

Media Professionals: Autonomous, Creative and Diverse?

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Fictional journalists

- Good Night and Good Luck
- All the Presidents' Men
- Spotlight
- A State of Play
- Citizen Kane
- Absence of Malice
- The Devil Wears Prada
- Veronica Guerin
- Page One – Inside the New York Times
- The Post

Actual “star” journalists

- Ernest Hemingway
- Martha Gelhorn
- Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein (Washington Post)
- David Frost (Frost vs. Nixon – exists as a film and theatre play as well)
- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IP_l2IFiQzs

- Nick Davies
- Marie Colvin

Task in small groups

Can you give us examples of star journalists from your countries?

Organizations – is there space for individual influence?

- Key media routines and organizational factors:
 1. News resources and resource allocation
 2. Time factors and newsmaking – immediacy
 3. News sources – powerful and resource-rich sources
 4. Regular relations with other media – pursuit of the same kind of news stories; collaborative sharing of news items; discussion etc. on how to interpret/frame the significance of particular occurrences
 5. News values
 6. News framing

Do journalists' personal characteristics and backgrounds count?

- Research on this since the early decades of the 20th century
- 3 main issues:
 1. What the characteristics of individual journalists are
 2. Whether/how these influence news
 3. The extent to which individual journalists' characteristics differ from those of the general public and whether this difference may be influential in terms of newsmaking

Journalists' personal beliefs and characteristics

- Personal characteristics:

Relatively minor influence but continues to be a recurrent theme in debates on bias/inequalities in news output (see the recent accusations that Facebook News Feeds suppress conservative news)

- Personal influence more likely in non-news genres
- The extent of personal influence depends on the health of commercial/financial record
- Star journalists/celebrities enjoy a high status

Liberal bias – esp. in US

American Journalist series (2014): ‘compared with 2002, the percentage of full-time U.S. journalists who claim to be Democrats has dropped 8 percentage points in 2013 to about 28 per cent, moving this figure closer to the overall population percentage of 30 per cent. ... This is the lowest percentage of journalists saying they are Democrats since 1971’ (Willnat and Weaver, 2014, p. 11).

The arguments about liberal (or leftist) journalistic bias are opposed by many journalists as well as academics who argue that professional journalistic practices and values (such as objectivity, balance and fairness) help prevent journalists’ potential personal bias.

Some of the debates - gender

1. the gender gap in news journalism (this gap involves the numbers of men and women working in news media, the pay they receive as well as the positions they occupy in media organizations)
2. the gendering of media organizations (organizations are not gender neutral) and
3. the gendered nature of the journalistic profession (in other words exploring whether journalistic values and routines are gender neutral or whether – as some argue – female journalists understand professional ideology in a distinctive manner).

Gender cont.

- American Journalist:

“the percentage of female U.S. journalists has increased from 33 per cent in 2002 to 37.5 per cent in 2013. However, women still represent only slightly more than one-third of all full-time journalists working for the U.S. news media, as has been true since the early 1980s. This trend persists despite the fact that more women than ever are graduating from journalism schools. ... Compared to the U.S. civilian work force in 2012, U.S. journalists are considerably less likely to be women (37.5 per cent vs. 46.9 per cent) and even less likely than the overall U.S. managerial and professional work force, which included 51.5 per cent women in 2012. Thus, retention of women in journalism is still a problem” (2014, p. 6).

Gender – cont.

In the United Kingdom ‘there are regularly more women than men studying journalism on a full-time undergraduate basis in the UK, according to data ... [from] the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS). The figures from 2007 to 2014 show the number of women on courses outnumber men in every year except 2008, when the numbers are equal’ (Reid, 2015).

Gender – pay gap

Female journalists with more than 20 years of work experience earn 6.6 per cent less on average than their male colleagues with the same level of experience (\$72,679/\$67,885). However, for journalists with 15 to 19 years (\$53,333/\$41,944) and 10 to 14 years of experience (\$40,000/\$31,429) the income gap jumps to 21.4 per cent. Among journalists with five to nine years of experience, the gap shrinks to 2.4 per cent (\$31,293/\$30,555) and then reverses for those with less than five years of work experience (\$24,167/\$25,761) (Willnat and Weaver, 2014, p. 6).

Also, women tend to work in areas of journalism that are considered less prestigious (in local as opposed to national newspapers; as news presenters rather than news reporters and in so-called soft news rather than hard news that involve politics and economics).

<http://whomakesthenews.org/gmmp/gmmp-reports/gmmp-201>

Task in small groups

Is the gender pay gap discussed in your countries? In relation to media? Do you think that the BBC pays male and female members of staff equally?

Gender – cont.

- Gendering of media organizations:

gender is socially constructed – i.e. society creates gender roles that are prescribed as appropriate for a person of a given gender – and gender is dynamic and is constructed and negotiated in social interaction.

Although organizations – not only media ones – are guided by codes of professional conduct and internal rules and regulations which may impact on women working in them (e.g. the most manifest provisions in such guidelines perhaps relate to non-discrimination and provision of childcare), importantly, research on the social construction of gender in organizations “documents dynamics that are implicit and unconscious rather than active and intentional. Most researchers do not suggest that individual employees are explicitly trying to modify either their gender or racial identity; nor do they suggest that organizations are deliberately trying to recast these identities. However, overall, the research does suggest that organizations contribute to the construction of both gender and race, even without the intention to do so” (Foldy, 2012, p.499).

Gender – cont.

“If women simply go along with institutionalized norms and stereotypes of femininity, they remain outside of men’s informal networks and usually formal ones too. ... Yet women who practice femininity according to femininity stereotypes that define women as subordinate may gain approval from men, but they do not gain equal status. ... Women who fail to practice femininity according to femininity stereotypes that define women as subordinate lose approval and end up with even lower status than they would otherwise. ... Men who practice masculinity/ masculinities according to masculinity stereotypes that define men as dominant do gain approval and status from men. While such men may not gain approval from women, their hold over powerful positions gives women no alternative but to respect them, especially in work situations where women’s opportunities are at stake” (Martin, 2003, p. 360).

Gender – do women practice journalism differently?

Van Zoonen (1998, p. 36) identifies areas in which the gendered nature of the profession (or in other words in which 'feminine values' in professional journalism) are demonstrated and some of these are linked to the definition of newsworthiness: selection of topics and angles (women journalists are concerned about the lack of topics relevant to women), choice of sources (men journalists tend to rely on male sources) as well as ethical values (men journalists are perceived as detached and insensitive).

Inconclusive evidence

Some of the debates - race

- US 1960s race riots followed by an inquiry which – among others – found that “fewer than 5 per cent of the people employed by the news business in editorial jobs in the United States today are Negroes. Fewer than 1 per cent of editors and supervisors are Negroes, and most of them work for Negro-owned organizations ... The plaint is “We can’t find qualified Negroes.” But this rings hollow from an industry where, only yesterday, jobs were scarce and promotion unthinkable for a man whose skin was black.’ The report went on to argue that the hiring of token African-American journalists was insufficient in addressing the problem as ‘newspaper and television policies are, generally speaking, not set by reporters. Editorial decisions about which stories to cover and which to use are made by editors. Yet, very few Negroes in this country are involved in making these decisions, because very few, if any, supervisory editorial jobs are held by Negroes’” (Kerner, 1968, Chapter XV).

Race – the quantitative gap

2010 US census: 36.3 per cent of the US population belong to a racial or ethnic minority group

2013 data: 13.2 per cent of the US population is Black or African American (Census 2014, 2015)

2014 American Society of News Editors report minority employment in US daily newspapers was 13.34 per cent (compared to 3.95 per cent in 1978, see ASNE, 2015)

Employment figures for US broadcast media from 2013 by the Radio Television Digital News Association/Hofstra University ‘the minority workforce in TV news, at 22.4 per cent, the highest it's been in 13 years and the second highest level ever. ... Still, as far as minorities are concerned, the bigger picture remains unchanged. In the last 24 years, the minority population in the U.S. has risen 11 points; but the minority workforce in TV news is up less than half that (4.6), and the minority workforce in radio is up 2.2’ (RTDNA, 2015)

Leadership gap

Representation of ethnic minorities in the management of media companies in the US: similar types of marginalization in the news industries as women

2015 census by the American Society of News Editors there were '12 per cent of participating organizations saying at least one of their top three editors is a person of colour' (ASNE 2015a)

Leadership gap – cont.

newspapers, government and business beats are widely considered. Pritchard and Stonbely found in 2007 in the US: “having minority journalists writing mostly about relatively powerless segments of society, while white journalists write mostly about powerful institutions, may have a certain logic, given that people of colour are overrepresented among the powerless and whites overrepresented among the powerful. To the extent that such practices exist, however, they both reinforce white dominance in newsrooms and shed light on the social processes by which white dominance is perpetuated” (p. 232). They go on to argue that being assigned to cover minority-related topics may in itself be detrimental to the career development of minority journalists as ‘within Americaned the fastest tracks to management positions’ (ibid.)

Socialization in news orgs – taking whiteness for granted

Pritchard and Stonbely's article 'Racial Profiling in the Newsroom' They identified race as an influence on the assignment of stories but they point out "the invisibility of whiteness in discussions about the bases for story assignments. The journalists, whatever their race, spoke of racial diversity only when they were talking about minority reporters and minority-oriented topics. The hegemony of whiteness was such that none of the journalists appeared to have thought about the role of whiteness in the coverage of the largely white realms of politics and business" (ibid., p. 244).

This leads them to conclude that 'the implicit notion was that minority reporters get their assignments because of their race, while white reporters get theirs because of hard work and talent. Such thinking keeps journalists of colour at the margins of news creation and newsroom decision making' (ibid.).

Practicing journalism differently?

Similarly as in the case of women, studies on ethnic minority journalists also raise questions about the ways in which professional practices and values may actually contribute to the marginalization of ethnic minority groups. It has been argued convincingly that news values represent the power hierarchy and skew the representation of minorities but because they are the foundation of professional journalism it is very difficult, for example, for African American journalists in the US (see Wilson in Cottle, 2000) to challenge them.