

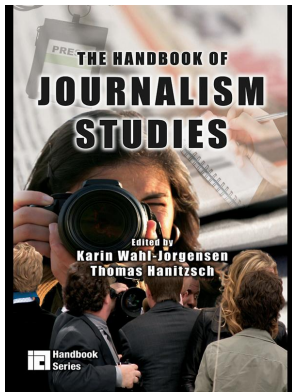
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### **Gender in the Newsroom**

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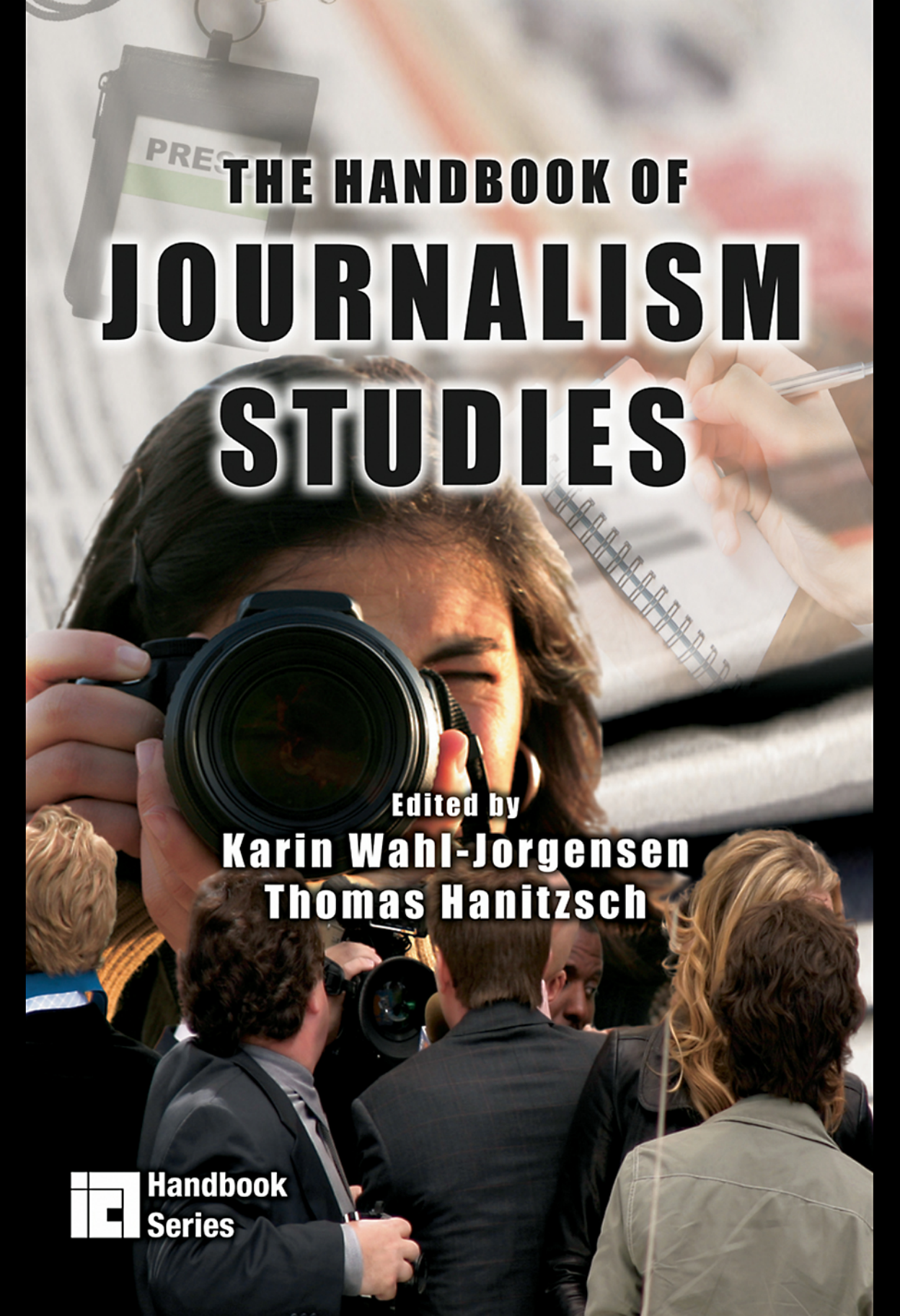
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**Karin Wahl-Jorgensen  
Thomas Hanitzsch**

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# 9

## Gender in the Newsroom

Linda Steiner

Without necessarily using the precise language of “gender,” discussions of “gender in the newsroom” date to the late nineteenth century, when, to support themselves and their families, women began entering UK and US newsrooms in great numbers. A worried UK woman’s magazine reader responded, “Our girls will rush into journalism, teaching or the stage, three professions already overstocked, and neglect really useful branches of employment, by which they might earn a steady, if not luxurious livelihood” (in Onslow, 2000, pp. 15–16). Enraged by women’s invasion, men said newswork would defeminize and even desex women. These continued assertions, muted only during world wars, had little to do with beliefs about women’s inherent inability to report. Instead, such claims betrayed the marginality of women readers and men’s interest in preserving a monopoly on high status work. In any case, these diatribes indicate that women were managing to compete in this masculine space. Women continued to demand newsroom jobs, despite their oft-expressed complaint that male editors, colleagues and sources refused to take them seriously and relegated them to the women’s angle.

During much of the twentieth century, the “gender” debate among both working journalists and scholars focused on women. In part this shows the residue of maleness as the “unmarked” standard, and the “Otherness” of women. It also rests on a notion of men and women as polar opposites, with femininity as the problem. Scholarship on gendered practices in journalism rarely challenges assumptions about gender or sex differences per se. Instead, gender and women are conflated as a distinctive, fixed, and self-evident category and then deployed to examine women’s status. Only recently has attention turned to shifting formations of masculinity and the role of men’s magazines in producing or reproducing various forms of masculinity (Beynon, 2002). The constructed relationship of femininity and masculinity is rarely studied. Whether the newsroom is treated as a literal site, an institution, or a set of cultural practices, gender has largely been invoked to raise one question: could or should women reporters try to act like men, or would they (and journalism) be better served if women produced distinctive forms?

At least until the 1950s, newsmen reserved their highest compliments for a very few women whose work was “just like men’s.” The *New York Tribune* crime reporter Ishbel Ross herself was praised by her editor Stanley Walker as the paragon of newspaperwomen precisely for achieving this standard. Ross’s *Ladies of the Press* (1936), the first book-length history of women reporters, acknowledged that even successful front-page girls had not revolutionized newsrooms. The few women who wrote journalism textbooks aimed at women took a practical view and encouraged women to do the same. Ethel Brazelton (1927), who taught journalism



for women at Northwestern University, insisted: “The fact of sex, the “woman’s angle,” is the woman writer’s tool, but it must never be her weapon.... But being a woman, she is possessed of a real advantage in the business of doing, recording, interpreting women’s interests, ways and work” (p. 8). Otherwise, since the 1900s, women reporters’ autobiographies and other self-reports increasingly emphasize how they avoided becoming “sob sisters” or “agony aunts,” regardless of pay. Thus, in blunt terms, summarizing the ancient history of gender in the newsroom involves tracing a shift from initial agreement among women and men journalists that women’s role was to write with a woman’s “touch” about women for women readers, whose interests were seen as dichotomously different from men’s; to a claim by women that they could produce the same “unmarked” journalism as men, who in turn disputed these claims to protect their status, jobs, and salaries. Women’s topics were initially women’s entry point: Pauline Frederick, for example, first covered women’s topics for radio; later ABC hired her to interview political candidates’ wives. But it was not women’s goal. Women understood that such women’s forms—explicitly marked as female—represented professional ghettos, not socialization, much less natural instincts.

The story grew more complicated and contested over the twentieth century. So now, at least officially, men assert that gender is irrelevant in contemporary newsrooms, which they see as changed (and challenged) by new economic constraints, technologies, audiences, norms of professionalism, and by the pronounced presence of women themselves. Recent complaints about the feminization of newsrooms, ironically, may be reactions to new feminine forms. Alternatively, they may reflect how women are overrepresented on camera, or are remembered more because of their (re-made) appearance. Perhaps it stems from backlash against feminism. Meanwhile, women journalists themselves largely, but not unanimously, agree with men that gender is a minor issue. Women and other “minorities”—defined by race, ethnicity, sexual orientation and class or hyphenated combinations of these—challenge employment discrimination on the basis of merit, of professional status. Relying on different logics, scholars have abandoned naturalized definitions of women but continue to treat gender as inherently and eternally significant. Scholars, then, argue that inclusion is necessary because distinct standpoints matter; they assume that women and men journalists work differently and/or that they should. The literal or perceived absence of women (or people of color or gays and lesbians) in the newsroom means, they assert, that such groups will not be “well” reported in terms of quantity or quality.

The controversy emerged in 2005, when Susan Estrich, a law professor and free-lance opinion writer, condemned a male editor for not running enough columns by women. Estrich said even the few women who do produce columns “don’t count as women because they don’t write with ‘women’s voices’” (Applebaum, 2005). Anne Applebaum (2005), a regular *Washington Post* columnist, called Estrich’s complaint “bizarre” and “seriously bad” for women: “Possibly because I see so many excellent women around me at the newspaper, possibly because so many of *The Post*’s best-known journalists are women, possibly because I’ve never thought of myself as a ‘female journalist.’” Nor did Applebaum think other women regarded themselves as female journalists with special obligations to write about women’s issues.

### THE IMPACT OF THE WOMEN’S LIBERATION MOVEMENT

Both the structure of the US news media and the refusal of the women’s liberation movement to identify spokespeople worked against publicity for that movement (Tuchman, 1978b), although

sympathetic women reporters, by virtue of sounding objective to their sexist male editors, managed in the 1960s to insert some women's issues, such as rape laws, into the women's pages. The National Organization for Women worked hard to mobilize news media and to cultivate relationships with women journalists. Whether because of the proactive information subsidies by women's organizations (Barker-Plummer, 2002) or agitprop efforts of radical feminists (Bradley, 2003), the movement was covered. And the women's movement had major consequences for newsrooms. First, inspired and emboldened by the movement, women journalists used regulatory and legal channels to challenge exclusionary hiring and promotion practices at several news organizations. Each victory further opened doors for women.

The long-term consequences for content are less clear. A *Los Angeles Times* reporter claims the resulting increased presence of women reporters had an important, positive impact (Mills, 1990). Women reporters are said to report on social issues and subjects that interest women and to use more women, feminist organizations, and "ordinary people" as sources; the resulting diversity benefits newsrooms. Certainly women acted to dismantle women's pages, first at *The Washington Post* and other elite papers and, later, at smaller papers. Since the 1890s, when Jane Cunningham Croly created a women's page for the *New York Daily World*, both mainstream and African-American newsrooms had hired women as editors of these pages. In the 1950s and 1960s some women's page editors had tried to expand the political and social scope of these sections, as well as their racial scope; but these efforts were limited and inconsistent. Again, newly-emboldened second-wave feminists attacked these sections for trucking in "symbolic annihilation" equivalent to other sexist forms that condemned or trivialized women (Tuchman, 1978a). As underscored in several oral histories sponsored by the Washington Press Club Foundation (available at <http://npc.press.org/wporal>) eliminating women's pages had the immediate effect of eliminating the single editorial slot reserved for women. A similar dynamic came into play in Ireland, where "real reporters" regarded women's pages with contempt (Maher, 2003) until the late 1960s, when the *Irish Times* let women revamp the women's pages to incorporate "serious" reporting. The section was soon killed off; Maeve Binchy, its second editor and now a blockbuster novelist, said women don't need a special place. Ironically, in the 1980s, to please advertisers some US papers reintroduced women's pages (Harp, 2007). Both experiments reveal not women's distinct values, but how marketing concerns drive the sex-binary packaging of news and the construction of women (readers and reporters) as interested in lifestyle issues and domesticity.

The second wave of the women's movement also inspired women to enter the academy and pursue their interests in women's history; it encouraged research on women's culture and work and created an audience for that research. Marzolf's (1977) path-breaking history brought long-forgotten women "Up from the Footnote." The next step was, as another title put it, *Great Women of the Press* (Schilpp & Murphy, 1983) and full-bore biographies of single individuals. Eventually scholars moved to more specialized categories—black women (Streitmatter, 1994), war reporters (Elwood-Akers, 1988), and sob sisters (Abramson, 1990) as well as theoretically-sophisticated histories of women's journalism around the world.

More importantly, scholars reconsidered the assumption that newsroom practices are the direct inevitable result of professional routines and socialization, with management defining the skills and talents they want in terms of what previously enhanced circulation and status. New thinking about how journalists' gendered identity matters influenced both explanations for why newsroom diversity is important (one can only understand someone if one has walked in the subject's shoes) and the research agenda itself. This led to reconceptualizing how women respond to newsroom dynamics and structures, including what constitutes news or newsrooms.

## WOMEN'S ALTERNATIVE MEDIA

One key research area for the second-wave generation was the women-led news media, beginning with mid-nineteenth century periodicals by young US textile workers, perhaps the first consistent efforts by women to produce their own news and thereby redefine themselves. Of continuing interest are periodicals of the women's movement, given their importance in explaining, justifying, and sustaining women's liberation; and in debating new models for womanhood. Suffrage journals addressed not only voting but larger issues, including health, law, politics, and labor. Their editors were active in other reform movements and periodicals, and formed their own community (Steiner, 1992). Their periodicals can also be analyzed in terms of newsroom policies, including their approach to accommodating family responsibilities, and commitment to journalism training and to reforming journalism along feminist lines. Thus, the 150 women-run UK political papers published 1856–1930 facilitated the growth of a gendered community of activists who convinced women that they could “affect social change by creating a new gender-based political culture” that commandeered public space (Tusan, 2005, p. 4).

Twentieth-century feminist periodicals are likewise important fora. *Time and Tide* (1920–1977), for example, was established out of frustration with both UK mainstream newspapers, which belittled women, and advocacy papers narrowly fixated on women (Tusan, 2005). Feminist periodicals that proliferated in the US in the 1970s were narrower in scope than the earlier US and UK papers; they were for, about, and generally by a niche: ecofeminists, prostitutes, celibates, older women, Marxists, feminist witches, and a host of other interests and professions. They were also more self-consciously experimental in rejecting conventional definitions of newsworthiness and newsroom structures, and loudly denounced sexist stereotypes (Endres & Lueck, 1996; Steiner, 1992). Since 1970 *off our backs* has been published by a collective that continues to operate by consensus. It eschews conventional principles: “We intend to be just; but we do not pretend to be impartial” (February 1970, p. 1).

Women producing women's movement organs of the second-wave type have primarily been activists, reformers, and crusaders wholly uninterested in profit. *Ms.*, since 1972 the “mouth-piece” of popular feminism in the US, is the exception that proves the rule. *Ms.* has been treated as a corrupt hybrid, “always firmly enmeshed in a commercial mass media matrix” (Farrell, 1998, p. 9), although *Ms.* refused to publish “complementary copy” for advertisers and for many years gave up advertising altogether. Otherwise, the leaders of feminist newsrooms lacked commercial journalism experience and did not identify themselves foremost as journalists. Yet, they provided both professional and industrial opportunities, including in journalism. Amelia Bloomer, for example, was willing to postpone production of *The Lily*, which she began in 1849 as “a medium through which woman's thoughts and aspirations might be developed,” in order to train her own women printers. They limited advertising to what they deemed appropriate and kept subscription prices accessible to unpaid or low-paid women. Thus, criticisms of alternative media certainly apply to feminist political papers, given their amateurish writing, inattention to aesthetics, lack of long-range business strategies, and inefficiency caused by collective or horizontal organization and obsession with principle (see Atton, chapter 19, this volume; Winship, 1987).

These critiques open up for research the possibilities of new media, including satellite radio, public access cable channels, and Internet zines, for covering on a global scale issues difficult to discuss elsewhere. Even in mainstream and commercial radio, women's voices were once assumed to irritate audiences and so were not heard, except on shows aimed at helping women with domestic work. Women are now prominent as reporters, news shows hosts, and interviewers. More to the point, feminist public affairs programs and even women-run radio stations operate

with varying degrees of feminist commitment in several countries. Feminist International Radio Endeavor (FIRE) creates an Internet-based global news flow; WINGS (Women's International News Gathering Service) furnishes feminist news to radio stations. Moreover, third-wave feminists operate by seemingly wholly new principles.

## EMPIRICAL EVIDENCE OF GENDER DIFFERENCES IN VALUES

According to national surveys (Delano & Henningham, 1995; Weaver & Wilhoit, 1996), gender is not a reliable predictor of differences in professional practices. Men and women conceive the role of news and evaluate the ethics of reporting methods in similar ways; they show similar (declining) levels of job satisfaction. On the other hand, feminist theorizing suggests that ways of thinking and knowing are highly influenced by social identity, in turn, affected by inherently gendered experiences, differences in socialization, and social history. Rogers and Thorson (2003) contend that "men and women socialize differently into the workplace because men and women have different values and priorities" (p. 659). Since men and women have distinct identities they had predicted that, "like females in other professions," women reporters would have unique values, interests, and priorities that would affect how stories are researched, sourced, framed, and written. As it turns out, Rogers and Thorson's content analysis of three newspapers found that women drew upon a greater variety of female and ethnic sources, especially in positive stories, but women at the large paper sourced and framed stories much like their male counterparts. Van Zoonen (1998) concludes that, overall, women journalists, with their distinctive "womanview," tend to be more interested in their audience, more concerned about context. She says women challenge male journalists' detachment, believing that men use objectivity as a shield against the sensitivity and sympathy that journalism requires.

Given its hazards and the risk of fatal injury, but also the potential for career-making reputation, war reporting arguably continues to be the most contested beat for women, with audiences criticizing women, especially mothers, for putting their bodies in danger. War reporting has also provoked unusually intense debate among audiences, journalists, and scholars regarding whether women and men report differently. The Vietnam War was the first war that women covered in significant numbers. Some women found that their very visibility meant they were noticed at press conferences; their questions were answered first. Even when they were paid to write from and about the woman's angle, however, women faced prejudice and suspicion from the American military, the Vietnamese forces and male reporters. Some women hated doing human interest war stories, precisely because they knew the stereotype that women were more attuned to the "human side" of the war, and these stories were more likely to be cut. That is, the numbers of women who refused to write as women or complained about being assigned according to sex stereotype suggest that the problem was sexism, not sex differences. Liz Trotta (1991), the first woman to report on Vietnam for television, speculated that male colleagues felt threatened by having to compete with women. In any case, men and women wrote substantially similar kinds of stories (Elwood-Akers, 1988).

Smaller studies of gender produce contradictory and inconclusive results. Women activists and scholars are the most likely to find that gender "matters" or that it should "matter" more. According to informal surveys by the International Women's Media Foundation ([www.iwmf.org](http://www.iwmf.org)), women believe female journalists offer a different, "more human perspective" to the news, although some women asserted that "news is news" and ethics are ethics. Likewise, the 22 women members of an advocacy group responding to a questionnaire split over whether women report women's issues differently (Ross, 2001). Many women said that they react differently



from men to stories because they have more sympathy for women and emphasize personal and emotional dimensions; a majority said men still dominate the professions. But three-quarters do not incorporate feminism into their reporting, and many agreed that women managers are even more macho than men. Ross regards many of her respondents as blind to gender issues, having normalized male-identified concerns and incorporated into what is a male profession. At the least, women's considerable ambivalence and lack of consensus cast doubt on hopes that a "critical mass" of women will transform the newsroom. Margaret Gallagher (2001), having published crucial comparative research on the global exclusion of women, argues that gender still needs to be addressed—indeed, in new, creative ways—as a professional issue. But her Global Media Monitoring projects argue against assuming that the increasing entry of women into journalism in most countries will radically transform content. Women form no unitary bloc. Many are unsympathetic to feminism as a movement and are insensitive to historical changes accomplished by feminists. In sum, women recognize that many of their male colleagues are sexist, but they largely adopt journalism's structures as part of the profession and choose to embrace its reward system. Gender socialization theory, moreover, cannot explain why some women escape their gender. It accounts for the chicken/egg argument on the domestic front no more than it settles the question at the battle front, largely because it ignores the key way to understand gender—not as a role, much less a static and dichotomous set of differences between women and men, but as a performance, a relational act (Butler, 1990). Men and women perform gender, sometimes creatively and often uncreatively, and provoke others to perform gender.

## MANAGEMENT

In the 1970s Marlene Sanders, one of the first female network news correspondents, became the first woman named as a network vice president on the news side. But until recently, little work was available about or by those few women who made it to the top. This makes Katharine Graham (1997) notable for her candid description of becoming *Washington Post* publisher: although her father had owned the paper, her involvement was minimal—primarily social—until the suicide of her husband in 1963. More critically, world-wide, corporations, including news organizations, have been and remain reluctant to promote women to executive positions. No wonder that Hemlinger and Linton's (2002) report on newsrooms' gendered glass ceiling was subtitled *Still Fighting an Uphill Battle*. In the US, in 2006, 18 percent of large newspaper publishers were women. Women held 30 percent of all executive jobs at daily newspapers, concentrated in a few chains, and are 35 percent of television news managers. Women are 20 percent of the top executives at network news companies and only 12 percent of the boards of directors of news and entertainment companies, according to Annenberg's study "No Room at the Top" (available at <http://www.appcpenn.org>). Yet, it is potentially contradictory to complain that 46 percent of female executives in the media/entertainment companies and 38 percent of the female news executives are in communications/marketing/PR, human resources or government relations (i.e., seen collectively as "woman's sphere") but also to justify, as the report does, women's executive potential in terms of their distinctive communication skills and knowledge of the female market.

The suggestion that women and men "execute" leadership differently parallels other dichotomized notions: "feminine" management style is more interpersonal, democratic, constructive, collaborative; while "masculine management is more autocratic, competitive, defensive. In any case, statistically men run most papers in both categories (Arnold & Nesbitt, 2006).

At a minimum, the attention to management betrays dissatisfaction with the argument about the impact of women reporters. For example, women are editors of 19 percent of New Zealand's

newspapers, but nearly 50 percent of the reporters. Judy McGregor (2006), the first woman to edit a major paper in New Zealand and now an Equal Employment Opportunities Commissioner, asserts that representing women's distinctive perspective and undoing the male-ness of news requires women in top management. Notably, during the years (1999–2003) the *Sarasota Herald Tribune* had women as its publisher, executive editor, managing editor, and two assistant managing editors, it carried the same content as other papers, with same percentage of female sources. But that paper's all-female management team was perceived as offering, as promised, an atmosphere of openness and transparent decision making (Everbach, 2006).

### TELEVISION REPORTING

The continuing emphasis on women's physical appearance cannot be ignored here. Nancy Dickerson, whose five minute afternoon newscast in 1963 made her the first woman to host a news show, was also the first to be promoted as an attractive woman, but certainly not the last. Networks have promoted attractive women not ready for big-time prominence, such as Sally Quinn, a *Washington Post* writer who quickly failed as a CBS co-anchor in 1973. A journalistically-inexperienced Jessica Savitch was promoted when market researchers found that she "scored as high with men, who saw her as a sex object, as with women, who saw her as a role model" (Blair, 1988, p. 168). Two decades later, BBC war reporter Kate Adie complains that even female war correspondents, including her, are judged by their appearance; she says TV management prefers women with "cute faces and cute bottoms" to those with journalistic experience. And women's attractiveness has limited shelf life, as Christine Craft (1986) demonstrated. Having been "made over" as a platinum blonde for CBS, Craft was demoted after eight months in 1981 as co-anchor for an ABC affiliate. The reason was focus group data indicated she was "too old, too unattractive and wouldn't defer to men."

Beginning in 1968 the US Federal Communications Commission encouraged broadcasters to hire more women; but this took time. In 1971 five of the 60 on-air correspondents in NBC's news division were women and all off-air women were secretaries, researchers, or assistants, "dead-end" jobs to which no men were assigned. Now that women hold about 40 percent of US network news jobs (Bulkeley, 2004), the issue is network status, the ultimate mark of status in television. Having been hired and promoted for their good looks, do women now have the gravitas—or whatever ratings systems measure—required to anchor high status shows? In 2007 Katie Couric became the first woman to anchor, solo, a network evening newscast. Much of Couric's potential rides on appearance—in her case, visibly remade. Granted, pushed by the "hard" numbers of focus groups, appearance is becoming increasingly important for men. Nonetheless, extraordinary, albeit contradictory, amounts of public criticism have been directed at Couric's hair, clothes, and make-up. The *New York Times* announced its conclusion in a typical headline (July 12, 2007): "Now the News: Couric Still Isn't One of the Boys." Narrowly defined standards for appearance continue to be crucial in determining who gets hired, how they are used, and how long they last on television.

### SEX AND SEXUAL HARASSMENT

Among the most studied newsroom topics is the journalist-source relationship. When the journalist is female—because most sources are people in power and most people in power are male—the relationship is particularly fraught. Many women journalists believe that manipulat-

ing their sexuality gives them an edge with their sources (Chambers et al., 2004; Robertson, 1992). Male reporters resent their female colleagues for enjoying what men are convinced is a competitive edge. On the other hand, deploying sexuality can backfire against women, as seen in 2007, when Univision demoted a television anchor for her relationship with the mayor of Los Angeles, and a Chicago anchor was fired for an inferred relationship with a male source. Meanwhile, sex and sexuality are remarkably understudied—referring here to relationships among journalists and to sources, to the relevance of journalists' and public's attitudes about sex, and to the possible impact of sexuality and sexual orientation (i.e., whether this matters in ways equivalent to gender.)

If women reporters long avoided making allegations of sexual harassment, the 1990s saw dramatic increases in harassment complaints and new legal remedies. Reporters continued to imply either that they transcend their bodies or that their embodied experiences never influence them. Still, a 1992 Associated Press Managing Editors survey found that about 2 percent of men and 11 percent of women journalists said sexual harassment or fear of it had affected their work; nearly 30 percent of women journalists surveyed said they had been sexually (non-physically) harassed by co-workers (Walsh-Childers, Chance, & Herzog, 1996).

After a flurry of attention, the controversy abated. Perhaps the trend toward professionalism and middle-class respectability slightly dented the bohemian "pub culture," long seen as inherent to journalism and much romanticized by male journalists. But more than one-third of 32 women journalists in Israel, where approximately 37 percent of newspaper staffs are female, reported experiencing either sexual harassment (mainly verbal) or sexist contempt from sources (Lachover, 2005). Notably, these women rarely described themselves as victims or even defined the behavior as sexual harassment; they ignored it, in the name of professionalism. The willingness to flirt with men who treat women as sexual objects is seemingly evident around the world, especially among sports journalists, who also may consistently endure the most overt non-sexual harassment, from athletes and male sports reporters (Chambers et al., 2004). Most, but not all, women accept the sexual attentions of co-workers or sources as part of journalism culture.

## MAGAZINES

Beasley (2001) calls for evaluating women journalists with broader criteria than applied to men. She would extend the definition of journalism to embrace informative material with wide popular appeal and include as journalists talk show hosts, advice columnists, and public relations professionals. The idea has had little take up, perhaps because redefining publicists and occasional columnists as journalists may fuel suspicions of women reporters. But Beasley's point bears on the question of women's magazines. Journalists and feminists world-wide have disdained and distanced themselves from women's magazines. Nonetheless, for centuries avid readers have regarded women's magazines as providing useful information. Women's magazines have understood their scope, albeit perhaps less in recent decades, to embrace social and political controversies, including birth control, food safety legislation, and child labor. Not unimportantly, the popularity of women's magazines proved to newspaper executives and advertisers that women were desirable consumers (Zuckerman, 1998). Many women's magazines in the US, Europe, and Asia were at least initially published and/or edited by men. Yet, eventually these became sites where women could achieve high levels of responsibility, even if women editors adopted and promoted sexist stereotypes.

As with newspaper reportage on women and women's issues, magazine content was long assumed to influence (i.e., to limit) how women see themselves and how society views women.

More recent scholarship emphasizes the potential for playful counter-hegemonic or oppositional readings by readers. Both approaches ignore magazines' newsroom policies and processes. Among the exceptions, Ferguson (1983) found that UK women's magazine editors defined themselves as professionals and defined professional success in economic/monetary terms. A generation later, editors may describe themselves in similar language, as "high priestesses" who know what is best and deserve the "divine right" to autonomy. But motivational research and, more recently, life-style research are increasingly powerful; they determine how women's magazines (similar to women's pages) construct and attract readers (Winship, 1987; Gough-Yates, 2003). In highly parallel ways, new markets of masculine readers are jointly co-constructed by publishers, journalists, and advertisers (Nixon, 1996).

### METHODS AND PROBLEMS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Lerner (1975) argued against the notion that any single framework or factor, or even eight-factor explanation, can describe the history of women. She famously described "compensatory" and "contribution" history, which judge women by male standards, as merely the first two stages in women's history. Notably, of 76 books and articles about women journalists, 71 were categorized as compensatory or contribution history; five developed new categories, periodization systems, concepts, and methods (Mitchell, 1990). Gender history is still at this transitional stage. More contextualized historical research on how men and women work, including how maleness and femaleness has figured in the newsroom, will contribute to the synthesis Lerner called for; research may get at successes and failures in attempts to challenge conventional definitions of professionalism, including how gender can work, or be worked against, in the newsroom. Untapped documentary sources for individuals and organizations are far-flung and often difficult to locate but do exist; some archival sources are even available electronically.

Feminist methods suggest, inter alia, expanding the scope of research materials. Journalists' autobiographies, memoirs, and oral histories are inherently unreliable as research materials, given the form itself and the fact that these texts are edited for a public audience; but they are no more unreliable than other forms. They are especially useful when analyzed collectively (Steiner, 1997). Autobiographies and oral histories allow reporters to be self-reflective and self-critical, and to explain why they entered or quit the newsroom. If our behaviors reflect our sense of what others expect of us, then popular culture representations of journalists are also worth investigating, especially newsroom-set novels written by women reporters. *The Image of the Journalist in Popular Culture* project (<http://www.ijpc.org>) maintains an extensive bibliography.

Ethnographic fieldwork that is informed by feminist theorizing and methodology is difficult but important in analyzing informal practices and cultures of mainstream and alternative newsrooms. Gough-Yates's (2003) plan for fieldwork on women's magazines floundered when insiders, perhaps suspecting that her feminist politics would lead to yet another hatchet job, refused her access. Nonetheless, fieldwork may help explain newsroom culture and the intersections of work and family responsibilities. Whether ambitious women reporters remain less apt than other women, and far less than male colleagues, to marry or to stay married requires more study. In the absence of total restructuring of all workplaces and of the stubbornly persistent expectations that women must be the primary care-takers, women—but also men—may have useful proposals for helping newsrooms to accommodate and support healthy interpersonal relationships, families, and working parents. The most effective suggestions will emerge from fieldwork.

Conversely, interviews and surveys are relatively straight-forward, cheap, and popular but over-used and decreasingly productive methods. Even focus groups do not successfully prod

respondents to confront thorny issues that warrant continued attention, such as women's networking or sexual harassment. Content analyses of published or broadcast stories produces at best inconclusive, shallow data, given that journalism is a complicated, institutional, thoroughly mediated and partly anonymous process. Therefore, and since even bylines may be non-gendered or pseudonyms, most large-scale studies of news representations of "gender" (again, that is, women) ignore who specifically produces that news. Lavie and Lehman-Wilzig (2005) properly describe data from their study of Israel's two major public radio stations as internally and externally inconsistent. Their content analyses found "gender otherness" in topic selection, with male editors preferring "hard" news while women tended to emphasize soft news; but their questionnaire yielded minimal differences in how male and female editors defined the functions of news. The paradoxical results required considerable explanation by the authors. For example, since the gap between declared news values and actual editorial behavior was wider among female editors than men, they suggest that women, being newer to journalism, are more ambivalent about new trends toward more feminine journalism. They conclude that women must "overcome their 'professional-psychological block' about being true to their innate value system" (p. 84). Alternatively, we might abandon the notion of an innate gender value system.

Crucial for a robust useable understanding of gender in the newsroom are transnational approaches, despite the difficulties of language skills and other resources necessary for scholarly attention to newsrooms around the world. Survey data is fragmentary, outdated, and cannot be reliably compared. That said, 1990s data collected in Weaver (1998) and other sources suggest that women are about 33 percent to 38 percent of the journalism workforce (but then journalists are only 10 to 15 percent of newspaper employees) in many countries, including China, Australia, and Hungary. Women are 15 percent in Korea; 25 percent to 42 percent in Britain and Spain, Canada, Germany, and Brazil; and nearly 50 percent in Finland, Estonia, and Lithuania. Nearly everywhere these percentages are significantly higher among journalists under 30. That is, as decades go by, more (new) women are being hired, although whether this evinces continuing intolerance of older women, presumed to be less attractive, or women's movement into jobs permitting greater stability is unclear.

Apart from such demographic data, internationalized discussions of newsrooms in countries outside the US or UK often ignore gender. Very little, at least of what is published in English, is comparative (Robinson, 2005). The parallels around the world in sexism and gender are remarkable, as are global shifts toward new technologies, to celebrity and lifestyle reporting, and decision making by marketing and advertising. Research is necessary to determine whether terms such as sexism and gender have consistent meanings across countries and cultures, as well as over time. Persuasive discussions of gender identities at work in newsrooms in various countries (for example, see deBruin and Ross, 2004) take gender as a persistent, universalizable issue; but, geographical and cultural differences referenced in those small-scale studies also suggest the need for much larger scale, comparative research. At a minimum, issues of national ideology would complicate the question of whether newsroom routines represent professional norms or a specifically white male prism.

More to the point, numbers do not explain where or how gender is meaningful, when and how women have cracked the glass ceiling in terms of senior-level management, how gender compounds (or does not) problems of castes, ethnicity, religion, marital or domestic status. How does color bear on the career trajectories of journalists? What about marital status? In Sweden, where women are almost 50 percent of journalists but 26 percent of senior managers, female top managers were more likely than men to marry other senior managers (i.e., gained professional and economic capital through marriage); and had more mentors (Djerf-Pierre, 2005). That is, although Toril Moi (1999) generally assumed that female gender capital is negative and maleness is



positive capital, these Swedish women countered the negative gender capital by amassing social capital. When must women adopt distasteful professional values for the sake of career advancement, and when can these norms be challenged or transformed? What are the consequences for resistance? Why do so many women journalists distance themselves from the feminist movement? Conversely, what are the important features of distinct cultural and geographic arenas?

## CONCLUSION

Covert (1981) was among the first to observe that journalism history celebrated independence and individual autonomy, thereby ignoring the influences of family and friendship networks. Journalism itself was written in terms of conflict, controversy, and competition, which Covert took to reflect men's interest in winning. Covert contrasted this masculine language to women's values: concord, harmony, affiliation, and community. But well before Covert's provocative and fruitful essay, the debate has been whether sexual identity (i.e., of women) trumped professionalism, meaning that, at least with sufficient numbers, women would change the newsroom.

While this continues to drive considerable research, claims about women's distinct news values have become internally and externally contradictory. First, the claim constructs women journalists as ever and always sharing a fixed standpoint as homemakers and parents. It ignores how gender may go in and out of focus. It ignores contemporary differences in experience and standpoint by virtue of race, sexual orientation, and religion. Decrying the lack of women covering politics, Anna Ford, an outspoken BBC newscaster, said: "We might have put different questions from those of the middle-aged, middle-class, white, Anglo-Saxon Protestant men" (in Sebba, 1994, p. 249). This counterposes a singular "we" to men correctly treated as speaking through sex as well as class, race, age, ethnicity.

Rush (2004) asserts that women always and everywhere get what is left over—this amounts to one-quarter to one-third—of symbolic representation, status, and salary. Similarly, Melin-Higgins (2004) quotes a European journalist who argues that newsrooms are so wracked by gender-based power, conflict, and culture clashes that they require guerilla warfare. Women journalists can take on the role of the "woman journalist" as defined by the dominant culture; challenge male supremacy by becoming one of the boys; or challenge the very "doxa" of journalism by becoming one of the girls, making journalism more feminine. But, in the twenty-first century women are no longer always confined to a woman's ghetto or called unfeminine if they infiltrate the newsroom. Rush's "Ratio of Recurrent and Reinforced Residuum" no longer holds. Moreover, not only have feminists changed newsrooms and privileged soft news and women's forms, but the very forms that Melin-Higgins promotes as oppositional are precisely the ones marketers seek. Historical work must take seriously how women have changed journalism, in part, by inventing forms never before credited to women. Perhaps once these softer forms became normalized and "hardened," they were redefined as conventional: sob sisters and front-page stunt girls morphed over the century into civic journalists and enterprise journalists. Even discarding the essentializing and universalizing dynamic, to conclude from data showing few sex differences that organizational constraints force women to reproduce existing masculinist practices ignores widespread social changes, including in journalism, where hard/soft binaries have been radically blurred. Claims about gender differences in reporting and editing are caught in philosophical, empirical, and methodological traps. Put bluntly, the solution is not multi-method approaches to gender effects in the newsroom, but asking new questions.

Gender remains an important issue, from war reporting (where the stress of putting bodies on the line is marked by problems in intimate relationships and substance abuse among men and

women) to political cartooning (where, women remain under 5 percent of those employed). Lingering gender effects need to be addressed as they intersect with other structural problems, such as newsroom fiscal policies that compound the likelihood of exploitation of women. For example, the increase in the women, who are especially likely to be stringers or freelancers even as foreign correspondents, may reflect a profit-driven shift to cheaper workers. Certainly sexism and using women sexually continues in society and in newsrooms. Indeed, accusing women of reproducing masculinist assumptions does not solve the problem of using women on air to add spice, drama, and sex appeal as well as encouraging newswomen to express disdain for women (say, for their dress or sexuality) and feminism. That is, because men can no longer get away with crude sexism, at least in the elite press and network news, women are providing intellectual “cover” for news organizations.

Some of the gender logic is self-fulfilling, as when data showing that women are less likely (45 percent as opposed to 55 percent) to read newspapers are said to show women’s inability to find stories relevant to their interests; but a circulation drop under female-led management is attributed to over-all circulation declines (Everbach, 2006). The notion that women and men are opposites is even more misguided when women are associated with all “good” qualities, here referring to suggestions that women journalists tend to privilege readers’ needs, prefer nuance, emphasize contexts, and cover a broader agenda than men, who engage in pack journalism because they are worrying about their competitors (Christmas, 1997). Celebrating women’s styles as if women can do no wrong overstates women’s preference for consensus and concord. Insisting that women express such sentiment is potentially distorting, both methodologically and affectively. Feminine is not always the opposite of masculine. It ignores crucial feminist insights on the arbitrary constructedness of gender.

Indeed, dichotomous thinking is unproductive. Instead of describing a female journalism, which depends on hard/soft and neutrality/subjectivity binaries, we might imagine a feminist journalism. Feminist theorizing suggests the value of more contextual and situated journalistic forms that get at reasons, consequences, impacts; and of collaborative, non-competitive, horizontal work structures that allow for integrating domestic responsibilities. Encouraging journalists to revise, if not reinvent, ways of understanding and representing human action is commendable. New kinds of newsrooms and new forms of print, broadcast, and online journalism require a new political sensibility and feminist epistemology, not women’s innate values. Experiments in newsroom structures, content, policy and decision-making emerging from feminist theorizing and critique are necessary if journalism is to serve the ongoing political and social needs of people who are embodied, and who may be particularly disadvantaged by class and race.

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