



This is to certify that the

thesis entitled

A Comparison of Newspaper Coverage of Male
and Female Officials in Michigan

presented by

Diane Silver

has been accepted towards fulfillment
of the requirements for

Masters degree in Journalism

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Frederick Fico".

Major professor

Date February 11, 1985



RETURNING MATERIALS:

Place in book drop to
remove this checkout from
your record. FINES will
be charged if book is
returned after the date
stamped below.

--	--	--

A COMPARISON OF NEWSPAPER COVERAGE
OF MALE AND FEMALE OFFICIALS
IN MICHIGAN

By

Diane Silver

A THESIS

Submitted to
Michigan State University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of
MASTER OF ARTS

School of Journalism

1985

© 1985

DIANE SILVER

All Rights Reserved

ABSTRACT

A COMPARISON OF NEWSPAPER COVERAGE OF MALE AND FEMALE OFFICIALS IN MICHIGAN

By

Diane Silver

This study examines how 21 Michigan newspapers covered male and female state officials during the late winter of 1983. In particular, the study focuses on the number of mentions, the context of mentions, length of stories and the manner of identification and description of officials. The effects of occupation and seniority are also probed. A qualitative analysis is also included to examine the coverage of three female and two male officials who were involved in newsmaking controversies during the study period.

Every story about Michigan state officials that appeared in state newspapers with capital bureaus and in a sample of all other state dailies during the study period was analyzed.

The study findings failed to replicate the findings of previous studies in several important ways. First, the present study failed to find a significant difference in length of stories. No differences were also found in the description and identification of male and female legislators. When the analysis was controlled for

Diane Silver

seniority, women also received practically the same proportion of mentions as their proportion in the pool of possible newsmakers.

However, other findings were replicated. In particular, differences were found in the description of non-legislator state officials and in the context of mentions of males and females.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author would like to acknowledge the generous help of the many people who made this project possible.

My thesis director, Frederick Fico, did more for this project than can be acknowledged on a piece of paper. He listened, argued, edited and pushed -- all at the right moments and in the right amounts.

The other members of my committee were also invaluable. Mary Gardner contributed constant support, fresh ideas and a two-year-long running argument on the definition of news. Stan Soffin provided encouragement, good humor, keen editing and penetrating questions.

I would also like to acknowledge The School of Journalism for giving me generous access to the school's computers and Debbie Siewert of the school staff. Without her patience, Wordstar would have remained baffling and this thesis may never have been written.

Most importantly, I would like to acknowledge the incredible support of my friends and family. From the beginning, Sharla Erbe provided me with much-needed perspective. My brother, Mark Silver, and his wife, Mary Hindelang, were always there when needed. Finally, my mother, Joan Silver, gave more than can ever be stated. She helped me see that anything is possible.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
LIST OF TABLES	v
I. Introduction	1
Footnotes -- Chapter I	4
II. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK	5
"Foolish, Wanton Fibbergibbes:" The Erasure and Stereotyping of Women Throughout History	5
"Passive, Noncompetitive, Illogical:" Stereotyping in the Present	11
"Ridicule and Disbelief:" Feminist Criticisms of the News Media	15
"Gender Stereotypes Die Hard:" The Perspective of Mass Media Research	20
A Contrasting View: Occupation as a Possible Intervening Variable	28
Footnotes -- Chapter II	34
III. RESEARCH QUESTIONS	40
Footnotes -- Chapter III	45
IV. METHODOLOGY	46
The Sample	47
The Quantitative Analysis	47
The Case Study Analysis	49
Footnotes -- Chapter IV	52

	Page
V. RESULTS	54
The Quantitative Analysis	54
Number of Mentions	54
Story Length	57
Description	59
Contexts of Mentions	60
Summary of Quantitative Results	62
The Case Study Analysis	63
Coverage of Howard Tanner	63
Coverage of Robert Bowman	65
Coverage of Sister Agnes Mary Mansour	66
Coverage of Dorothy Comstock Riley	69
Coverage of Patricia Boyle	73
Summary of Case Study Results	76
Footnotes -- Chapter V	78
VI. SUMMARY AND IMPLICATIONS	81
VII. BIBLIOGRAPHY	86

LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
I. Mentions in Stories of All State Officials	56
II. Mentions of Legislators	56
III. Mentions of Low-Seniority Legislators	57
IV. Average Story Length	59
V. Contexts of Mentions of All Officials	61
VI. Contexts of Mentions of Legislators	61

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This study compares newspaper coverage of male and female Michigan officials to determine if systematic differences exist in their treatment. Three different content analyses of data are used to probe these differences both quantitatively and qualitatively.

The comparison of news coverage of male and female officials is important to both researchers and working journalists. Studies by mass communication researchers have found overemphasis on coverage of government officials to the point of neglect of ordinary citizens and minority political viewpoints.¹ Both feminists and researchers, furthermore, have charged that news coverage either ignores or trivializes women. If the press merits either or both of these assertions, then journalists will have failed in what the American Society of Newspaper Editors calls their mission to "serve the general welfare by informing the people and² enabling them to make judgments on the issues of the time." People cannot possibly make informed judgments when they have only one part of the story.

In fact, several researchers have said that one-sided³ coverage is exactly what has been produced. These researchers contend that journalists tend to cover only government officials, while generally ignoring the rest of the population. Any study of the coverage of women is extremely relevant to this discussion because the female population is one of the most economically powerless and politically underrepresented groups in America.⁴ One pair of researchers, thus, has suggested that women's general absence from the news columns can be blamed on their lack of⁵ political and economic power.

Study of the coverage of women is also needed because of the continuing controversy surrounding the quality of that coverage. During the past 10 years, academic researchers and feminists have frequently criticized the press either for ignoring women or for mentioning them only in the stereotypical contexts of wife and mother. Both experimental studies and content analyses have produced evidence to support these charges.

This study both replicates the work of earlier studies and extends the analysis by being the first to control for occupation while examining the coverage of women. This is accomplished by looking only at newspaper treatment of females who are state officials. This focus on governmental occupations allows for the examination of the importance of occupation in determining news coverage. In the absence of any sexist bias, females who hold governmental positions were

expected to be covered as often and in the same way as males who have the same job. However, if feminists are correct in arguing that sexist bias is the determining factor in coverage of females, then newspapers were expected to either ignore or trivialize the female officials in the sample.

FOOTNOTES -- CHAPTER I

1

Herbert J Gans, Deciding What's News. (New York: Vintage Books, 1979); Leon V. Sigal, Reporters and Officials. (Lexington, Mass.: D.C. Heath, 1973).

2

American Society of Newspaper Editors, "Statement of Principles," quoted in Catherine East and Dorothy Misener Journey, New Directions for News. (American Society of Newspaper Editors and the Women Studies Program and Policy Center of The George Washington University, 1983).

3

Gans and Sigal.

4Mary Anne Baker, Catherine White Berheide, Fay Ross Greckel, Linda Garstarphen Guigin, Margia J. Lipetz and Marcia Texler Segal, Women Today. (Monterey, Calif.: Brooks/Cole Publishing Co., 1980).

5

Suzanne Pingree and Robert P. Hawkins, "News Definitions and Their Effects on Women," in Laurily Keir Epstein, Women and the News. (New York: Hastings House, 1978).

CHAPTER II

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

"Foolish, Wanton Fibbergibbes": The Erasure and Stereotyping of Women Throughout History

The idea that women receive different treatment than men in the public records of a society is at least 300 years¹ old. Since the 1600s, writers have been arguing that women are either ignored or portrayed in a stereotypical manner. The invisibility that comes from being ignored has been labeled as the erasure of women by several writers. The works of dozens of writers, from Behn in the mid 1600s to Gage in the late 1880s and Spender in 1983, suggest that any problem that exists in the coverage of women in the modern news media² is not a new phenomenon. An examination of their work and of the stereotypes that have been held about women in the past must be the basis of any study that explores the possible erasure and stereotyping of women in contemporary news media. Researchers cannot fully understand erasure and stereotyping in the present unless they know what these phenomena looked

like in the past.

In their work, Behn, Gage and Spender argue that women and their work and accomplishments are erased because they are simply not put into the public record. Historians do not report their accomplishments. Editors of anthologies and textbooks do not include their work. Scholars do not discuss³ their work. Journalists refuse to write about them. If a woman's accomplishments are too important to ignore, then her role as creator is explained away, according to Spender. Instead of being shown as an author, she is shown as being a co-author or simply a helper to the real author, who is inevitably male. At other times she is portrayed as a populizer of ideas even if she is the creator of those ideas.⁴ In the end, men get the credit.

Both Gage and Spender discuss the erasure of women in detail. Much of Gage's published work involves documentation of women's achievements and of the ways in which these achievements were kept out of the public record of her time. For example, Gage wrote that the contemporary wisdom of her era was that few women had served in government. To counter this idea, Gage listed many English women who had served in government. During the reign of Henry III, four women held seats in Parliament. In the 13th century Queen Elinor sat as Lord Chancellor in the Aula Regia, the highest court in the kingdom. Gage also reported about the reign of Martia, who created the first principles of common law. Gage said that her efforts were generally ignored while the laws of Alfred

and Edward the Confessor became well known. This occurred despite the fact that the laws of the two men were restorations and compilations of Martia's laws, Gage said. ⁵

While the work of some women like Martia was taken over and claimed as the work of men, Spender said the work of other women has been ignored by both men and women because male critics have ridiculed the physical appearance or the lifestyle of the women. ⁶ These women were turned into such objects of public scorn that their ideas were ignored. Spender documents dozens of these cases of what she calls harassment, including the case of Margaret Fuller, an American who died in 1850 in the midst of her career as a journalist. Fuller was the first editor of the magazine, The Dial, and a literary critic for the New York Tribune. Her work has often been ignored by scholars, in part, because of a book published two years after her death by Ralph Waldo Emerson, William Henry Channing and James Freeman Clark. That book inaccurately described Fuller as "an arrogant old maid, aggressive and ugly" and generally ignored her published work, making Fuller seem to scholars to be a poor subject for study, ⁷ Spender said.

Another kind of harassment that has been discussed for centuries is the continual representation of women in a stereotypical manner. Behn argued that men distribute only their limited, one-sided view of women even though women experience the world and themselves very differently than men believe. ⁸ "Sophia," an anonymous writer who probably was

English journalist Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, agreed with Behn. "Sophia" wrote in 1739 that men produce a view of women⁹ that only shows females as irrational and inferior.

Evidence of a stereotypical picture of women can be found in the writings of cultures ranging from ancient Judaism and Greece to the Middle Ages and 1800s America.¹⁰ Although the details of the stereotype have varied, major elements of it have remained constant. These elements include the ideas that females are mentally and emotionally inferior to males and that their only real contributions to the world come from being virtuous mothers and wives.

The idea that females are emotionally and mentally weaker than males can be dated back thousands of years. For example, both Plato and Aristotle described women as inferior to men. Plato wrote in The Republic that a woman's capacity¹¹ to learn is less than that of a man. Aristotle scientifically "proved" the inferiority of women -- a proof that Bullough contended dominated much of Western thought¹² until modern times. Aristotle believed that females were intellectually and morally inferior to males because in nature the male of the species was always larger, stronger and more agile. Females simply had a natural deficiency, Aristotle wrote. This meant, he believed, that males were meant to rule. "For although there may be exceptions to the order of nature, the male is by nature fitter for command than the female, just as the elder and full grown is superior¹³ to the younger and more immature."

In the Middle Ages, females were often portrayed as child-like creatures. They were inferior to males who were seen as both adult and capable. For example, the Virgin Mary was described as being prey to the normal womanly caprices. "She loved grace, beauty, ornament, her toilette, robes, jewels and she demanded attention."¹⁴ In the 15th century, Leon Battista Alberti explained that the inferiority of women meant that they were only suited for a certain role.

The character of men is stronger than that of women and can bear the attacks of enemies better, can stand strain longer, is more constant under stress ... Women, on the other hand, are almost all timid by nature, soft, slow, and therefore more useful when they sit still and watch over our things. It is as though nature thus provided for our well being, arranging for men to bring things home and for women to guard over them.¹⁵

Similar attitudes were evident in Elizabethan England where one writer summed up women as "fond, foolish, wanton, fibbergibbes, tattlers, triflers, wavering, witless, without counsell, feable, careless, rashe, proude, deintie, nise, talebearers, eavesdroppers, rumor raisers, evell tonged, worse minded."¹⁶(sic)

In the United States, proofs of women's inferiority came from the medical profession. Dr. Edward H. Clarke said in 1873 that any attempt by women to compete with men would reduce women to unhealthy invalids and make them unfit for childbearing.¹⁷ One Oregon physician said that the studying required for higher education killed sexual desire in women, took away their physical beauty and led to sterility.¹⁸ Practical examples of the fact that men expected women to be

incompetent can also be found in 19th century America. During the Civil War, a man was appointed to chair the Women's Central Association for Relief even though the association had been organized by females. The man was given the job, Bullough said, because it was assumed that women would be incapable of chairing such a body.¹⁹ In 1893 when a Board of Lady Managers was established to oversee women's activities at the Chicago World's Fair, "journalists expected they would accomplish nothing of importance since many (journalists) still held women to be innately incapable of governing or administering anything."²⁰ When the new board failed to live up to the stereotypical image of women and was a success, some journalists invented stories and exaggerated incidents of what Bullough calls "quarreling and hysterics" among the female members of the board.²¹ This overexaggeration is identical to the overexaggeration that some mass media researchers have said occurred in recent coverage of women's activities.

The idea that a woman's worth is based only on her ability as mother and wife also goes back thousands of years. In the Bible, the first woman, Eve, was shown as being created only as a helpmate for a lonely Adam. In Rome, the whole "system was designed to suggest that women were not, or ought not, to be genuine individuals, but only a fraction of a family, specifically anonymous and passive fractions."²² For example, until late in Roman history, women did not have individual names. The names that appear in Roman literature

like Claudia and Julia were family names with feminine
²³
 endings. In America in the 19th century, people were
 horrified if any woman rejected motherhood. Thus, any
 distribution of information on contraception was against the
²⁴
 law. At that time, Bullough said, some writers compared the
 obligation of women to bear children with the obligation of
 men to serve in the military. "Such a pattern had been set by
 biology and one prominent writer claimed that any person who
 interfered with either of these duties should be regarded as
²⁵
 a traitor."

"Passive, Noncompetitive, Illogical:" Stereotyping of Women
in the Present

In the past decade, sociologists have found evidence
 that Americans continue to believe that women are incompetent
 in worldly matters and of importance only as wives and
 mothers. Tests have shown evidence of such beliefs by both
 sexes, by the married and the unmarried, and by people of
 widely varying ages and education.

In a 1972 article reviewing six years of research that
 has become the basis for most other research in the area,
 Broverman et al said their tests of 599 men and 383 women
 "demonstrate the contemporary existence of clearly defined
²⁶
 sex-role stereotypes for men and women." Using a
 questionnaire of 41 items, the researchers found their
 subjects viewed males as being competent and emotionally cold

while females were seen as being incompetent and emotionally warm. The researchers classified these beliefs as being made up of clusters of male-valued and female-valued items.

Included in the (male-valued) cluster are attributes such as being independent, objective, active, competitive, logical, skilled in business, worldly, adventurous, able to make decisions easily, self-confident, always acting as a leader, ambitious. A relative absence of these traits characterize the stereotypic perceptions of women, that is, relative to men, women are perceived to be dependent, subjective, passive, noncompetitive illogical, etc.²⁷

On the other hand, the female-valued items consisted of "attributes such as gentle, sensitive to feelings of others, tactful, religious, neat, quiet, interested in art and literature, able to express tender feelings." Men were perceived as lacking in these characteristics.²⁸

The pervasiveness of stereotypes is shown by the fact that many different kinds of people agreed on the differing characteristics of men and women, the researchers reported. The age of respondents ranged from 17 to 60 years and their education ranged from elementary school to advanced graduate degrees. A study of 79 practicing mental health clinicians found evidence that these professionals believe in the stereotypes of the male and female. The sample consisted of clinical psychologists, psychiatrists and psychiatric social workers. Forty-six were men (31 of whom held Phd or MA degrees) and 33 women (16 with Phd degrees). Their ages ranged from 23 to 55 and their experience went from an internship to extensive professional practice.²⁹

Broverman et al also concluded that large segments of

society approve and even idealize the stereotypes. For example, data for 137 college men who were given the questionnaire indicate that the men "feel that it is desireable for women to be less independent, less rational, less ambitious etc. than men."³⁰

More recent studies confirm that these stereotypes continue to exist. Using a modified version of the questionnaire administered by Broverman et al, Ruble surveyed a sample of 32 males and 32 female undergraduates in an upper division course on organizational behavior at a midwestern university in 1978.³¹ Overall, the average level of agreement on how typical and desireable it would be for a man or woman to possess each characteristic exceeded 85 percent. Comparison of the ratings yielded significant differences on 53 of 54 items. "Thus, stereotypes of the sexes apparently remained strong during the 1970s," he concluded.³²

The elements of the stereotypes Ruble found included the same kinds of male-valued and female-valued items as those in Broverman et al. The respondents scored the typical male, among other things, as being more independent, more aggressive than women, not excitable in minor crisis, skilled in business, having mechanical aptitude, being outspoken, acting as a leader, self-confident, dominant, not easily influenced, active, loud, more interested in sex, making decisions easily, not timid, standing up under pressure, good at sports, competitive, intellectual. The typical female was described, among other things, as being more emotional, more

grateful, more home-oriented than the male, being kind, crying easily, being creative, understanding, considerate, devoting self to others, needing approval, aware of others feelings, excitable in a major crisis, expressing tender feelings, enjoying art and music, not hiding emotion, tactful, helpful to others, neat, religious, liking children³³ and needing security.

In another study, Huston-Stein and Higgins-Trenk concluded that negative sex stereotypes of feminine competence were still strong and pervasive. The researchers found this even though they found a change in attitudes about work and family roles.³⁴

A study by Reis and Wright found that sex stereotyping starts very early in Americans.³⁵ Basing their work on other studies that found evidence that 5-year-old children possess an articulate knowledge of sex-role stereotypes, Reis and Wright found evidence of stereotyping among children as young as 3 1/2. Reis and Wright studied children between 3 and 5 years of age. The subjects were 100 children from four predominantly white, middle-class day care centers and one group of children who spent their days at home with their mothers. The researchers found that the subjects were able to match masculine and female stereotypical statements with pictures of the appropriate sex. The masculine stereotype statements included the ideas that the individual gets into fights, is adventurous, gets along by himself, talks loudly, sits and thinks about what to do, and is strong. The feminine

characteristics included the ideas that the person cries a lot, is appreciative, weak, and talkative, changes her mind,³⁶ and is gentle, fussy, quiet and afraid. Reis and Wright also found that the children's knowledge of stereotypes increased as they got older. "Age trends appeared such that older children, as well as all children as they got older, demonstrated greater gender categorization of various³⁷ behavior traits."

"Ridicule and Disbelief:" Feminist Criticisms of the News Media

Feminists have called news coverage of women shallow and stereotypical for at least a century. The depths of the distrust of the mass market media is illustrated by the 500 to 1,000 feminist publications that have been published in the last century to tell the story feminists³⁸ have said is ignored by the mass media. These publications have ranged from The Revolution, which was first published in 1868 by activists Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony and lasted two and one half years, to The Woman's Journal, which was first published by activist Lucy Stone and ran from³⁹ 1869 to 1914. Contemporary feminist publications have included off our backs (sic), a Washington-based monthly newspaper, which has a nationwide circulation of more than⁴⁰ 15,000 built over 14 years of publication; and MS, a glossy, mass-produced magazine, which was first published in⁴¹ 1971 and now has a circulation of more than 400,000. Jo

Freeman, a co-founder of the now defunct Voice of women's liberation (sic), has written that the multitude of feminist publications began "out of disillusionment with the commercial press and in the belief that only women's movement publications would give the movement fair coverage."⁴²

One of the continuing feminist criticisms of mass market news media has been the charge that the media contribute to the erasure of women by refusing to cover women and the women's movement. Peggy Simpson, an AP Congressional correspondent and Nieman Fellow, presented several incidences of this in an article she wrote in 1979.⁴³ "Many of the benchmarks of change in the 1960s and 1970s were ignored," she wrote.⁴⁴ Those unreported stories included three Supreme Court rulings that struck down state laws restricting work opportunities for women. These cases were filed by women factory workers who were kept from better paying jobs because state law limited the hours they could work and the weight they could lift. "The nullification of these laws had sweeping consequences and opened up whole new worlds of work for women."⁴⁵ Simpson also listed four other major unreported stories including an analysis of far-right conservative strategy in the campaign against ERA and abortion.⁴⁶

In a 1984 article Buresh, a former newspaper reporter and Newsweek correspondent who teaches journalism at Boston University, gave a Business Week cover story of July 30, 1984, as an example of how women often "find themselves missing" in the news.⁴⁷ The article was about the factions

within the Democratic Party. Yet apart from mentioning that Geraldine Ferraro had been nominated for vice president, it never once mentioned the participation of women in the
48
party.

Criticism of journalists for only presenting a stereotypical image of women has also been frequent. In one essay, Ward, an associate professor of journalism at the University of Minnesota, argued that journalists often base
49
their work on sexist presumptions. Her list included such presumptions as "all people are male unless proven female," "a woman's relationship to a man (or men) is her defining identity," "a woman's appearance always requires comment" and "status as a housewife takes precedence over all other kinds
50
of status." Ward reported that examples of this kind of thinking include a 1976 article that states that "booze has played as big a part in the lives of modern American writers
51
as talent, money, women and longing to be top dog." This statement leaves no room for a writer to be a woman. A 1979 New York Times article carried on the tradition of focusing on a woman's physical appearance by describing Margaret Thatcher as "a small, fine-boned woman with pale blue eyes, the kind of complexion the English always liken to a rose and
52
hair that she readily admits to dyeing blond." A Wall Street Journal article presented an example of a woman being classified as a wife no matter what she has accomplished. That article noted: "For most farmers, a wife is an immense asset as a livestock feeder, errand-runner and extra tractor

driver. But Mr. Nelson's wife, Leona, is more than that: She ran the farm single-handedly five days a week for 20⁵³ years." The question, of course, is how Mr. Nelson, who did not actually farm, came to be classified as a farmer, while the person who worked the farm for 20 years failed to qualify for the title.

Feminists have also criticized the mass market news media for focusing on minor incidents that emphasize stereotypes of women while ignoring the larger story. In her 1973 article, AP correspondent Simpson wrote that this happened in the coverage of the United Nations international⁵⁴ conference on women in Mexico City in 1975. This occurred when a photograph of a half dozen Mexican and Argentine women struggling over a microphone was published all over the world. The argument only involved six women out of 6,000 at the conference. Yet the photograph was widely circulated with the caption, "Women fighting at the International Women's Conference." Simpson said this simply reinforced stereotypes about women.

"I first knew about the photo 10 hours after its release when New York requested a story to explain the conflict. Since the dispute was extremely parochial ... there was no story. Unfortunately, that photo was the most widely distributed picture of the conference and helped to reinforce a stereotype in the minds of many editors and people in general that women can't get along and that they resolve conflict by shouting and pulling hair.⁵⁵

The Mexico City coverage is only one example of the way the news media treated "early women's liberation activities with a mixture of humor, ridicule and disbelief," according⁵⁶ to Freeman. The treatment of feminist activities was

anything but equal to the treatment of the activities of male radicals. For example, when the Yippies utilized guerrilla theater tactics in the late 1960s "reporters had examined the political message underneath the yippie spoofs," Freeman said. However, when female activists engaged in similar spoofs, such as those at the 1968 Miss America contest where a "freedom trash can" was filled with bras, girdles, false eyelashes and "other instruments of female oppression," reporters "just glanced at the surface of the women's actions and used them to illustrate how silly women are."

"Gender Stereotypes Die Hard:" The Perspective of Mass Media Research

During the past decade, mass media researchers in a variety of studies have found evidence supporting feminist criticisms of the media. Experimental studies have found indications of sexist attitudes among newspaper gatekeepers and journalism and communication students. Content analyses have shown that women have been treated differently than men in news stories.

Studies of News Decision Making

A test of 36 gatekeepers by Whitlow found that some of them treated stories featuring women differently than stories featuring men.⁵⁸ The subjects were 17 female and 19 male city editors, wire editors, sports editors, women's or family section editors and reporters who worked for a national sample of newspapers with circulations ranging from 39,000 to more than 300,000. The subjects were asked to decide which stories out of a group of 48 should be printed by their newspapers. Half of the stories had news principals who were male and half featured news principals who were female.⁵⁹

Even though the news-sorting pattern exhibited by the greatest number of subjects did not consider gender, Whitlow found other patterns that appeared to be based on gender.⁶⁰ For example, the decision-making pattern of some of the subjects was "significantly characterized by rejections of

items having female news principals." ⁶¹ Other subjects showed reservations about selecting stories showing non-traditional ⁶² role behaviors by either sex. While the methodology of the study did not allow for generalization of the findings to other news professionals, the study did show that there may be some justification for concern about the coverage of women, Whitlow said. "We can assume that for at least one type of gatekeeper, the selection and handling given an item is influenced by the sex and to a lesser degree by the role of the news principal and when the news principal is female ⁶³ the newsworthiness of the item diminishes."

Evidence that college communication undergraduates believe stereotypes about women was found by Orwant and ⁶⁴ Cantor. To determine if student's perceptions of people's information preferences are affected by sex-role stereotypes, the researchers asked more than 150 students in communication classes at American University to fill out a questionnaire in March 1973. The subjects were asked to rate the interest of men, women and the general public in several different kinds of news. Orwant and Cantor found that subjects of both sexes said that women would be more interested in the stereotypically female subjects of cooking, fashion and religion. Men were expected to be more interested in the stereotypically male subjects of business, sports, science ⁶⁵ and politics. The researchers concluded that "the results of this study strongly suggest that communication students' perceptions of audience news interests are influenced by the

sex-role stereotypes."⁶⁶

Two experimental studies with journalism students found⁶⁷ evidence of stereotyping in news writing.

Drew and Miller asked student reporters to write stories about the appointment of a new public relations director for a local school district. In half of the information given to 65 Stanford University students, the appointee was male. In the other half, the appointee was female. With the exception of a name change, the information was identical. Besides being asked to write a story, the students were told to⁶⁸ devise a list of questions for the appointee.

While the data did not indicate blatant stereotyping, Drew and Miller reported "a suggestion of a subtle bias in the reporting."⁶⁹ For example, the stories tended to use more assertions about qualifications for the job when the appointee was male. Such a difference could come from a belief by reporters that the male is more qualified for the job, Drew and Miller said. The female appointee also received more questions about her private life, which seemed "to indicate a concern about the ability of the woman to handle⁷⁰ both traditional and professional roles."

In a similar experiment, Barnes et al asked 30 Syracuse University students to write a story about the appointment of a new school superintendent. Again the students were given identical information except that half were told David Chandler was the appointee and half were told Elizabeth Tomkins Chandler got the job.

The researchers found that reporters were more likely to include assertions about the appointee's marital status and looks when writing about the female. "This is in keeping with research ... and with the pessimistic expectation that gender stereotypes die hard: describing a female source in the same professional terms as a male source is still wishful⁷¹ thinking." While a post-test questionnaire showed that the subjects agreed that a woman is suitable for the position, "they were hard-pressed to assign the same characteristics to the female as they did to the male."⁷² For example, two sentences, written by different male subjects, show how identical information can be presented "in such a way as to change the reader's perception of the source." In writing about the male, one reporter noted: "Fielding questions with aplomb, the 34-year-old, slightly built Chandler declined to comment." The other student wrote about the female: "Mrs. Chandler, with brown hair and brown eyes, a slim maybe even frail build, showed herself to be tougher than she looks." In the first sentence, Chandler is confident and masterful. In the second, the female appointee is "made to seem almost⁷³ anemic -- but surprisingly able to survive."

Studies of News Content

Evidence of stereotyping in news coverage has also been uncovered in five newspaper content analyses by NOW, Foreit⁷⁴ et al, Davis, Morris and East and Journey.

In analyzing nine Washington D.C. and Virginia

newspapers during the summer of 1972 and one month in the winter of 1973, The National Organization for Women found that hard news about females appeared more often in the woman's sections than in the sections of the newspaper in which hard news about men appeared. The study also found that 82 percent of the obituaries published by The Washington Post 75 for that period were about men.

In two studies of two Texas papers, Foreit et al found that women were treated differently than men. In the first study, an equal number of stories with male and female news principals were randomly selected from The Fort Worth Star-Telegram and The Dallas Times Herald 76 in the fall of 1976.

Analysis showed no reliable differences in length of stories, frequency of pictures or size of pictures. However, the researchers did find differences in descriptions of the actors. Marital status, indicated by means other than the courtesy title "Mrs," was given for 64 percent of the female principals as opposed to 12 percent of the male principals. Personal appearance was mentioned in 38 percent of the female-centered stories compared to 14 percent of the male-centered stories. The researchers also found that most of the stories about women ran in the women's sections while the 77 stories about men ran in other sections of the papers.

The second study was designed to avoid any bias that may have resulted from different writing styles in different newspaper sections. In this study, the researchers examined national wire service stories that appeared in the first

section of The Dallas Times Herald. Almost 300 stories were collected during five weeks in the fall of 1977.

Although the total frequencies were low, each of the variables of marital status and description showed a reliable sex difference. They were all mentioned significantly more
78
often for women than for men. The researchers concluded that men and women received different treatment in their sample -- a difference which could not be attributed to the greater number of men than women in the public eye or to the section of the newspaper where stories about men and stories
79
about women were found.

Davis found evidence of different treatment of men and women in appearance, story length and context of mention. Approximately 5,500 stories from eight medium-circulation newspapers from across the nation were analyzed for a
80
constructed week in October 1979.

Davis found that only 8.6 percent of the stories had women as the main characters while 51.8 percent had male main characters. Women were featured more often in shorter stories and in those with smaller headlines while men were featured
81
in larger stories with larger headlines. Women were also the main characters in hard news stories less often than men. Of those stories, 6.9 percent featured women and 50.3 percent featured men. Women were identified more often than men by attire, physical description and by marital or parental status. Women also made news far more often in domestic or subordinate roles or as sex objects, but less often because

of occupation, sports or crime.⁸² "It appears that most of these newspapers pretty much ignore 51 percent of the population," Davis concluded. "The bias was pervasive, indicating that newspaper editors, whether they be male or female, have little sensitivity toward women and women's⁸³ issues."

In a content analysis that focused only on coverage of the women's movement, Morris also found that women were ignored by the newspapers. The analysis focused on the two major Los Angeles papers from July 1968 to June 1979 and on 12 British newspapers from May 1969 through July 1970. The time periods were chosen to coincide with the early formation⁸⁴ of the modern women's movement in both locations.

Morris found that out of more than 250,000 units of news in the Los Angeles papers, 26 units, or approximately one ten thousandth percent of the total, covered the women's movement. In the British newspapers, a total of 396 units⁸⁵ focused on the women's movements. "Shortage of space can hardly be considered an adequate reason for the withholding of (this) news when the Daily Mirror (in England) devoted nearly half a page to a photograph of a man loosing his two⁸⁶ front false teeth in a loaf of french bread," Morris said.

East and Jurney's qualitative study of the coverage of six women's events and issues by 10 major U.S. newspapers also found that coverage was stereotypical, shallow and inadequate. A total of 1,096 stories collected from 4,566 clippings donated by the newspapers were analyzed. The study

focused on coverage of domestic relations, The National Women's Conference in Houston in 1977, The UN World Conference for Women in Copenhagen in 1980, the legal impact of the ERA, pay equity for women and enforcement of Title IX. East and Journey's findings on the coverage of the UN conference illustrate their findings on the coverage of the other stories.⁸⁷

In analyzing the coverage of the 1980 UN conference, the researchers found that the newspapers generally ignored the story or published coverage that was shallow and stereotypical.⁸⁸ The researchers argued that the three-week conference, which was attended by 2,000 delegates from 145 nations, should have been covered in detail because of its importance and accomplishments. The conference adopted a 287-paragraph Program of Action and 48 resolutions. The United States and 52 other nations also signed the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women,⁸⁹ which called for equal rights in all fields.

Only three major U.S. newspapers sent correspondents to the sessions. Only one of those, the New York Times, was among the papers in the study. This lack of coverage is puzzling, East and Journey said, because editors should have known about the importance of the conference long before it started. Pre-conference meetings were held in three of the cities covered by the papers in the study. The UN and the United States both provided advance press releases. Furthermore, one paper that did send a correspondent to the

conference, The San Francisco Examiner, found that readers were so interested in the conference that the newspaper was able to issue a reprint of its conference coverage.⁹⁰ Reg Murphy, the editor and publisher of the Examiner at the time, said the articles were reprinted because of the "unprecedented hunger of news of the accomplishments" of the conference and forum.⁹¹ Journey concluded, "It is difficult for this retired editor, who is far from being a flaming feminist, to understand how some of the country's outstanding newspapers could pay so little attention to an event meaningful to the health, economy, education and well-being of half of the world's population."⁹²

East and Journey also said the coverage that was printed was either confusing or stereotypical. Spot news coverage focused on conflict and failed to discuss conference's achievements. For example, the signing of the convention on the elimination of discrimination was almost ignored. Three papers in the sample never mentioned it and three other papers mentioned it, but failed to tell readers what the document said. "Without knowing what the convention provided for, how could a reader understand its importance?"⁹³

A Contrasting View: Occupation as a Possible Intervening Variable

Even though these studies present evidence of what Davis

calls "sexism in newspapers,"⁹⁴ the work of other researchers suggest that there might be an alternate explanation for these inequalities. Several researchers including Sigal and Gans have noted that journalists are producing one-sided coverage by focusing on high ranking government officials while generally ignoring the rest of the population.⁹⁵

In a study of the New York Times and Washington Post, Sigal said content analyses of stories and study of reporting procedures and interactions between reporters and sources shows that high government officials have a virtual monopoly on the national news.⁹⁶ In noting that "what the news is" depends on who the sources are, Sigal likened each day's front page to a frame in a movie. The movie camera may belong to journalists, he said, but the lights are in the hands of the sources because they control the information. One cause of distortion in the news is the fact that sources aim those lights in the directions that are most advantageous to them. "Moreover, if every other news source had a flashlight to point wherever he chose to, senior officials would have a spotlight and the President, a beacon."⁹⁷ Senior federal officials exert tremendous control over the news simply because of their positions in government. "Within the government, senior officials, by dint of their virtual monopoly of access to routine channels of news and their means of controlling subordinates' disclosures, can dominate press discussion of issues by the sheer volume of their own

emanations."⁹⁸

Sigal's content analysis of all national and foreign front page stories in the two newspapers focused on two randomly selected weeks in 1949, 1954, 1959, 1964 and 1969.⁹⁹ Out of 2,850 stories analyzed, 58.2 percent came from routine channels, 15.7 percent from informal channels and 25.8 percent from enterprise channels. This is an important finding because routine channels only expose reporters to officials and their ideas. Study of the beat system of newsgathering at the newspapers found that the system concentrates staff at routine channels that are set up by federal officials. Most of the channels are generally under the control of senior officials. Sigal concluded that "the routine channels for newsgathering thus constitute the mechanism for official dominance of national and foreign news at the two papers."¹⁰⁰ Sigal found that federal officials made up 46.5 percent of the news sources in the analyzed stories while foreign and international officials were sources for 27.4 percent of the stories. Nongovernment sources were used 16.5 percent of the stories. Sigal noted that access to the news had become so tilted towards high ranking officials and particularly towards the executive branch of government that members of Congress have even lost some of their ability to make news.¹⁰¹

Gans came up with similar results in a content analysis of domestic stories from CBS News telecasts in 1967 and from stories in Newsweek's National Affairs section in six months

in 1967, 1971, and 1975.¹⁰² Gans found that people he classified as Knowns -- well-known political, economic, social or cultural figures -- dominated his sample. Out of a total of 3,483 stories about 75 percent of the people in the news were Knowns with 18 percent unknown people. The other stories were about animals, objects or abstractions. Gans also found that several types of Knowns dominated domestic news, including incumbent presidents, presidential candidates, leading federal officials and state and local officials. The most dominant individual in the news is the highest ranking person in the government -- the president, Gans said.¹⁰³ "The single individual who appears in the news most often year after year is the president." He appeared in every issue of the newsmagazine and on virtually all television news programs. For example, in 1975 he took up 23 percent of all magazine space about the well-known and almost 10 percent of all domestic news. "Unlike people who get into the news only when they are involved in unusual, innovative or dramatic activities, he is the only individual whose routine activities are deemed newsworthy."¹⁰⁴

Gans also noted that probably less than 50 Knowns, most of them high federal officials, were repeatedly mentioned in his sample. Heads of minority parties and more informal political groups only received coverage when they lead demonstrations or were associated with civil disobedience.¹⁰⁵ Unknown people obtained about one fifth of the available time and space. Most of that coverage was devoted to protestors,

rioters and strikers, and to victims of crime and disasters.

Gans concluded:

The Unknowns who appear in the news are, by most criteria, an unrepresentative lot and most ordinary people never come into the news, except as statistics. How ordinary people work, what they do outside working hours, in their families, churches, clubs and other organizations and how they relate to government and public agencies hardly ever makes the news.106

An examination of the economic and political situation of women in the United States suggests that if Sigal and Gans are correct in claiming that the unknown people are ignored by the news, than newspapers can be expected to ignore women. Greckel reported that women are sex segregated into a small number of low-paying, low-prestige, low-power jobs such as secretary, nurse and teacher.107 Men also hold the vast majority of high level positions in business and government, according to Guigin. Several studies show that the higher the rank of positions studied in business and government, the fewer the number of women. One researcher found that as Civil Service job ratings go up, the number of women goes down and the number of men goes up. Women also get little or no chance to gain economic power by amassing wealth. They are not only clustered in lower-paying jobs, but they have a consistently higher unemployment rate than men and earn about 60 percent108 of the amount that men earn, according to Greckel. Women are also more tied to the home and have less time to enter the public, newsmaking arena of politics. Their home commitments also give them less time to further their education in order to advance in business or government.

These commitments come from the fact that women are responsible for most of the child care, housework and laundry chores in the United States, according to Greckel. 109

In fact, Pingree and Hawkins have suggested that women's lack of economic and political power may be one reason why women are often ignored by the news media. 110 Women's lack of power gives them little chance to gain prominence, and thus, little chance to gain news value. In the eyes of journalists, the authors said, "most women are denied the decision-making power that would make their actions news, and without power and the consequent prominence, only their most obtrusive actions are newsworthy." 111

FOOTNOTES -- CHAPTER II

¹
Dale Spender, Women of Ideas. (London: Ark Paperbacks, 1983), pp. 32-156.

²
Aphra Behn, quoted in Spender, pp.32-42; Matilda Joslyn Gage, Women, Church and State, (Chicago: Charles Kerr, 1873, reprint ed. Watertown, Mass.: Persephone Press, 1980); Spender.

³
See Spender, pp. 2-42; Joanna Russ, How to Suppress Women's Writing, (Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press, 1983).

⁴
Spender, pp. 230-236.

⁵
Gage, pp. 30-31.

⁶
Spender, pp. 29-32.

⁷
Ibid, pp. 197-212.

⁸
Ibid, p. 35.

⁹
Ibid, pp. 68-85.

¹⁰
Vern L. Bullough, The Subordinate Sex, (Urbana, Ill.: The University of Illinois Press, 1973).

¹¹
Ibid, p. 60.

¹²
Ibid, p. 63.

¹³
Ibid, p. 64.

¹⁴
Ibid, p. 170.

¹⁵
Ibid, p. 193.

¹⁶
Ibid, p. 195.

¹⁷
Ibid, p. 322.

¹⁸
Ibid.

¹⁹
Ibid, p. 316.

²⁰
Ibid.

- 21
Ibid.
- 22
Ibid, p. 82.
- 23
Ibid.
- 24
Ibid, p. 311.
- 25
Ibid.
- 26
Inge K. Broverman, Susan Raymond Vogel, Donald K. Broverman, Frank E. Clarkson and Paul S. Rosenkrantz, "Sex-Role Stereotypes: A Current Appraisal," Journal of Social Issues 28 (1972):75.
- 27
Ibid, p. 66.
- 28
Ibid, p. 67.
- 29
Ibid, p. 65.
- 30
Ibid, p. 68.
- 31
Thomas L. Ruble, "Sex Stereotypes: Issues of Change in the 1970s," Sex Roles 9:3 (1983):398-9.
- 32
Ibid, p. 397.
- 33
Ibid, p. 400.
- 34
A. Huston-Stein and A. Higgins-Trenk, "The Development of Females: Career and Feminine Role Aspirations." In P.B. Baltes (ed.), Life-Span Development and Behavior (Vol. 1). (New York: Academic Press, 1978).
- 35
Harry T. Reis and Stephanie Wright, "Knowledge of Sex-Role Stereotypes in Children Aged 3 to 5," Sex Roles 8:10 (1982):1049-1056.
- 36
Ibid, p. 1052.
- 37
Ibid, p. 1055.
- 38
Maurine Beasley and Sheila Gibbons, Women in Media: A Documentary Source Book, (Washington, D.C.: Women's Institute for Freedom of the Press, 1977).
- 39
Ibid, pp. 24-27.
- 40
Ibid, pp. 116-118.
- 41
Ibid, pp. 119-125.

- 42 Jo Freeman, "The Politics of Women's Liberation," in Beasley and Gibbons, pp. 111-112.
- 43 Peggy A. Simpson, "Covering the Women's Movement," Nieman Reports, Summer 1979, pp. 19-23.
- 44 Ibid, p. 21.
- 45 Ibid.
- 46 Ibid, p. 23.
- 47 Bernice Buresh, "Critical Mass," The Quill, September 1984, pp. 14-20, 33.
- 48 Ibid, p. 20.
- 49 Jean Ward, "Attacking the King's English: Implications for Journalism in the Feminist Critique," Journalism Quarterly 52 (1975): pp.699-705; "Check Out Your Sexism: A Quiz for Journalists," Columbia Journalism Review, May/June 1980, pp. 38-39.
- 50 Ibid (1980), p. 38.
- 51 Ibid, p. 39.
- 52 Ibid.
- 53 Ibid.
- 54 Simpson, p. 22.
- 55 Ibid.
- 56 Freeman, p. 112.
- 57 Ibid.
- 58 S. Scott Whitlow, "How Male and Female Gatekeepers Respond to News Stories of Women," Journalism Quarterly 54 (1977): 573-579, 609.
- 59 Ibid, pp. 574-575.
- 60 Ibid, pp. 577-579.
- 61 Ibid, p. 579.
- 62 Ibid.
- 63 Ibid, p. 609.
- 64 Jack Orwant and Muriel Cantor, "How Sex Stereotyping

Affects Perceptions of News Preferences," Journalism Quarterly 54 (1977): 88-108.139.

65

Ibid, pp. 103-104.

66

Ibid, p. 139.

67

Dan G. Drew and Susan H. Miller, "Sex Stereotyping and Reporting," Journalism Quarterly 54 (1977): 142-146; James Barnes, Mary Patterson, Lorrie Arden, Nam Jun Kang, "The Effect of Gender of Source and Reporter on News Coverage," presented at The Status of Women Committee research session, Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication, Gainesville, Florida, August 1984.

68

Drew and Miller, pp. 143-144.

69

Ibid, p. 146.

70

Ibid.

71

Barnes et al, p. 14.

72

Ibid, p. 15.

73

Ibid.

74

National Organization for Women, Newspaper Monitoring Project. (Arlington, VA.: NOW, Northern Virginia Chapter, 1973); Karen G. Foreit, Terna Agor, Johnny Byers, John Larue, Helen Lokey, Michael Balazzini, Michele Patterson and Lillian Smith, "Sex Bias in the Newspaper Treatment of Male-Centered and Female-Centered News Stories," Sex Roles 6 (1980):475-480; Junetta Davis, "Sexist Bias in Eight Newspapers," Journalism Quarterly 59 (1982): 456-460; Monica Morris, "Newspapers and the New Feminists: Black Out as Social Control?" Journalism Quarterly 50 (1973): 37-42; East and Journey.

75

NOW.

76

Foreit et al, p. 476.

77

Ibid, p. 477.

78

Ibid, p. 479.

79

Ibid.

80

Davis, p. 457.

81

Ibid, p. 459.

82

Ibid, p. 460.

83

Ibid.

84

Morris, pp. 38-39.

85

Ibid, pp. 40-41.

86

Ibid, p. 42.

87

East and Journey, p. 6.

88

Ibid, p. 14.

89

Ibid, p. 15.

90

Ibid, p. 14.

91

Ibid.

92

Ibid.

93

Ibid, p. 15.

94

Ibid.

95

Davis, p. 475.

- 96 Gans and Sigal.
97 Sigal, p. 125.
98 Ibid, p. 189.
99 Ibid.
100 Ibid, p. 120.
101 Ibid, p. 125.
102 Ibid, p. 126.
103 Gans, pp. 6-7.
104 Ibid, p. 9.
105 Ibid.
106 Ibid, p. 10.
107 Ibid, p. 15.
108 Greckel, pp. 195-199.
109 Ibid, p. 194, 205-216.
110 Ibid, p. 169.
111 Pingree and Hawkins.
112 Ibid, p. 122.

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The review of the historical, sociological, feminist and mass media literature suggests that research questions for an examination of the coverage of women should focus on erasure and stereotyping.

In the news media, the erasure of any population can be expected to take the form of the media's failure to mention members of the population. When members of the population are mentioned, they could also be expected to get shorter stories. These phenomena were found by Davis, Morris and Foreit et al. However, these studies failed to control for occupation -- a situation which may have produced skewed results.

Stereotyping of women in the news media can also be expected to follow the outline of stereotyping uncovered by Broverman et al, Ruble, Reis and Wright and Orwant and Cantor. Thus, women would be expected to be portrayed as only being important as wives and mothers. They could also be expected to be shown as unworldly and being solely interested

in matters of the home and family.

The previous studies of the media have looked for evidence of this kind of stereotyping by examining whether physical attributes, marital status and parental status are discussed more often for women than for men. These variables can indicate stereotyping because if women are only important as wives and mothers, then their marital status, parental status and their physical appearance are the most important attributes about them. The earlier studies also looked for evidence of stereotyping by examining whether women were mentioned more often in feature stories than in hard news stories. Women could be expected to be the subjects of feature stories more often than hard news stories because women are stereotypically considered to be uninterested and incapable in the areas that are usually the subjects of hard news stories -- politics and economics. Davis, and Foreit et al found evidence of both of these differences in coverage, but again they failed to control for the possible effects of occupation.

For the present study, five research questions were chosen that would explore the variables previously examined by the earlier mass media studies. However, the research questions were also designed to extend the previous research by incorporating a control on occupation. This was done by focusing only on coverage of males and females in the same newsworthy occupation.

The following research questions were probed in this

study:

1. Is the proportion of newspaper mentions of females smaller than the proportion of females in a particular newsworthy occupation?

Since the cited studies found that the coverage of women equalled a much smaller proportion of the news columns than women's proportion of the total population, it is important to determine whether a similar inequality will appear if analysis is confined to coverage of a particular newsworthy occupation.

However, an analysis of the coverage of all people within one occupation might also be expected to show skewed results if it did not control for the relative rankings of individuals within that occupation. As Sigal and Gans have noted, while it is true that the media tend to focus on government officials, it is also true that they do not give all officials the same amount of coverage. High ranking officials like the president or governor receive an overwhelmingly disproportionate amount of coverage. Since females generally hold the lowest seniority, lowest ranked positions, it is vital for any study of the coverage of women to control for rank.

2. Are stories that mention females of a particular newsworthy occupation, on the average, shorter than stories that mention males of the same occupation?

Davis' study, in particular, found differences in length. She found that as the length of the stories increased, the percentage of stories dealing with women decreased. The opposite was true for stories about men.

3. Are females in a particular newsworthy occupation described more often than males in the same occupation by attire, physical attributes and marital and parental status?

Both Davis and Foreit et al found large differences in the identification and description of males and females. For example, Davis found that women were identified by marital status in about 41 percent of the stories where they were mentioned while men were identified in this way in about 7 percent of the stories.²

4. Are females mentioned more often than males in non-job contexts?

Davis, Foreit et al, Barnes et al and East and Jurney all found evidence of coverage that emphasized this aspect of the stereotypical image of women. Such coverage also focused more on stories about women in non-job feature contexts than on hard news coverage of women in job-related contexts.

5. Does the overall qualitative image of a female newsmaker in the news media match the stereotypical female image more often than the news media image of a male newsmaker?

Examination of qualitative evidence of stereotyping is also important because of the findings of Broverman et al, Ruble, and Reis and Wright on the prevalence in contemporary America of stereotypes about women. In fact, Orwant and Cantor found evidence of a strong belief in those stereotypes among college communications students, who may someday become journalists.

In the only qualitative study on the coverage of women that was found in the literature, East and Jurney reported

that coverage of six women's issues and events presented a stereotypical picture of women. However, the East and Journey study was limited, particularly in identifying stereotypical elements in coverage, because it failed to compare the coverage of women's issues with coverage of similar issues involving men. Such comparisons are important in any research designed to detect discrimination because discrimination doesn't exist unless one group is treated differently than another.

FOOTNOTES -- CHAPTER III

¹
Davis, pp. 458-459.

²
Ibid.

CHAPTER IV

METHODOLOGY

The coverage of Michigan state officials¹ was chosen for study because it makes possible some tight controls on occupation and because of the importance of the population of state officials. In particular, it is possible to include both males and females of various occupational ranks. Thus, this study examines coverage of several ranks within one newsworthy occupation by looking at coverage of all state officials. The study also examines coverage of males and females who hold the same job -- the job of legislator -- and have the same seniority.

It is also important to examine coverage of this population of officials because of their importance to the people of Michigan. As the people who create, implement and enforce the laws of the state of Michigan, state officials affect every person in the state. Thus, it is vitally important that news coverage of this population be accurate, fair, balanced and unbiased.

The Sample

Every story about Michigan state officials that appeared in 21 state newspapers from Feb. 1, 1983 to April 7, 1983 was analyzed.² These papers included all of those with capital bureaus and a randomly-selected sample of all other Michigan dailies.³ Wire service and broadcast stories were not included to focus the analysis on the work of newspaper journalists. The sample period was chosen to allow for the examination of the coverage of a normal legislative session. Approximately 450 stories were analyzed. The unit of analysis was the story. Both quantitative analysis and a qualitative, case study analysis were carried out.

The Quantitative Analysis

Three different kinds of quantitative analyses were carried out. The first two focused on the coverage of state legislators. One analysis included all legislators and the other included all female legislators and male legislators who had the same seniority.⁴ The third analysis included all state officials. The different kinds of analysis were chosen to control for occupation while correcting for problems created by that control. The legislative study provided the most rigorous control, but failed to provide a large enough number of cases to allow for confident generalizations. The analysis of all state official coverage, while not as tightly controlled as the legislative analysis, provided a larger number of cases.

For each of the analyses, the number of mentions was determined by coding the names of the first and second state officials encountered in each story. Mentions of the governor, a male, were not included in this analysis because the governor gets a disproportionate number of mentions. Including the mentions of the governor would have skewed the results.⁵ Story length was determined by calculating the average word length for stories.

Data on the number of mentions and length of stories were collected on all three levels of the quantitative analysis. The variables that dealt with physical description and marital or parental status were collected only for legislators to allow for the greatest control for occupation. Thus, any mention of a legislator's physical appearance, clothing, marital status, any use of the courtesy titles Miss or Mrs, or any mention of a legislator's children or of the fact that the legislator is a parent was also coded.

Data on the context in which mentions were made was collected for all officials and for all legislators. For both of those groups the context of each mention was coded as either job related or non-job related. Job-related contexts were considered to be any mention of the official in the context of leadership, bill advocate and/or opponent, home district partisan, corruption or impropriety, comments on and reactions on state topics, comments and reactions on non-state topics and appointments to posts. Ceremonial activities, amusing incidents and features on life or

lifestyle were categorized as non-job contexts. Categories for accidents and illness and "other" were also coded, but were not included in the analysis.

Tests of statistical significance were not performed because the entire universe of newspaper coverage for the study period was analyzed, making such tests inappropriate.

The Case Study Analysis

This consisted of a qualitative review of the coverage of five individuals who were the focus of a series of news stories during the study period. Chosen for study was coverage of Michigan Department of Natural Resources Director Howard Tanner, state Treasurer Robert Bowman, state Supreme Court Justice Dorothy Comstock Riley, state Supreme Court Justice Patricia Boyle and state Department of Social Services Director Agnes Mansour. Coverage of these individuals was chosen because all five were of roughly equal governmental rank at the time of the study. Tanner, Bowman and Mansour headed state departments while Riley and Boyle held seats on the highest court in the state. Riley, Tanner and Mansour were chosen for study because they were involved in similar kinds of controversies about their fitness for office. Analysis of the coverage of Boyle was included because of her involvement in the Riley controversy. Bowman is the only one of the five who was not involved in a controversy over his job. His coverage was included because Bowman was the male with the largest number of first mentions

after the governor. Sixty stories made up this part of the study. Nine focused on Tanner, 10 on Bowman, 19 on Mansour, 16 on Riley and six on Boyle.

The qualitative analysis consisted of a careful reading of all of the stories. An outline of the image of each of the five officials portrayed in the coverage was then drawn up. That outline was based on such things as the descriptive words and phrases used for each official and the actions that were reported for each official. The images of the female officials and of the males were then compared to the elements of the contemporary stereotype of women that are discussed below. The presence of any one of these elements for female officials along with the absence of that element for the males was considered evidence of stereotyping.

Based on the findings of Broverman et al, Ruble, Reis and Wright and Orwant and Cantor, the contemporary stereotype of females will be assumed to include the following eight elements.

1. Women are passive, dependent and submissive.
2. Women are subjective, easily emotional, excitable in minor crises, easily influenced and easily hurt. They also cry a lot.
3. Women are very home oriented, unaware of the ways of the world, not skilled in business and dislike math and science. They are also not adventurous.
4. Women seldom act as leaders, are not self-confident, are very uncomfortable about being aggressive, have

difficulty making decisions and are not ambitious.

5. Women are conceited about their appearance.

6. Women are very talkative.

7. Women are tactful, gentle, quiet and aware of the feelings of others. They also express tender feelings easily.

8. Women are religious, seldom use harsh language and very neat in their habits. They also enjoy the arts and literature.

FOOTNOTES -- CHAPTER IV

1

The data for this study was collected as part of the Michigan Statehouse Reporting Project, which was directed by Dr. Frederick Fico. assistant professor of journalism at Michigan State University.

2

Findings can only be generalized to Michigan and specifically to Michigan newspapers. The limited geographic scope of the study and the small number of cases make it impossible to generalize these findings to any other medium or to any other geographic area.

3

The newspapers with capital bureaus that were included are Detroit Free Press; Detroit News; The Battle Creek Enquirer-News, Lansing State Journal and Port Huron Times Herald, which all used Gannett bureau copy; The Flint Journal and Grand Rapids Press, which ran Booth News Bureau stories; and The Plymouth Community Crier, Houghton Daily Mining Gazette, Holland Sentinel, Lapeer County Press, Midland Daily News, Monroe Evening News, Petoskey News-Review, Sturgis Journal and Traverse City Record Eagle, which used Capital News Service stories. CNS is a student news bureau that is operated by Michigan State University.

Newspapers without state capital bureaus that were included in the sample are The Dowagiac Daily News, Huron Daily Tribune, Ludington Daily News, Macomb Daily and Royal Oak Tribune.

About 56 percent of the stories were produced by the professional news bureaus, 32 percent were written by non-bureau newspaper reporters and 8 percent were produced by CNS. The origins of 4 percent of the stories could not be identified.

4

Since the woman lawmaker with the greatest seniority in the Michigan Legislature had five terms of service during the study period, only male legislators with five terms or less were included in this part of the analysis.

5

Michigan Gov. James Blanchard was mentioned as the first official in more than 34 percent of the stories collected during the study. He was mentioned as the second official in 14 percent of the stories.

CHAPTER V

RESULTS

The Quantitative Analysis

Number of Mentions

All Officials

As in the cited studies, the present study found that women were mentioned less often than their male counterparts. They also received a smaller proportion of mentions than their proportion of the population of all officials. (See Table I) Females were mentioned from 7 to 8 percentage points less than their 26 percent of the total population of state officials.¹

All Legislators

The same was true of the coverage of all legislators. (See Table II.) Women legislators were mentioned in about 7 percent of the stories even though they made up 11 percent of the state legislature.

Low-Seniority Legislators

However, when the analysis was controlled for seniority, the differences between the proportion of mentions of women and their proportion of the occupational population almost disappeared. (See Table III.) Women made up 15 percent of the total pool of low-seniority legislators. Female legislators received 14.5 percent of the first official mentions. They received 13 percent of the second official mentions.

The Answer To Research Question #1

The key factor in answering the first research question, therefore, appears to be seniority. The proportion of mentions of females in a particular newsworthy occupation appeared to be the same as their proportion of that occupation when the analysis was controlled for seniority. When the analysis was not controlled for seniority, differences in the number of mentions and women's proportion of the population occurred.

TABLE I: MENTIONS IN STORIES OF ALL STATE OFFICIALS

A. The First Official Mentioned

(n=251)

	<u>female</u>	<u>male</u>
proportion of total population of officials	26%	74%
percentages of first mentions	18	82

B. The Second Official Mentioned

(n=256)

	<u>female</u>	<u>male</u>
proportion of total population of officials	26%	74%
percentages of second mentions	17	83

TABLE II: MENTIONS OF LEGISLATORS

A. The First Official Mentioned

(n=107)

	<u>female</u>	<u>male</u>
proportion of population of legislators	11%	89%
percentages of first mentions	7.5	92.5

B. The Second Official Mentioned

(n=119)

	<u>female</u>	<u>male</u>
proportion of population of legislators	11%	89%
percentages of second mentions	7	93

TABLE III: MENTIONS OF LOW-SENIORITY LEGISLATORS

A. The First Official Mentioned

(n=55)

	<u>female</u>	<u>male</u>
proportion of low-seniority legislators	15%	85%
percentages of first mentions	14.5	85.5

B. The Second Official Mentioned

(n=61)

	<u>female</u>	<u>male</u>
proportion of low-seniority legislators	15%	85%
percentages of second mentions	13	87

Story Length

All Officials

The analysis of the length of stories about all officials showed that the stories were of nearly equal length. In fact, the stories where females were the first mentioned officials were slightly longer than the male-first stories. (See Table IV) The female-first stories averaged 485 words while the male-first stories averaged 477 words.

All Legislators

In stories about all legislators, those stories with females as the first officials averaged about 100 words less than stories with males mentioned first. (See Table IV.) The female-first stories averaged 363 words while the male-first stories ran an average of 486 words. Even though this difference appears to signal an inequality in coverage, it

masks the great variability in the length of both male-first and female-first stories. For example, story length in the total sample ranged from 60 words to over 1,000 words. The standard deviations for the male-first and female-first stories were both about 200 words.

Low-Seniority Legislators

Story length did not change when only low-seniority legislators were considered. (See Table IV) Stories with low-seniority male legislators mentioned first averaged 464 words and were still about 100 words longer than 363-word average for female-first stories. However, this difference also does not signal an inequality in coverage because it is much less than the standard deviation for female-first stories, which was about 200 words long.

The Answer To Research Question #2

The analysis shows no real differences in length between stories about females of a newsworthy occupation and males of the same occupation. On the average, however, male legislators got longer stories than female legislators.

TABLE IV: AVERAGE STORY LENGTH

A. All Officials

(n=421)

	<u>female</u>	<u>male</u>
average word length	485	477

B. All Legislators

(n=106)

	<u>female</u>	<u>male</u>
average word length	363	486

C. Low-Seniority Legislators

(n=55)

	<u>female</u>	<u>male</u>
average word length	363	464

Description

This part of the analysis, which examined coverage of legislators only, found little difference between the treatment of men and women. Of the more than 200 times legislators were mentioned, attire, physical attributes, marital and parental status were noted only three times. Of these mentions, one involved a woman -- a state representative who was mentioned with her state senator husband in a feature about the couple's lifestyle. The legislator who received the most complete description with attire, looks, marital and parental status all noted was the newly chosen speaker of the House -- a male. All of those descriptions came in a story where he was mentioned in a leadership context. Except for the feature about the wife and husband lawmakers, the marital courtesy

titles Miss and Mrs were not used for any female legislators during the study period.

The Answer To Research Question #3

Thus, the analysis showed that females did not receive more or different kinds of descriptions than males of the same occupation.

Contexts of Mentions

All Officials

The analysis of the coverage of all state officials indicates that women were mentioned slightly more often than men in the non-job contexts of ceremonial activities, amusing incidents and features on lifestyle. Men were mentioned more often in such job contexts as leadership, bill advocate or opponent and comments on state topics. (See Table V) While almost all of the mentions of male officials were in a job context with 100 and 99 percent in that context, 93 and 97 percent of female mentions were in a job context.

All Legislators

The difference in context is more pronounced when the analysis is narrowed to include stories about legislators. (See Table VI) In that group, females were mentioned in job contexts 86 and 71 percent of the time while males received job related mentions 98 and 100 percent of the time.

The Answer To Research Question #4

Thus, the analysis shows that females do appear to have been mentioned more often than males in non-job contexts in all categories of officials analyzed. These differences are,

however, small for all officials and are based on a small number of stories for female legislators.

TABLE V: CONTEXTS OF MENTIONS OF ALL OFFICIALS

A. Context of First Official Named in Story

(female n=39, male n=193)

	<u>female</u>	<u>male</u>
job related	97%	99%
non-job related	3	1

B. Context of Second Official Named in Story

(female n=41, male n=204)

	<u>female</u>	<u>male</u>
job related	93%	100%
non-job related	7	0

TABLE VI: CONTEXTS OF MENTIONS OF LEGISLATORS

A. Context of First Legislators Named in Story

(female n=7, male n=97)

	<u>female</u>	<u>male</u>
job related	86%	98%
non-job related	14	2

B. Context of Second Legislator Named in Story

(female n=7, male n=97)

	<u>female</u>	<u>male</u>
job related	71%	100%
non-job related	29%	0

Summary Of The Quantitative Results

These results appear to be unique among quantitative studies of the coverage of women because they do not show clear-cut bias in all areas examined. No real differences were found in the length and description of male and female officials. Even though females got a far smaller proportion of mentions than their proportion of the occupational population in part of the analysis, those differences disappeared when the analysis was controlled for seniority. The only difference that appeared constant was in the context of mentions. Female officials were mentioned in non-job contexts slightly more often than male officials.

While the results of this analysis are provocative, it is important to note that the results on the coverage of legislators are problematic because of the small number of stories involved.

Further, bias may well exist in forms too subtle for the crude quantitative analysis categories to capture. A closer look at stories involving male and female officials is thus needed. The qualitative, case study analysis of the coverage of five prominent state officials probes the existence of stereotypical portrayals in more depth.

The Case Study Analysis

Coverage of Howard Tanner

The Story

Tanner became the subject of a series of stories when reporters learned that his boss, The Natural Resources Commission, had scheduled a closed-door meeting to discuss his job. Tanner had been director of the DNR for eight years at the time. On the day the meeting was to take place, Tanner announced that he would retire from the DNR effective in the summer. After reporting the announcement of Tanner's retirement, the rest of the coverage focused on accounts of Tanner's tenure in office and discussions of the search for a new natural resources director.

Tanner's Image In The Press

The subject of nine stories, which averaged 572 words, Tanner was portrayed in the press as an "embattled"² individual, who was trained as a scientist and working at a job he was never quite able to do right. His "reign"³ at DNR was described as "eight mostly troubled years."⁴ One story noted: "He has frequently been under fire for his management style and reorganization of the department."⁵ Another story⁶ blamed Tanner for low morale in the department. One story talked about "his inability to grasp the administrative reigns⁷ of the vast department." Finally, he was portrayed as having resigned under pressure. "Had he not quit voluntarily, the embattled director who is blamed for weak leadership and low⁸ department morale, would have been ousted." Portrayed as

ineffective on the job, Tanner was shown in the most negative light of any of the five individuals studied. It should also be noted, however, that while his image was generally negative, two of the stories included positive mentions of his accomplishments in office.⁹ In fact, one story focused completely on the positive results of his years as¹⁰ director.

Another aspect of Tanner's image could also be called positive. Even though his actions were portrayed as failing, he was shown as a strong individual who fights back. Use of the phrase "embattled director" is one example of this. Someone cannot be embattled unless he or she is fighting. Tanner was also portrayed as a vigorous individual who was¹¹ also an outdoorsman. Another article said that¹² he had run the DNR "with a strong hand." One story talked about how Tanner was strong enough to cope with the stress of the DNR directorship -- a job that the story implied had contributed to the deaths in office of two of his¹³ predecessors.

None of the stories gave any indication of Tanner's marital status, including one story that mentioned his post-retirement plans. Tanner's appearance was never described.

Thus, Tanner's image matched the stereotypical image of the female in only one aspect by portraying him as incompetent at his job. The portrait of a strong, vigorous individual and the lack of personal information about Tanner does not fit into the stereotype of a female in any way.

Coverage of Robert Bowman

The Story

Bowman entered the news as a spokesman for the administration of Gov. James Blanchard in the middle of a financial crisis. At the time, the administration said the crisis was so bad that the state had to increase its income tax to prevent payless paydays for state employees and bankruptcy. Unlike the other four officials, Bowman was not the subject of the coverage. Instead, he was used as a source to explain much of the financial actions and philosophy of the Blanchard administration. The stories in which he appeared focused on the withholding of state aid payments to local school districts and colleges, the payment of income tax refunds and the proposed tax increase.

Bowman's Image in the Press

In 10 stories that averaged 351 words in length, Bowman was portrayed as an extremely active, knowledgeable, powerful figure who controlled the purse strings of the state. Even though, as one story noted, Bowman was only 27, he was shown as a father-like expert who "cautioned,"¹⁴ "explained,"¹⁵ and "defused fears."¹⁶ In six of the nine stories with Bowman as the first official mentioned, he was shown either explaining his or the governor's actions. In two stories, he was shown giving his opinion about the economy. In one story, he was shown rejecting a plan for the financial bailout of the state. Bowman's power over Michigan's purse strings was shown

in stories which said he would release delayed payments soon
 17
 to local school districts.

None of the stories gave any indication of Bowman's marital status. None of the stories ever described his appearance.

Nothing in Bowman's image in the press matched the stereotypical image of a female.

Coverage of Sister Agnes Mary Mansour

The Story

Mansour, a Roman Catholic nun from the Sisters of Mercy, became the center of controversy in early 1983 after Blanchard appointed her as director of the state Department of Social Services. The controversy involved whether Mansour, as head of the state's welfare department, would administer state funding for Medicaid abortions, a program which had been run for years by the department. Mansour was quoted in newspapers as saying that while she opposed abortion, she felt that it was wrong to deny the poor a service that was legally available to the rich. She was also quoted as saying she would continue to administer the program because "more
 18
 harm could come from halting state funding."

Soon after she was appointed, Detroit Roman Catholic Archbishop Edmund Szoka demanded that Mansour resign. Szoka, who had originally supported her appointment, said Mansour should resign because she had not taken a public stand

against Medicaid abortions. Mansour refused to step down, went through confirmation hearings in the state Senate, won the support of the Senate and stayed on the job. In the meantime, her religious order announced its support of her stand. The story became an international one when The Vatican ordered Mansour to resign. At the time the study period ended, Mansour had vowed to stay on as social services director.

Mansour's Image in the Press

In 19 stories that averaged 543 words in length, Mansour's image was one of a "strong-willed and independent,"¹⁹ "combative,"²⁰ yet "soft-spoken"²¹ who in defying Rome was "caught in a swirl of controversy."²² Although Mansour's image showed her as the strongest of the three women in the study group, she was also portrayed as a somewhat powerless individual who was waiting to see what her superiors would decide to do to her.

The image of a strong Mansour is evident in many of the stories. Among other things she was described as a "tough administrator" at her old job as president of Mercy College²³ in Detroit. She was called "assertive, and at times, combative."²⁴ Stories noted that Mansour directs the state's massive social services department and its \$3.3 billion²⁵ budget, that she "won the support" of her order,²⁶ was in "defiance" of her superiors in the church,²⁷ had "refused" to resign and had "vowed to continue."²⁸ One story conveyed a picture of strength when it quoted an anonymous church

official as saying: "Here you have a religious who has defied her archbishop and a clear papal directive that clerics and religious orders ought not to be in politics ... (Vatican officials) know that Agnes Mary and her order are tough, that the hierarchy has to negotiate with them."²⁹

However, at the same time she was portrayed as a strong individual, Mansour was also shown to be relatively powerless and passive. This comes through not so much in the words used in the stories, but in the angles chosen for the leads.

Thirteen of the 19 leads focus either on what her church superiors or the Senate planned to do to her. For example, one lead reported: "A Vatican representative ... has been ordered to direct Sister Agnes Mary Mansour to give up her post as director of the Michigan Department of Social Services, the Cable News Network reported Wednesday."³⁰

One other lead also stands out, particularly in light of the feminist argument that women have often been erased from history. The lead reported Mansour's confirmation by the state Senate as if she had little or no role in winning it. The lead emphasized the role of Blanchard, who according to press reports, made few public statements about the controversy and engaged in little or no lobbying on her behalf. That lead reads: "Gov. James Blanchard's appointment of a Roman Catholic nun to head the state agency that oversees abortions for women on welfare was approved today by the state Senate."³¹ This gave a completely different view of the event than the following lead, which showed Mansour as an

active participant in the confirmation process. That lead reads: "Sister Agnes Mary Mansour won the first round in her fight to retain her job as director of the state Department of Social Services, but now faces a potentially sterner test³² in Rome."

Mansour's physical appearance was never mentioned. Mention of her marital or parental status, of course, would not be appropriate because she was a nun.

The image presented in the press of Mansour was a mixture of the female stereotype and its opposite. Her portrayal as being soft spoken and dependent on powerful men matches the stereotypical view of women. The portrayal of her as strong and combative does not.

Coverage of Dorothy Comstock Riley

The Story

The Riley controversy began in the fall of 1982 when an incumbent state Supreme Court justice died shortly after being re-elected to the court. The governor at the time, Republican William Milliken, appointed Riley, also a Republican, to fill the vacancy. Riley had run unsuccessfully for the court in the 1982 election. Her appointed term was to encompass the rest of Milliken's term in office, which ended in January and 11 months of 1984. She would hold office until the next election for the court in November 1984. However, when Democrat Blanchard, succeeded Milliken, Blanchard

protested that Milliken only had the power to appoint Riley until the end of Milliken's term in office. Shortly after the study began, the issue went to the court for a ruling. Riley abstained from voting on the case. At first, the court deadlocked on the issue, voting 3-3. The deadlock meant that Riley would keep her seat. However, four days later Justice Charles Levin changed his vote and Riley was ousted from the court.

In the following six-week period, the story consisted of Riley's announcement that she would not try to fight for the seat, Blanchard's announcement that he would soon appoint a new justice, and the campaign of former state Supreme Court Chief Justice Thomas Brennan and Riley's husband and a law-firm associate to get Riley reinstated. The coverage ended shortly after the state bar governing board decided not to intervene in the case.

Riley's Image in the Press

The subject of 16 stories averaging 520 words in length, Riley was portrayed as a "quiet and composed"³³, passive recipient of the action of men. Her image was that of a pawn in a political struggle between the Democratic governor, his Republican predecessor and the Democratic and Republican members of the Supreme Court. She was rarely shown as taking any action on her own. Instead, she was depicted as being championed by four men, including one who engaged in what one³⁴ article called a "crusade."

Twelve of the 16 stories about Riley showed her as the

passive object of the actions of others. In all, two stories focused on the court's decision to oust Riley, two stories led on the governor's timetable for appointing a new justices, and five stories focused on the efforts of Brennan to get Riley reinstated. Three stories did show Riley taking action. One story was printed shortly after her appointment was announced. It described her legal philosophy and made some predictions on what kind of justice she might be.³⁵ Two other stories focused on her announcement after she was ousted from the court that she would not fight for the court seat. The image of Riley as the recipient of the actions of others is illustrated by one story. That story noted that when the decision was made to throw Riley off the court, "Riley, meanwhile, apparently did not know the vote was occurring."³⁶ The story also contained the following passage.

When Riley returned from dinner at 9:50 p.m. Tuesday, Supreme Court Clerk Harold Hoag was sitting in the lobby of her hotel.

Hoag said, "I told her I had a sad message, that the court had reconsidered its actions of last Friday and removed her from the court," Hoag said. He handed her a sealed envelope containing the court order ousting her.

"She was quiet and composed," Hoag said. "She walked away without opening the envelope."³⁷

Riley was also portrayed as having her cause championed by four men. These included Milliken, who was reported to have intervened with the state court on her behalf. Her husband, Wallace Riley, along with George Roumell, a partner in the law firm Riley and her husband established, also attempted to regain Riley's seat for her. Brennan's solo crusade consisted of speeches around the state and an

appearance before the court to try to get the justices to reconsider their decision.

The reports of their efforts also contained one instance of what appears to be inaccurate and possibly sexist reporting. That occurred in a story that reported the state bar governing board's vote on whether to intervene in the Riley case. Brennan and Riley's law-firm colleague, Roumell, were both members of the board. The problem came in the following passage. "Voting with Brennan on Monday was George Roumell, a partner of Riley's husband, Wallace." ³⁸ This identification of Roumell is puzzling since the same story reported that Riley helped found the firm and that at the time of publication she was working in the firm with both Roumell and her husband. Logically, it would make sense to identify Roumell by his relationship with the person he is helping and not by his relationship with that person's spouse. Inaccuracy occurs in the implication that the man has no working relationship with Riley. In a subtle way, this passage also erased Riley's role and accomplishments in the firm. The story implied that she had taken no part in the firm by saying that she was neither the partner nor the colleague of the men who work in the firm. While it cannot be argued that Riley's accomplishments had been erased in stories that consistently referred to her work as an appellate justice, it seems odd that a story could be written in such a way as to negate her work in a private law firm. Any apparent negation of a woman's work may be significant in

light of the feminist argument that the accomplishments of women are consistently erased from history.

Finally, Riley's marital status was noted in nine out of the 16 stories. This was done either through the use of the courtesy title Mrs or by mentioning her husband. The Detroit News was the only newspaper that appeared to have a policy of using Mrs. on second reference. The courtesy title Mr. was not used for men on second reference in the News. One story in the Macomb Daily showed evidence of what could be called journalistic split-personality. This story alternately³⁹ referred to her as Riley and Mrs. Riley.

Riley's physical appearance was never mentioned in any of the stories.

The coverage of Riley came the closest of any of the coverage analyzed to presenting a stereotypical profile of a woman. The coverage matched the stereotypes by continually emphasizing Riley's marital and parental status and by portraying her as a quiet, passive pawn of men.

Coverage of Patricia Boyle

The Story

A U.S. district judge, Boyle entered the Riley controversy in mid-March when a story appeared reporting that she had rejected Blanchard's offer to accept the Supreme Court seat that had been vacated by Riley. Three weeks later Boyle re-entered the news with the announcement that she had

reconsidered and had decided to accept the appointment. The coverage of Boyle was brief. It consisted of two stories on her rejection of the appointment, three stories on her acceptance and one story focusing on former Supreme Court Chief Justice Mary Coleman's evaluation of Boyle as a judge and lawyer.

Boyle's Image in the Press

In six stories that averaged 510 words, Boyle's image was mixed. It portrayed an active, "scholarly, highly respected federal judge"⁴⁰ who graduated at the top of her law school class and overcame sexism to get her first job. However, she was also shown as someone who, at least partially, based career decisions on her husband and changed her mind on a major decision.

Much of the portrayal of Boyle can be classified as positive. Coleman was quoted as saying Boyle "was always very well-prepared, very articulate, a good legal mind."⁴¹ At least part of another story painted a very active picture of Boyle. That story reported that "she also apparently enjoys the rough and tumble of campaigning that goes with the state Supreme Court post."⁴² That same story also noted that even though she graduated at the top of her law school class in 1963, Boyle could not immediately get a job because of sexism. The story also showed her getting a job because she performed the very traditional role of baby-sitter.

Federal Judge Lawrence Gubow, whose death created the vacancy that she later filled, was responsible for getting that first job.

"I was his baby-sitter," she said. "He knew that (U.S.)

Judge Thaddeaus) Machrowicz needed a law clerk and recommended me."43

Boyle was also portrayed as basing a major decision on her husband and as being changeable. In one of the two stories that report her refusing the Supreme Court job, her husband was reported as the reason for her decision. "Among the factors in her decision was her long-standing desire to have Blanchard appoint her husband to a state judicial post, sources said."⁴⁴ The portrayal of her change of mind could be construed as both positive and negative. The positive images included a headline about Boyle "Responding to a Higher Court Calling."⁴⁵ However, another headline touched on the stereotype of the feather-brained female who cannot decide what to wear. That headline read, "Judge Changes her Mind and her Court."⁴⁶

Boyle's marital status was noted in all six of the stories. Three in The Detroit News did this by following the apparent News policy of using Mrs. The other three stories, all in The Detroit Free Press, did this by directly mentioning her husband.

Boyle's physical appearance was not mentioned in any of the stories.

The portrayal of Boyle both matched the stereotype of women and contradicted it. The media image of Boyle as someone who changes her mind and bases her decisions on her family is close to the stereotype of women. The image of Boyle as active, scholarly and enjoying "rough and tumble" does not fit the stereotype.

Summary Of The Case Study Analysis

Like the quantitative analysis, the case study failed to find consistent or overwhelming evidence of blatant stereotyping. Mansour and Riley's sex was never specifically discussed and Boyle's sex was only mentioned in a story that reported her problems with sexism. Furthermore, none of the three women was ever described physically. In comparison, neither the sex nor the appearance of either of the two men, Tanner and Bowman, was ever discussed.

However, one major difference between the coverage of the men and the women was found in the case study. The marital and the parental status of Riley and Boyle was constantly reported while the personal life of Tanner and Bowman was never mentioned in any of the stories. Over 56 percent of the Riley story noted her status and 100 percent of the Boyle stories supplied the information. Marital status was communicated by direct mention and, in the case of The Detroit News, by the use of the courtesy title, Mrs.

Another possible difference also appeared in the qualitative analysis. This is the fact that the three women were portrayed as passive more often than the two men. This is relevant because one of the elements of the stereotype of women is the idea that women are passive. More than 68 percent of the leads about Mansour portrayed her as passively awaiting a decision on her fate. More than 62 percent of the Riley leads showed her passively waiting for her fate to be

decided. The coverage of Riley also emphasized that when she was removed from the court, she did not fight her ouster. Instead, several men were shown fighting for her. On the other hand, the coverage of Tanner, who was in a similar position of having to wait for a decision on the fate of his job, showed him to be both waiting for the decision and taking action. Forty-four percent of the Tanner leads portrayed him as the subject of the actions of others, while 44 percent showed him taking action.

Is this apparent difference evidence of sexist coverage? That question cannot be answered conclusively, of course, because it would be necessary to conduct an independent investigation into the actions of Mansour, Riley and Tanner. Thus, it is very possible that the difference in coverage is simply an accurate reflection of events. However, the fact that Riley's image and part of Mansour's image closely mimics the stereotypical view of women cannot help but raise the possibility that a subtle bias affected their coverage.

FOOTNOTES -- CHAPTER V

1
The female proportion of the population of state officials was calculated by counting the number of women listed under any job title other than secretary or technician in the State of Michigan Telephone Directory, prepared by the Department of Management and Budget, November 1983.

2
"Panel Looks for New DNR Boss," Lansing State Journal, 26 February 1983, p. 3A.

3
"DNR Chief Quits; Avoids Ouster Vote," Lansing State Journal, 25 February 1983, p. 1A.

4
"Is Tanner Resigning?" Lansing State Journal, 22 February 1983, p. 1B.

5
Lansing State Journal, 15 February 1983.

6
"Nationwide Search is Launched to Find New Director for DNR," Grand Rapids Press, 17 March 1983.

7
Lansing State Journal, 26 February 1983.

8
"Tanner to Step Down June 1 as DNR Director," Grand Rapids Press, 25 February 1983, p. 1; "DNR Chief Leaving Frustration with His 'Impossible Job,'" Flint Journal, 6 March 1983.

9
Flint Journal, 6 March 1983.

10
Ibid.

11
Grand Rapids Press, 25 February 1983.

12
"DNR Post Takes Heavy Toll on Bosses Before Tanner," Flint Journal, 6 March 1983, p. A6.

13
"State Tax-Refund Till Running Low," Lansing State Journal, 11 March 1983.

14
"Deficit May Slow State Tax Refunds," Lansing State Journal, 11 March 1983.

15
"No Payless Paydays, State Answers Schools," Detroit News, 18 March 1983.

- 16 "Some State Cuts Could be Returned to Area," Port Huron Times, 31 March 1983, p. 3A.
- 17 "Abortion Dilemma: 'We Must Try to Find Ways to Change Attitudes,' Says Sister Mansour of Controversy in State Job," Detroit News, 16 February 1983, p. 1A.
- 18 Detroit News, 16 February 1983.
- 19 "Senate Committee Supports Mansour," Detroit Free Press, 9 March 1983, p. 1A.
- 20 Detroit News, 16 February 1983.
- 21 "Mansour Must Quit, CNN Says," Lansing State Journal, 25 March 1983, p. 1A.
- 22 Detroit News, 16 February 1983.
- 23 Detroit Free Press, 9 March 1983.
- 24 "Senate Panel to Quiz Nun on DSS Post," Detroit Free Press, 8 March 1983, p. 3A.
- 25 "Nuns Back Mansour; Issue Goes to Vatican," Detroit News, 6 March 1983, p. 1A.
- 26 "Nun Told to Quit, Network Reports," Lansing State Journal, 26 March 1983, p. 1A.
- 27 Lansing State Journal, 25 March 1983.
- 28 "Senate Confirms Mansour," Lansing State Journal, 9 March 1983, p. 1A.
- 29 "Nun Wins Approval From Senate," Detroit News, 10 March 1983, p. 3A.
- 30 "Apology Due, Justice Says," Detroit Free Press, 17 February 1983, p. 1A.
- 31 "State Bar Says Riley Case Closed," Detroit Free Press, 22 March 1983, p. 3A.
- 32 "State's Top Court May Become More Liberal," Detroit News, 13 February 1983, p. 1A.
- 33 Detroit Free Press, 17 February 1983.
- 34 Ibid.
- 35 Detroit Free Press, 22 March 1983.

36

"Brennan: Constitution Ignored in Riley Case," Macomb Daily, 3 March 1983, p. 2A.

37

"Blanchard Choice Says No to High Court Seat," Detroit Free Press, 11 March 1983, p. 3A

38

"Ex-Chief Justice Rates Boyle High," Detroit News, 23 March 1983, p. 4A.

39

"Responding to a Higher Court Calling," Detroit Free Press, 23 March 1983, p. 13A.

40

Ibid.

41

Detroit Free Press, 11 March 1983.

42

Detroit Free Press, 23 March 1983.

43

"Judge Changes Her Mind and Her Court," Detroit News, 23 March 1983.

CHAPTER VI

SUMMARY AND IMPLICATIONS

Taken together, the quantitative and case study results show areas of apparent equality and areas of apparent inequality in the coverage of male and female Michigan officials.

The quantitative results show males and females of the same occupation and seniority receiving almost the same proportion of coverage as each sex's proportion of the total group. This finding indicates that occupation and seniority did affect the amount of coverage and that sex did not -- an interpretation that is supported by some evidence from the case study analysis. That analysis found that two of the women, Riley and Mansour, were anything but ignored by newspapers. In fact, they each received a larger number of stories than either of the men in the study.

The case study analysis also supports the quantitative analysis finding of no real difference in story length. Averaging 543, 520 and 510 words, the stories about the three women were of almost the same length as the Tanner stories,

which averaged 572 words. In fact, the stories about the women were far longer than the stories about Bowman, which averaged 351 words.

The equality in physical description that was found by the quantitative analysis was also backed up by the case study results, which found no physical descriptions for either of the women or the men. However, the case study did uncover a difference in reporting marital status that was not evident in the quantitative part of the study. The fact that marital status was reported constantly for two of the women and ignored for the two men indicates that at least two women in non-legislative positions did not receive the same kind of equitable coverage as female legislators.

Finally, comparison of the results of both parts of the study indicate that there may have been subtle differences in the focus of the coverage. Quantitative analysis results show women mentioned slightly more often than men in feature contexts. While the small number of cases make these results problematic, the case study finding of what may be a difference in the portrayal of women's actions indicates that differences in context may exist. Specifically, the tendency to portray women as more passive than men, which was found in the case study, and the tendency to mention women more often than men in feature contexts, could both come from the stereotypical belief that women are passive and incompetent. These findings suggest that female Michigan officials and male officials may be treated differently by journalists in

these respects. However, methodological problems make these findings suggestive rather than conclusive. While they do raise questions about the treatment of the male and female officials, they cannot be considered evidence of blatantly sexist coverage.

This study has implications, then, for feminists, journalists and mass media researchers.

If occupation and seniority do make a difference, then feminists intent on getting more women into the news columns cannot possibly succeed unless they rethink their methods. Arguing that women, as half of the human race, should receive half the coverage will not change anything as long as journalists define newsworthy to equal power and most women remain powerless. Thus, the key to getting greater news coverage for women appears to include changing both the economic and political position of women and changing the accepted definition of news.

Such a redefinition could take several forms. Pingree and Hawkins suggested that the news value of significance can be redefined to include the things that are significant about the powerless -- their oppression and their fight against it. A redefinition could also include a change that has often been suggested, but has yet to become a reality in most American newspapers. That change would swing the focus of the news away from events and onto issues and trends. Under such a definition, economic and social trends and issues involving the quality of life would be just as worthy of a story as a

fire or a traffic accident.

The data showing fewer differences in description than past studies plus the findings on context also suggest that feminists stop focusing their critiques on descriptions of women. Instead, feminists should consider closer examinations of more subtle problems in coverage. This means the context of mentions and the accuracy of reports of women's actions must begin to be the subject of probes.

For journalists, the implications are similar. In light of the findings on occupation and seniority, journalists must rethink their definition of news. Is it ethical, fair or even accurate to continue to operate on a conception of news that classifies half the population as non-newsworthy? Can the news media claim to be mirroring society when they focus only on the most powerful members of that society?

Journalists should also examine their stories involving women in more detail. The findings on context suggest that journalists should ask themselves if they ever seek out female newsmakers as expert sources for comment on hard-news topics. Do they assume that women are less capable than men and, thus, are not suitable hard-news sources? The fact that the case study analysis found some evidence of stereotyping also suggests that journalists must become aware of the pitfalls of stereotyping. To do this, reporters and editors must understand what the stereotypes are and must diligently guard against using those stereotypes in their stories.

Mass media researchers who have explored these issues must

also undertake a re-examination. If occupation and seniority do affect coverage, then it is possible that the previous studies that found greater evidence of unequal coverage may not have been measuring sexism in the minds of journalists. Instead, the studies may have been measuring the sexism of a society that discriminates against women and keeps them from reaching the high-ranking political positions that are defined as newsworthy. This also means that researchers interested in measuring possible sexist practices by journalists must build controls for occupation and seniority into their studies.

The findings on context also suggest that studies take more detailed and, possibly, more qualitative looks at the contexts in which women are mentioned. Studies into the portrayal of women's actions are also needed.

It is also important to note that this study may be reflecting a real change in the attitudes and work of journalists. Previous studies, which found greater evidence of bias against women, might have been reflecting the sexism of the coverage of their time, while the current study may have reflected a more recent, nonsexist attitude among journalists. This is supported by the fact that many newspapers in the past few years have dropped the use of courtesy titles before women's names. In fact, it is clear from this study that the women's movement may have been at least partially successful in educating journalists about the importance of equal coverage for men and women.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Books Consulted

Baker, Mary Anne, Catherine White Berheide, Fay Ross Greckel, Linda Garstarphen Guigin, Margia J. Lipetz, Marcia Texler Segal. Women Today. Monterey, Calif.: Brooks/Cole Publishing Co., 1980.

Beasley, Maurine and Sheila Gibbons. Women in Media: A Documentary Source Book. Washington, D.C.: Women's Institute for Freedom of the Press, 1977.

Bullough, Vern L. The Subordinate Sex. Urbana, Ill.: The University of Illinois Press, 1973.

Freeman, Jo. The Politics of Women's Liberation, Quoted in Beasley and Gibbons, pp. 111-112.

Gage, Matilda Joslyn. Women, Church and State. Chicago: Charles Kerr, 1873; reprint edition, Watertown, Mass.: Persephone Press, 1980.

Gans, Herbert J. Deciding What's News. New York: Vintage Books, 1979.

Huston-Stein, A. and A. Higgins-Trenk. "The Development of Females: Career and Feminine Role Aspirations." In P.B. Baltes (ed.), Life-Span Development and Behavior (Vol. 1). New York: Academic Press, 1978.

Pingree, Suzanne and Robert P. Hawkins. "News Definitions and Their Effects on Women." In Laurily Keir Epstein, Women and The News. New York: Hastings House, 1978.

Russ, Joanna. How to Suppress Women's Writing. Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press, 1983.

Sigal, Leon V. Reporters and Officials. Lexington, Mass.: D.C. Heath and Co., 1973.

Spender, Dale. Women of Ideas. London: Ark Paperbacks, 1983.

Journal Articles Consulted

Broverman, Inge K., Susan Raymond Vogel, Donald K. Broverman, Frank E. Clarkson and Paul S. Rosenkrantz. "Sex-Role Stereotypes: A Current Appraisal." Journal of Social Issues 28 (1972): 59-78.

Buresh, Bernice. "Critical Mass." The Quill (September 1984): 14-20, 23.

Davis, Junetta. "Sexist Bias in Eight Newspapers." Journalism Quarterly 59 (1982): 456-460.

Drew, Dan G. and Susan H. Miller. "Sex Stereotyping and Reporting." Journalism Quarterly 54 (1977): 142-146.

Foreit, Karen G., Terna Agor, Johnny Byers, John Larue, Helen Lokey, Michael Palazzini, Michele Patterson and Lillian Smith. "Sex Bias in the Newspaper Treatment of Male-Centered and Female-Centered News Stories." Sex Roles 6:3 (1980): 475-480.

Morris, Monica B. "Newspapers and The New Feminists: Black Out as Social Control?" Journalism Quarterly 50 (1973): 37-42.

Orwant, Jack E. and Muriel Cantor. "How Sex Stereotyping Affects Perceptions of News Preferences." Journalism Quarterly 54 (1977): 99-107, 139.

Reis, Harry T. and Stephanie Wright. "Knowledge of Sex-Role Stereotypes in Children Aged 3 to 5." Sex Roles 8:10 (1982): 1049-1056.

Ruble, Thomas L. "Sex Stereotypes: Issues of Change in the 1970s." Sex Roles 9:3 (1983): 397-402.

Simpson, Peggy A. "Covering The Women's Movement." Nieman Reports (Summer 1979).

Ward, Jean. "Attacking the King's English: Implications for Journalism in the Feminist Critique." Journalism Quarterly 52 (1975): 699-705.

-----, "Check Out Your Sexism: A Quiz for Journalists." Columbia Journalism Review (May/June 1980).

Whitlow, S. Scott. "How Male and Female Gatekeepers Respond to News Stories of Women." Journalism Quarterly 54 (1977): 573-579, 609.

Newspapers Analyzed

Battle Creek Enquirer-News.
Detroit Free Press.
Detroit News.
Dowagiac Daily News.
Flint Journal.
Grand Rapids Press.
Holland Sentinel.
Houghton Daily Mining Gazette.
Huron Daily Tribune.
Lansing State Journal.
Lapeer County Press.
Ludington Daily News.
Macomb Daily.
Midland Daily News.
Monroe Evening News.
Petoskey News-Review.
Plymouth Community Crier.
Port Huron Times Herald.
Royal Oak Tribune.
Sturgis Journal.
Traverse City Record Eagle.

Newspaper Articles Consulted

"Abortion Dilemma: 'We Must Try to Find Ways to Change
Attitudes,' Says Sister Mansour of Controversy in State Job."
Detroit News, 16 February 1983, p. 1A.

- "Apology Due, Justice Says." Detroit Free Press, 17 February 1983, p. 1A.
- "Blanchard Choice Says No to High Court Seat." Detroit Free Press, 11 March 1983, p. 3A.
- "Brennan: Constitution Ignored in Riley Case." Macomb Daily, 3 March 1983, p. 2A.
- "Deficit May Slow State Tax Refunds." Lansing State Journal, 11 March 1983, p. 1A.
- "DNR Chief Leaving Frustration With His 'Impossible Job.'" Flint Journal, 6 March 1983.
- "DNR Chief Quits: Avoids Ouster Vote." Lansing State Journal, 25 February 1983, p. 1A.
- "DNR Post Takes Heavy Toll On Bosses, Before Tanner." Flint Journal, 6 March 1983, p. A6.
- "Ex-Chief Justice, Rates Boyle High." Detroit News, 23 March, 1983, p. 4A.
- "Is Tanner Resigning?" Lansing State Journal, 22 February 1983, p. 1B.
- "Judge Changes Her Mind and Her Court." Detroit News, 23 March 1983, p. 1A.
- "Mansour Must Quit, CNN Says." Lansing State Journal, 25 March 1983, p. 1A.
- "Nationwide Search is Launched to Find New Director for DNR." Grand Rapids Press, 17 March 1983.
- "No Payless Paydays, State Answers Schools." Detroit News, 18 March 1983, p. 3A.
- "Nun Told to Quit, Network Reports." Lansing State Journal, 26 March 1983, p. 1A.
- "Nun Wins Approval From Senate." Detroit News, 10 March 1983, p. 3A.
- "Nuns Back Mansour; Issue Goes to Vatican." Detroit News, 6 March 1983, p. 1A.
- "Panel Looks for New DNR Boss." Lansing State Journal, 26 February 1983, p. 3A.
- "Responding to a Higher Court Calling." Detroit Free Press, 23 March 1983, p. 13A.

- "Senate Confirms Mansour." Lansing State Journal, 9 March 1983, p. 1A.
- "Senate Committee Supports Mansour." Detroit Free Press, 9 March 1983, p. 1A.
- "Senate Panel to Quiz Nun on DSS Post." Detroit Free Press, 6 March 1983, p. 1A.
- "Some State Cuts Could Be REturned to Area." Port Huron Times, 31 March 1983, p. 3A.
- "State Bar Says Riley Case Closed." Detroit Free Press, 22 March 1983, p. 3A.
- "State Tax-Refund Till Running Low." Lansing State Journal, 11 March 1983, p. 1A.
- "State's Top Court May Become More Liberal." Detroit News, 13 February 1983, p. 1A.
- "Tanner's Job on the Line as 'Bosses' Meet Friday." Flint Journal, 23 February 1983.
- "Tanner To Step Down June 1 as DNR Director." Grand Rapids Press, 25 February 1983, p. 1.

Reports

East, Catherine and Dorothy Misener Journey. New Directions for News. Washington, D.C.: American Society of Newspaper Editors and The Women Studies Program and Policy Center of The George Washington University, 1983

National Organization for Women. Newspaper Monitoring Project. Arlington, VA.: NOW, Northern Virginia Chapter, 1973.

Unpublished Paper

Barnes, James, Mary Patterson, Lorrie Arden, Nam Jun Kang. "The Effects of Gender of Source and Reporter on News Coverage." Presented at The Status of Women Committee research session, Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communications, Gainesville, Florida, August 1984.

MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES



3 1293 03174 8712