



# Research You Can Use

From: Association for Education in Journalism & Mass Communication  
*Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly* • Spring 2004

*For immediate release*

## Is Apathy Fostered by News Coverage?

**Contact:** Linda Jean Kensicki, School of Journalism and Mass Communication, University of Minnesota, phone: 612 625-9388, E-mail: [kensicki@umn.edu](mailto:kensicki@umn.edu)

Social apathy about public policy issues, such as pollution, poverty and incarceration, may be linked to how each are depicted in news coverage, a study finds in the current *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*.

In pollution, poverty and incarceration coverage, four newspapers rarely provided readers with information to participate and infrequently mentioned non-profit organizations, the content analysis reports. News coverage also depicted the underlying causes and responsible agents for pollution, poverty and incarceration as government, industry, natural forces rather than individuals or public interest organizations.

*The New York Times, Los Angeles Times, Albuquerque Journal and Houston Chronicle* further mentioned little likelihood of solutions more frequently than how to resolve pollution, poverty and incarceration issues. The study of 300 articles, published between 1995-2000, suggests individuals are rarely "found to be the cause, effect, or responsible agent for any of the three social problems," Kensicki writes.

Kensicki writes that, however inadvertent, a disconnect between social problems and the reader leads "to a sharply decreased sense of personal efficacy. Put another way, why would people find any of these issues directly relevant if they had no part in its cause, its effect, or its solution?"

Linda Jean Kensicki, "No Cure for What Ails Us: the Media-Constructed Disconnect Between Societal Problems and Possible Solutions." *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, Spring 2004, 81:1, 53-73.

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**Research You Can Use** is produced by a volunteer group of faculty and staff within the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (AEJMC). The group selects new research from AEJMC refereed journals that may interest journalists. Journalists may use the releases for stories or for continuing education.

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### Embedded Journalists More Favorable Toward Troops and the Military

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Embedded journalists were more favorable toward the military and troops during the first five days of the 2003 Iraq war compared to recent war coverage by non-embedded reporters from the same news organizations, a study finds in the current *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*.

News coverage by embedded journalists from the *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, *Los Angeles Times* and *Chicago Tribune* also was more episodic in nature, or was less likely to report the day's events in a broader context, compared to their recent war reportage, the content analysis finds. The authors, who are faculty, students and military public affairs officers, compared 291 articles written by the *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, *Los Angeles Times* and *Chicago Tribune* during the initial days of the 2003 Iraq war, the 2002 invasion of Afghanistan and the 1991 Gulf War.

The authors noted, however, that a favorable image of the military and individual troops did not influence the tone of overall reporting about the 2003 Iraq war in comparison with past conflicts. The tone of overall reporting about the war effort was similar in each of the four newspapers during all three time periods surveyed, the study explains.

"When reporters are embedded, they produce stories that are more personalized, based on the experiences of the troops and the units covered," the authors write. The reporting becomes, "a narrow slice," of the war, which provides more vertical depth than horizontal scope, the authors write.

Michael Pfau, Michel Haigh, Mitchell Gettle, Michael Donnelly, Gregory Scott, Dana Warr, Elaine Wittenberg. "Embedding Journalists in Military Combat Units: Impact on Newspaper Story Frames and Tone." *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, Spring 2004, 81:1.

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## **News Exec Gender Affects Coverage**

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Newspapers with a high percent of women news managers tend to report more favorable community news than male-managed news rooms, a study finds in the current *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*.

Women-managed news organizations emphasize more positive stories such as successful efforts to clean up an area river, the authors write. At the same time, male-managed news organizations tend to cover more negative stories, such as news about a town's water pollution, the authors explain. Male and female reporters also cover similar beats when news organizations are female-managed, the study finds. In male-dominated news organizations, men are more likely to cover politics and women are more likely to be assigned to business and education beats.

The study compared 30 randomly selected newspapers in 22 states with circulations under 12,000, less than 50,000 and more than 50,000. "On average a high newspaper had 66% women in editorial management; low newspapers averaged 23%," the authors write. Female-managed newspapers, "tend to encourage positive news reporting, or at least a focus on the positive aspect of stories. They also tend to treat their female reporters on a par with male reporters," Craft and Wanta write.

Stephanie Craft and Wayne Wanta. "Women in the Newsroom: Influence on Female Editors and Reporters on the News Agenda." *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, Spring 2004, 81:1.

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