Feminist Approaches to Journalism Studies:

Canadian Perspectives

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Abstract:

One of the orthodoxies of communication scholarship is that much of the gender-based differences between males and females with regard to experiences in newsrooms can be attributed to demographics. The discussion presented in this paper challenges this claim by comparing the findings of two national surveys that measured the professional progress of Canadian press and television journalists. The first survey was undertaken in 1975, and the second in 1995. While the historical evidence points to reductions in gender-based structural inequalities over time, it also identifies the continued presence of gender-based assumptions about how work and family obligations should be combined. Such assumptions, it is argued, help to foster and reproduce systemic biases in the newsroom culture that still resonate today in the journalism profession and which can be best understood as a manifestation of the meaning of gender at three levels: as a classifying system, as a structuring structure, and as an ideology.

Keywords: Gender; Canadian Press; Canadian Television; Canadian Journalists; Inequality; Bias; Ideology

Résumé:

Une des orthodoxies de la mission professorale de la communication est que la grande partie des différences basée sur les genres entre le masculin et le féminin, en ce qui concerne l'expérience en salle de presse, peut être basée sur la démographie. Les arguments présentés dans cet article contestent cette orthodoxie par la comparaison des résultats obtenus lors de deux sondages nationaux qui ont mesuré la progression professionnelle de la presse canadienne et des journalistes de la télévision. Le premier sondage a eu lieu en 1975 et le deuxième en 1995. La preuve historique démontre une baisse des inégalités structurales basée sur le genre, cependant elle identifie aussi le maintien de la présence des préjugés basés sur le genre à propos de la combinaison des obligations du travail et de la famille. D'après l'auteur, ces préjugés encouragent la reproduction systémique de partialité qui se trouve dans la salle de presse et qui influence encore la profession journalistique contemporaine par une manifestation de la définition du genre à trois niveaux : comme un système de classification, comme une structure de structuration et comme une idéologie.

Mots-clés: Genre; Presse Canadienne; Télévision Canadienne; Journalisme Canadien; Inégalité; Biais; Idéologie

Introduction

Despite the fact that gender and communication studies have begun to demonstrate that newsroom work is different for female and male personnel, communication scholarship continues to perpetuate the orthodoxy that women's different experiences in the newsroom are a result of their lesser numbers. In Canadian studies as recent as those of Pritchard and Sauvageau's *Les journalists Canadiens* (1999), gender is considered a biological attribute that exists in isolation from social characteristics like ethnicity, status, and education. Although this might have been a persuasive argument in the 1970s, gender studies have indicated that such a view is not only oversimplified, but factually wrong. News work for women is different because of *systemic* biases in the social reproduction of the profession. These systemic biases are recreated through classificatory and evaluative procedures that use gender dualisms to define women and ethnic minorities as "different" and then fall back on these classificatory differences as reasons for the unequal evaluations of women's newsroom activities.

In Canadian society, as in North America and Europe, these systemic biases are primarily grounded in gender-based assumptions about how work and family obligations should be combined. This is demonstrated by the fact that in spite of married women's increased employment at the beginning of the 21st century, their work outside the home has not reduced the time spent on their family roles, or increased their husband's family involvement (Armstrong & Armstrong, 1990). As a consequence, Pleck (1984) notes that employed wives face strain and exhaustion in combining what he calls their "dual roles". These gendered work and family role expectations begin to explain the predominance of males in such a prestige profession as

journalism, as well as how differently female and male journalists have to organize their working lives.

A Millennial Portrait of Canadian Print Journalists

In order to examine these structural issues, comparative national surveys were conducted in 1975 and 1995 to measure the professional progress of Canadian press and television journalists. They covered all 114 dailies and 118 television outlets that were in operation at the time. Information was obtained regarding: female/male participation rates; the organizational positions of females and males; professional beats and average salary levels. In the two decades between the surveys structural inequalities resulting from gender classification in Canadian journalism substantially diminished. The comparative evidence indicates that female progress includes more access, faster progress up the professional ladder, as well as increased pay in the media professions, factors that have also been observed in Europe (Melin-Higgins & Djerf-Pierre, 1998). In daily newspapers, female access grew from one in five in 1975, to about one in three at the turn of the century. In 1975 females constituted only 21% of the full-time employed Canadian print journalists whereas twenty years later they accounted for 28%. Although female participation in the print sector grew much more slowly (7%) than that in broadcasting (17%) during the two decades, the *total pool* of employed females in the two media sectors doubled from 504 to 962 in dailies and to 486 in television (Robinson & Saint-Jean, 1997: 6).

Another indication of the reduction of structural inequalities based on gender is found in women's progress up the professional ladder. In 1975 females were disproportionately clustered (62%) in the bottom positions of Reporter and Star Reporter, while in the nineties they held parity at the bottom of the job hierarchy. By the turn of the century, moreover, females were *proportionally* represented at all job levels. This is indicated by the fact that *all five* position descriptions—Reporter, Star Reporter, Desk Heads, Day/Night Editor, and the Assistant Managing Editor positions—had between 22% to 30% female representation. Comparisons of management positions in the U.S. and Canada showed that Canadian newspaper women were ahead of their U.S. sisters in managerial clout, even though they too continued to have difficulty achieving the Publisher position. There were an average of 10% female Editors-in Chief in Canada in all circulation types, versus a miniscule 0.8% in the U.S. The same discrepancies were found on the other management levels and furthermore demonstrate that circulation affects promotion differently in the two countries. In Canada, large circulation papers are females' best bet, while in the U.S. it is exactly the opposite, small circulation dailies offer the best managerial chances for female staff. At the second and third managerial levels, Canadian females held an average of one third (27%) of the Editor and Assistant/ Associate Editor's positions. Their U.S. sisters register only 14% in small circulation dailies, with proportions of less than 1% in the other two circulation categories. At the third management level, that of Managing Editors, Canada's female proportion was between 10% and 45% depending on circulation, whereas it ranged between 13% and 16% in the U.S. (Marzolf, 1993: 11).

Why these variations in the figures? As Epstein (1988) suggests, there is an *interplay* between gender, organizational and socio-psychological factors in the recruitment to top management which differs from country to country. Lűnenborg's (1997) interviews with European media professionals elicited heavily gendered responses with regard to the lack of females in management positions. Enlightened Danish and German male managers cited "a lack of qualified female candidates," which turns out to be a typical male gendered preconception

based on *presumption* rather than on *evidence* (Lűnenborg, 1997: 172-177). German and Danish female respondents were closer to the mark. They opined that only childless, and unmarried female journalists could accept a position with a 10-hour long working day (Ibid: 165). All together these findings demonstrate that females, who started out as a small minority in the media professions in the seventies, became numerous enough by 2000 to affect organizational change. In conjunction with these changes, the evidence also demonstrates that the "glass ceiling" moved up from Assistant Managing Editor to Editor-in-Chief. Even though only 6 females held this position, Canada was ahead of the U.S., Britain, France and Germany in female promotion into top print management (Ibid: 148).

A final indication of the weakening of gendered inequalities is found in female journalists' growing salary equalities, although parity still eludes them. Our evidence showed that there were three- to four-fold increases in weekly earnings over the quarter century for female staffers, with male salaries increasing even more steeply. In daily print, average weekly salaries ranged from $214 to $400 depending on circulation in 1975, while they grew to between $687 and $1,560 in 1995. Overall, large (over 100,000) circulation dailies located in Canada's largest cities such as Montreal, Toronto and Vancouver, paid their staffs double as much as small (under 50,000) circulation papers. Since 51% of all females worked in large circulation dailies in 1995, versus 14% in medium and 35% in small papers, women's more competitive salary levels are partially explained by their employment in metropolitan newspapers. Salary differentials are furthermore affected by sectorial differences. Pritchard and Sauvageau (1998: 381) indicate that daily print and TV journalists had the highest average salaries of $58,185 and $58,708 respectively in 1997, while radio and weekly print personnel received substantially less, an average of only $44,131 and $32,857.

Zelizer (1993) argues that these differences in professional experience constitute *systemic biases* that utilize gender and/or ethnicity to construct a system of social stratification in the profession of journalism. As demonstrated above, even though female journalists progressed in the twenty years between 1975 and 1995, females were still assigned to lesser beats, had slower promotion rates and were paid less for their work. As a consequence journalism has what Melin-Higgins and Djerf-Pierre (1998) call a "non-homogeneous" work culture. In it women and minorities are not equal participants. Although this gender stratification has been reduced for the younger group of professionals in the past thirty years, it has not yet been totally eliminated in the 21st century.

The "Glass Ceiling": What does it mean?

The Canadian and international evidence on the "glass ceiling" phenomenon suggests that there are two very general sets of social factors that inhibit career development. The first consists of the difficulty of combining professional with family responsibilities. Clearly the solutions to this problem depend partially on a given country's social legislation, including rules about maternity/paternity leave; the availability and cost of day-care; and society's options for the care of elders. The second has to do with male preconceptions concerning female's managerial capabilities. A 1995 Catalyst mail survey of 1,251 U.S. female vice presidents and 1,000 male CEO's identified six barriers to female advancement into corporate leadership, which graphically illustrates how gender affects managerial progress. The most important barrier, according to female executives is *interpretive* and consists of gender stereotyping of female managerial capabilities. Fully 52% of females, but only a quarter (25%) of males consider this barrier most important. It is followed by female executive's exclusion from informal organizational networks

and their lack of "line" experience. The final three barriers mentioned are: the inhospitable corporate climate for an executive recruited from outside, which is the fate of a majority of female candidates; a lack of mentoring; and the narrow definition of "experience", which is measured in "years worked for a company" rather than by more objective criteria. All of these criticisms are familiar to media managers in supervisory positions.

O'Leary and Ickovics (1992) point out that gender stereotyping is grounded in two attitudinal processes: gender stereotyping of work and social role preconceptions. Gender stereotyping of work refers to male managers' beliefs that females, as a result of their gender, are incapable of carrying out managerial functions, while social role preconceptions relegate females into the "private sphere" of the home and underrate their career commitment. When these expectations conflict, as in the selection for top management recruitment, they become particularly salient and are difficult to eradicate. This raises the question of: What exactly is going on here? It is important to remember that performance standards for managerial positions are often vague and there is little supervision. Consequently, trust becomes one of the major recruitment preoccupations (Agocs, 1989: 5). It follows, therefore, that the belief that female managers will drop out and are not committed to their careers, provides a substantial barrier (O'Leary & Ickovics, 1992: 10-11).

In addition there is the finding that female middle managers are reluctant to be promoted, while their male colleagues show none of this reticence. Interviews have documented two negative effects for female recruits to top management. They are first, the "isolation" a manager recruited from the outside encounters at the top, because she lacks her own network of relationships in the new organization. The second negative effect is her "token" status, which means that she is unable to marshal the resources of time and money to make her ideas happen (Kanter, 1980: 311). My own research has found a third negative effect: sexual harassment" which is, in all of its forms, more prevalent among female than male journalists. Kanter's organizational research discovered that there are not one, but two types of tokenism whose effects are different depending on the *group situation* in which a woman or minority finds herself at the top. If she is part of a "skewed" group setting (in the 30% minority range), she will be able to "bargain" with the majority, but if she is part of a "tilted" (less than 15% minority), she feels the full brunt of her "token" status. As a deviant individual, she is not only excluded from the informal power networks, but also side-lined from getting her ideas accepted and has to bear the additional burden of never being assessed on her own merit (Kanter, 1976: 240).

There is only one study, Keil (2001), which investigates what it *means* to adapt to a "tilted" management environment. Her interviews with female broadcast managers reveal that they are aware of their inability to change their newsrooms' formal structure, although they believe they have informal power to influence the organizational *culture*. Female managers attempt to do this through informal networking *across* organizational divisions, as well as modifying their own managerial behavior. Their strategies include being more democratic in decision-situations, introducing an "issue" focus in editorial meetings in order to undermine the competitive power rituals and consciously trying to restructure the gendered beat structure, by encouraging both genders to cover a variety of issue domains.

The final manifestation of isolation at the top, I found, is sexual harassment, which has not been systematically studied before in either Canada or elsewhere. My representative sample of female and male professionals (attitudinal survey) confirms the amazing fact that nearly half (49%) of all female staff, but only 39% of males answered "maybe" to the question: "Is sexual harassment a problem for female journalists?" To clarify harassment activities, feminist

scholarship suggests it be divided into three categories: verbal, psychological and physical. The interview evidence shows that female practitioners are most prone to verbal harassment with almost two-thirds (60%) of female staff having encountered it at least once. Psychological harassment comes in second place with almost one half (43%) of female media personnel encountering it, while physical harassment has been experienced as well by an astounding one-fifth (20%) of all females at least once. As expected, percentages are much lower for male staff: only 13% have experienced verbal, 9% psychological and a mere 1% have experienced physical harassment on the job. The proportions of female and male respondents who have *witnessed* harassment, in contrast, are extremely close. About one half of all staff has witnessed verbal harassment, a quarter psychological and a full quarter (26%) of female staff—but only 11% of males—have witnessed at least one case of physical harassment. All of these findings are significant at the $P < 0.05$ level and indicate that harassment is another gendered control mechanism by which a male majority keeps females in check.

The cumulative evidence shows that the "glass ceiling" persists because of the "attitudinal" and "interpretive" preconceptions of male managers. Attitudinally, it has been shown that male managers tend to choose to recruit people for top positions, on the basis of their own self-interest, rather than the qualifications of the candidate. O'Leary and Ickovics (1992: 14) call this the "rational choice" theory. Among the interpretive preconceptions that work against the female managerial candidates, as we have seen, are the ideas that they are not "work primary" and that they will therefore be less committed. Both of these preconceptions have been disproved by the evidence, but they nevertheless continue to inhibit the progress and effectiveness of female and ethnic staff in the heterosexual media workplace. The gender approach has also explained why females and minorities are reluctant to move into the journalistic management ranks at the present time. It has demonstrated that this reluctance is, in turn, a "rational response" to female managers' lack of personal networks, their exclusion from informal networks, as well as the stressfulness of playing the "token" role where personal qualifications become invisible. Moreover, the gender approach has discovered that "sexual harassment" is an additional strategy, which is practiced at all organizational levels for keeping female colleagues in check and that it is linked to their "token" status. The more "skewed" (less than 15%) the group situation in which a person finds herself, the more likely that sexual harassment will occur, even at the managerial top.

Constituents of a Theory of Gendered Journalism

According to Foss and Foss (1989) a proper theory of gendered journalism should have four characteristics. It should aim for "wholeness" and explain how the scattered findings about women in the media professions *systematically* fit together. The theory should furthermore move us out of what Creedon (1993) calls the *paradigm paralysis* that seems to have afflicted studies of the journalism profession. Most of these studies, including the Pritchard and Sauvageau (1999) research mentioned above, fail to make a connection between the profession's social structure and the working patterns of its practitioners. The theory should furthermore demonstrate how cultural and professional knowledge systems structure the activities of everyday life. A communication-based gender theory, which focuses on the *meanings* that people attach to their behavior, provides such a vantage point. The purpose of the discussion in this section is to develop a theoretical framework for understanding how media institutions "engender" different working practices for different types of employees and how these working

practices are, in turn, related to professional knowledge systems. This framework is made up of three components: a gendered and reflexive communication theory, Bourdieu's notion of "habitus" and a feminist ontology.

Demonstrating that gender is *constitutive* of all human social practices, provides a new and holistic entry point for theorizing journalism as a profession and for explaining the different roles females and males play within it (Rakow, 1986; Robinson, 1987). Communication scholarship has emphasized that journalism is not only practiced by a trained group of people, but that it fulfills important public meaning making and agenda setting functions. It also has shown that journalism professionals develop a special world-view with unique sets of ideals, values and rules. Among these are the ideal of objectivity, the value of neutrality and special rules pertaining to how reporting activities are to be carried out. Consequently, scholars like Zelizer (1993) argue that journalism is practiced by what she calls an "interpretive community" that has developed an identifiable "culture." Melin-Higgins and Djerf-Pierre (1998: 6) define this culture as "what a body of journalists at a particular point in history, feels, thinks.... [en]acts and is". As a living set of practices, journalism varies from country to country and from one epoch to another. Viewing journalism as having a "culture" enables us to identify the *processes* through which its practitioners make meaning, as well as the ways in which different groups *within* the profession develop different professional practices and outlooks. These differences are constructed over time and as a function of the prevailing power structure in the newsroom, where dominant (i.e., male) and subordinate (i.e., female and ethnic) professionals encounter very different work environments (Schudson, 1982).

Bourdieu (1991) has clarified how structural and socio-psychological characteristics in society are complexly interrelated with power through naming practices. He does this by demonstrating that naming practices permit the powerful to convert their institutional power positions in the job hierarchy into descriptive power through these naming practices, and by showing that the dominated groups themselves contribute to their subordination through learned "ways of life" (habitus) that provide complex models for acting and understanding everyday existence. This notion of "habitus" is particularly useful for understanding why women's struggles to acquire symbolic capital, like status and prestige in the social field of journalism, have not been nearly as successful as that of their male colleagues. Part of the reason for this discrepancy lies in the fact that perception structures in male dominated professions such as journalism, are based on binary evaluation patterns. These classify females as "other," as somehow deviant in social relations and in self-definition. Consequently many male practitioners continue to consider it "natural" to assign lower status to female professionals and to undervalue their reporting work. The "beats" females cover and their lower importance value in the daily description of public events are illustrative of these implicit evaluation patterns.

Feminist ontology, or the study of how we are, is a third domain that has helped feminist thinkers to shed light on how power structures in knowledge creation are maintained and recreated. Here, Haraway (1991) and others have demonstrated that knowledge is *not universal, eternal and value free,* but produced in a culturally and historically specific time and place. As such, bodies of knowledge arise from, and contribute to, social interests. Certain social groups, among them journalists, have maintained knowledge superiority from the Enlightenment onward, through their ability to classify the world in terms of biological dualisms that pit maleness against femaleness. In each of these classificatory systems, the "female" designated couplet is evaluated as less worthy (Cirksena & Cuklanz, 1992). Through the ability to name and to define, users of language systems constitute categories of thought and communicate hierarchies of

status. It is consequently not gender that causes women's behavior, but our *gender system* that places females into an inferior social position. The same gender system furthermore makes women's inferior location appear "natural" as though it results from biology and psychology, rather than from culture and power. North American and European cultures, in general, continue to reproduce and amplify these gender asymmetries that become viewed as part of the natural order through "habituation" (Bleier, 1987).

In analyzing the ways in which media organizations serve as sites for the reproduction of gender relations that privilege men over women, we are helped by the insight that gender is culturally constructed and therefore an unstable category of social organization and that language, which is implicated in knowledge creation, is central in maintaining female inferiority. A society's language and symbolic system defines and legitimizes what is to be taken as "true", what is "normal", as well as what is to be considered as "good" and "bad." Through language, information about which gender should be assigned to a person, and about how to act and react are conveyed to others in the communicative situation. The power distinctions constituted by the act of naming carry over into the social and evaluative realms in which we live as gendered beings. Here they become normalized and legitimated through social practices that Bourdieu (1991) calls "learned ways of life" or "habitus".

Understanding gender is at once very complex and very simple. It involves the recognition that gender is not only the name of a person, place, or thing, but that it functions *like a verb* and is integrally involved in the construction and interpretation of everyday events. As such, gender, like the notion of "selfhood," is developed through interactions with significant others who are users of particular language systems. Gender must thus be conceived not as a fixed property of individuals, but as part of an ongoing *process of naming* by which social actors are constituted and relate to their environment (van Zoonen, 1992). Epstein (1992) explains how this happens by observing that language itself helps to create "boundaries" by providing the terms by which real and assumed behaviors and things are grouped. These naming practices begin at birth. Gender is consequently "constructed" in relation to the existing power relations of the culture in question, as well as the gendered experiences one has over one's lifetime (Cirksena, 1987). Language philosophers like Elshtain (1982) have furthermore shown that language is both a mode of *description* as well as a mode of *expression*. Through speaking we influence others and, more importantly, rethink and reinvent our futures and ourselves. As Elshtain (1982: 144) puts it, "Speech is the central way we come to know ourselves, reveal ourselves to others and develop and express our identities."

Journalistic "Culture" in Canadian Newsrooms

Following Barthes (1977), the *meaning* of gender in a professional setting must therefore be studied on three theoretical levels: as a classifying system; as a structuring structure, and as an ideology. As a "classifying system", gender is used to assign social status in the media workplace, and manifests itself in the ways in which work assignments are made. As a "structuring structure", gender has behavioral consequences that manifest themselves in workplace "climate" and in the ways in which female reporters are expected to act in the heterosexual workplace. As an "ideology" gender notions permeate management practices and as we have seen, may also influence the styles of reporting that female and male practitioners employ (Robinson, 2005: 179-188). Each of these domains in which gender operates will now be appraised and documented through the Canadian "attitudinal survey." This second survey,

conducted in 1995, constructed a regionally weighted proportionate representative sample of 123 female (62) and male (61) journalists, matched by age, position and geographic location to systematically assess gender differences in workplace *experiences*. Here information was collected through interviews focusing on career paths, family obligations, work assignments, attitudes towards news work, and ethical issues.

The findings of the attitudinal survey corroborates that the "meanings of gender" lead to three types of socially constructed gender-based biases in the journalistic workplace and furthermore, that these biases are complexly interrelated and reinforce each other. As a "classifying system," journalism utilizes "masculinist" career notions. This is manifested in the fact that females, but not males are penalized for work interruptions. Overall, 27% of all participant female journalists, but only 19% of males at all levels of the newsroom hierarchy had interrupted their careers at least once. For females these career interruptions were overwhelmingly caused by the birth of a child. Men listed study, travel, or relocation as their main reasons for career interruptions. Yet, interviews established that the *evaluation* of these career interruptions was different for male and female media workers. For males, they are interpreted as "career-building" strategies, whereas for females, because they have to do with child-bearing, they are seen as "career-inhibiting." Melin-Higgins and Djerf-Pierre (1998: 6) correctly deduce from this state of affairs, that the journalistic "culture" defined as a working community that develops shared understandings about professional life, is *not homogeneous* or hegemonic.

As a "structuring structure", gender prescribes how females are supposed to *enact* their working roles. Although it initially was assumed that the newsroom's working "climate" was a relatively simple variable, reflecting a neutral "professional ethos" (Löfgren-Nilsson 1994:1), comparative research has shown that it too is organized around a man-as-norm and woman-as interloper model (Ross, 2000). Several researchers in Sweden, the United Kingdom and Germany (Melin-Higgins & Djerf-Pierre, 1998; Klaus, 1998) discovered that newsroom "climate" is in fact sexist in both tone and practice. Three of these symbolic practices used to reinforce male power superiority, have by now, been widely documented. The first is the newsroom's "communicative style" that has been described as permeated by joking. Melin-Higgins and Djerf-Pierre (1998) call it "locker room humor," whereas other researchers refer to it as "banter," which focuses on team sports and contains sexist jokes. In Canada, my interviewees mentioned that it utilizes football and ice hockey as its vehicle, which are team sports in which women's participation is not yet widely legitimated. Because females are generally not interested in contact sports, this informal communication practice turns out to be a not too subtle mechanism for excluding female reporters from workplace interactions and making them feel like outsiders.

The second aspect of newsroom culture is its "competitiveness." It draws attention to the fact that story assignment is not cooperatively worked out, but struggled over. In this contest, not only story areas (beats) but also interview assignments are gender stereotyped. High-profile interviews with politicians will be assigned to males, whereas low-priority health and school stories go to female reporters. Bourdieu (1991) explains this contest as an asymmetrical prestige exchange process, in which male incumbents are able to convert their "political capital" based on power in the newsroom hierarchy, into "cultural capital," namely desirable story assignments. Clearly such a gender-role positioning places female practitioners into an attitudinal double-bind, pitting their status against their competence (Klaus, 1998). A Canadian reporter mentioned: "We have helped bring issues traditionally deemed 'women's issues' such as health, parenting, and

family relationships…. off the lifestyles and on to the front pages of newspapers… [Yet,] we still have quite a way to go." A third aspect of newsroom culture is the pub visits that take place *after* the work day and which enable the "old boys network" to influence work assignments and to affect promotions. These visits extend the already long working day into the wee hours of the night and informally exclude all those female reporters with family responsibilities. By the mid-nineties, this group included more than three-fifths (65%) of all female practitioners who were married, whereas the married males (81%) were not so affected, because their wives fulfilled all family duties.

As an "ideology" gender differences affect workplace expectations in relation to "relationship building" tasks. To evaluate these differences we devised a unique set of questions suggested by female staff. In response to the inquiry "who does more of the following work?" our representative sample showed a surprising level of difference in the performance of three relationship building tasks: comforting colleagues (54%); being a lightning rod (41%) and answering the telephone (39%). The responses additionally revealed that female journalists were three times as likely as their male counterparts to "pick up after others" and "look for documents." These task differences demonstrate that the "mothering role," important in ensuring cooperation, has been imported from the home into the workplace. The ability to structure workplace "culture" in such a way that females disproportionately shoulder these labor intensive relationship tasks, also demonstrates that an "ideology" of gender continues to reproduce itself. Only one traditional activity, that of "coffee making" has over the years become de-gendered.

Conclusions: Journalistic Role Conceptions

With gender functioning as a "classifying system," a "structuring structure" and an "ideology" in journalism, one would assume that it would also be reflected in the definition of the profession's social role conceptions and the media's mission in contemporary democracy. These have been matters of public debate in Canada since the time that both the media and the profession endorsed the social responsibility mandate in the late 1950s (Saint-Jean, 2002). Initially, U.S. investigators viewed journalistic roles in dichotomous terms, questioning whether journalists considered themselves "messengers" or "agents of change." Since the eighties, however, factor analysis discovered that the professional understanding of U.S. journalists include, three attitude clusters: the adversarial, interpretive, and the disseminator roles (Weaver & Wilhoit, 1991). The Canadian survey adopted Weaver and Wilhoit's methodology and added gender as an important variable, to answer professional role questions. Using a list of "things that the media do or try to do today," respondents were asked to rate the importance of eight media roles on a 5-point scale, ranging from "very important" to "not important".

To our surprise we found that not only role conceptions, but notions of professional practice, based on various ethical stances, differed widely between the two countries and that gender was not an important consideration. In the mid-eighties, U.S. female and male journalists assigned primary importance to three media roles: investigating government claims (66%); getting information to the public quickly (60%) and avoiding stories with unverified content (50%). Their Canadian counterparts in 1995 made a different choice. For them, providing analysis of complex problems (63%) was in first place, getting information to the public quickly (60%) was in second, followed by investigating government claims, which ranked third (52%). These national differences, one might speculate, indicate that U.S. journalists are considerably more suspicious about their government agencies than Canadian professionals, and that the

competitive 24-hour news cycle seems to play a greater role there, than north of the 45th parallel. Beyond that, however, news agendas in the two countries in 1982/3 and 1995 must also be taken into account. In Canada at the time, news agendas were dominated by complex constitutional issues arising from Quebec's upcoming referendum on secession, which accentuated cultural differences, regional imbalances and the like. No wonder that "providing analysis for complex problems" topped the list of media roles (63%) for Canadian professionals. Gender differences turned out to be much less important than we had predicted. Both female and male professionals agreed that beyond "providing analysis", the most important additional role of the media in Canada was to "discuss national policy" (39% females to 27% of males). This results from the fact that in Canada the federation is constantly under stress from regional interests that differ widely from east to west. Consequently, the public broadcaster (CBC) was given the legal mandate to promote "national unity," since the first broadcasting act in the 1930s, a mandate not found in the United States. These findings show that journalistic values are not uniform in democratic societies, but constructed in relation to constitutional, legal and political contexts that differ from state to state.

Finally, there is the issue of the impact of ethical values on journalistic role conceptions, which have also not been widely investigated (Robinson, 1998: 364-366). To address these lacunae, we asked Canadian respondents to provide an approval rating (on a 5-point scale) of seven ethical practices that were isolated by Weaver and Wilhoit in 1991. Surprisingly, once again, the social context was more important than gender in evaluating general attitudes toward professional practices. Most likely this results from the fact that both genders receive the same workplace socialization either in journalism schools or in their on-the-job training. To gain a better understanding of the "degree of justification" that professionals in the U.S. and Canada attach to a set of seven practices, we expanded Weaver and Wilhoit's tripartite scale (may be justified, would not approve, unsure) to include two more options: highly justified and justifiable. To our surprise we found that Canadian journalists seem to be more critical of most ethical practices, giving *lower* approval ratings than their U.S. counterparts. Three practices: "getting employed in an organization to gain inside information", "badgering unwilling informants to get a story" and "making use of personal documents without permission" received approval ratings of only 31% to 63%, whereas their U.S. colleagues' ratings were between 48% and 82%. Both groups disapproved strongly however, of "paying people for confidential information", "claiming to be someone else", and "reneging on confidentiality", where ratings were between 17% and 2% among Canadian and between 48% and 5% among U.S. practitioners. Weaver and Wilhoit's comparison with British and German attitudes shows furthermore, that among the four democracies: Canada, the United States, Germany, and Great Britain, Canadian professional ethical attitudes were closer to those of Germany (e.g. more disapproving) and varied the most from professionals in Great Britain. They *agreed strongly* with six of the seven practices, by margins *above* 50% to every practice, except that of "divulging confidential sources" (4%) (1991: 139). Wilhoit and Weaver explain the British lack of ethical disapproval to the prominence of the tabloid press, which has no counterpart in the other three countries (1991: 138-142).

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