



Research You Can Use

From: Association for Education in Journalism & Mass Communication
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For immediate release

Mainstream print media use old frames to cover new feminism

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Journalists offer only a limited and partial account of modern feminism, a study finds in the current *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, because they have relied heavily on using some of the same inadequate frames they used in depicting the feminism of the '60s to report on the current wave of feminism.

In an analysis of 94 news stories published between 1992 and 2004, the study found that feminists in the "second wave," launched 40 years ago, are described as strident, gruff, angry and radical, while members of the third wave, which arose in the '80s, are characterized as agreeable and friendly. Second wavers are mannish and unattractive; third wavers are feminine and pretty. And according to a new frame—Feminism Lite—second wavers are serious feminists while third framers take it all with a grain of salt.

By reusing the same sets of frames in their reporting, journalists can't capture any dynamic social movement, including feminism. While second wavers tended to coalesce around specific issues such as pay equity, the Equal Rights Amendment, stricter sentences for rapists and batterers and legal abortion, third wave feminists have expanded the definition of feminism. It's more individual and flexible, more independent of movement goals. It deals more with issues of race and class and heterosexism, and it deals differently with personal aesthetics. In short, third wave feminism is more complex, but its story can be told.

However, when journalists characterize the waves of feminism as static and opposing forces, they limit public understanding: for people outside the movement; for people within the movement; and for people who might find the movement relevant to them.

Carolyn Bronstein, Representing the Third Wave: Mainstream Print Media Framing of a New Feminist Movement. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, Winter 2005, 82:4.

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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Women in sports media like their work but still face obstacles

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Most women in sports media say they are satisfied with their career choice despite discrimination and abuse, a study finds in the current issue of *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*.

Like previous studies of women in sports media, the survey found that women still faced serious obstacles to tenure and advancement. Most women report that they have experienced sexual discrimination on the job, and almost half say they have been verbally abused. But overall, they say the job is still satisfying enough to offset a sometimes-hostile workplace.

The two biggest reasons women cite for leaving their careers are lack of advancement and the impact of their job on their lives outside of work. And although most see inequities in coverage of female sports, they are divided on whether they should lobby for more coverage. This runs counter to the theory that more women covering sports would automatically lead to more exposure for female sports.

The study surveyed members of the Association for Women in Sports Media, a national organization of women working in print, online or broadcast media and in sports information.

Marie Hardin and Stacie Shain, Strength in Numbers? The Experiences and Attitudes of Women in Sports Media Careers. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, Winter 2005, 82:4.

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The public and journalists have different expectations of media's role

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The public does not highly value traditional journalistic goals of serving as a watchdog or reporting the news rapidly, a study finds in the current issue of *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*. In fact, it values them less than journalists did in a comparable survey. By contrast, the public said providing a community forum - a principle of public journalism - was more important. African Americans, Hispanics, women, and adults with less education and income strongly endorsed the role of offering solutions to problems, also a public journalism principle.

In a survey of a southwestern metropolitan area, the respondents overwhelmingly said they wanted accuracy and unbiased reporting from the media. But an analysis of 13 roles and characteristics of journalism showed that the respondents were primarily interested in the media serving as a good neighbor that cared about and understood the community, highlighted interesting people and groups in that community and helped with problem-solving. Again, that was different from what the journalists envisioned in their survey.

The researchers suggest their work is evidence that the public and the press are on separate tracks headed in different directions and unless something is done to better meet the public's expectations, civic participation, newspaper readership and the credibility of the press may continue to decline.

Don Heider, Maxwell McCombs, Paula M. Poindexter, What the Public Expects
of Local News: Views on Public and Traditional Journalism.
Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly, Winter 2005, 82:4.

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