

Foreword

Can we achieve gender equality and human rights for all if we fail to address the gender gaps in the news media? Probably not. Expanding freedom of speech and freedom of expression to include both women and men is a key human rights issue. If we are to attain sustainable societies, more women from all parts of the world need to be part of the public conversation that the news media represent. Still, the global journey towards gender equality seems to move at glacial speed. Gender equality will not be attained for another 99.5 years if we continue in the current pace, according to the 2020 Global Gender Gap Report, published by the World Economic Forum.

When we began writing the foreword to this book, we were confident that 2020 would be a year when the world again focused on gender equality – celebrating and reviewing the 25 years that have passed since the United Nations adopted the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, a document where Women and the Media is one of twelve areas that call for action. We wanted to do our part with the project Comparing Gender and Media Equality Across the Globe, and contribute to the wider understanding of the importance of news media for gender equality. We wanted to champion the greater use of existing comparative data made available through the GEM dataset we created, and stress the need for more gender-related data on the media.

Then came Corona. 2020 will now forever be the year of a global pandemic that locked down many countries, and so far, as of October 2020, Covid-19 has killed more than one million people. As the United Nations and many others have noted, the pandemic both illuminates and amplifies all existing inequalities – including gender inequalities. In many societies, we have seen an escalation of gender-based violence during the lock-down, as for some women and children the home is not a safe place. The pandemic has also led to financial insecurity striking many workers, especially in service work and in the informal sector

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where many women make their living. More women are also putting their health at risk, working on the front lines of the pandemic in care homes and hospitals, and they are less likely to get the health care they need due to the pandemic. Future research will reveal how well the news media covered these stories. The first preliminary studies indicate a dominance of male experts in the news, with three men appearing for every woman expert (Operation 50/50, 2020). News matters. To learn more about the factors that encourage gender equality in the news media and the consequences a lack of gender equality in the news media has for social and political life, we need research that monitors and critically examines the news media from a gender perspective.

This is why we are proud to present this book. The chapters have different starting points and invite the reader to consider different theoretical and empirical understandings of gender and media, but they are united in the clear vision that gender equality in society will not be achieved if we fail to keep track of and address gender disparities in the news media. Hopefully, this book, the GEM dataset, and the GEM-Index will find their way to researchers, students, civil society, newsrooms, and decision-makers around the world.

A project like this is both a great privilege and an endeavour to pursue and complete, and it relies heavily on the collective efforts and generosity of many people. We would especially like to thank the organisations and individuals who made it possible compile and curate the data in the pooled GEM dataset. The data come from the following studies: Advancing gender equality in decision-making in media organisations (by EIGE, the European Institute for Gender Equality); Global Report on the Status of Women in the News Media (by IWMF, the International Women's Media Foundation); and the Global Media Monitoring Project (by WACC, the World Association of Christian Communication). Our gratitude goes to Carlien Scheele, Virginija Langbakk, and the EIGE team, Philip Lee and the WACC team, and Elisa Lees Muñoz and Nadine Hoffmann at IWMF for sharing their data. The principal investigator (PI) of these studies has given generously of their time and expertise in order for us to build the GEM dataset, to test and analyse data for this book. Thanks for everything, international research team: Carolyn M. Byerly (PI for the Global Report on the Status of Women in the News Media), Sarah Macharia (PI for the Global Media Monitoring Project), Claudia Padovani and Karen Ross (PIs for Advancing gender equality in decision-making in media organisations).

In the initial phase of the project, William Bird from Media Monitoring Africa (MMA) contributed with his expertise, and we also thank the co-authors of the book chapters – Rossella Bozzon, Tobias Bürger, Marloes Jansen, and Katherine A. McGraw – for taking the time to explore the GEM dataset.

A special thanks also go to our team colleague Mathias Färdigh at the Department of Journalism, Media and Communication (JMG) at the University of Gothenburg, who has relentlessly worked to put together the dataset. But

this is not the end – rather the beginning! Hopefully, you will be able to update and curate the dataset with new data for future research to explore.

Thanks also to Todd Nesbitt, at the Department of Communication and Mass Media Studies at the University of New York in Prague, for giving us the possibility to have a workshop in conjunction with the Interantional Communication Aassociation in Prague 2018. Thanks also to the Interantional Association for Media and Communication Research for letting us host a pre-conference, The Future of Media Monitoring: Comparing Gender and Media Equality Across the Globe, in Madrid 2019.

Karin Enberg, at Vidform, who provided us with the logo and colour palette for the book, namasté. Last, but certainly not least, our gratitude goes to the Swedish Research Council for funding this research project.

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