

**Reflective Statement**

If I had had just a bit more time (and no word requirement), I would have included a lot more in this research paper (there would definitely be more discussion of the issue in each news genre) I think it's one of the most disheartening moments when you realize that you can't fit all of your research into a single paper, even though it's fascinating. This has become a topic that I could research forever because the depth of it is almost endless.

Of course, my research area was restricted to the print media; however, I think it would be really interesting to also evaluate broadcast and radio news as well (in different chapters with the same method). I came across a female-only expert database called Broadcast Ready which was founded in the UK in 2013. It's the world's only video-based expert database where female experts attach a short video to their application explaining their expertise. I also would have explored a BBC initiative aimed at getting more female experts in the newsroom. They host an annual event to meet female experts from around the world. This is pretty significant because it's a major news outlet recognizing a pervasive issue and admitting their shortcomings, something that doesn't happen too often, especially in the media industry where reputation and appearance is critical.

I also wish I could have written about hiring practices in newsrooms and whether the proportion of female reporters is equivalent to the proportion of female applicants. It would have added a very interesting element to this paper, but I also know I would've kept going on and on until I didn't even know what I was supposed to be talking about anymore.

If I could write for as long as I wanted, and if this paper didn't solely have to be about a media issue, my goal would be to use my method to evaluate other professions as well. When I was reading about the country level model and job model and realizing I could contribute my

own theory, I started thinking about how it would be applicable to other industries. I started to think of the way many professional women present themselves. Take Hillary Clinton, for example: she came the closest to breaking one of the firmest glass ceilings out of every woman in American history. I don't think it's a coincidence that she had short hair, only wore pantsuits, and presented herself in a very calm and stiff manner. I think she knew that, as a candidate for an office solely held by men (and which many people continuously said a woman couldn't handle), she had to present herself in a way similar to previous presidents. The ultimate contradiction in the 2016 campaign was that she was heavily criticized for not being inspiring, yet we can assume that any emotion she showed would likely be used to characterize her as an emotional and irrational woman incapable of rationally making important decisions. This is exactly what my model was getting at. Americans, and people all over the world, are uncomfortable with a person who doesn't fit the status-quo. Its why (among other factors) it took hundreds of years to elect a black president, its why we haven't had a female president, its why we likely won't have an LGBT president for many years.

I believe the issue of gender disparity in media expert sourcing is just the beginning. My model aimed at breaking the status-quo and challenging comfort levels. When we stick to our comfort levels and only accept those who fit an established narrative, we lose. We cannot find the best person for a job if we subconsciously exclude entire populations based on who we've seen do the job before.

I am starting to ramble now, so I will cut this short. But I think its important for anyone reading this piece to know it's just a fraction of a much larger, much more damaging issue. Don't be fooled by the academic style of this paper—it's a piece written in anger, an exposé of our very culture.

**Fear of the “Woman Brain”?**

How the Print Media’s Low Incorporation of Female Expert Sources Reflects Gender Disparity  
Within the Field

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**Abstract**

*Although there has been much progress toward gender equality, persistent problems still exist within the news media. Journalists rely on male experts significantly more than female experts. Because the modern news media is prevalent, the effects of this practice are far-reaching as a failure to include more female experts sends a message to women and girls everywhere: women are not experts. This paper introduces the concrete environment socialization model which maintains that a newsroom's environment must be disrupted to correct gender disparate practices. To accomplish this, newsrooms must implement expert source databases that focus on women, assign journalists to more than one genre, and require more than two experts per story.*

**Introduction**

Issues of gender disparity have long been debated, especially with regards to their impact on future generations and the ways in which they shape society.<sup>1</sup> Many professions still struggle with gender disparity and the modern news media is no exception. Clear gender disparity exists both in the gender makeup of newsrooms and in journalistic practices. According to the Global Media Monitoring Project (GMMP), women made up 35 percent of newspaper reporters in 2015, highlighting a substantial gender imbalance. Furthermore, the same data shows that female reporters are utilized differently from their male counterparts as female reporters were most

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<sup>1</sup> Thank you to Professor Mullen, Drew Haskins, Joey Rodriguez, Elliot Haywood, Mack Slaughter, Jonathan Lindenbaum, Norman Karlson, Daniel Woznica, and John Hastings for reading and providing meaningful feedback on my draft.

likely to present stories on birth control and beauty pageants, and least likely to be assigned stories on national defense and politics.<sup>2</sup>

Moreover, gender disparity is particularly evident within the realm of expert sourcing. Journalists use male sources significantly more than female sources, and male sources are typically represented differently from their female counterparts. Zoch and Turk found that, compared to men, “women were infrequently cited as sources.”<sup>3</sup> Ross and Carter concluded that “despite women’s presence in the labour market across all professions and occupations...their contribution to social and economic life continues to be marginalized as journalists still privilege men’s voices as the authoritative expert.”<sup>4</sup> Overall, women make up 26 percent of subjects in news stories, most often represented as eyewitnesses or personal accounts. Expert sources are particularly important as they are frequently relied upon by journalists in covering stories. In 2015, only 32 percent of expert sources in news stories were female.<sup>5</sup>

With the ever-increasing visibility of the news media, the potential impact of newsrooms on society is substantial. Any gender disparity exhibited in news coverage may further cement gender disparity in society. Armstrong and Nelson argue that “because [men] are viewed as official sources more frequently than women, [men] may be perceived as more important than

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<sup>2</sup> Sarah Macharia, *Who Makes the News? Global Media Monitoring Project 2015*. (London: World Association for Christian Communication, 2015).

<sup>3</sup> Lynn M. Zoch and Judy VanSlyke Turk, "Women Making News: Gender as a Variable in Source Selection and Use," *Journalism and Mass Communication* 75, no. 4 (1998), 771.

<sup>4</sup> Karen Ross and Cynthia Carter, "Women and News: A Long and Winding Road," *Media, Culture & Society* 33, no. 8 (2011), 1161. Accessed October 22, 2017.

<sup>5</sup> Sarah Macharia, *Who Makes the News? Global Media Monitoring Project 2015*. (London: World Association for Christian Communication, 2015)

women.”<sup>6</sup> Furthermore, they conclude that a “reporter’s selection of sources within a story is a crucial factor toward the story’s overall impact for readers” and that reporter sourcing may promote gender stereotypes.<sup>7</sup>

Gender disparity in the print media is also evident when examining the genres in which female experts are used. The GMMP reported that, in 2015, women made up 43 percent of news sources in coverage of science and health which includes stories on birth control and sexually transmitted diseases. Notably, while news coverage of politics and government was the second most prominent genre, it had the lowest representation of female expert sources.<sup>8</sup> Desmond and Dacilewicz contend that when female reporters and experts are primarily visible in “soft” news stories, it “can underline young viewers’ expectations that certain topics are appropriate for each gender.”<sup>9</sup> Thus, visible gender disparity in the news media influences ideas of gender roles in society. Because political news coverage is substantial, and the genre serves as having the lowest representation of female news sources, the discussion of gender disparity in print media sourcing in this paper will be primarily focused on political reporting.

Based on a body of literature concerning gender disparity in print media sourcing, it is evident that the environment in which reporters operate is pivotal to gender disparate practices. Using Shor et al.’s country level model and Rodgers and Thorson’s job level model, this paper will introduce the concrete environment socialization model which maintains that even as

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<sup>6</sup> Cory L. Armstrong and Michelle R. Nelson, "How Newspaper Sources Trigger Gender Stereotypes," *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly* 82, no. 4 (2005), 820.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.* 832.

<sup>8</sup> Sarah Macharia, *Who Makes the News? Global Media Monitoring Project 2015*. (London: World Association for Christian Communication, 2015)

<sup>9</sup> Roger Desmond and Anna Danilewicz, "Women Are On, But Not In, the News: Gender Roles in Local Television News," *Sex Roles* 62, no. 11-12 (2010), 823.

demographic changes occur within the print media, new reporters will adhere to the environment already in place within the field. To correct gender disparity within print media sourcing in political coverage, the model holds that the fundamental environment of print media must be disrupted in some way. Specifically, this can be achieved through requiring reporters to utilize a higher number of sources in their stories, designating political reporters to cover more topics outside of the political genre, and implementing expert databases within news organizations that focus on female experts. Such disruption is imperative, as the ever-increasing visibility of the news media poses new consequences on the society in which it operates.

### **Theoretical Framework: A Two-Step Approach**

Both Rodgers and Thorson's job model and Shor et al.'s country model aim to explain the underrepresentation of female experts in print media sourcing.<sup>10</sup> However, neither model alone can fully explain the causes of and the extent to which the print news media exhibit gender disparity through expert sourcing. Therefore, this paper will utilize a combination of the country and job models, which will be referred to as the *concrete environment socialization model* to give more accurate context of gender disparate sourcing in the print media.

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<sup>10</sup> For Rodgers and Thorson's job model: Shelly Rodgers and Esther Thorson, "A Socialization Perspective on Male and Female Reporting," *Journal of Communication* 53, no. 4 (2003) 658-675.

For Shor et al.'s country model: Eran Shor, Arnout van de Rijt, Alex Miltsov, Vivek Kulkarni, and Steven Skiena, "A Paper Ceiling: Explaining the Persistent Underrepresentation of Women in Printed News," *American Sociological Review* 80, no. 5 (2015), 960-984.

### *Job Model*

Rodgers and Thorson's job model maintains that "socialization is a function of the work environment", arguing that "although male and female reporters may bring different values, attitudes, and perspectives to the news, organizational factors and experiences mediate these differences."<sup>11</sup> The defining factor in how female reporters operate within the newsroom is not their personal background and earlier socialization, but rather the environment of the newsroom itself. Rodgers and Thorson maintain that the size of a news outlet impacts reporting practices. They found that the "most pronounced difference in sourcing was evidenced among the female reporters at the small newspaper, who used nearly twice as many female sources than female reporters at the medium and large newspapers."<sup>12</sup> Thus, they demonstrated that the intensity of gender disparity in the print media differs according to the size of a media outlet, and that male and female journalists will operate "very much the same...in larger more reputable news organizations where conformity and elitism are the norm."<sup>13</sup> Even if women make up a larger share of reporters at a large media outlet, they will most likely still adhere to male professional norms so as not to threaten the established reputation of their organization.

But while this model does explain some discrepancies between male and female reporter sourcing, some aspects may not be entirely verifiable. For instance, the notion that a higher proportion of female editors will influence the practice of female journalists has been met by significant opposition, with many scholars finding that the change, if any, is often insignificant.<sup>14</sup> Additionally, the model holds that prior socialization differences between men and women will

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid. 661.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid. 667.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid. 663.

<sup>14</sup> For example, see: Eric Freedman, Frederick Fico, and Megan Durisin, "Gender Diversity Absent In Expert Sources for Elections," *Newspaper Research Journal* 31, no. 2 (2010), 20-33.

be fully cancelled out by the environment of the newsroom; however, it is unlikely that once a female reporter steps into a newsroom, she will automatically shed the impact of earlier socialization. The environment of the newsroom may be far more important, but it is highly probable that prior gender socialization still has some role. These gaps raise the question of whether another element is in play, which is why the country level model must be evaluated.

### ***Country Model***

Shor et al.'s study concluded "that the difference between the rate of female and male names in today's newspapers is due primarily to external factors, namely, the persistent dominance of men in top positions across various social categories, that is, among well-known and highly covered individuals."<sup>15</sup> In other words, despite the gradual progression of women moving into male-dominated fields, there is still significant gender disparity in such careers that is reflected in print media sourcing, particularly in government positions as the United States ranks 73<sup>rd</sup> in political empowerment for women globally.<sup>16</sup> They maintain that "as long as the real-world glass ceiling remains resistant to change, the paper ceiling of newspaper coverage is likely to remain in place."<sup>17</sup> Shor et al.'s model contends that the print medias' sourcing in political stories will continue to exhibit gender disparity as long as societal-level gender disparity exists in government.

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<sup>15</sup> Eran Shor, Arnout van de Rijt, Alex Miltsov, Vivek Kulkarni, and Steven Skiena, "A Paper Ceiling: Explaining the Persistent Underrepresentation of Women in Printed News," *American Sociological Review* 80, no. 5 (2015), 976.

<sup>16</sup> Till A. Leopold, Vesselina Ratcheva, Saadia Zahidi, Klaus Schwab, Richard Samans, Ricardo Hausmann, and Laura D. Tyson. 2016. *The Global Gender Gap Report 2016*. Insight Report, The World Economic Forum.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.* 978.

While Shor et al.'s hypothesis has been generally supported, many studies have also found that higher representation of women in different governments may not increase the representation of female expert sources in those nations' political news coverage. Hanitzsch and Hanusch's study found that a higher number of women in political power in different nations has not corresponded to higher female representation in expert sourcing.<sup>18</sup> However, this may be a result from the fact that newsroom cultures around the world have historically been dominated by male professional norms, despite changing gender demographics in newsrooms. This premise is what leads to the theory of the concrete environment socialization model.

### ***Concrete Environment Socialization Model***

Both Rodgers and Thorson's job model and Shor et al.'s country model deal with issues of the environment surrounding news reporting. The environments they are concerned with are of different scale (the newsroom and the nation); however, the authors come to similar conclusions that make up the concrete environment socialization model. This model contends that even as demographic changes occur within a field, new staff will adhere to the environment already in place within the field. They will adopt the practices set before them and follow the social rules that preceded their entry, even despite the field's changing demographics. Furthermore, when working across professions, one employee will abide by what they believe to be the atmosphere in the other profession (such as reporters covering topics of politics and government). For the environment to change, there must be a significant event or shift to disrupt the profession's normal routine. More specifically, for the gender disparity in print media

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<sup>18</sup> Thomas Hanitzsch, and Folker Hanusch, "Does Gender Determine Journalists' Professional Views? A Reassessment Based on Cross-National Evidence," *European Journal of Communication* 23, no. 3 (2012), 257-277.

sourcing to be eliminated, the environment of the print media must be fundamentally changed by disrupting routine practices.

### **Illustrating Inequality**

Gender disparity in print media sourcing is not an abstract issue. In fact, it is blatantly obvious, and it is not difficult to find evidence of such disparity in the world's largest, most reputable newspapers.

The *New York Times* was selected for a casual study to test the prominence of gender disparate sourcing practices. On its website, the word "expert" was searched which resulted in several hundred article results.<sup>i</sup> This word was chosen because some stories do not have an expert source comment, so searching the word "expert" narrowed down the scope of results. One by one, articles filed under "politics" were scanned, and the number of male or female expert sources who were directly quoted in the article were counted. This practice was performed for the 14 most recent results.<sup>ii</sup>

Overall, 45 expert sources were quoted in the sample, the overwhelming majority of whom were male. Only eight expert sources were women, and half of the fourteen stories had no female experts at all.

When these findings are applied to society, it becomes increasingly clear that the print media is seriously misrepresenting society. The GMMP measured the news media's portrayal of women in certain professions. It found that, according to the news media in 2015, women made

up only 20 percent of federal government employees.<sup>19</sup> In reality, women held over 44 percent of all federal government positions and 34 percent of executive government positions in 2014.<sup>20</sup>

### **Solutions for Sourcing**

The concrete environment socialization model allows us to evaluate gender disparity within print medias' sourcing practices in a unique way. The model allows for a multi-faceted approach to solving issues of gender disparity in sourcing as it considers socialization effects through the lens of real-world inequalities. It holds that the environment in which reporters operate is pivotal to their practices, and that solving issues of gender disparity should begin with changing such a reporter's environment both in the newsroom and the nation.

One common solution proposed for correcting gender disparity in print media sourcing is to increase the number of women working in a newsroom. Armstrong found that "female writers were more likely to write about women and showcase women in news coverage, whereas male writers were more likely to include males in their stories."<sup>21</sup> However, as previously stated, this premise is thoroughly controversial, as many studies have found little to no difference in reporter sourcing based on the gender makeup of a newsroom. Freedman, Fico, and Durisin concluded that not only were reporters of both genders in their study "less likely to use female than male discretionary sources in stories", but also that male reporters

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<sup>19</sup> Sarah Macharia, *Who Makes the News? Global Media Monitoring Project 2015*. (London: World Association for Christian Communication, 2015)

<sup>20</sup> U.S. Office of Personnel Management, *Women in Federal Service: A Seat at Every Table*. Government Report, (Washington D.C.: U.S. Office of Personnel Management, 2014)

<sup>21</sup> Cory L. Armstrong, "The Influence of Reporter Gender on Source Selection in Newspaper Stories," *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly* 81, no. 1 (2004), 149.

engaged with female sources more: “Indeed, male reporters in this study were more likely than female colleagues to use female sources.”<sup>22</sup> Hanitzsch and Hanusch’s results also found that “better representation of women in newsrooms alone may not be a sufficient condition for such a change, at least as long as men are still holding key positions in the news management and decision-making process.”<sup>23</sup> Because this solution is controversial, it is clear that a solution should go beyond this suggestion.

Rodgers and Thorson found that smaller newspapers exhibit significantly less gender disparity in their sourcing practices.<sup>24</sup> So, perhaps evaluating practices at smaller newspapers and applying them to larger newspapers will be beneficial to correct journalistic practices that reflect gender inequality. Smaller newspapers are becoming increasingly understaffed as local news declines. Oftentimes, reporters working at smaller papers are forced to cover multiple genres of journalism instead of solely concentrating on one particular area. If reporters at larger newspapers had to cover multiple genres, journalistic routines would be disrupted as the reporters would be compelled to reach outside of their normal sources to develop their stories. Perhaps this will lead to more inclusion of female sources.

Utilizing more sources in news stories may also increase the representation of female experts. In Shapiro et al.’s study of journalistic verification methods, they note a “so-called two-

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<sup>22</sup> Eric Freedman, Frederick Fico, and Megan Durisin, "Gender Diversity Absent In Expert Sources for Elections," *Newspaper Research Journal* 31, no. 2 (2010), 30.

<sup>23</sup> Thomas Hanitzsch and Folker Hanusch, "Does Gender Determine Journalists' Professional Views? A Reassessment Based on Cross-National Evidence," *European Journal of Communication* 23, no. 3 (2012), 272.

<sup>24</sup> Shelly Rodgers and Esther Thorson, "A Socialization Perspective on Male and Female Reporting," *Journal of Communication* 53, no. 4 (2003) 658-675.

sources rule” in which journalists typically obtain two sources when writing a story.<sup>25</sup> Applying this standard to the problem of gender disparity in print media sourcing is invaluable. Armstrong and Nelson note that “a larger variety of sources may help to lessen gender stereotyping”, suggesting that “if newspapers have edicts or directives asking for more diverse sources, more varying viewpoints will be presented in news content.”<sup>26</sup> While there are fewer female officials than male officials in government positions, women in government are by no means absent, so it is highly probable that if a political reporter increases the number of sources he/she uses, the likelihood of including a female expert will increase.

This solution will not only decrease gender disparity in the print media, but will also increase the quality of political news coverage. More thorough verification can make coverage more accurate and meaningful, while also correcting gender disparate practices. This solution will disrupt reporter routines and the print media environment in line with the concrete environment socialization model. As Armstrong and Nelson argue: “Reporters often choose sources based in part on accessibility and familiarity, seeking sources that they know instead of seeking out sources with a more diverse background.”<sup>27</sup> If newsrooms require three or even four expert sources to verify a point of coverage, journalists may need to break routine and find sources outside of their traditional contacts.

Many newsrooms also utilize expert source databases—collections of experts searchable by location and field of expertise. These databases aid journalists who need an expert source

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<sup>25</sup> Ivor Shapiro, Colette Brin, Isabelle Bedard-Brule, and Kasia Mychajlowycz, "Verification as a Strategic Ritual," *Journalism Practice* 7, no. 6 (2013), 666.

<sup>26</sup> Cory L. Armstrong and Michelle R. Nelson, "How Newspaper Sources Trigger Gender Stereotypes," *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly* 82, no. 4 (2005), 832.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.* 832.

comment on a story, but may not know how to find one. *Expertise Finder* is one of these databases and is used by the *New York Times*, the *Wall Street Journal*, and many other reputable news organizations.<sup>28</sup> However, some similar databases focus on increasing the representation of women and minorities in expert sourcing. The *Women's Room*, founded in 2012, connects journalists to thousands of female experts with the goal of increasing the number of female expert sources in news stories.<sup>29</sup> In an interview for the *New Left*, Caroline Criado-Perez, one of the founders of the *Women's Room*, is asked why women are not used as experts more often: "I think the main reason really is a time issue. Researchers are pushed for time and they just don't have the women contacts, so they're just going back to the same voices time and time again."<sup>30</sup> In other words, journalists are adhering to a routine and repeatedly using the same expert sources. Databases like the *Women's Room* help journalists go beyond their journalistic routines in crafting a story—all while increasing the number of female expert sources used.

Some claim that increasing female staff in a newsroom will correct inequality in sourcing; however, it may prove much more effective to consider alternative solutions to print media gender disparity. Obliging reporters to cover more than one genre and include more than a couple expert sources in their stories will cause a disruption in journalistic routines. Additionally, utilizing female expert source databases will make female experts increasingly available to reporters. These changes will disrupt the environment of the newsroom as they will disrupt routine practices, in line with the concrete environment socialization model.

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<sup>28</sup> Stavros Rougas, *Expertise Finder*, <http://expertisefinder.com/>

<sup>29</sup> The Women's Room. 2012. *The Women's Room*. Accessed November 2017.  
<http://thewomensroom.org.uk/>.

<sup>30</sup> David Wearing, "Combatting the Under-Representation of Women in the Media," *The New Left*, March 11, 2013, <http://www.newleftproject.org/>

## **Conclusion**

The concrete environment socialization model maintains that despite socialization differences between male and female reporters, all reporters will adhere to the routines and perceived culture in their newsroom. In this case, such a premise suggests that even female reporters will abide by standard male-oriented professional norms, often to gain promotion. To correct gender disparate practices in print media sourcing, the model argues that the environment of the newsroom must be disrupted in order to compel reporters to operate outside of the status-quo.

It is unlikely that simply hiring more women will cause substantial change within journalistic practices. To solve the issues of gender disparity, routine reporter practices must be disrupted. This can be done in implementing certain practices that exist in smaller media outlets as these outlets exhibit a significantly higher representation of female expert sources in political coverage. In smaller newspapers, reporters often cover more than one genre due to shrinking staff sizes. Perhaps replicating this at larger newspapers and compelling reporters to cover different genres will cause a break of traditional practices. Furthermore, newspapers should implement policies that require reporters to utilize more expert sources in their coverage as it will increase the likelihood that female sources will be included. Both practices, along with expert source databases that focus on female experts, will contribute to a more equitable representation of women in expert sourcing.

It is imperative that print media's visible gender disparity in sourcing practices be corrected because of the extremely prominent role they play in society. In a world where the news cycle is constant and unwavering, having few women visible in news stories as experts sends a stark message to young women and girls everywhere: women are not experts. This

reinforces existing gender roles and stereotypes which can potentially impact future career choices of young female viewers. The solution lies in disrupting the existing environment of print media newsrooms. If this does not occur, the effects of print media practices will continue to influence the way society views its members and damage the likelihood of more women entering male-dominated professions.

**Word Count: 3,076**

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<sup>i</sup> The word “expert” was searched in order to exclude those articles that did not utilize any expert source. The study was done on November 15, 2017 and only included stories filed in the politics section of U.S. News on the *New York Times* website.

<sup>ii</sup> The following articles were used in the casual New York Times study (note: some articles were published by other newspapers and reposted onto the New York Times website; those articles have been marked with an asterisk.)

\*Ricardo Alonso-Zalvadir, "In election glow, Dems see health care as a winning issue," *Associated Press*, November 9, 2017. Accessed November 15, 2017 on <https://www.nytimes.com/>.

\*Josh Boak, "GOP test: Expiring tax cuts would mean little bang for buck," *Associated Press*, November 11, 2017. Accessed November 15, 2017 on <https://www.nytimes.com/>.

Alexander Burns, Michael Wines, and Trip Gabriel. 2017. "Despite Recent Wins for Democrats, Gerrymanders Dim Hopes for 2018." *New York Times*, November 12, 2017. <https://www.nytimes.com/>. Accessed November 15, 2017.

Thomas Gibbons-Neff, "Kelly, in Defending Trump Call, Holds Up Military as an Elite Class," *New York Times*, October 20, 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/>. Accessed November 15, 2017.

\*Ginger Gibson, "Former U.S. Homeland Security officials back nominee ahead of hearing," *Reuters*, November 7, 2017. Accessed November 15, 2017 on <https://www.nytimes.com/>.

\*Chris Kahn, 2017. "Trump's low approval rating masks his support among likely voters: Reuters/Ipsos poll." *Reuters*, November 8. Accessed November 15, 2017 on <https://www.nytimes.com/>.

Mark Landler, "Trump Heads to Asia With an Ambitious Agenda but Little to Offer," *New York Times*, November 2, 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/>. Accessed November 15, 2017.

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Mark Landler, and Yamiche Alcindor, "Trump's Condolence Call to Soldier's Widow Ignites an Imbroglia," *New York Times*, October 18, 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/>. Accessed November 15, 2017.

Linda Qiu, "Trump Calls Terrorism Trial Process 'a Joke,' Despite Hundreds of Convictions," *New York Times*, November 2, 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/>. Accessed November 15, 2017.

\*Raphael Satter, Jeff Donn, and Chad Day, "Russian hackers took week to pry into Clinton camp," *Associated Press*, November 4, 2017. Accessed November 15, 2017 on <https://www.nytimes.com/>.

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Charlie Savage, "Guantánamo Defendant Is Sentenced, in Rare Success for Military Commission," *New York Times*, October 13, 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/>. Accessed November 15, 2017.

Michael Schmidt, Matt Apuzzo, and Scott Shane, "Trump Heads to Asia With an Ambitious Agenda but Little to Offer," *New York Times*, November 2, 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/>. Accessed November 15, 2017.

Michael D. Shear, "Former Eli Lilly Executive Is Trump's Choice for Health Secretary," *New York Times*, November 13, 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/>. Accessed November 15, 2017.

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doi:10.1177/107769900408100110 .

Armstrong, Cory L., and Michelle R. Nelson. "How Newspaper Sources Trigger Gender Stereotypes." *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly* 82, no. 4 (2005): 820-837.  
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**Karin Scott**

**Eckles Prize Research Reflection Essay**

I did not intend to write a paper dealing with the underrepresentation of female sources in the print media. In fact, my original topic centered on the impact of social media on journalism as a whole. Professor Mullen told my UW class to find a problem in the news media and solve it. It wasn't until he mentioned that no one in my class chose a topic of diversity that I decided to shift my focus.

I started broadly, thinking about the lives and work of women in the news media. When I found a study that discussed gender disparate sourcing practices, I used this article's footnotes to find more relevant sources. This became my method of research. I would use the Gelman online database to search for journal articles that were relevant to my topic, and I would scan the articles' references and find more pieces to read. I was very careful to only include pieces that were recently published because I wanted my final product to be as current as possible. All in all, I estimate I read well over a hundred pieces grappling with gender issues in the news media.

Many of the articles included empirical studies that tested whether the frequency of female expert sources was impacted by a particular variable. Some studies tested whether larger or smaller newsrooms used more women as expert sources, and others tested whether the genre of news writing played a role in the gender of the expert sources. Overwhelmingly, however, studies focused on the impact of reporter gender in source selection with many studies concluding that female reporters employed female experts at the same rate that male reporters employed female experts.

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At this point, I knew my research would need to be broadened. I started searching in journals of sociology as well as journalism. This is when I found Rodgers and Thorson's "A Socialization Perspective on Male and Female Reporting." This piece gave a theoretical framework for evaluating the underrepresentation of female expert sources in the print media. Their study proposed an intriguing model, the job model, which they found existed at larger newspapers. Rodgers and Thorson concluded that female reporters at large newspapers "are expected to behave more like men, presumably to maintain the male-dominated power structure that is typical of so many high-status newspapers."

A little while later, I came across Shor et. al's article which examined gender disparate sourcing as a product of the gender equality of specific countries. In other words, the model maintained that a newsroom in a country with higher rates of gender equality would use female expert sources more frequently. Instantly, I made a connection that would lead me to develop my own theoretical model.

Both Rodgers and Thorson's model and Shor et. al's model dealt with issues of the environment, whether on the small scale of the newsroom or the larger scale of society itself. Using these two models, I created the concrete environment socialization model to argue that gender disparate sourcing is a product of environment. The formulation of my own model taught me that research is flexible. Previous ideas do not have to stand alone. They can be employed and combined and rearranged to create entirely new contributions. I will approach future research with the comprehension that previous research should not be considered rigid—it is flexible.

My model is what took my research to the next level. For this UW assignment, all we needed to do was find an existing model and use it as the framework for our paper. When I

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created my own model, I knew it would take much more time and much more work to support my argument. I went back to the articles I'd already read, scanning them for any piece of information I may have missed. I learned that doing this is a crucial step in research. It is not enough to simply read a source once or twice. Because my focus had shifted considerably during my research time, I realized the importance of re-reading pieces since research depends on the lens of the researcher's approach. I knew I would find important points for my new focus, points that I may not have deemed important when reading a piece for my initial focus.

When I chose to research women in the news media, I had no idea where I would end up. One major takeaway I learned from this research assignment is that a research topic must be specific. While I initially wanted to research gender disparate sourcing practices in the news media, Professor Mullen pushed me to further define my objective. I ended up making my research specific to the genre of political reporting and the medium of newspapers. But Professor Mullen also taught me that while a research topic must be specific, it is important to make it applicable in other instances outside of the narrow focus. As part of the assignment, my class was supposed to write reflective statements at the beginning of our papers to explain what we would have included in our final drafts if there were no space limitations. To understand why I believe my research is important, look no further than the reflective statement at the beginning of my paper.

Research should be used to make a significant contribution to a field. A research paper should not be primarily filled with long quotations from other authors. Instead, previous ideas should be utilized, but in a way that lets the new contribution speak for itself. It is not enough to simply restate other scholars' ideas. Instead, I learned that research is about synthesizing past ideas to form a unique contribution that pushes a field of study further.