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Melissa A. Gerber

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MELISSA A. GERBER

has been approved for

the E.W. Scripps School of Journalism

and the Scripps College of Communication by

____________________________________________________________________________________

Joseph P. Bernt

Professor of Journalism

____________________________________________________________________________________

Gregory J. Shepherd

Dean, Scripps College of Communication
Abstract

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Director of Thesis: Joseph P. Bernt

Previous studies assess the representation of women in journalism; however, few specifically look at broadcast journalism and crisis reporting. This content analysis analyzes approximately 40 years of national network news crisis coverage to determine the representation of female journalists in crisis reporting. Overall, this study found while female journalists were responsible for more crisis coverage with the progression of time, women were still underrepresented. Furthermore, through categorizing the crises, this study found an association between the nature of the crisis situation and the gender of the reporters covering it; overall, female journalists were most underrepresented in accident crisis coverage.

Approved: _____________________________________________________________

Joseph P. Bernt

Professor of Journalism
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Chapter 1: Introduction

In times of crisis millions of Americans turn to television for information. Journalism not only provides information; but, also, fulfills rituals and creates meaning. The live nature of television is used to provide security and help people process what happened. It is not so much the content of televised stories that makes television so important in a crisis but, rather, television’s particular format and style of presentation, coupled with the fact that so many people watch it simultaneously. Newsroom managers have to decide carefully which reporters to send into the mayhem with the task of relaying information, fulfilling ritualistic roles, and providing meaning for audiences, while at the same time remaining calm. This content analysis assesses the representation of female journalists in crisis reporting during the last 40 years.

Female journalists first contributed to the broadcast industry through radio. During the radio industry’s infancy in the early 1920s, women, who were the wives and daughters of radio station owners, contributed as a hobby. As radio gained popularity, women became more involved in programming. By 1930, 49% of households, in the United States, had radio sets. The growth in radio resulted in more opportunities for women in music, acting, and in programming. However, female journalists were limited

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1 Kristina Riegert and Eva-Karin Olsson, “The Importance of Ritual in Crisis Journalism,” (paper presented at the International Communication Association annual meeting, Dresden Germany, June 19-26, 2006).
4 Ibid., 28.
to producing programming intended for other women: advice on childcare, household hints, and recipes.\(^5\)

By 1940, television was in its infancy, but radio was booming; approximately 80% of households had a working radio. At the beginning of the Second World War, Americans found radio to be an important source of national and world news. As American men were drafted to serve in the war, women stepped forward and became radio personalities. By 1944 women outnumbered men as radio news announcers twelve to one. Despite these advances in the broadcast industry for female journalists, as the men came home from war, women were asked to return jobs to them. Once replaced by men, many women left journalism for homemaking.\(^6\)

During the 1950s and 1960s, few female broadcast journalists were responsible for either radio or television programming.\(^7\) Pauline Frederick, Nancy Dickerson, and Marlene Sanders, represented a select few who fought for on-air time at the major television networks. They constantly felt pressured to prove themselves capable by filing stories that were nearly perfect.\(^8\)

Women became more prominent in journalism during the 1970s and 1980s.\(^9\) In 1971, female journalists made up 12.8% of the broadcast industry, which increased to 32.3% by 1982.\(^10\) This shift is partly the result of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which

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\(^6\) Ibid., 33.


\(^8\) Ibid., 39.


prohibited discrimination based on gender. Following the enactment of the Civil Rights Act, the major networks received a flood of complaints concerning discrimination against female journalists.\textsuperscript{11} Women’s groups not only filed complaints against the major networks but, also, filed directly to the Federal Communications Commissions (FCC). \textsuperscript{12} Broadcasters are regulated by the federal government; while the First Amendment protects freedom of the press, the FCC ensures that radio and television stations use the airwaves responsibly and reserves the right to revoke a local network affiliate’s broadcasting license. Since the local affiliates air national network programming, pressure at the local level from the FCC can be felt at the national level. Women’s groups, especially the National Organization for Women (NOW), encouraged the FCC to deny the renewal of local network affiliate broadcasting licenses for sexist policies, practices, and programming by television stations.\textsuperscript{13} Their efforts were fairly successful. For example, by 1971 NBC News employed six women as powerful, highly visible professional journalists.\textsuperscript{14}

Marlene Sanders was one of the chosen female journalists given airtime on national network television. In 1966, Sanders became the first woman to anchor a national network evening newscast when she spent three months substituting for Sam

\textsuperscript{11}Deborah Chambers, Linda Steiner and Carole Fleming, \textit{Women and Journalism}, 57.
\textsuperscript{12} Maurine H. Beasley and Sheila J. Gibbons, \textit{Taking Their Place: A Documentary History of Women and Journalism} (State College PA: Strata Publishing, 2003), 192.
\textsuperscript{13} Ibid., 192.
\textsuperscript{14} Deborah Chambers, Linda Steiner and Carole Fleming, \textit{Women and Journalism}, 58.
Donaldson on the ABC “Evening News.” Later, in filing feature stories from Vietnam, Sanders became the first female broadcast journalist to cover a war zone.\textsuperscript{15}

Women were given more opportunities during the 1970s and 1980s to appear on camera. However, they still experienced discrimination based on the time allotted for reports. Data for 1987 indicates that, of a total of 239 network reporters, none of the 36 women ranked among the top ten in time on the air. Moreover, the top six male journalists enjoyed more time on the air than all 36 women combined.\textsuperscript{16} Not only were male anchors allotted more time for reporting, at the local level they were often allowed to pick their co-anchor. This meant that female journalists were sometimes replaced solely because the anchorman preferred to broadcast with someone else.\textsuperscript{17}

Steps towards equality in on-air presence for female journalists did not necessarily indicate equality in news assignments. While a 1971 Federal Communications Commission (FCC) rule that mandated network affiliates engage in affirmative action and hire more female journalists or risk losing their broadcasting licenses resulted in female journalists being hired at explosive rates, the women hired were not assigned to cover hard-news stories but rather stories that appealed to female viewers.\textsuperscript{18} “Women journalists were called upon to provide feature stories on American and British television and to contribute personalized, human-interest accounts.”\textsuperscript{19}

\textsuperscript{15} Robin Morgan, \textit{The Sisterhood is Forever: the Woman’s Anthology for the New Millennium} (New York: Washington Square Press, 2003), 423.
\textsuperscript{16} Deborah Chambers, Linda Steiner and Carole Fleming, \textit{Women and Journalism}, 61.
\textsuperscript{17} Ibid., 61.
\textsuperscript{19} Ibid., 9.
In 1976, Barbara Walters was given a $1 million five-year contract to co-anchor the ABC evening news with Harry Reasoner. News executives at ABC believed that Walter’s popularity on the Today Show from 1961 through 1976 would help boost ABC’s evening news ratings. However, it quickly became clear that Reasoner and Walters had two very different personalities and approaches towards journalism and that it would be nearly impossible for them to work together as a team. Despite several management attempts to improve their relationship, their cold rapport was captured by the camera. Within a year and a half, it became clear that ABC news executives had to make a change. Both Reasoner and Walters stepped down from the anchor desk. Reasoner took a salary cut and left ABC to host CBS Reports and Walters became the primary interviewer and reporter for ABC News.  

Twenty years after ABC’s failed experiment with male and female co-anchors, CBS tried it as well; in this case, Connie Chung and Dan Rather seemed like an ideal partnership. Yet, similarly low rankings, coupled with accusations concerning her ability to anchor the evening news, resulted in Chung’s removal from the anchor desk. Chung, as was the case with Walters, found herself filling in everywhere, except the evening news.  

As women fought for equality in the newsroom, there were many lawsuits. One, however, stands out above the rest: Craft vs. Metromedia 1983. In 1980, Christine Craft, a 36 year-old anchor, took a job at KMBC in Kansas City, Missouri. Within seven

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21 Robin Morgan, *The Sisterhood is Forever: the Woman’s Anthology for the New Millennium*, 419.
months, KMBC’s management team informed Craft that she would have to step down to reporter status as a result of low ratings. Craft sued on four counts: sex discrimination, unequal pay, fraud, and intent to injure. Initially Craft was awarded $500,000 in damages which was reduced to $250,000 and ultimately overturned in a federal appeals court. The appeals court felt that Craft did not adequately prove that she was defrauded or a victim of sexual discrimination and thus ruled in favor of Metromedia.\textsuperscript{22} While Craft lost the case, she succeeded in bringing broadcasting values and practices of beauty and age into the public arena.\textsuperscript{23}

Female journalists continued fighting for representation throughout the 1990s; in 2000, it appeared as though equality for female journalists based on representation on newsroom staffs was attainable.\textsuperscript{24} The Radio and Television News Directors Association (RTNDA) surveyed 1,400 radio and television stations across the United States and found that, on average, female journalists comprised approximately 40\% of total employees.\textsuperscript{25} Moreover, the 2001 RTNDA/ Ball State University Survey of Women and Minorities in Radio & Television News reported that 20.2\% of news directors were women. The survey also found that 34.7\% of television news managers and 12.6\% of television general managers were women.\textsuperscript{26}

Feminist groups viewed Katie Couric’s promotion to solo anchor on the CBS “Evening News” on September 5, 2006, as a milestone for gender equality across the

\textsuperscript{22} Associated Press, “Court Bars $325,000 Award to Christine Craft,” \textit{New York Times}, June 29, 1985, Section 1, Late City Final Edition.


\textsuperscript{25} Ibid., 189.

\textsuperscript{26} Ibid., 188.
United States. They were not only pleased with the increase in female presence on national television but, also, that Couric was offered a four-year contract worth 60-million dollars, a contract that trumped that of any other network anchor. Couric was seen as ideal anchor material, as Andrew Lack, president of NBC news, explained: “She (Couric) is able to be the serious news interviewer in one segment, talking to senators or the president, and be Peter Pan in the next segment.”

Yet, Couric’s “girl-next door” qualities might not be enough; CBS “Evening News” with Katie Couric trails behind the other networks in ratings. Part of the problem lies in her 15 year career on the CBS Today Show where she gained notoriety for her creative approaches toward soft-news. It is hard to expect the American public to take Couric seriously when they are used to seeing her dress in up in costumes and provide cooking advice. Couric is doing so poorly that she and CBS News executives have discussed her giving up the anchor desk in November 2009, if her ratings do not improve. Currently, “NBC Nightly News” with Brian Williams averages 9 million viewers; ABC’s “World News” with Charles Gibson draws 8.8 million viewers; and CBS “Evening News” with Katie Couric attracts only 6.7 million viewers.

Couric’s rise and rumored fall suggest that in 2008 female journalists in the broadcast news industry are still considered the ‘other’ and struggle to achieve typically

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28 Robin Morgan, Sisterhood is Forever: the Women’s Anthology for a New Millennium, 423.
29 Ibid., 423.
male-dominated positions, according to gender researcher Paula Poindexter. She further argues: “In television – where spectacle counts – emphasis on the decorative value and even the sexualization of women journalists is overt.” For example, in 2002, CNN ran an advertising campaign promoting their morning newscast with Paula Zahn that included a voiceover saying: “Where can you find a morning news anchor who’s provocative, super-smart, oh yeah, and just a little bit sexy?” While CNN pushed her sex appeal, others criticized it. Zahn, who has logged more airtime than any other female journalist for crisis reporting, was criticized in the Wall Street Journal, not for her reporting, but rather, for her choice in haircut.

With such an overt emphasis on women’s physical appearances, female journalists are, on average, younger and spend less time in the industry. In 2000, the Radio and Television News Directors Association analyzed data from 1972 through 1996 and found that once women become 40 years of age, they tend to leave the industry. The RTNDA concluded that: “Thirty-eight percent of journalists are in their 30s, but 43% women are; and 13% of the workers are in their 40s, but only 3% of women are.” A greater presence on-air does not necessarily correspond with equality for female journalists.

Despite the age differences, throughout the past several decades the ratio of male to female journalists in newsrooms across the United States has decreased. However,

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32 Paula Poindexter, “Finding Women in the Newsroom and in the News,” 34.  
33 Ibid., 34.  
34 Paula Poindexter, “Finding Women in the Newsroom and in the News,” 32.  
35 Robin Morgan, Sisterhood is Forever: The Women’s Anthology for a New Millennium, 418.  
37 Ibid., 188.
regardless of the decade, the ratio of male to female journalists does not represent the ratio of males to females in the United States population. In the 1970s approximately 20% of the broadcast industry was comprised of women. This increased to 30% during the 1980s as the result of more women earning bachelors’ degrees in journalism and an increase in pressure from the FCC for local affiliates to hire more women. During the early 1990s, female representation in the broadcast industry rose to 36%.\textsuperscript{38} From 1997 through 2007, approximately 40% of the broadcast industry was comprised of women.\textsuperscript{39}


Chapter 2 – Literature Review

Gendered Reporting

Despite the hurdles, some argue that, as solo anchor of CBS “Evening News,” Katie Couric represents the strides women have made in national network news. However, even though women are present nationally on camera, it does not mean they have the same opportunities as male journalists in story assignments. A 2006 content analysis of the role gender plays in broadcast story assignments found that, indeed, some progress has been made for female reporters. ¹ The results indicate that with regard to local news, women are reporting on hard-hitting topics as often as men are; however, in national news programming hard-news stories are still male dominated.²

Even though the aforementioned study found that at the local level female reporters were covering the same stories as their male colleagues, both gender and age played a role in time allocations. On the local level, women were more likely allotted 30 seconds or less of airtime for a report. Moreover, the older a female journalist, the less time on-air she was likely to receive, to the extent that female journalists over the age of 40 were non-existent on the air both locally and nationally.³

This issue of age is tightly knit with beauty concepts. There seems to be a relationship between Hollywood’s constant depictions of the ideal woman as being thin, beautiful and polished, and the female journalists who are on-air. To assess the pressures facing female journalists in broadcast newsrooms, Ericka Engstom and Anthony Farri

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² Ibid., 90.
³ Ibid., 89.
conducted a survey of 118 male and 128 female anchors from across the United States.\(^4\) Engstom and Farri compiled a list of barriers commonly confronted by journalists and asked each anchor to rank them in order of most often confronted to never confronted. Of 34 possible career barriers, on average, regardless of age, female journalists ranked importance of physical appearance as number one. As one female participant explained, “Women are supposed to appear attractive; perhaps even glamorous … the men just have to look trustworthy.”\(^5\) For men, the physical appearance barrier ranked, on average, 27\(^{th}\) of 34.\(^6\)

The study further found drastic differences between the male and female participants’ demographics. The average age for female anchors surveyed was 29 years, with approximately 6.5 years of experience and earning about $60,000 to $70,000. Men, however, averaged 36 years of age with 13.6 years of experience and earning $70,000 to $80,000.\(^7\) Engstrom and Ferri suggest that the seven-year age difference does not reflect the ability of female journalists to rise in newsroom hierarchy faster than men but, rather, demonstrates the emphasis placed on physical attractiveness for female journalists.\(^8\) This study, paired with the aforementioned study by Armstrong, Wood, and Neilson suggests that the broadcast industry places an emphasis on female journalists’ overall physical appearance, more than, their reporting capabilities.


\(^5\) Ibid., 623.

\(^6\) Ibid., 624.

\(^7\) Ibid., 622.

\(^8\) Ibid., 631.
Despite the push towards equality, some female journalists admit that they do not approach journalism the same way as their male colleagues. The International Women’s Media Foundation conducted a survey in May of 2000 at a gathering of female media leaders in Washington, D.C. A majority (92%) of respondents said that women bring a different, more human perspective to the news.\(^9\) While the survey indicated that female journalists believe that gender makes a difference in story selection and presentation, ultimately news is news. They explained that the same set of standards concerning accuracy, fairness, and ethics applies to all journalists regardless of gender.\(^{10}\)

Moreover, Liesbet van Zoonen argued that male and female journalists have clear roles in societies in which media content is driven by the market. After researching the structure of mass media in several countries, van Zoonen concluded that American broadcast news is based upon “Ken and Barbie” journalism.\(^{11}\) beautiful people each with their own gender roles. His research suggests that male journalists predominately report on masculine topics: politics, crime, and finance, whereas, female journalists report on feminine topics: human-interest stories, consumer news, culture, and social policy. Moreover, a woman’s role in American television news is to care for the emotional needs and desires of the audience.\(^{12}\)

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\(^{10}\) Ibid.


\(^{12}\) Ibid., 36.
Newsroom Management Influences

It is important to consider the gender of newsroom management in decisions about story selection and assignment. The dearth of women in management positions affects how female journalists are treated in the newsroom. The reality is that male news executives still practice the oldest form of affirmative action, they hire people who went to the same school they did, and dress in a similar manner; quite simply they hire people who remind them of themselves. This practice not only makes it difficult for women to compete for the same positions but, also, results in women imitating men to achieve similar positions. Jodi Enda, White House correspondent for Knight Ridder, advised novice female journalists to: “Follow him. Because, to a great extent, we (female journalists) have to act like men.” Some ways in which female journalists follow their male colleagues is through appearance. Women mask their femininity through pulling back their hair, dressing conservatively, and lowering their voices.

Female journalists falling into the habit of imitating their male colleagues to advance into management positions is related to journalistic norms. Warren Breed observed that organizational norms aide in the production of news. After interviewing 120 reporters from mid-sized newspapers in the North Eastern quarter of the United States, Breed cited six factors that lead to the adaptation and acceptance of newsroom policy. Breed concluded that organizational policy results in the formation of a reference group for new staffers. After a period of time when the new staffer becomes a veteran

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14 Ibid., 68.
he/she will be part of some new staffer’s reference group. This reference group concept creates a cyclical effect for the adaptation of newsroom policy. Once someone buys into the newsroom policy, it is unlikely that he or she will change values or approaches towards news production.

Often, reporters are assigned stories and have few opportunities to choose what they cover. Male and female journalists may be assigned specific stories based solely on their gender. Stephanie Craft and Wayne Wanta studied how the gender of newsroom managers influenced story selection by analyzing the staffing in newsrooms of thirty newspapers. The newsrooms were divided into those with low, medium, and high percentages of women in management positions. Craft and Wanta found that in newsrooms with a high percentage of female managers, male and female reporters covered similar stories. However, in newsrooms with a low female management presence, there was a clear division in story assignment based on gender. Male reporters tended to report on political stories and female reporters on education and business.

Marilyn Greenwald also conducted a similar study concerning the management team’s gender and story assignments. She analyzed thirty business section fronts from the Courier-Journal and the Columbus Dispatch. These papers were selected because they had similar circulation sizes and geographic locations. The Courier-Journal had a

18 Ibid., 134.
19 Ibid., 135.
business reporting staff with five male reporters, three female reporters, one male copyeditor, one male assistant business editor, and one female section editor. The *Columbus Dispatch* had five female reporters and two male reporters with a male section editor and a male copyeditor.\(^{21}\)

Greenwald found that while both papers underrepresented women as subjects, sources, and reporters, there was a difference between the gender of the newsroom management and the gender of the reporting journalist. Overall, at the *Courier-Journal*, with a female editor, 30% of the stories were written by female reporters and 36% by male reporters. Conversely, at *Columbus Dispatch*, with a male editor, only 5% of the stories were by female reporters, whereas, 19% were by male reporters.\(^{22}\) This study suggests that the presence of a female editor may influence story assignment.

*Gender and Crisis Reporting*

Journalists have the important role of informing while remaining calm during times of crisis.\(^{23}\) Studies suggest that younger and more inexperienced reporters are more likely to become absorbed personally in the crisis activity surrounding them and develop symptoms of Post Traumatic Stress Syndrome than are more experienced journalists. Ensuring that the reporter sent to cover a crisis is physically and mentally capable of handling the situation is of primary importance. The information and images journalists relay to an audience may remain in people’s minds forever. Thoughtful reporting can


\(^{22}\) Ibid., 72.

help readers and viewers to respond intelligently to what occurred, however, repeating
myths and errors can hinder personal and community efforts in a crisis.\textsuperscript{24}

In crises the manner in which information is relayed is as important as the
information itself. Renita Coleman and Denis Wu studied 653 journalists’ uses of non-
verbal expressions during the first 24-hours of news coverage of the September 11
terrorist attacks.\textsuperscript{25} Each journalist’s expressions were identified as positive, negative, or
neutral according to six measures of non-verbal expression.\textsuperscript{26} The results showed that the
majority of stories overwhelmingly used non-neutral expressions. However, the results
also indicated that men were just as likely as women to engage in non-verbal expressions
when reporting, and that there is no difference in how male and female reporters use non-
verbal expressions to emotionally respond to crises.\textsuperscript{27} This study suggests that many
reporters are inclined to become emotionally involved in crisis coverage; thus, newsroom
managers should not make decisions on story assignments based solely on perceptions of
gender differences in response to certain situations.

Moreover, one study concluded that, while reporting differences do exist, female
reporters are more likely to produce diverse stories.\textsuperscript{28} Shelly Rodgers and Esther Thorson
selected 21 issues of three daily newspapers to assess reporting differences based on

\textsuperscript{24} Roger Simpson and William Coté, \textit{Covering Violence: A Guide to Ethical Reporting about
Victims of Trauma}, 70.
\textsuperscript{25} Renita Coleman and Denis Wu, “More Than Words Alone: Incorporating Broadcasters’
Nonverbal Communication into the Stages of Crisis Coverage Theory – Evidence from September 11th,”
\textsuperscript{26} Ibid., 8.
\textsuperscript{27} Ibid., 11.
\textsuperscript{28} Shelly Rodgers and Esther Thorson, “A Socialization Perspective on Male and Female
gender. The study concluded that female journalists were more likely to write stories that are more diverse and positive than were male journalists.

Tying it all together, one study has been conducted that analyzes female journalists and crisis reporting. John Sutcliffe, Martha Lee, and Walter Soderlund analyzed seven war crises between 1990 and 1996 in the Caribbean and the representation of women reporters as well as overall differences in content and reporting styles between male and female reporters. In the seven crises assessed, female reporters were underrepresented. On average, female journalists covered only 31% of the stories. At the same time, the study found no differences in how the genders reported on the crisis situations: “The case findings indicate a broad similarity in the coverage of these crises by female and male reporters that cannot be ignored.”

While Sutcliffe, Lee, and Soderlund found a disparity in which gender covers crisis situations, their study was limited to the Caribbean and situations of war and political crisis. This content analysis expands upon the aforementioned study by assessing the representation of female reporters during United States domestic crisis situations from 1969 to 2007 nightly newscasts at ABC, CBS, and NBC. The immediate responses by journalists to the crises through the following six months were coded to assess the role of gender in the initial coverage as well as in follow up stories.

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29 Shelly Rodgers and Esther Thorson, “A Socialization Perspective on Male and Female Reporting,” 663.
31 Ibid., 118.
Research Questions

RQ1: Are women, as field reporters, underrepresented in crisis coverage?

RQ2: Is the gender of the field reporter associated with the nature of the crisis situation?

RQ3: Over time, from 1969 to 2007, have women been given more opportunities to cover crisis situations?

RQ4: Is there a difference among the networks as to the gender of the field reporter who covers a crisis situation?

RQ5: Is there an association between the gender of the reporter and the time allotted for the report?

RQ6: Is there a difference in the gender of the reporter responsible for coverage during the first three days of the crisis versus the initial three days through the following six months?

RQ7: Is there an association between the gender of the anchor and the gender of the field reporter?
Chapter 3: Method

The first step in completing this content analysis was defining a crisis situation. For the purpose of this study, the definition by Uraiel Rosenthal and Charles Michael of crisis as “a serious threat to the basic structures or the fundamental values and norms of social system, which under time pressure and highly uncertain circumstances-necessitates making crucial decisions”¹ was applied. This definition was appropriate because it includes various types of crises: ecothreats, information technology (IT) crashes, economic adversity, prison riots, wars, exploding factories, spikes in crime, the war on drugs, and natural disasters.²

Next, the lists of Associated Press Top 10 Stories of the Year were gathered for all years from 1969 to 2007. Each story corresponded to a top news event. Each event was then compared to the definition of crisis by Rosenthal and Michael. Following this definition, it was easy to identify situations that caused a serious threat to societal norms, basic structures, and fundamental values. Because the AP lists identify top stories of the year in general, several of the stories were clearly about positive or neutral situations and were not assessed: for example, presidential elections. Similarly, the AP lists included international stories that were automatically discarded unless it was a war situation in which the United States was involved: for example the Vietnam War. Even though the military action occurs overseas, wars result in domestic crisis activities: “an increase in assassinations, riots, political strikes, armed attacks and protest demonstrations” that disrupt societal norms.³ Of the 380 events identified by the Associated Press Top 10 Stories of the Year, 32 matched this study’s definition of a crisis situation; see Appendix B for the complete list of crises used for this study.

According to Sutcliffe’s 2005 study, “In terms of case selection, it is important to keep in mind that the chosen events had to be seen as newsworthy by American media organizations.” Following this logic, this study used the Associated Press Top 10 Stories

of the Year, because the selection of the top news stories was made from polling Associated Press newspaper editors and broadcast executives across the United States.

The period of 1969 to 2007 was used because, after consulting the Associated Press Top 10 Stories of the Year, it became apparent that not every year corresponded to a crisis situation; approximately 40 years were necessary to compile a sufficient list of major crises for assessment. If a year had more than one crisis situation, then all crises from that particular year were assessed. Similarly, if the year did not have a domestic crisis situation, then no situations from that year were assessed.

Once the list of crisis situations was finalized, abstracts of ABC, CBS, and NBC broadcasts were obtained from the Vanderbilt Television and News Archives. The Vanderbilt Television and News Archives has been recording and abstracting regularly scheduled U.S. evening broadcast newscasts since August 5, 1968. Today, the archives contain more than 850,000 abstracts from ABC, CBS, NBC, CNN, and FOX News.4 Because the Vanderbilt Television and News Archives are limited to evening newscasts, this study did not analyze breaking news coverage. All relevant abstracts were pulled from the initial day of the crisis situation through the following six months. Some crisis situations did not have an initial starting point, but were rather situations that were continually in the news for the year. For these situations further research was conducted to identify a pivotal point as a starting point, and then the following six months were coded. For example, for the war in Iraq, the initial U.S. invasion on March 20, 2003 was identified as the starting point for analysis.

The national networks were used because they reach a large number of viewers, and they were in existence during this entire period. Similarly, the national networks were selected over cable news programming because approximately ten times more people watch the three network evening newscasts than primetime news shows on cable networks.5 Abstracts were used because they provide the necessary information to identify type of stories, reporter, anchor, and time allocations.

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The Vanderbilt Archives’ abstracts were coded for the following variables: broadcast network, date, reporter’s name, reporter’s gender, time allotted for the report, corresponding anchor’s name, corresponding anchor’s gender, crisis event, and crisis category. Since the abstracts do not break time allocations down by reporter, it was impossible to code for time based upon gender, if more than one gender reported in one story. Therefore, for this study, the average times were calculated through assessing the stories that had only male or female reporters. See Appendix A for a sample coding sheet.

The crises were categorized following a categorization system employed by Guido Stempel. Stempel’s system originally identified twelve different categories; however, some modifications were made to fit this study. An additional terrorism category was added primarily because several domestic crisis situations in the time frame assessed were the result of terrorist acts: for example, the Oklahoma City bombing in 1995 or the World Trade Center attacks on September 11, 2001. In addition, the accident and disaster category was split into two different categories: accidents and natural disasters. Also, the category diplomacy and foreign affairs was changed to diplomacy and politics to account for political crises: for example, an assassination attempt on the President of the United States. The 10 other categories include: war and defense, economic activity, agriculture, transportation, crime, public moral problems, science and innovation, public health and welfare, education and classic arts, and entertainment. See Appendix C for the complete list and definitions of the crisis categories.

An intercoder reliability test was conducted before coding all the abstracts. The three participants included one graduate journalism student, one first-year law student, and one undergraduate chemistry student. The intercoder reliability, based on percentage of agreement, ranged from 96% for identification of reporters and anchor’s gender, to 98% for crisis identification, AP story from list, and report length in seconds, to 100% for abstract case number, slug of the report, and date. The overall intercoder reliability for this study was 98.3%.

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Chapter 4: Results

Overall, this study analyzed 3,866 abstracts of stories reporting on crisis coverage and found that female reporters were underrepresented. Female journalists contributed to 18% of the crisis reports. The degree of underrepresentation was dependent upon crisis category as well as time period assessed. This study found that as time progressed from 1969 to 2007, women were responsible for more crisis reports.

RQ1: Are women, as field reporters, underrepresented in crisis coverage?

Overall, female journalists were underrepresented in crisis coverage. Table 1 illustrates that when years, networks, and crisis categories were combined female journalists were responsible for only 698, 18%, of the 3,866 crisis reports.

Table 1: Reports by Male and Female Reporters on ABC, CBS, & NBC from 1969 to 2007

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Crisis Category</th>
<th>Male # and %</th>
<th>Female # and %</th>
<th>Total # and %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Accidents</td>
<td>50 (89%)</td>
<td>6 (11%)</td>
<td>56 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education &amp; Arts</td>
<td>307 (87%)</td>
<td>44 (12%)</td>
<td>351 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic Activity</td>
<td>141 (87%)</td>
<td>21 (13%)</td>
<td>162 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Moral</td>
<td>147 (86%)</td>
<td>24 (14%)</td>
<td>171 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transportation</td>
<td>140 (86%)</td>
<td>24 (14%)</td>
<td>164 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>War and Defense</td>
<td>325 (85%)</td>
<td>58 (15%)</td>
<td>383 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diplomacy &amp; Politics</td>
<td>129 (82%)</td>
<td>28 (18%)</td>
<td>157 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Terrorism</td>
<td>479 (81%)</td>
<td>113 (19%)</td>
<td>592 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natural Disasters</td>
<td>718 (80%)</td>
<td>184 (20%)</td>
<td>902 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science</td>
<td>254 (80%)</td>
<td>63 (20%)</td>
<td>317 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crime</td>
<td>479 (78%)</td>
<td>132 (22%)</td>
<td>611 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>3,169 (82%)</td>
<td>698 (18%)</td>
<td>3,866 (100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

RQ2: Is the nature of the crisis situation associated with the gender of the field reporter?

This study found that the nature of the crisis situation is associated with the gender of the journalist sent to report. Table 1 illustrates the representation of female reporters broken down by category for all three networks and years combined. Female journalists were responsible for 15%, or less, of crisis coverage for six of the 11 categories: war and defense, economic activity, transportation, public moral problems, accidents, and education and arts. They were most underrepresented in coverage of crisis situations pertaining to accidents, making up only 11% of coverage. This study also found that female journalists were most represented in crime crisis reporting, making
22% of all reports, closely followed by science and natural disaster crisis reporting with 20% of reports.

Table 2: Reports by Male and Female Reporters on ABC, CBS, and NBC from 1969 to 2007 in Rank Order

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Crisis Category</th>
<th>Male #</th>
<th>Male %</th>
<th>Female #</th>
<th>Female %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Natural Disasters</td>
<td>718</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>184</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crime</td>
<td>479</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Terrorism</td>
<td>479</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>War &amp; Defense</td>
<td>325</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education &amp; Arts</td>
<td>307</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science</td>
<td>254</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Moral Problems</td>
<td>147</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic Activity</td>
<td>141</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transportation</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diplomacy &amp; Politics</td>
<td>129</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accidents</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>3,169</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>698</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is necessary to assess, not only, the percentage of male versus female reporters for a given crisis category but, also, the number of male and female reporters for a given crisis category against the overall number of male and female reporters covering crisis situations. Table 2 rank orders the crisis categories for networks and years combined. For both male and female journalists, coverage of natural disaster crises was ranked the number one crisis category in regards to the number of journalists responsible for coverage. While there is some fluctuation in the ranking of categories, the fewest number of both male and female journalists were responsible for crises pertaining to accidents. With so few reporters responsible for accident coverage, it is hard to assess the degree to which female journalists are underrepresented.

RQ3: Over time from 1969 to 2007, have women been given more opportunities to cover crisis situations?

This study found that, in general, with the progression of time women reported more frequently on crisis situations. Table 3 illustrates the breakdown of the number and percentage of reports covered by male and female journalists for each decade of the study. Because this study assessed 39 years, the results were broken down into three decades and one period of nine years. With the passing of each decade, as a whole, women were responsible for more crisis coverage. From the first decade assessed, 1969
– 1978, to the last period of nine years, 1999 – 2007, female journalists’ responsibility for crisis reporting increased from 10% to 22%.

Table 3: Reports by Male and Female Reporters for Each Decade from 1969 through 2007 on ABC, CBS, & NBC Cumulatively

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years</th>
<th>Male Reports</th>
<th>Female Reports</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td># and %</td>
<td># and %</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1969-1978</td>
<td>431 90%</td>
<td>50 10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1979-1988</td>
<td>413 85%</td>
<td>74 15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1989-1998</td>
<td>1051 82%</td>
<td>227 18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999-2007</td>
<td>1264 78%</td>
<td>357 22%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

RQ4: Is there a difference among the networks as to the gender of the field reporter who covers a crisis situation?

According to this study, the results are two fold. First, in analyzing the years and crisis categories cumulatively, the network breakouts on reporters covering crisis situations were as follows: on ABC and CBS, 80% of crisis coverage was reported by male reporters and 20% by female reporters; and, on NBC, male reporters were responsible for 85% and female reporters 15% of crisis coverage.

Second, Table 4 illustrates the breakout of reporter gender and network by year and crisis category. Even though, in comparison to NBC, CBS ranked highly for percentage of women responsible for crisis coverage, CBS had ten crisis situations in which no female journalists participated in the reporting. However, at the same time, there were a couple of crises in which CBS’s coverage was dominated by female journalists, the 2007 Virginia Tech University shooting and the Waco incident, with women responsible for 70% and 92% of the reports respectively.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year &amp; Crisis ID</th>
<th>ABC (male / female)</th>
<th>CBS (male / female)</th>
<th>NBC (male / female)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1969 Education</td>
<td>19 (100%) 0 (0%)</td>
<td>11 (100%) 0 (0%)</td>
<td>11 (100%) 0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970 Education</td>
<td>22 (85%) 4 (15%)</td>
<td>31 (100%) 0 (0%)</td>
<td>24 (92%) 2 (8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971 Natural Disasters</td>
<td>7 (100%) 0 (5%)</td>
<td>7 (100%) 0 (0%)</td>
<td>12 (100%) 0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1972 Natural Disasters</td>
<td>7 (100%) 0 (0%)</td>
<td>4 (100%) 0 (0%)</td>
<td>7 (100%) 0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1974 Crime</td>
<td>24 (89%) 3 (11%)</td>
<td>43 (100%) 0 (0%)</td>
<td>18 (56%) 14 (44%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1975 War &amp; Defense</td>
<td>22 (100%) 0 (0%)</td>
<td>14 (100%) 0 (0%)</td>
<td>16 (100%) 0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Political</td>
<td>17 (89%) 2 (11%)</td>
<td>12 (85%) 2 (14%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1976 Accident</td>
<td>5 (100%) 0 (0%)</td>
<td>8 (100%) 0 (0%)</td>
<td>5 (71%) 2 (29%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1978 Public Moral</td>
<td>18 (86%) 14 (14%)</td>
<td>25 (96%) 1 (4%)</td>
<td>25 (83%) 5 (17%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980 Public Moral</td>
<td>1 (100%) 0 (0%)</td>
<td>5 (100%) 0 (0%)</td>
<td>3 (100%) 0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981 Economics</td>
<td>20 (95%) 1 (5%)</td>
<td>16 (80%) 4 (20%)</td>
<td>23 (88%) 3 (12%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Political</td>
<td>24 (83%) 5 (17%)</td>
<td>23 (72%) 9 (28%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1986 Science</td>
<td>36 (49%) 38 (51%)</td>
<td>86 (97%) 3 (4%)</td>
<td>78 (98%) 2 (3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1987 Accidents</td>
<td>7 (100%) 0 (0%)</td>
<td>6 (100%) 0 (0%)</td>
<td>5 (100%) 0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1988 Education</td>
<td>21 (100%) 0 (0%)</td>
<td>15 (100%) 0 (0%)</td>
<td>18 (100%) 0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1989 Natural Disasters</td>
<td>29 (100%) 0 (0%)</td>
<td>19 (95%) 2 (10%)</td>
<td>25 (100%) 0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990 Economics</td>
<td>31 (89%) 4 (11%)</td>
<td>28 (88%) 4 (13%)</td>
<td>23 (82%) 5 (18%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991 Crime</td>
<td>6 (35%) 11 (65%)</td>
<td>19 (100%) 0 (0%)</td>
<td>18 (100%) 0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992 Natural Disasters</td>
<td>45 (79%) 12 (21%)</td>
<td>45 (79%) 12 (21%)</td>
<td>48 (98%) 1 (2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1993 Crime</td>
<td>36 (95%) 2 (5%)</td>
<td>9 (18%) 42 (92%)</td>
<td>40 (95%) 2 (5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994 Crime</td>
<td>64 (80%) 16 (20%)</td>
<td>109 (79%) 29 (21%)</td>
<td>93 (88%) 13 (12%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995 Terrorism</td>
<td>65 (74%) 23 (26%)</td>
<td>78 (76%) 24 (24%)</td>
<td>81 (99%) 1 (1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996 Transportation</td>
<td>35 (73%) 13 (27%)</td>
<td>50 (83%) 10 (17%)</td>
<td>55 (98%) 1 (2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999 Education'</td>
<td>22 (69%) 10 (31%)</td>
<td>47 (82%) 10 (18%)</td>
<td>37 (84%) 7 (16%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000 Science</td>
<td>12 (63%) 7 (37%)</td>
<td>20 (77%) 6 (23%)</td>
<td>22 (76%) 7 (24%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Categories</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>2002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------</td>
<td>--------------------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>-------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Terrorism</td>
<td>35 (74%)</td>
<td>12 (26%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Accidents</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>1 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Terrorism</td>
<td>48 (86%)</td>
<td>8 (14%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>War &amp; Defense</td>
<td>119 (86%)</td>
<td>20 (14%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>Natural Disaster</td>
<td>176 (79%)</td>
<td>46 (21%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Public Moral</td>
<td>27 (79%)</td>
<td>7 (21%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>Education</td>
<td>20 (95%)</td>
<td>1 (5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>2001</strong></td>
<td><strong>2002</strong></td>
<td><strong>2003</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>1020 (80%)</strong></td>
<td><strong>263 (20%)</strong></td>
<td><strong>1018 (80%)</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
RQ5: Is there an association between the gender of the reporter and the time allotted for the report?

Overall, male journalists were allotted more time to report on camera than were female journalists. Regardless of crisis category and network, in regards to minutes and seconds, male journalists averaged 1:15 whereas female journalists averaged 0:57. As illustrated by Table 5, this study found several differences in time allocations based on crisis category and network. At all three networks, female reporters were allotted almost 30 seconds less time than were male reporters for economic crises. Natural disasters and terrorism were the only two crisis categories in which male and female reporters were allotted very similar amounts of time at all three networks. The only occurrence where women outnumbered men in regard to time allocations was at NBC for crises pertaining to war and defense.
Table 5: Average Times Allotted to Male and Female Journalists in Minutes and Seconds per Crisis Category on ABC, CBS, & NBC from 1969 to 2007

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Crisis Identification</th>
<th>ABC Male / Female</th>
<th>CBS Male / Female</th>
<th>NBC Male / Female</th>
<th>Total Male / Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>War &amp; Defense</td>
<td>1:33 0:59</td>
<td>1:47 0:51</td>
<td>1:42 1:45</td>
<td>1:41 1:12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diplomacy &amp; Politics</td>
<td>1:01 0:37</td>
<td>1:07 1:05</td>
<td>1:07 1:01</td>
<td>1:05 0:54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic Activity</td>
<td>1:04 0:37</td>
<td>1:01 0:37</td>
<td>0:53 0:32</td>
<td>0:59 0:35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transportation</td>
<td>1:01 0:40</td>
<td>1:08 0:47</td>
<td>1:23 0:48</td>
<td>1:11 0:45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crime</td>
<td>1:02 0:45</td>
<td>1:10 0:53</td>
<td>1:10 0:47</td>
<td>1:07 0:48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Moral</td>
<td>0:58 0:37</td>
<td>1:18 0:53</td>
<td>1:22 0:54</td>
<td>1:13 0:47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accidents</td>
<td>1:12 1:06</td>
<td>1:04 0:28</td>
<td>0:58 0:32</td>
<td>1:05 0:42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natural Disasters</td>
<td>1:22 1:24</td>
<td>1:08 1:24</td>
<td>1:24 1:19</td>
<td>1:23 1:16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science</td>
<td>1:28 1:24</td>
<td>1:11 0:48</td>
<td>1:23 1:08</td>
<td>1:21 1:07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education &amp; Arts</td>
<td>1:20 1:12</td>
<td>1:14 0:54</td>
<td>1:25 1:09</td>
<td>1:20 1:05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Terrorism</td>
<td>1:17 1:13</td>
<td>1:12 1:01</td>
<td>1:22 1:19</td>
<td>1:17 1:11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>1:04 0:57</strong></td>
<td><strong>1:13 0:51</strong></td>
<td><strong>1:14 1:05</strong></td>
<td><strong>1:15 0:57</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

RQ6: Is there a difference in the gender of the reporter responsible for coverage during the first three days of the crisis versus the initial three days through the following six months?

When networks and years are analyzed collectively, there was a difference in which gender reported during the first three days of initial coverage versus which gender reported for the initial three days of coverage through the following six months. As illustrated by Table 6, regardless of crisis category, female journalists were responsible for only 13% of crisis coverage during the first three days versus 18% of coverage from the first day through the following six months.

Table 6 also illustrates the percentage of stories reported by women by crisis category. Female journalists were responsible for only 18% of overall crisis coverage from the moment of the crisis through the following six months; however, there were
Four categories in which female journalists were responsible for between 19% - 22% of the coverage: terrorism, natural disasters, science and technology, and crime. Similarly, women were responsible for 13% of overall coverage for the first three days of a crisis; however, there were five crisis categories in which female journalists were responsible for between 15% and 21% of the initial coverage: diplomacy and politics, public moral problems, accidents, terrorism, and crime.

Most interesting, only three of the 59 reports aired during the first three days of science and innovation crises were covered by female journalists; however, as the time elapsed, female journalists were given more opportunities to cover science crisis situations, to the extent that when assessing the full six months of coverage, science and technology was one of the categories with the most female representation. Moreover, female journalists dropped in responsibility for coverage after the first three days for crises pertaining to accidents, public moral problems, and terrorism. Female journalists were most represented in crime coverage for both the first three days and the following six months.

Table 6: Amount of Coverage by Male and Female Reporters on ABC, CBS, & NBC from 1969 to 2007 the First Three Days of Crisis Coverage versus the First Three Days through the following Six Months of Crisis Coverage by Crisis Category

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Crisis Identification</th>
<th>First 3 Days</th>
<th></th>
<th>Following 6 Months</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male Male %</td>
<td>Female Female %</td>
<td>Male Male %</td>
<td>Female Female %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science</td>
<td>56 95%</td>
<td>3 5%</td>
<td>254 80%</td>
<td>63 20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic Activity</td>
<td>29 91%</td>
<td>3 9%</td>
<td>141 87%</td>
<td>21 13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education &amp; Arts</td>
<td>84 89%</td>
<td>10 11%</td>
<td>307 87%</td>
<td>44 12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natural Disasters</td>
<td>83 89%</td>
<td>8 11%</td>
<td>718 80%</td>
<td>184 20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transportation</td>
<td>24 59%</td>
<td>3 11%</td>
<td>140 86%</td>
<td>24 15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>War &amp; Defense</td>
<td>86 88%</td>
<td>12 12%</td>
<td>325 85%</td>
<td>58 15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diplomacy &amp; Politics</td>
<td>40 85%</td>
<td>7 15%</td>
<td>129 82%</td>
<td>28 18%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
RQ7: Is there an association between the gender of the anchor and the gender of the field reporter?

When the date of the story and network were taken collectively, there was a difference in the gender of the anchor and the gender of the reporter. As illustrated by Table 7, while both male and female anchors consult male reporters more often than female, female anchors relied on female reporters for 21% of the stories, whereas, male anchors relied on female reporters for 18% of the stories. It is also interesting to note that female anchors were used in only 9% of all crisis coverage. Table 7 also indicates the breakdown by crisis category. There are some categories in which there is a striking difference between the genders of reporters used by male versus female anchors. For example, for political crisis coverage, female anchors used exactly the same number of male, as they did female, reporters. However, for political crises male anchors were associated predominately with male reporters.

In order to assess the association between the gender of the anchor and the gender of the reporter it is important to consider how many women were anchors and during what time periods. Table 8 illustrates the representation of stories by male and female anchors by decade and network. Women were underrepresented on the anchor desk; for time period and network combined, only 317 or 9% of reports were anchored by women. Female anchors were responsible for the greatest number of crisis stories at ABC.
Table 7: The Number of Stories in which Male or Female Anchors Consulted Male or Female Reporters by Crisis Category for Year and Network Combined.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Crisis Category</th>
<th>Male Anchor</th>
<th>Female Anchor</th>
<th>Male Anchor</th>
<th>Female Anchor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male Reporter</td>
<td>Female Reporter</td>
<td>Male Reporter</td>
<td>Female Reporter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td># and %</td>
<td># and %</td>
<td># and %</td>
<td># and %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>War &amp; Defense</td>
<td>372 (85%)</td>
<td>64 (15%)</td>
<td>10 (83%)</td>
<td>2 (17%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diplomacy &amp; Politics</td>
<td>132 (84%)</td>
<td>26 (16%)</td>
<td>3 (50%)</td>
<td>3 (50%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic Activity</td>
<td>126 (89%)</td>
<td>17 (13%)</td>
<td>16 (76%)</td>
<td>5 (23%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transportation</td>
<td>111 (87%)</td>
<td>17 (13%)</td>
<td>31 (84%)</td>
<td>6 (16%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crime</td>
<td>370 (77%)</td>
<td>108 (23%)</td>
<td>111 (82%)</td>
<td>24 (18%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Moral</td>
<td>147 (86%)</td>
<td>23 (14%)</td>
<td>4 (80%)</td>
<td>1 (20%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accidents</td>
<td>53 (91%)</td>
<td>5 (9%)</td>
<td>4 (80%)</td>
<td>1 (20%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natural Disasters</td>
<td>602 (80%)</td>
<td>152 (20%)</td>
<td>134 (77%)</td>
<td>40 (23%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science</td>
<td>254 (80%)</td>
<td>63 (20%)</td>
<td>14 (93%)</td>
<td>1 (7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education &amp; Arts</td>
<td>292 (89%)</td>
<td>36 (11%)</td>
<td>18 (69%)</td>
<td>8 (31%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Terrorism</td>
<td>432 (81%)</td>
<td>102 (19%)</td>
<td>53 (80%)</td>
<td>13 (20%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>2,879 (82%)</td>
<td>611 (18%)</td>
<td>398 (79%)</td>
<td>104 (21%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 8: Reports Anchored by Male and Female Anchors through the Decades for ABC, CBS, and NBC

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>ABC</th>
<th>CBS</th>
<th>NBC</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>#</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>#</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1969-1978</td>
<td>515</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>149</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>176</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1979-1988</td>
<td>479</td>
<td>93%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>161</td>
<td>94%</td>
<td>167</td>
<td>99%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1989-1998</td>
<td>1,163</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>291</td>
<td>77%</td>
<td>347</td>
<td>88%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999-2007</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>370</td>
<td>86%</td>
<td>310</td>
<td>94%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1,056</td>
<td>93%</td>
<td>1,080</td>
<td>92%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>971</td>
<td>86%</td>
<td>1,000</td>
<td>93%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>158</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter 5: Discussion

It was not too surprising, in this study, that in crisis reporting as a whole, female journalists were underrepresented throughout the years. Previous literature suggests that historically women have struggled in a male-dominated newsroom. It was almost expected that this study would find female journalists trailing behind their male colleagues. However, in discussing the underrepresentation of women in crisis reporting, it is important to consider that women were not underrepresented in crisis reporting alone but in the broadcast industry as a whole. Only in the last period of ten years assessed in this study was the broadcast industry comprised of approximately 40% female journalists. From the 1970’s through the late 1990’s women made up between 20% and 36% of the industry. The dearth of women in the industry affects how many women report on crisis situations.

While women were underrepresented in crisis coverage overall, there was a difference with regard to crisis category. As indicated by Table 1, female journalists contributed to less than 15% of coverage in six crisis situations, and were most underrepresented in crisis situations pertaining to accidents. This was particularly interesting because in the 39 years assessed, the two accident crisis situations, the Jessica McClure well incident and the Pennsylvania mine rescue, occurred in 1987 and 2002 respectively, the two decades in which female journalists were responsible for the most crisis coverage.

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Perhaps most surprising, however, was the representation of female journalists in crises pertaining to education and classic arts. Previous research suggests that women tend to report on feminine and maternal issues such as family, health, fashion, and education. Yet, for three of the five education crises assessed in this study, female journalists were non-existent. This could be because all three of those crises fell between 1969 and 1988; decades, in which, regardless of crisis category, women were underrepresented. Female journalists were more prominent in the coverage of the 1999 and 2007 educational crises.

Female journalists were most represented in crisis coverage pertaining to the category of crime. Previous studies indicate that crime, along with politics and the economy have been male-dominated subjects in mass media. However, in this study, those categories were not the weakest in terms of female reporter representation. Yet, while women were most represented in crime crisis coverage, there were no clear similarities among the networks. As Table 3 illustrated, for three of the four crime situations, one of the networks had female journalists responsible for close to the majority of the reporting, while the other two networks had female journalists trailing. However, the four crime situations assessed in this study could almost also be identified as public moral problems: O.J. Simpson murders, Waco, police brutality because of race, and the kidnapping of Patricia Hearst. All four of these crises challenge social norms and values. Previous literature suggests that female journalists tend to report on social-policy issues

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and human interest stories. The social nature of these particular crime situations could explain the increase in female reporters.

Another possible explanation for the increase in female journalists in coverage of crime crises is location. In this study, all four of the crises pertaining to crime occurred out West and were thus covered by the networks’ West Coast bureaus as opposed to those in New York or Washington. At the national network level, female journalists tend to be more prevalent in the West Coast bureaus than in the New York or Washington bureaus. The likelihood that there was a greater percentage of female journalists in the West Coast bureau could explain the high representation of female journalists reporting on crises pertaining to crime.

This study found that with the progression of time, female journalists were responsible for more crisis coverage. This increasing trend was likely the result of an increase in women in the newsroom. From the 1970’s to the beginning of the 21st century, the broadcasting industry changed from being comprised of 20% to 40% female journalists. As more women joined the industry, more women appeared on television. However, despite this increasing trend, it is important to note the breakdown through the decades. Table 2 indicated that during the 1980s, female journalists were responsible for roughly 14% of all crisis reports. However, this number is skewed by one crisis situation and one network. As illustrated by Table 3, throughout the 1980s, female journalists were underrepresented in almost all crisis coverage, with the exception of ABC’s coverage of

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the 1986 Challenger explosion. The 38 reports by female journalists for this one event, however, constitute 51% of all the crisis reports by female journalists throughout the decade for all networks combined.

As time progressed, women made tremendous improvements with regard to responsibility for crisis coverage in the war and defense category. For the reports assessed in this study, no network had a female journalist responsible for coverage of the fall of Saigon during the Vietnam War from April of 1975, through the following six months. However, this does not necessarily mean that female journalists were not responsible for reporting on Vietnam. As previously mentioned, during the Vietnam War Marlene Sanders became the first woman to report from a war zone. However female journalists reporting from Vietnam were scarce. In comparison this study found that, 30 years later, the number of women responsible for war stories increased. All three networks had women responsible for between 14% and 23% of the coverage concerning the first invasion of Iraq on April 20, 2003 through the following six months.

As to network differences, it was surprising that when years and categories were combined, ABC and CBS both ended up with men responsible for 80% of the coverage and women 20%, and NBC trailed behind with 85% and 15% respectively. When Table 3 is consulted, it is clear that part of the reason why NBC trailed behind is because for nine of the 32 crises assessed, women had no representation and for eight others, women were responsible for less than 10% of the coverage.

In all crisis situations, female journalists were responsible for more crisis coverage after the initial three days of coverage. As previously mentioned, the most
striking difference occurred with the science and innovation category. During the first three days of initial coverage, female journalists were responsible for only 5% of stories, yet, in the following six months, they were responsible for 20% of all coverage.

One possible explanation for the drastic difference in representation of women during the first three days of crisis coverage and the following six months lies in female journalists’ abilities to be “hyper-compassionate.” After the initial impact of a crisis, there is a need for journalists who are able to detach from the event, to be desensitized, in control, and focused. Perhaps, newsroom executives believe that male reporters are more capable of seizing control in a crisis situation and calming viewers at home. After the initial coverage of the crisis, female journalists may be sent to cover stories concerning the cleanup and the return to normalcy. Studies suggest that women tend to write and deliver stories in a way that is almost therapeutic for the audience. However, an audience does not seek therapy and comfort until it is clear what occurred. These therapeutic stories happen when news editors and producers believe that the audiences’ attention could be maintained with “excessive emotional coverage emphasizing compassion with the victims of tragedies.” The use of female journalists to humanize and make the stories emotional for the viewers weeks later could explain the increase in female reporters in the weeks following the crises.

In terms of time allocations, on average, female journalists lagged behind males in all areas. At all three networks, women trailed behind men by almost 30 seconds when

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8 Deborah Chambers, Linda Steiner and Carole Fleming, *Women and Journalism*, 221.
reporting on economic crises. This was not surprising; a previous study indicated that regardless of topic, female journalists average 30 seconds less airtime than do male journalists.¹¹

However, it is difficult to speculate on the explanations for the variance in time allocations between the networks and reporter gender without knowing the exact content of what was said. While women had comparable time allocations for certain crises, this does not necessarily mean they covered the hard-news aspects of the story. All stories coded pertained to the crisis in some way; however, some of the stories were softer news. For example, for nearly every crisis situation NBC had an “In Depth” report that included human-interest aspects of what occurred rather than a hard-hitting explanation of the facts.

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Chapter 6: Limitations and Conclusions

Overall, this study found that while female journalists were more responsible for crisis coverage with the progression of time, they were still underrepresented in both crisis reporting and time allotted to report. These results are important because few studies specifically assess the role of gender in crisis reporting. This study adds to previous literature in concluding that crisis coverage is gendered; the gender of the reporter is associated with the type of crises. When the full six months of coverage was assessed, it was clear that women were given the most responsibility to report on crises pertaining to: crime, natural disasters, and science. However, regardless of the category, women were provided with minimal opportunities the initial three days following the crisis situation. This suggests that male reporters dive into the scene of the crisis to explain what happened; and, once the initial shock is over, female reporters are sent to cover the clean-up and help viewers regain feelings of normalcy.

While this study provides new insight into gender and reporting, there were a few limitations. First, the Vanderbilt Television and News Archives contained only abstracts of evening news stories. This means that while the archives identified special news alerts, abstracts with breakouts of reporters and time allocations were not available. For example, the first two days of the September 11 terrorist attacks were not coded because the networks replaced their regularly scheduled evening newscasts with special breaking news programming. For a more thorough analysis of the role gender plays in crisis coverage, transcripts of the breaking news programming should be assessed.
Second, the abstracts were used to identify crisis situations and reporter’s gender, yet differences in coverage and stories were not analyzed. While this study concludes that with the progression of time female journalists have been given more opportunities to report on crisis situations, it is not clear whether female journalists are reporting on hard or soft news. Pulling and assessing transcripts would allow for the analysis of whether, over time, female journalists have progressed to covering hard news stories.

Third, it was difficult to assess differences in time allocations for male and female reporters through the abstracts. The abstracts do provide the overall length of the story; however, they do not provide time breakouts for each reporter. This meant that if more than one reporter contributed to one story, based on the abstracts it is impossible to know how long each reporter spoke. Once again, an assessment of transcripts would allow for a more in-depth comparison of time allocations based on gender.

Finally, this study makes conclusions on the representation of gender and crisis coverage based upon crisis categories. However, some crisis categories were only represented by events that fell in the earlier years assessed. For example, the category diplomacy and politics was represented by assassination attempts on Ford and Reagan in 1975 and 1981 respectively. As noted by Table 3, female journalists were underrepresented in all categories in crisis events from 1981 and earlier; since this study did not assess any recent political crises, it cannot be determined whether women are underrepresented because of the time period in which the crisis occurred or because of subject matter.
This content analysis opens the door for several areas of further study. This study specifically focused on ABC, CBS, and NBC and excluded cable networks. In today’s world so many Americans turn to 24-hour news networks for minute-by-minute insight into what is happening. A future study should assess whether the reporting on cable networks follows the same pattern as on the national networks.

Similarly, this study analyzes solely the representation of women in crisis coverage. A further study should assess the representation of women in daily news programming from 1969 through 2007. This would allow a comparison to be made; is the under representation of female journalists in crisis coverage merely a reflection of the general industry pattern in story assignment?

Also, it is important to consider the whether the gender of the newsroom management team makes a difference in which gender is assigned to report on a crisis situation. There is a possibility that female managers do not strive for gender equality in story assignments; previous studies indicate that if women feel as though they cannot be a woman and advance in their careers, they assimilate male attitudes towards producing and managing. It is all part of organizational norms and routines; by the time women get to the top they have already embraced the practices of the newsroom.\(^1\) A further study should assess the gender of the network management teams for this same time period to determine if an association exists between the gender of the management team and the gender of the field reporters sent to cover crises.

Finally, this study focused on the presence or absence of male and female journalists. With regard to television news, it is also important to consider, not only, what is being said but how. Television is a visual medium, a future study should assess actual video footage of the coverage to determine if male and female journalists physically approach crisis coverage in similar manners.
Bibliography

“Alexandra Wallace: Executive Producer ‘NBC Nightly News with Brian Williams’.”


Associated Press. “Court Bars $325,000 Award to Christine Craft.” New York Times, June 29, 1985, Section 1, Late City Final Edition.


Appendix A: Sample Coding Sheet

Crisis Reporting and Gender Study

1. Case Number for Abstract
   ______ ______ ______

2. Name/Slug for Report
   __________________________________________

3. AP Story Name from List
   ______

4. Date Report Broadcast (year-month-day)
   ______ ______ ______ ______

5. Network Broadcasting Report
   ______
   1 = ABC
   2 = CBS
   3 = NBC

6. First Reporter’s Name
   ______________________ _____________________
   First Name          Last Name

7. First Reporter’s Gender
   ______
   1 = Female
   2 = Male
   3 = Unclear
   4 = No Reporter

8. Second Reporter’s Name
   ______________________ _____________________
   First Name          Last Name

9. Second Reporter’s Gender
   ______
   1 = Female
   2 = Male
   3 = Unclear
   4 = No Reporter

10. Third Reporter’s Name
    ______________________ _____________________
        First Name          Last Name

11. Third Reporter’s Gender
    ______
        1 = Female
        2 = Male
        3 = Unclear
        4 = No Reporter
12. Fourth Reporter’s Name

13. Fourth Reporter’s Gender

1 = Female
2 = Male
3 = Unclear
4 = No Reporter

14. Anchor’s Name

15. Anchor’s Gender

1 = Female
2 = Male
3 = Unclear

16. Length of Report in Seconds

17. News/Crisis Category

1 = War and Defense
2 = Diplomacy and Foreign Relations
3 = Economic Activity
4 = Agriculture
5 = Transportation and travel
6 = Crime
7 = Public Moral Problems
8 = Accidents
9 = Natural Disasters
10 = Science and Innovation
11 = Public Health and Welfare
12 = Education and Classic Arts
13 = Entertainment
14 = Terrorism
Appendix B: Supplemental AP Crisis Identification Sheet

3. Terri Schiavo (4/21/2005)
4. Sniper killings in DC, Maryland, and VA during 3 wks in Oct. 13 killed (10/2002)
5. 77 hr PA mine rescue 9 (7/24/2002)
6. 9/11 (9/11/2001)
8. Columbine (4/20/1999)
9. TWA Crash 800 (7/17/1996)
10. Oklahoma City bombing (4/19/1995)
13. Hurricane Andrew (8/24/1992)
15. US economy down (1990)
17. National parks plagued by forest fires (8/1988)
18. Jessica McClure recovered from a well (10/17/1987)
24. School bus kidnapping in Chowchilla, CA (7/15/1976)
25. 2 assassination attempts on Ford (9/5/1975)
27. Flooding kills hundreds in WV, SD, PA (1972)
28. California earthquake (2/9/1971)
29. Shootings at Kent State and Jackson State University (5/4/1970)
31. The Vietnam War – Fall of Saigon (4/1975)
Appendix C: Supplemental Crisis Category Definition Sheet

The following are news/crisis category definitions for question 9 on the coding sheet.

1. War and Defense: This includes crises involving defense, rebellion, and the military, an example would be a declaration of war.

2. Diplomacy and Politics: Crises pertaining to diplomacy issues.

3. Economic Activity: Crises involving general economic activities; depressions, recessions, natural resources, labor, money and wages are all examples.

4. Agriculture: Crises pertaining to farming, an example would be an outbreak of insects that were ruining crops.

5. Transportation and travel: crises involving transportation/travel, an airplane crash would be an example.


7. Public Moral Problems: Crises involving human relations and moral problems such as alcohol, sex, racial tensions, and civil issues.

8. Accidents: Crises that are a result of an accident that do not fit into another category examples include: falling into a well or a mining accident.

9. Natural Disasters: Crises that are a result of nature; floods, hurricanes, tornados etc.

10. Science and Innovation: Crises as a result of science or innovation, a medical crisis would also be included in this category; an example would be a space shuttle explosion.


12. Education and Classic Arts: An educational crisis is anything involving schools. School shootings and bombings are examples.

13. Entertainment: An entertainment crisis involves a crisis that surrounding a leisure activity or location. An example of an entertainment crisis would be something at an amusement park, or a night club fire.
14. Terrorism: A terror crisis is any crisis conducted by an individual or a group of people with the motivation of causing terror, destruction, and pain, an example would be a bombing (however school violence needs to be categorized under education).