’s realities and experiences and their work and analysis based on that difference. In their book *Women Transforming Communications: Global Intersections*, Allen, Rush, and Kaufman (1996) addressed IC as a question of networking, and in particular women’s international networking and its impact upon systems and ideas of communication. The shift of emphasis to transnational networks, citizens, connectivity, and social movements, coupled with the strate-