

## University of Wisconsin Milwaukee UWM Digital Commons

---

Theses and Dissertations

---

May 2017

# The Cycle of Exclusion in Local Print News: How News Content Reflects and Reinforces Patriarchy

Emily Wright

*University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://dc.uwm.edu/etd>

 Part of the [Journalism Studies Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Wright, Emily, "The Cycle of Exclusion in Local Print News: How News Content Reflects and Reinforces Patriarchy" (2017). *Theses and Dissertations*. 1557.

<https://dc.uwm.edu/etd/1557>

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by UWM Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of UWM Digital Commons. For more information, please contact [open-access@uwm.edu](mailto:open-access@uwm.edu).

THE CYCLE OF EXCLUSION IN LOCAL PRINT NEWS: HOW NEWS CONTENT  
REFLECTS AND REINFORCES PATRIARCHY

by

Emily A Wright

A Thesis Submitted in  
Partial Fulfillment of the  
Requirements for the Degree of  
Master of Arts  
in Media Studies

The University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee

May 2017

## ABSTRACT

### THE CYCLE OF EXCLUSION IN LOCAL PRINT NEWS: HOW NEWS CONTENT REFLECTS AND REINFORCES PATRIARCHY

by

Emily Wright

The University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, 2017  
Under the Supervision of Professor David Pritchard

Print news has been relied upon as a source of information for centuries. Despite recent strides towards gender equality, women are persistently marginalized in news content and newsrooms. This thesis analyzed over 950 staff-written *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* stories and conducted 19 interviews with both men and women staff reporters and editors to examine how patriarchy might infiltrate local print news. I analyzed how women and men authors, sources and subjects are included or excluded from the news. Furthermore, this thesis examines the gendered division of labor within the newsroom.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>List of Figures.....</b>	<b>iv</b>
<b>List of Tables.....</b>	<b>v</b>
<b>Acknowledgments.....</b>	<b>vi</b>
<b>1. Introduction.....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>2 Literature Review.....</b>	<b>4</b>
Theoretical Background.....	4
Existing Empirical Research.....	10
Hypotheses.....	10
<b>3. Methods.....</b>	<b>14</b>
Background on <i>Milwaukee Journal Sentinel</i> .....	14
Content Analysis.....	14
Interviews.....	16
<b>4. Results.....</b>	<b>16</b>
Results A.....	16
Results B.....	22
<b>5. Discussion.....</b>	<b>41</b>
<b>6. References.....</b>	<b>46</b>

## LIST OF FIGURES

**Figure 1:** Effect of gender and nature of section on proportion of sources who were male.....19

**Figure 2:** Effect of gender and section on proportion of photo subjects who were male.....21

## LIST OF TABLES

<b>Table 1:</b> Percentage of male bylines, public vs. domestic sections.....	17
<b>Table 2:</b> Percentage of sources that were male, public vs. domestic sections.....	18
<b>Table 3:</b> Percentage of male sources used by male and female journalists.....	18
<b>Table 4:</b> Percentage of named photo subjects who were male, public vs. domestic sections.....	20
<b>Table 5:</b> Percentage of male photo subjects, stories by men vs. stories by women.....	21

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

First and foremost I want to thank my advisor, David Pritchard. While your dedication to my research pushed me past my limits at times, I appreciate your investment in my education.

Also, I want to express my appreciation to Sarah DeGeorge, Derrick Johns, Anthony Mandella, Dasmond McMillan, Anthony Pollman, Srijan Sen, and Sierra Wolf for your help and support.

Tremendous thanks to all my family and friends, and my loving partner who I leaned on for support when I was knee-deep in coding sheets and newspaper ink.

This thesis is dedicated to all the women who came before me who valiantly fought so I could get an education.

## **Introduction**

Powerful forces like gravity often go unnoticed. Although gravity is an ever-present force that consistently shapes peoples' lives, they often take such immense powers for granted.

Patriarchy is a lot like gravity in that it frequently affects people with great intensity, yet it largely goes unobserved. Patriarchy has no sensory elements, but its effects can be quite palpable and potent. Like gravity, patriarchy is all around, yet it is a force that is overlooked because it is so engrained in daily life, many hardly notice it is there.

Patriarchy is a gender-based system of social organization in which men are dominant. Patriarchy persists in large part because its features, especially male privilege and gender-based divisions of labor, are so pervasive they are largely considered normal and natural. Maleness, in a patriarchal society, is the standard by which all individuals are compared. Women, and even men who fail to conform to male role expectations, are defined as "Others" whose place in society is secondary to people who succeed in conforming to the norms of maleness.

Patriarchal practices in journalism are normalized and often go unnoticed because they exist within a patriarchal society. The degree that patriarchy is so invisible may help explain why division of labor at newspapers (i.e. men concentrated in public domain sections and women concentrated in domestic sections) often escapes criticism or scrutiny.

This thesis looks for evidence of patriarchy in local print journalism, specifically the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*. This research examines how patriarchy may infiltrate local news by channeling male and female journalists into either public or domestic domain sections, and determining which gender's voice and image is featured more frequently in the news. In other words, my research will analyze which gender is seen and heard more frequently in local news. I will also look at whether reporters' gender helps predict the gender of the sources they choose.



This research seeks to explain how newspapers may reflect and reinforce the persistent devaluation of women. It's important to point out that there are indeed other systems of dominance that contribute to marginalization of women and minority voices in the news. And while intersectionality is important to keep in mind, my study focuses on women and patriarchy as a system of dominance.

Print journalism has more status associated with it than other mediums. Journalism is a critical social tool that shapes what the world thinks about. This research will help society better understand what goes on behind the scenes of such a massive institution. Although statistics show print news consumption is declining, newspapers offer an important status and relevance that other mediums cannot provide (Mitchell & Holcomb, 2016). Print news is not as fleeting as other forms like television or online publications. Newspaper ink transfers to the consumer's fingertips. No other news medium offers such a physical connection.

Print news has extremely limited space; therefore being quoted is a form of high validation and status for the source. Sources also recognize the implications of being acknowledged by journalists who are seen as important gatekeepers backed by huge corporations (Palmer, 2016). Something about seeing one's name in print offers a higher status than any other medium (Palmer, 2016). If being quoted in print news has prestige and validation, being excluded from this experience denies legitimacy and status in the public sphere.

The stories that are on the front page send a message to readers about what is important in society. Also, the people who are quoted and pictured in stories send a message to readers about who is important in society. If a disproportionate amount of people on the front page and featured in stories are men, it sends a clear message to readers that men are the important decision makers in society. Linda Steiner points out the detrimental influence of being

underrepresented or misrepresented in the news. “News content...causes women to underestimate their potential, in terms of what leisure and work activities they can successfully undertake, what behaviors and values they can adopt, and, essentially, how far they can go in life” (2012, p. 204).

This cycle of exclusion will continue if the logic the newspaper hinges on remains. However, the newspaper gets to decide what is news. If newspapers cover more stories involving women and put them on the front page, over time newspapers will inevitably send a message to readers that women’s voices are just as important as men. Hopefully that message will encourage more women to participate in public domain roles and thus, break the cycle of exclusion.

Empirical research has not developed a solid understanding of how gender intersects with journalism. Often times, study results acknowledge that gender has some sort of influence on journalism, but observed differences are vastly different from study to study. In this thesis, I maintain that patriarchy is a useful framework for understanding how gender and journalism are interconnected.

This thesis uses content analysis of staff-written stories across all sections in the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*. I also conducted nineteen interviews with journalists and editors. I used these methods to test the hypotheses I developed to understand the relationship between gender and journalism. Through multiple research methods, I found that local print news not only reflects patriarchy but also reinforces it.

This thesis is distinctive for several reasons. First, unlike most studies of gender and journalism, I acknowledge the units of analysis are all existing within a patriarchal society and are somehow influenced by that powerful social force. Next, I not only assess individual factors

like most studies about gender and journalism, but I also evaluate organizational factors. Third, I suggest that the gender profiling documented by this study reinforces patriarchy. Reinforcement is an important, but often overlooked, media effect (Potter, 2011). Finally, I look at gender more holistically than most studies of gender and journalism that just focus on women.

### **Theoretical Background**

Research on gender in journalism usually focuses on women and individuals rather than looking at women and men as well as organizational or systemic structures. Studies that use interviews as their primary method seem to especially focus on women only and individuals. Content analysis studies on the other hand compare men and women in various ways. Focusing on women only is a huge methodological blind spot. This thesis hopes to shed light on this area of research that is often overlooked.

#### *Patriarchy*

Research about gender in the news largely overlooks the concept of patriarchy. For many scholars “patriarchy” seems to be a taboo word, despite the overwhelming evidence that traditional workplaces like newsrooms are patriarchal structures. Patriarchy is a powerful social structure that favors men. Perhaps the lack of naming this concept is evidence of its invisibility. Cindy Elmore interviewed 15 women who were former journalists. She wrote:

They confirmed and described a patriarchal newsroom structure where male journalists applied exclusionary strategies, made news choices on the basis of sex, encouraged assertiveness and toughness and wanted to rescue women from journalistic unpleasanties (Elmore, 2007, p. 24).

Results from my interviews suggest the culture of a male-dominated newsroom reflects in the content. Patriarchy breeds cultural barriers for women and prevents them from participating fully

in society and this is true in journalism in terms of journalists, sources and subjects (Chambers et al., 2004). If the newsroom is a patriarchal structure, it may explain why women and men enter journalism at nearly the same rates but women journalists are far less likely to stay in the field (Weaver et al., 2009). Although patriarchy is the social structure that guides most of the world, it is so ubiquitous it seems to escape scrutiny. Patriarchy is so normalized that many people seem not to notice it.

If editors and reporters get to define what news is, and they rarely define news in terms of issues or institutions that women are involved in, it creates a cycle of exclusion. We can use patriarchy as a framework to discuss why women-centric stories rarely make front-page news. Results from my interviews support other studies that found the front-page sections are extremely male-dominated (Shor et al, 2015).

### *Defining the News*

There seems to be a general consensus that what journalists consider “news” is an organic or essentialized concept. However, journalists are just relying upon old traditions of news definitions and unwritten professional rules. Mark Fishman, in his classic book about constructing news, said:

News personnel participate in upholding a normative order of authorized knowers in society. Reporters operate with the attitude that officials ought to know what it is their job to know, and they sanction officials for knowing or not knowing what they should. In particular, a news worker will recognize an official’s claim to knowledge not merely as a claim, but as a credible, competent piece of knowledge (1988, 144, 145).

If a reporter fails to grasp these unwritten rules about reporting it would be considered a “serious journalistic incompetence” (Fishman, 1988, 63). Furthermore, Fishman argues that no event is

inherently newsworthy, but instead, over time journalists and institutions defined what should be considered newsworthy and journalists are unwilling to stray from comfortable traditions (Fishman, 1988).

In another key text about news making, Gaye Tuchman explains two ways people tend to see how news is constructed. One view suggests society helps to shape consciousness. This view implies that definitions of news rely on the social structure of a particular society. Thus, a journalist's stories will just reflect the society (1978a). This view echoes the popular notion that in order to boost women's representations in the news, we must first overhaul the structure of a society where women are treated as second-class citizens.

A different way people tend to look at news making relies upon the notion that what we consider to be important or newsworthy as a society is collectively constructed by people who live in that society (Tuchman, 1978a). This view suggests that journalists are more active or involved in deciding what news to produce. It also suggests that rather than newspapers simply reflecting a society, the news helps shapes what a society considers to be normal or deviant (Tuchman, 1978a).

### *Male Privilege*

Male privilege is the concept that society is structured around maleness and masculinity so much that "maleness" as a category is considered by society as default. Individuals who fall into "default" identity categories (i.e. whiteness, maleness, cis-gendered) have the privilege to not think about that aspect of their identity. Furthermore, if you have that privilege, you get to define other people in contrast to yourself. Men benefit from male privilege in many ways, but one main way they benefit is they never have to think about their gender.

In a patriarchal society like the United States, maleness is the category against which others are assessed and evaluated. In this sense, gender is like race because whiteness is the category against which others are assessed. There is an influential, yet largely invisible power that flows from being the marker against which all others is compared. Though these hierarchies may continue unintentionally or unnoticed those who deviate from their expected gender roles are marked as oddities or “Others.” The issue here is not whether women are capable journalists. The issue is “experiences and demands of white men are privileged” over the experiences and voices of women and people of color (Chambers et al., 2004, p. 105).

Social norms placed upon men are far more conducive to workplace environments than the norms placed upon women. For instance, women are still encouraged to be homemakers so women journalists often flock to soft-news beats because they are more conducive to family life (Elmore, 2007; Beam & DiCicco, 2010; Wood, 2011). It is evident male privilege is in practice when everything from cultural norms to the organizational structure of an institution like journalism favors maleness. For instance, “top women editors often acted like men, rarely if ever giving any help to women or women’s concerns” (Elmore, 2007, p. 22). Furthermore, empirical studies show that the gender of the top editors does not have an influence on the news content (Beam & Di Cicco, 2010; Shor et al, 2015). Many studies said women journalists felt like they had to act like men to be successful (van Zoonen, 1998; Chambers, et al., 2004; Craft & Wanta, 2004; Elmore, 2007). Also, this phenomenon it is closely related to gender socialization because sometimes the pressure for women to act more like men is coming from internalized pressure as well (Chambers et al., 2004).

Male privilege is a major component of patriarchy that is intertwined with other patriarchal byproducts like the gendered division of labor as well. It is important to note that all of these concepts are complex systems of dominance and they each relate to one another.

### *Public Domain and Domestic Domain*

Men are channeled into public domains and women channeled into domestic domains (Armstrong & Nelson, 2005). This division of labor carries over into the newsroom seamlessly, which can explain why so often gender roles are reflected and reinforced in the news (Silver, 1986; Armstrong & Nelson, 2005; Shor et al., 2015). Direct effects theory is based on a popular myth that suggests men and women have different innate talents based on their sex (Doosje et al., 1999; Steiner, 2012). This theory is rooted in patriarchal tradition because the talents assigned to men relate to leadership, power, and strength and the talents assigned to women relate to homemaking, nurturing, and caretaking. These “innate talents” assigned to genders can explain the engendering of spaces such as the public domain and the private domain.

The “public domain” does not necessarily refer to a physical space, but rather, a space where decisions are made, visible to the public and deemed as important for democracy. The “domestic domain” on the other hand does not receive as much media attention, is not deemed by society as necessary for democracy and is not as visible to the public eye. Linda Steiner points out that before the “Women’s Movement in the 1960s it was taken as fact that women only belonged in the newsroom to either provide a women’s touch to certain stories, or write about domestic topics to draw in more women readers” (2012, p. 205). These traditions did not end after the Women’s Movement, but rather section titles were changed from the “Women’s Section” to things such as “Food,” “Entertainment,” and “Lifestyle.” Little else has changed

other than the names. Women still overwhelmingly reside in the domestic domain both inside and outside the newsroom (Chambers et al., 2004; Desmond & Danilewicz, 2010; Steiner, 2012).

One scholar calls the phenomenon of gendered division of labor “horizontal segregation,” which it is not unique to journalism but it is prevalent in all male-dominated fields (Pringle, 1998). Other scholars call the phenomenon “Pink-Collar Ghettos” (Beasley & Theus, 1988) or “feminine ghettos” (Chambers et al., 2004: 123). No matter what the phenomenon is called, scholars across many fields agree that women are somehow channeled into feminine gender roles in the workplace and men are somehow channeled into masculine roles due to the traditional gendered division of labor.

The ghettoization of women journalists, sources and subjects to the literal *back* of the newspaper is problematic. Nancy Duncan points out:

The public/private dichotomy (both the political and spatial dimensions) is frequently employed to construct, control, discipline, confine, exclude, or suppress gender difference preserving traditional patriarchal and heterosexist power structures.

(1996, p. 128).

Being ghettoized to a domestic domain is not conducive to promotion or leadership opportunities like people involved in hard news sections that are more likely to be promoted to management roles (Elmore, 2007). Many women journalists report they chose the domestic sphere beats because it was conducive to raising a family, and men simply do not experience that same pressure (Elmore, 2007). Either way, Duncan’s point remains, and the division of spaces in the newspaper is a clear example of preserving patriarchal power structures.



## **Existing Empirical Research**

### *Who Writes?*

**Hypothesis 1:** Men will be authors of stories more frequently than women.

Male journalists dominate all forms of media; especially print news (Macharia et al., 2010; Byerly, 2011). The 2010 Global Media Monitoring Project content analyzed 1,281 newspapers, television news and news radio in over 100 countries and found 63 per cent of reporters are men. Since these findings included television and radio, the percentage of male journalists is actually shown as more proportionate to women than if the study included only newspapers, as women on television are more prevalent than in the newspaper (Macharia et al., 2010). Liebler and Smith found few significant differences in the ways women and men report stories (1997). But Liebler and Smith do maintain that gender-biased reporting does still exist (1997). A different study found that gender may play a role in how stories are written. Rodgers and Thorson found women are more likely to write positive stories and they select from a more diverse source pool (Rodgers & Thorson, 2003; Armstrong, 2004). If women are underrepresented as journalists, and women journalists select from a more diverse source pool, then perhaps women sources are underrepresented too.

### *Whose Voice?*

**Hypothesis 2:** Named sources are more likely to be male than female.

For the purposes of this research, I define sources as named individuals in news stories who provided information. A source can be a crucial tool for information and add value to a story. Studies show that men are in fact more likely to be cited as sources than women (Armstrong, 2004; Macharia et al., 2010; Shor et al, 2015). One study found that male names occur four times more than female names in news stories (Shor et al, 2015) Furthermore, male sources are more

likely to be cited in a professional capacity (Armstrong 2004; Macharia et al., 2010; Liebler & Smith, 1997). The Global Media Monitoring Project found that women are cited as experts only 20% of the time but men are cited as experts 80% of the time (Macharia et al., 2010).

Furthermore, the only occupational “experts” women outnumber men are as homemakers and students (Macharia et al., 2010). Armstrong and Nelson’s study found that when readers persistently see men cited in news stories they may associate men with authority, thus reflecting and reinforcing patriarchy in the news content (Armstrong & Nelson, 2005).

**Hypothesis 2a:** Male journalists will use a higher proportion of male sources than female journalists.

Studies have reinforced the fact that men are more likely to be cited as sources in news stories (Armstrong, 2004; Macharia et al., 2010; Shor et al, 2015). However, some studies took this information further and found that male journalists tend to choose male sources more than female journalists (Zoch & Turk, 1999; Armstrong, 2004). If male journalists do source men more frequently than they source women, it follows that women journalists conforming to the male-marker will further silence women as subjects and sources. According to the Global Media Monitoring Project, 92% of sources by male journalists are male, while female journalists choose male sources 86% of the time (Weaver & Wilhoit, 1996; Macharia et al., 2010). Although the GMMP includes television, radio and newspapers, these numbers are still useful. Furthermore, these numbers include other regions, but numbers across regions only vary slightly. In fact, North America’s numbers in terms of women journalists are lower than Latin America and the Middle East (Macharia et al., 2010).

*Whose Face?*

**Hypothesis 3:** Named subjects are more likely to be male than female.

I define subjects as named individuals in photographs accompanying a news story. Research is scarce on the topic of subject and gender. One study content analyzed nearly 2,200 newspaper photographs and found male subjects were twice as likely as women subjects (Len-Rios, et al., 2005; Beam & Di Cicco, 2010).

**Hypothesis 3a:** Male journalists will use a higher proportion of male subjects than female journalists.

I did not find any studies that specified the relationships between the gender of the reporter and the subject selection. I am assuming findings would have been very similar to that of the source selection studies.

#### *Public vs. Domestic*

**Hypothesis 4:** I predict men, as journalists, sources and subjects will be even more dominant in the public sections than in the domestic sections.

Hard news is generally defined as deadline-driven news providing informational value, or sometimes it is referred to as “serious news,” (North, 2016). Soft news is the antithesis of hard news in that it tends to be more human interest and emotional and these types of stories are typically not deadline-driven stories (Baum, 2003; Van Zoonen, 1998). Soft news is associated with evoking emotion which is a trait closely associated with femininity, which may explain the newsroom stereotype that suggests women journalists are naturally better at reporting human interest or soft news stories (van Zoonen, 1998).

Hard news is closely associated with having a large, visible impact on democracy. Hard news topics are associated with things that happen in the public domain such as politics, business, and current events while soft news is associated with domestic domain topics like

lifestyle, food, and education. As mentioned previously, men are channeled into public domains and women are pressured or assigned into domestic domains.

Steiner mentions “Overall, women report only 32% of so-called “serious” stories such as politics and government” (2012, p. 203). Women journalists appeared more frequently than male journalists in sections involving family or “women’s” issues (Zoch & Turk, 1999; Liebler & Smith, 1997; Shor et al., 2015). This phenomenon spans across all news media platforms. Female reporters were more likely to present soft news stories, or human-interest stories in local television news (Desmond & Danilewicz, 2010). Male journalists, on the other hand, are far more likely to appear in hard news stories that are deadline-driven or “hard news” stories involving politics, business, and sports (Liebler & Smith, 1997; Steiner, 2012; Desmond & Danilewicz, 2010).

According to Armstrong the reason sections are gendered is directly related to gender role stereotyping (2004). Some scholars believe women may choose domestic domain beats because they have accepted the sex roles imposed onto them and internalized sexist attitudes (Armstrong, 2004; Steiner, 2012). Some journalists said they selected soft news beats because of pressures to be at home with their families (North, 2016). No matter the reason, there is an evident pattern of gendering beats that directly influences the news making process. Journalists are aware of sexist attitudes and gendered story assignments in the newsroom, but have largely accepted their roles as gendered individuals and journalists (North, 2016). Women journalists also described the “boy’s club” atmosphere of the newsroom which results in exclusion of “women’s access because women’s access to hard news is thwarted by strong relationships that men in power develop with other men” (North, 2016, p. 362).

In public domain sections, it is likely there will be more male subjects and sources than women, whereas in domestic domain sections it is likely there will be more female subjects and sources than men. According to Armstrong, male journalists tend to choose male sources more than female sources (2004). Furthermore, if male journalists are more prominent in hard news sections, it follows that there will be a greater disparity between men and women sources, subjects and authors depending on the section of the newspaper. If this is true, a clear message is sent to readers “that men are more prominent and active in public spheres like politics and business” (Armstrong & Nelson, 2005, p. 832). Eran Shor points out “the social realities of acute gender inequalities at the top in politics, business, and sports translate into highly imbalanced gender coverage patterns,” (Shor et al., 2015, p. 954).

## **Methods**

### *Background on the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*

The *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* was founded in 1995 through a merger of the *Journal*, which was founded in 1882, and the *Sentinel*, which was founded in the 1830s. The *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* is the largest paper in Wisconsin. At the time the study was conducted in 2016 paper consisted of eight major sections. In the four consecutive weeks that I content analyzed, 83 bylines appeared in the paper.

### *Content Analysis*

This thesis analyzed staff-written stories in the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, a daily paper with a paid circulation of about 160,000 in 2016. The *Journal Sentinel* is a typical American newspaper in the sense that it is politically non-partisan (Pritchard et al., 2008). The newspaper has a strong reputation for investigative and watchdog reporting. It won Pulitzer Prizes in 2008, 2010, and 2011 (Journal Sentinel staff, 2013).

Every staff-written story was coded during four consecutive weeks during April and May 2016. A fifth week of local content was coded after the Gannett purchase was finalized in Fall 2016. I ended up with a total of 954 staff-written stories across all sections of the paper. I coded for the gender of the byline which, if it was unclear based on their name, was available online or in their biographies. If two or more people of the same gender shared a byline, the byline was coded as that gender. In 12 cases, representing only about 1% of the cases, journalists of different genders shared bylines and were excluded from analyses that used the byline variable.

I also coded the gender of named sources. Sources' first names usually indicated their gender. In rare cases when names were gender-ambiguous (for example, Chris) Internet searches provided sufficient information to determine the sources' gender. The gender of named subjects in photographs that accompanied stories was also coded. For the subject variable, all cases gender was easily determined based on the person's photo and name.

During the period under study the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* routinely published eight sections. For the purposes of this study, I divided the sections into public domain and domestic domain. The public domain sections consist of: News, Business, Sports and Crossroads. The domestic sections consist of: Fresh, Food, TAP, and Green Sheet.

Some analyses of gender and journalism focus on the latent content of the news – whether a story was positive, negative, or neutral, for example, or whether it exhibited high or low levels of empathy. Such topics are important, but it is very difficult to code latent content reliably. In contrast, I coded only manifest content without any need for judgment calls. And interviewed 19 journalists who, at the time of the study, worked at the paper added context and depth to the quantitative findings.

I coded the initial four weeks and my advisor (David Pritchard) coded a 5% sample of those weeks (38 stories). His coding for every variable was the same as mine. Inter-coder reliability, in other words, was perfect, as it has been in other studies of manifest content (for example, Len-Ríos et al., 2005).

### *Interviews*

In the first months of 2017 I interviewed 19 *Journal Sentinel* reporters and editors. Nine of my interview subjects were men and ten were women. It was important for this thesis to talk with men because they provided interesting insight and also reinforced the fact that patriarchy, especially for those that benefit from it, is largely invisible.

I asked the subjects roughly the same questions and let the conversations go naturally. Some reporters and editors were very concerned with me protecting their anonymity so I edited out anything that could give away the person's identity. The interviews added much depth to this thesis that quantitative results alone couldn't provide.

## ***Results A***

### **Quantitative Findings**

All of my hypotheses were strongly supported.

Table 1 shows the results for Hypothesis 1, which predicted that men would be more likely to be authors of stories than women. Also, this table shows results for Hypothesis 4 that predicted that the percentage of male journalists would be even higher in public domain sections.

**Table 1: Percentage of male bylines, public vs. domestic sections.**

Sections	Number of bylined local stories	Percentage of local stories by men
Public	777	83%***
Domestic	165	47%***
Total	942	77%

\*\*\* Difference is significant at  $p < .001$

Men wrote 83% of the stories in the public sections of the newspaper (News, Business, Sports, Crossroads), on the other hand, men only wrote 47% of the stories in the domestic sections of the newspaper (Food, Fresh, TAP and Green Sheet). The difference between the two types of sections is statistically significant.

Table 2 shows the results for Hypothesis 2, which predicted that named sources are more likely to be male. Also, it shows results for Hypothesis 4, which again, predicted the male sources would be disproportionately higher in public domain sections than in domestic domain sections.

**Table 2: Percentage of sources that were male, public vs. domestic sections.**

Sections	Number of stories with named source	Percentage of male sources
Public	700	85%***
Domestic	94	58%***
Total	794	82%

\*\*\* Difference is significant at  $p < .001$



Named sources were men 85% of the time in the public sections of the *Journal Sentinel*, compared with 58% of the time in the domestic sections of the newspaper. The difference is statistically significant.

Table 3 shows the results of Hypothesis 2a, which examined whether sourcing would differ with the gender of the reporters who wrote stories. Specifically, I predicted that stories with male authors would have a significantly higher proportion of named male sources than would stories with female authors.

**Table 3: Percentage of male sources used by male journalists.**

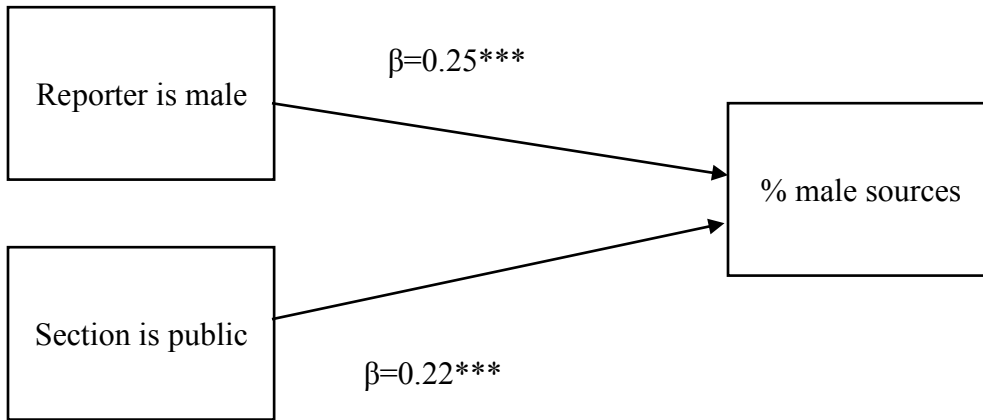
<b>Journalist gender</b>	<b>Stories with named sources</b>	<b>Percentage of male sources</b>
Male	619	87%***
Female	166	63%***
Total	785	82%

\*\*\* Difference is significant at  $p < .001$

The analysis (which excluded nine stories with joint bylines including male and female journalists) shows that 87% of the named sources used by male journalists are men, while only 63% of the named sources used by female journalists are women. The difference is statistically significant.

I tested Hypotheses 2 and 2a simultaneously to find out which factor is more important in determining source use – the public or domestic nature of the section (Hypothesis 2) or the gender of the reporter who wrote the story (Hypothesis 2a)? To answer that question, I conducted a simple multiple regression. The results are shown in Figure 1.

**Figure 1: Effect of gender and nature of section on proportion of sources who were male.**



\*\*\* Coefficients are significant at  $p < .001$

Both of the relationships are significant, indicating that the organization-level factor of gendered sections and the individual-level factor of a reporter's gender each make separate and distinct contributions to explaining the gender mix of sources in stories.

The subsequent hypotheses focused on the gender of people pictured in photographs associated with staff-written local stories. Hypothesis 3 predicted that named subjects are more likely to be male. Again, this table also supports Hypothesis 4, which predicted the differences would be even greater in the public section. Table 4 shows the results.

**Table 4: Percentage of named photo subjects who were male, public vs. domestic sections.**

<b>Sections</b>	<b>Stories with named people in photos</b>	<b>Percentage of photo subjects who were men</b>
Public	431	83%***
Domestic	91	55%***
Total	522	78%

\*\*\* Difference is significant at  $p < .001$

In the public sections, 83% of the people who were named in photographs accompanying staff-written stories were men, compared to 55% men in the domestic sections. The difference is statistically significant.

Table 5 shows the results of the analysis with respect to Hypothesis 3a, which predicted that people in photographs accompanying stories written by men would be more likely to be male than those in photographs accompanying stories written by women. The results mirror those of the previous hypotheses, and again the difference is statistically significant.

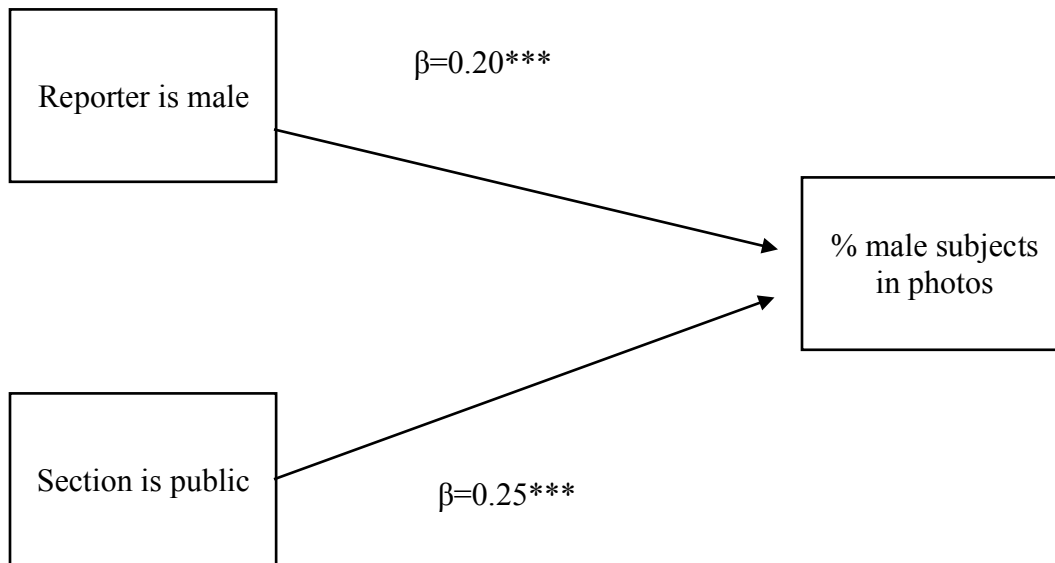
**Table 5: Percentage of male photo subjects, stories by men vs. stories by women.**

<b>Reporter gender</b>	<b>Stories with named people in photos</b>	<b>Percentage of photo subjects who were men</b>
Male	391	84%***
Female	125	61%***
Total	516	78%

\*\*\* Difference is significant at  $p < .001$

As I did with the second hypothesis, I tested Hypotheses 3 and 3a with a simple multiple regression to ascertain the relative importance of the organizational factor (gendered sections) and the individual factor (the gender of the reporter). Figure 2 shows the results.

**Figure 2: Effect of gender and section on proportion of photo subjects who were male.**



\*\*\* Coefficient is significant at  $p < .001$

Both relationships are significant, indicating that the organization-level factor of gendered sections and the individual-level factor of a reporter's gender each make separate and distinct contributions to explaining the gender mix of people in photographs accompanying staff-written local stories.

Finally, sports sections are infamous for being male dominated (Claringbould et al., 2004; Franks & O'Neill, 2016), so I ran the analyses again after removing the sports section from the "public" category. The percentage of "maleness" in the analyses that removed the sports

section from the data diminished, but not by much. In each of the analyses, the gender differences between public sections (excluding sports) and the domestic sections remained significant at the  $p < .001$  level.

## ***Results B***

### **Qualitative Findings**

#### *Level of Autonomy*

One of the more basic things I hoped to glean from the interviews was the level of autonomy of the reporters. I wanted to know if the editors were assigning the reporters stories or if they had a choice in what to cover. I wanted to know more about levels of autonomy because it would provide insight on whether reporters were self-selecting their stories or topics or if editors were assigning them. I found that every reporter I talked with said they have total freedom to choose what to write about, or close to it. Part of the reason reporters and editors say that happens is the newspaper simply does not have the staff they used to. Editors used to assign stories and be more active in deciding which stories to cover. Now, editors have so much on their plates as the paper is shrinking and roles have been consolidated, beat reporters are expected to know what is happening on their beat so they rarely get assigned stories. Other than one female general assignment reporter, all reporters I spoke with across all sections perceived a high level of autonomy. For example, a male news reporter said:

Almost 99% freedom. I mean the editors trust the beat reporter or topic reporter to generate stories. Most editors are desperate to fill their pages so if you provide them with a stream of stuff they are less and less picky about what it is.

Reporters' levels of autonomy did not seem to vary by gender. Women beat reporters perceived just as much autonomy as their male counterparts. One female news reporter said:

So I would say I have a lot of freedom. I've never had an editor straight out tell me "no you can't write that." I do think though in this particular beat there are stories that you just have to do.

Editors across all sections reflected what the journalists said about reporters' levels of autonomy. Here's what a male news section editor said:

Most of the writers come up with their own ideas. But generally speaking the story starts with the writer. And one of the downsides of having as few people as we do is that you run the risk of too much of one voice in the paper. It's better for a paper that's going for a wider audience to have broader perspectives.

Several reporters, regardless of gender or section, say their independence largely comes from experience and merit. Beat reporters, especially those who have been working at the *Journal Sentinel* for a long time, are expected to know what is happening on their beat. Here's what a male business reporter had to say:

In my case I've been doing this for a long time and I think covering (my beat) specifically for over 20 years so you know obviously they have confidence in my ability to know what's going on in my beat. And that's the case for most people who are fairly experienced reporters; I mean you're kind of expected to find things on your own.

Levels of autonomy were high no matter the person's gender or beat. Unless the reporter was a general assignment reporter or a freelancer, all journalists reported a high level of autonomy. Although reporters who have been working at the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* for a long time attributed their levels of autonomy to merit, journalists who have been there for less than five years still reported high levels of autonomy in terms of story choice.

### *Source Selection*

I wanted to better understand what factors journalists consider when they choose whom to talk to for their stories. Some journalists say they have a routine. They don't have a mindful thought process in choosing whom to speak with; they quote people who have some type of authority on a subject or who are the most convenient for the reporter. Most of the reporters say the sources fall into place depending on the topic of the story and the sources just seem obvious. Some criteria in picking the "obvious source" include spokespeople, policy makers and managers. A woman general assignment reporter from the news section said:

I'm not thinking I need females, males, uh you know, gay, straight, you know, Catholic, Lutheran, Muslim, I'm not thinking in that terms. I'm just thinking who do I need to talk to for this story.

A male news reporter referred to the deadlines as a driving factor in who gets quoted in his stories:

I think it's just more a matter of who's the obvious source of information and if you have any discretion it's who can I get right now. And that's a problem for all reporters forever.

Because reporters tend to go to the easier source. We all know the reasons why we should (diversify our sources) but you know, deadline pressure is a powerful factor.

A male features editor said he does think about gender but not in terms of sources:

It's who do I think can best tell that story. So I think the gender consciousness comes when figuring out what to write about, less so than who to interview for a given subject.

Both male and female journalists across all sections described developing a network of sources over time, which they regularly quoted in their stories. Several of the journalists recognized relying too heavily on a network of sources, especially ones in positions of power, could be problematic. For example, here's what a female news reporter said:

It's really easy to fall into the trap of I know this person will get back to me on deadline and I know this person would be able to speak on this issue in a way that, I know they will be able to speak on this issue in a concise way and in a way they are explaining something holistically and so the trap you don't want to fall into is constantly going back to those same sources.

Developing a reliable network of sources was apparent throughout all sections, roles, and genders at the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*. Most reporters said having a solid network of sources was not an issue unless you relied *too* heavily on the same people. While relying on the same sources too often is something reporters are aware of, sometimes they feel it is unavoidable.



### *Institutional Reporting*

Newspapers, for as long as they have existed cover stories about institutions and people in charge. Those stories are in the news section which is the first section anyone sees and sometimes the only section people read. It follows then, there will be fewer women in stories because women are lacking in decision-making roles in the real world (Shor et al., 2015). But again, it is the newspaper's decision to focus and highlight these patriarchal institutions thus, reflecting and reinforcing patriarchy.

Most editors and reporters say their goal is to get a quote from the most authoritative person or people who represent organizations on their beat. Since domestic domain sections don't necessarily cover institutions as a whole, I really did not notice the systemic silencing of women sources and subjects coming from feature editors or reporters. People working in public domain sections, in contrast, repeatedly reinforced the importance of talking with people in positions of power within the institutions they are covering. The notion of institutional reporting could help explain why men are so disproportionately represented in public domain sections like news, sports and business.

Newspapers tend to cover institutions that happen to be male-dominated, and it creates a cycle of exclusion in terms of sources and subjects. In other words, if the stories the newspaper covers are almost exclusively about men, it sends a clear message to readers that men are the most important players in decision-making roles. Thus, reinforcing patriarchal attitudes that women do not belong in public decision-making roles.

Relying too heavily on a network of sources is only one explanation as to why women are marginalized in the news in terms of reporters, sources and subjects. When you look at where the network of sources is coming from it's largely people who are in charge or people in decision-

making roles. When journalists consistently reach for the top person in charge at any given organization, they are systematically going to source more men because men still hold more leadership roles especially in the public domain.

A female news reporter said she relies on policymakers as sources because they are the best people to help readers understand a potential policy, but she realizes it's important to quote regular citizens in her stories too. She was the only reporter to remark on the importance of sourcing everyday people.

Well usually I will go to the people who are, if it's a policy thing, the people who are kind of laying out that policy so I understand it, but it's important to have both perspectives of those who are establishing or considering policies and those who are affected by them. I think that others will probably say the same thing it depends on who are the key sources on your beat, it just tends to be who are the people in the decision making roles or the spokesperson roles (in the) the institution.

*Some say the lack of women in the news is a reflection of the lack of women in leadership positions out there, would you agree with that statement?*

Absolutely.

A female news reporter said that her beat has disproportionately high percentages of male sources and subjects because that's the way the industry that she covers is.

It's funny, my beat is still largely kind of a dude fest. It can be tricky sometimes because you don't want to like over represent the two women (on my beat) and I don't want to just repeatedly call them all the time just to let you know have equal men and women. It's

pretty stunning to me that when I started covering my beat that there's only one female.

And also a lot of the top level (people on my beat) are men. Yeah I mean there's just not many women in the top leadership positions.

News organizations make news by deciding which topics and issues to cover and which to ignore. Some male reporters covering news and business define the news in terms of who is in charge. For instance, people in leadership positions don't make news as some journalists implied. Patriarchal news is all about talking to the top person at a company or a government organization. It's no surprise that such news is mostly about men. If a news organization wanted to be non-patriarchal, it would define news in a much different way. For example, without even changing what the newspapers cover, they could simply rearrange the paper so the front-page stories were not always stories about government. Here's an example of a male business reporter defining news in terms of the people in positions of power.

I mean you know you go to who's making the news that's who we talk to obviously. And again, if the Mayor of Milwaukee were a woman you have more coverage of women in politics for that default reason (my beat) is a male-dominated there aren't a lot of female developers in town... now for some reason (one sector of my beat) lends itself to women, and I don't know why that is but the reality is my perspective as a reporter, I'm not going to do a lot with (that sector), I mean it's not something that's going to generate a lot of news.

The editor in chief echoed what several of the reporters said. According to him, it's a reporter's job to...

...get the most authoritative person they can and hold that person accountable for whatever decisions are being made. I don't want to dismiss that we have our own institutional biases that we are unaware of but I don't think Wisconsin has been this male-dominated for a really long time as it is today so there's fewer (women) in key leadership roles.

*Would you say you kind of knew in the back of your mind that women are vastly underrepresented in the news?*

We're focused on where decisions are being made especially in the public sector. So on the news side of things a lot of our job is watching people in power. But because of that I think what we do is distort it toward the powerful and the decision makers because that's what we focus our attention on. And in a society where a lot of those people are still male, that is going to distort our view. And we don't do enough stories about the rest of life. We are trying to reflect life better than we have in the past.

No one covering domestic domain beats said anything about institutional coverage. It's no wonder public domain sections use a higher percentage of male sources and subjects. None of the journalists who remarked on institutional coverage questioned why the news focuses solely on people in power or spokespeople. The sentiment of the public domain was a very traditional one and the cultural hegemony of patriarchy makes it impossible for news organizations to imagine any other way of doing the news.

Although some reporters were keenly aware of the fact the newspaper systemically excluding women from the news, other reporters implied they never think about how gender relates to their reporting at all. I found the level of reflection about gender as an issue at the

*Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* varied from person to person, but I did find two trends particularly interesting. Women were by far more aware of gender as an issue than men. Also, a lot of women in the public domain sections were much less aware of gender than women in the domestic domain sections, perhaps because they have bought in to the idea of institution-focused news, which results in patriarchal news. These trends complemented my quantitative results, which show the gender of the individual journalist is as significant and strong as the organizationally gendered division of labor in terms of predicting source and subject use.

### *Level of Awareness*

According to the quantitative results, section was just as powerful as an individual reporter's gender in determining the gender of sources and photo subjects. However, the interviews show a stronger awareness of gender-related issues in the newspaper in domestic domain sections no matter the reporter's gender. The public domain sections generally don't focus as much on gender-related issues in terms of sources and subjects. Several women reporters and editors in the domestic domain sections showed high levels of awareness about gender-related issues in the newspaper. For instance, a female features reporter said:

I do try to find women because they're such a big part of (my beat) right now. On a subject that has been fairly male-dominated it has been sort of eye opening to me. I don't have a mission, I just want to be inclusive. I just want to be able to say when I can who's doing what.

Men in the domestic domain sections also seemed to be attuned to issues of gender. A male features editor said:

I really try to make it a goal to have parity, and that's not completely because I'm a great wonderful feminist guy, it's also recognition of who reads that stuff. I would say that (gender) has a regular ongoing influence. I wouldn't want to claim that (gender is) the dominant overriding thing that I think about when I choose what to write.

In public domain sections, there was some overlap in the answers, but largely the women in the public sphere sections saw gender in the newspaper as a non-issue. Several of the women reporters in the public domain section said things that echo what this female news reporter said:

I can't say (gender) often does (cross my mind). There've probably been times when I thought I need women talking about this if it's a particular issue.

A female public domain reporter says she thinks about gender sometimes, but other times "I don't want (gender) to cross my mind. I don't want it to be an issue."

Several men in the public domain sections were aware of the imbalance of women sources and subjects in the newspaper. For example, a male business reporter said:

You can't always (quote women) in every story and sometimes you're under deadline pressure so it's whoever gets back to you first, but yeah I would say that I try to balance it out when I can...it's always been in the back of my mind. I would hope that in some way I could show that women are out there doing this stuff just like guys are.

Other male reporters in the public domain section do not think of source gender as an issue. A male news reporter said:

I mean I consciously never make a choice to call or seek a source that's you know based on gender. Yeah and sometimes I wonder though, should I take notice? Sometimes you feel stupid even bringing it up.

One business reporter thinks there are no issues regarding race or gender in the news.

I don't really think in terms of, well am I talking to enough women am I talking to enough African Americans. When I read our paper I guess I don't have a sense of there aren't enough black people or there aren't enough women (as sources).

It seems like the interviews reinforced the quantitative results. The awareness of gender relies more on section of the paper rather than the gender of the reporter.

### *Race*

While I think it is absolutely valuable to recognize the underrepresentation of people of color in the news, my research focuses on gender. Some of the reporters deflected my questions about gender and brought up issues about racial diversity. While issues of race are important to address and I am glad the reporters were aware of racial diversity issues, several reporters seemed to be using the ever-present exclusion of people of color in the news as a way to avoid talking about gender. The passive attitude towards gender could be in part because gender issues are normalized, meaning these gender-related issues are so pervasive they aren't seen as an issue. I noticed people deflecting my questions about gender happening even more heavily in public domain sections. For instance, one female news reporter said:

We don't have enough people of color or coming from different backgrounds (as sources). I don't get the effect that female voices aren't heard in the newsroom that's definitely not, for me, the case.

Another female news reporters deflected question in terms of source gender:

I probably think more broadly of quoting a racially diverse group than always thinking men versus women...but yeah I think in my mind I think more in terms of racial ethnic diversity.

While a different woman news reporter commented on the diversity issues of the reporters.

I almost feel that race is a bigger issue here than gender because even though we don't have 50% female reporters we have even fewer reporters of color.

These deflections only came from female news reporters. This could be in part because issues of gender in the news section are more heavily normalized. The only male to deflect my questions about gender was an editor from a domestic domain section.

I think it really good example would be the Green Sheet. Male and female is pretty much even but people of color are woefully under-represented and that's a no small part because of the historic type content that's drawn directly from our archives and if you look at the old papers in this town they did not cover people of color. Like I wouldn't say that were sitting there with a calculator counting but I think the others here are all keenly aware that that's an issue.



No women from the domestic domain sections, and only one man, redirected my questions about gender. Perhaps gender is less of a blind spot in domestic domain sections because they are more woman-centric. In patriarchal societies maleness is treated as the default, and public domain sections are more male-centric, people in public domain sections have the privilege to *not* think about gender.

### *How Gender Intersects with Journalism*

Women across all sections brought up their gender socialization as a factor in reporting. No men brought up his gender socialization as a factor in reporting. The fact that women talked about themselves as gendered while men did not speaks to the level in which maleness is treated as default. When you belong to the group that is treated as the norm, you don't have to think about that part of your identity, as it is the category to which all others are compared. Several women journalists, especially in the domestic domain sections, talked about being self-aware of their gender while on the job. For example, here's what a female features editor had to say about her gender identity intersecting with her career:

It's the types of stories and the way that stories are written, like what was lost when the lifestyle section was killed were stories that have emotions to them. I mean everybody reads stories that have an emotional impact and sometimes we do those kinds of features in the news pages, but too often it's straight news, who cares? Does this really matter to anybody? I'm sure if we had women (in the news), there would be a whole different perspective and even the choices for investigative, (women) do look at the world differently.

A male features editor also noticed how gender interacts with reporting.

It takes anyone an effort to stretch out of their comfort zone. My comfort zone includes a lot of women, it's not a problem for me. And then when your male reporters are covering, let's say politics, heavily male-dominated area then it's an extra special effort to bust out.

Women in the public domain also seemed keenly aware of how their gender interacted with their careers. The women in public domain sections were aware of their own gender identity and how it interacts with reporting. Their self-awareness is a lot different from their gender-blindness when it comes to sources and subjects. A lot of reporters and editors essentialized gender using a reporter's femininity as an excuse for their marginalization. For example, a woman news reporter said:

There's a way that (women) think, there's a way that (women) were brought up and what's in (a woman's) wheelhouse. (Women) feel more comfortable (with other women); it could also be that the sources feel more comfortable talking to us as well. (Female sources) may feel a little bit more at ease with (women reporters).

Some female reporters noticed their gender actually standing in the way of their job at times. For example, one female reporter covering a public domain beat said:

I don't want it to matter that I'm a female reporter. I don't really want anyone to look at me gender-specific, I just want them to consider the reporter. I certainly think I probably have a different perspective of some things being a woman. When I was younger it was pretty hard to blend in and I was very self-conscious of that, I hated it. I finally stopped

worrying about having to prove myself because I didn't stand out so much being in the minority gender (on my beat).

Another female reporter covering news said something quite similar.

As a woman I started reporting, gosh right out of school, and I think I looked pretty young and there'd be times where I'd show up for an interview and people would be like "Oh I'm sorry miss we're waiting for a reporter to get here" and I'll be like "No, that's me." I think maybe I was taken less seriously either because I was young or because I was a woman or both.

Balancing work and life seems to be a woman's issue rather than a gender-neutral one. Several female reporters explained how their gender socialization, or cultural expectations might inhibit their progress as journalists, while no men remarked on his struggle with work-life balance. For example a female news reporter said,

Being a certain kind of reporter is difficult. So if I'm speaking very personally now, I've had certain thought processes of, you know, if I decided to have children would I be able to cover this particular beat. I don't know that I would.

*I do notice that women are heavily saturated in the features sections. Do you think that has something to do with gender roles and traditional family structures?*

I think that's something a little more broadly cultural based. A lot of things with women become self-selecting, so you're not getting external pressure to maybe do this but maybe you feel like women have been socially conditioned in a lot of ways to be really hard on

themselves and constantly be thinking of how they're providing for others. That can carry over to the workplace too and that may influence your own decisions as to where to go, your career trajectory in that news organization or elsewhere. It's real and it's tough.

One man, the editor in chief, took notice of the struggle his female employees have with work-life-balance.

One thing I've noticed is it's harder to convince women to go into management than men. I think women may be less ego-driven and more balance-of-life driven than men are. They're less interested in climbing steps and more interested in life-choices.

Work-life balance is not a gender-neutral issue. While I'm sure men struggle with balancing work and family too, it doesn't seem to be an issue that gets in the way of their careers like it does with women.

### *Newsroom Makeup*

Men and women reporters and editors in both public and domestic domain sections talked about the makeup of the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* in terms of gender and race. Mostly female reporters and editors commented on the imbalanced gender makeup of the newsroom. For example, here's what a female news reporter said:

I think to some degree in this newsroom there is gender stereotyping in conversations, but it's not universal across the newsroom. So you can say legitimately that there is still some of that is a part of the culture, but yes it's very male-dominated in terms of editors.

A different female reporter, also from the news section, noticed the male-dominance of editors might play a role in the lack of women bylines on the front page.

I've been in newsrooms that like the only women were like in features or education. One of the first things I do when I pick up a front page of any newspaper is I find myself scanning the bylines to see how many women get the front page. Either men might be in harder news positions or men might be better at selling their stories or being more aggressive about it. I do think that women's stories get more marginalized. I feel like overall most newspapers around the country would benefit from more women in leadership positions.

One female news reporter said editors "don't rule the newsroom," but a different female news reporter said editors *do* have a lot of say in how things are covered and where they appear in the paper. Her comments speak to my earlier point about how journalists and editors *define* what news is.

At a daily news meeting the editors get together and they decide what's the newsiest thing, what do we think is going to be the top story...and have you looked at our newsroom?

*Yes.*

What do you see?

*White men mostly.*

And when you look at it in terms of whose making decisions about how we cover stories and how they're played, what kind of people do you see?

*The same.*

Yeah, and of a certain age too. I think yes, it reflects in the content and I think it reflects in where we dedicate our resources and I'm not saying the things we cover aren't important, they are, (but) if you're not a person who brings a certain life experience to the table, without that voice there we lose that factor in deciding what's news and what's not. Every newsroom in America wants to be more diverse. There are problems systemically in journalism as a field that inhibit that.

Male reporters in both public and domestic domain sections also noticed gender and racial underrepresentation in terms of the newsroom makeup. For example, one male business reporter said:

On the demographic makeup I'll say no, (the *Journal Sentinel* is) under represented racially. We are. I don't think there's any doubt about that.

A male business reporter, and several others, pointed to the staff cuts as a major issue contributing to the lack of diversity in the newsroom.

The editors, instead of thinking with the reporters on what's interesting and how to do it better, their days are spent planning survival into the future I mean obviously (female source usage) should be higher. I cannot over-stress how much the whole shift in how we do business has changed everything and I think when people had more time to work on

stories and you had more time to think about who my sources are going to be and should I have this diversity of sources.

Several reporters and editors reflected on the idea of the newsroom makeup mirroring source and subject selection. For example, a male features editor said:

It's a largely male newsroom. If you think of like attracts like, or like seeks out or unconsciously aligns with like, a largely white male newsroom it's probably going to land on, or find it easy to land on white male sources or subjects.

A female editor from the features section noted that unwillingness to recognize and change biases is problematic.

We don't have any women in editor positions here (other than one), which is features and entertainment, which is a traditional position for women to hold. And believe me we used to have a lot more women over in the news side and high positions, there's nobody now. And it shows in the content. I work with guys on the staff anyway, and they are not sexist people but I suppose if you define the word "sexist" broadly you could say "not knowing your bias and not working to overcome it" is a form of sexism.

The *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* cannot help that it exists in a patriarchal society, but it could devote more time to covering things that highlight the participation and achievements of women and perhaps other minorities in the community, too.

## Discussion

Gaye Tuchman famously said that women are “symbolically annihilated” from mass media (1978b). This study is not about symbolic annihilation, but I think there is strong evidence of “symbolic marginalization” in local print news. I found that more men write stories, are pictured more in stories and are sourced in stories far more frequently than women. The decision to highlight coverage of government and business institutions, I believe, is the primary reason gender imbalances persist in the newsroom and in the news content. That decision to cover male-dominated institutions drives the gendered division of labor in the sections and it drives the source and subject imbalance within the news content.

The qualitative and quantitative results clearly show the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* not only reflects a patriarchal society but it actively reinforces it on a daily basis. While there are still imbalances of women in leadership positions in institutions the newspaper covers, the newspaper ultimately decides what to cover, where to play stories and what is considered news.

Gannett purchased the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* shortly before I finished coding the stories, but the effect of the transaction wasn't felt at the time I was coding my stories. While the newspaper layout changed a few months after I finished coding, all the staff I asked said the changes were mainly behind the scenes and had to do with logistics rather than reporting or coverage practices. Though Gannett buying the *Journal Sentinel* is not necessarily a limitation, as I feared it might be, there were some limitations to this research.

In terms of the quantitative research, I would have liked to keep track of the capacity in which the sources were cited. What I discovered through many of my interviews is that a lot of the sources come from official documents, and the journalists sometimes don't go out and talk to people. This is especially true with crime, government, courts and commercial real-estate beats. I



think the quantitative results would have been stronger or more interesting if I could differentiate whether the journalist was actually talking with a person or repurposing quotes from official documents. Furthermore, I would have liked to track of whether or not the source was an “official” source like the mayor or police chief or if the source was just a regular citizen.

In terms of qualitative research, I wish I had interviewed the editor in chief sooner in the process because he told me some interesting things that I would have liked to discuss with the staff. For instance, he told me women are harder to convince to go into management positions. It would have been interesting to interview a few more women to see if they felt the same.

A potential methodological weakness with the interview portion of the research is that I, the interviewer, am a woman and gender affinities may have made it easier for women to discuss gender-related topics. The way to compensate for the possible effect of interviewer gender is to make sure to push hard to get gender-inconsistent interview subjects (i.e. men) to discuss the topics women discussed.

While there are inevitable limitations and shortcomings to my research, the fact that I used multiple methods is certainly the strongest aspect. The fact that I coded as many stories as I did added breadth to the research, but the interviews added depth and dimension that numbers alone couldn't. I gleaned interesting information and confirmation from the interviews that gave life to the statistics. Numbers alone only tell one part of the story, a crucial part, but it's not the whole picture. Interviews added life to the numbers I found, and they reinforced my quantitative findings. Furthermore, my research focused on men and women, an important aspect of analysis, which some studies about gender and journalism overlook.

The dominance of men in local print news in terms of writers, decision makers, sources and subjects is a tradition that is deeply rooted in a patriarchal ideology. Such practices make the

imbalance found in this research seem not only normal, but also natural. Solving the problem will take far more than simply hiring more women. As a group of scholars noted:

The change we need to make in order to fundamentally shift the news agenda away from its androcentric gaze is not simply to ‘add women and stir’ but rather, to mount a more comprehensive challenge to the normative nature of news routines which masquerade sexism as objective practice. It is anything but (Ross et al., in press, 16).

Patriarchy is not the only systemic form of inequality in American society, of course. It intersects with other systems of oppression such as socioeconomics, race, and religion (Ortner, 2014). Journalism unthinkingly reflects such structures of inequality by persistently downplaying women’s contributions in social, economic, political, and cultural realms, patriarchal journalism diminishes democracy (Ross & Carter, 2011).

Patriarchy is only a partial explanation for why mainstream news is the way it is, yet this concept is still a powerful demonstration that gender is a significant predictor of who writes the news, whose voice gets heard in the news, whose faces are seen in the news, and which kinds of organization the news gives prominence to. Similar studies should be done on race, class, and other variables that relate to non-patriarchal systems of dominance.

Rather than simply hiring more women, the Milwaukee *Journal Sentinel* and other newspapers across the country should focus their important news coverage to areas other than male-dominated institutions. As Steiner pointed out, exclusion from important topics in the news diminishes women’s self-worth and sends a clear message that they are not welcome to participate in certain institutions (2012). If newspapers featured more women on the front page

showing them in both non-professional *and* professional capacities, just like they've always done for men, over time, it could help diminish rigid patriarchal attitudes that discourage women from participating in the public sphere.

Gender emerges from intersections of historical and social conditions. It is a complex concept that is not easily explained or understood. However, what we do know is that somehow women are still marginalized in most aspects of the public sphere and newspapers are not the exception. The Milwaukee *Journal Sentinel* is not an outlier; patriarchal journalism is the norm in the United States. Routine news of the kind analyzed in this study carries a variety of meanings about gender, subtly contributing to a social construction of gender that actively reflects and reinforces patriarchy, which perpetuates a cycle of exclusion of women in the public sphere both in the news and in real life situations.

The news sections could and should reflect the important things that people do. Some of those important things are what the governor and mayor do, but some of those things involve women and people outside positions of power. For instance, the majority of public school teachers, the majority of social workers, the majority of those who take care of vulnerable people are women and they do work everyday that greatly contribute to society.

I'm not saying the current news isn't important, I'm saying that covering other types of things and bringing in more women to the news is something that could easily be remedied. I don't believe that news organizations or journalists have an evil sexist agenda, but I do think the routine way those organizations and journalists define news and cover stories should be looked at critically.

So when newspapers willfully follow traditions of putting the mayor or the police chief front and center of the newspaper, they are not only actively reflecting patriarchy but also they

are reinforcing patriarchy on a daily basis. In an insidious and subtle way, American newspapers published every year reinforce patriarchy, and help explain why progress toward gender equality (not just in employment, but in all realms) is so slow -- the way the press portrays men and women makes it easy for people to simply accept that what men do is more important than what women do. Subtle messages are being sent to readers every single day that men are the important decision makers, men's voices are more important, women's voices belong in the back.

Despite the fact that now women can vote, own property and serve in combat, and we have anti-discrimination laws, progress has been slow. We've still never seen a woman president, overwhelming male majority in elected officials, CEOs and when the news focuses disproportionality on those things the news then reflects patriarchy. We need to break away from news traditions and expand the lens of what news is so we can capture much more of what women do. I think that breaking those news traditions would actually send a message to women and girls that they belong in decision making roles and public sphere discussions just like newspapers have been doing for men all along.

What I found contradicts received common wisdom about gender in journalism. Most studies argue that adding a critical mass of women into newsrooms will make things better, and while that would be nice, that won't change much. Newsrooms still actively reinforce gendered divisions of labor, putting women-centric stories in the back of the paper, and women's voices in sections that are taken less-seriously. Furthermore, a lot of the female journalists in the news section seemed to absorb some patriarchal attitudes and they didn't really see gender as an issue. Instead of adding more women to leadership positions, we need a radical overhaul of how we define news.

## References

- Armstrong, C. (2004). The influence of reporter gender on source selection in newspaper stories. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, 81, 139-154.
- Armstrong, C. L., & Nelson, M. R. (2005). How newspaper sources trigger gender stereotypes. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, 82(4), 820-837.
- Baum, M. A. (2003). Soft news and political knowledge: Evidence of absence or absence of evidence?. *Political Communication*, 20(2), 173-190.
- Beam, R.A., & Di Cicco, D.T. (2010). When women run the newsroom: Management change, gender, and the news. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, 87, 393-411.
- Beasley, M., & Theus, K.T. (1988). *The new majority: A look at what the preponderance of women in journalism education means to the schools and to the profession*. Lanham, MD: University Press of America.
- Byerly, C. M. (2011). Global report on the status of women in the news media. *International Womens Media Foundation*.
- Chambers, D., Steiner, L., & Fleming, C. (2004). *Women and journalism*. London: Routledge.
- Claringbould, I., Knoppers, A., & Elling, A. (2004). Exclusionary practices in sport journalism. *Sex Roles*, 51, 709-718.
- Craft, S., & Wanta, W. (2004). Women in the newsroom: Influences of female editors and reporters on the news agenda. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, 81, 124-138.
- Desmond, R., & Danilewicz, A. (2010). Women are on, but not in, the news: Gender roles in local television news. *Sex Roles*, 62(11-12), 822-829.
- Doosje, B., Rojahn, K., & Fischer, A. (1999). Partner preferences as a function of gender, age, political orientation and level of education. *Sex Roles*, 40(1), 45-60.
- Duncan, N. (1996). Renegotiating gender and sexuality in public and private spaces. In *Bodyspace: Destabilizing Geographies of Gender and Sexuality* (pp. 127-145). New York: Routledge.
- Elmore, C. (2007). Recollections in hindsight from women who left: The gendered newsroom culture. *Women and Language*, 30(2), 18-27.
- Fishman, M. (1988). *Manufacturing the news*. University of Texas Press.

- Franks, S., & O'Neill, D. (2016). Women reporting sport: Still a man's game?. *Journalism*, 17(4), 474-492.
- Journal Sentinel staff. (2013, April 17). *Journal Sentinel Pulitzer Prizes*, available at <http://archive.jsonline.com/news/90618044.html> (last accessed March 30, 2017).
- Len-Ríos, M.E., Rodgers, S., Thorson, E., & Yoon, D. (2005). Representation of women in news and photos: Comparing content to perceptions. *Journal of Communication*, 55, 152-168.
- Liebler, C.M., & Smith, S.J. (1997). Tracking gender differences: A comparative analysis of network correspondents and their sources. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, 41(1), 58-68.
- Macharia, S., O'Connor, D., & Ndangam, L. (2010). *Who makes the news?: Global media monitoring project 2010*. World Association for Christian Communication.
- Mitchell, A., & Holcomb, J. (June 15, 2016 ). State of the news media 2016. *Pew Research Center*. Retrieved from <http://www.journalism.org/files/2016/06/State-of-the-News-Media-Report-2016-FINAL.pdf>
- North, L. (2016). The gender of “soft” and “hard” news: Female journalists’ views on gendered story allocations. *Journalism Studies*, 17, 356-373.
- Ortner, S.B. (2014). Too soon for post-feminism: The ongoing life of patriarchy in neoliberal America. *History & Anthropology*, 25, 530-549.
- Palmer, R.A. (2016). Manuscript in preparation.
- Potter, W.J. (2011). Conceptualizing mass media effect. *Journal of Communication*, 61, 896-915.
- Pringle, R. (1998). *Sex and medicine: gender, power and authority in the medical profession*. Cambridge University Press.
- Pritchard, D., Terry, C., & Brewer, P.R. (2008). One owner, one voice? Testing a central premise of newspaper-broadcast cross-ownership policy. *Communication Law and Policy*, 13, 1-27.
- Rodgers, S., & Thorson, E. (2003). A socialization perspective on male and female reporting. *Journal of Communication*, 53, 658-675.
- Ross, K., & Carter, C. (2011). Women and news: A long and winding road. *Media, Culture & Society*, 33, 1148-1165.
- Ross, K., Boyle, K., Carter, C., & Ging, D. (in press). Women, men and news: It's life, Jim, but not as we know it. *Journalism Studies*.

- Shor, E., van de Rijt, A., Miltsov, A., Kulkarni, V., & Skiena, S. (2015). A paper ceiling: Explaining the persistent underrepresentation of women in printed news. *American Sociological Review*, 80, 960-984.
- Silver, D. (1986). A comparison of newspaper coverage of male and female officials in Michigan. *Journalism Quarterly*, 63(1), 144-149.
- Steiner, L. (2012). Failed theories: Explaining gender difference in journalism. *Review of Communication*, 12(3), 201-223.
- Tuchman, G. (1978). *Making news: A study in the construction of reality*. New York: The Free Press.
- Tuchman, G. (1978b). The symbolic annihilation of women by the mass media. In Tuchman, G., Daniels, A. K., & Benét, J. (Eds.), *Hearth and home: Images of women in the mass media* (pp. 3-38). New York: Oxford University Press.
- Van Zoonen, L. (1998). One of the girls? The changing gender of journalism. In C. Carter, G. Branston, & S. Allan (Eds.), *News, gender and power* (pp. 33-46). London: Routledge.
- Weaver, D.H., Beam, R.A., Brownlee, B.J., Voakes, P.S., & Wilhoit, G.C. (2009). *The American journalist in the 21st century: U.S. news people at the dawn of a new millennium*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Wood, J.T. (2011). *Gendered lives: Communication, gender and culture*. Boston: Wadsworth.
- Zoch, L.M., & Turk, J.V. (1999). Women making news: Gender as a variable in source selection and use. *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly*, 75, 762-775.