

DUBLIN BUSINESS SCHOOL

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THE HIDDEN SEXUAL ABUSE OF FEMALE WAR CORRESPONDENTS

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ABSTRACT

The possibility of sexual abuse, and the apparent reticence in reporting this abuse is a very real concern for female war correspondents. As the majority of those abused opt to keep the incident under wraps rather than highlight and report the issue, the source material available is dearth. This scarcity of literature does not represent the invalidity of the issue, but rather highlights the need for further examination, discussion and analysis of the subject.

This thesis argues that this abuse *does* exist, and aims to provide an understanding of the psychology and reasoning behind the associated secrecy. Using a qualitative method, the basis of argument for the thesis relies for the most part on first hand interviews with former and current war correspondents, and journalists, both male and female, in addition to case studies and the existing limited source material.

My central argument is that sexual abuse of female war correspondents exists and *is* hidden. The framework of this psychology is articulated in chapter 1, where this mindset of suppression is established and maintained in the female journalist through social conditioning and newsroom culture. Divisions of culture in the field are explored in chapter 2, and several scenarios and case studies of instances of sexual abuse are highlighted and analysed. The final chapter focusses on stress disorders after assault, how these correspondents and their peers react; revealing the complexity of issues affiliated with this active concealment.

The study concludes with a recommendation to re-examine this area forensically with global reach, provide appropriate training before covering an area of conflict and confidential counselling after experiencing trauma and assault, and to re-address the structure of trust and discourse in the newsroom regarding the subject of sexual abuse.

It's constantly on a woman's mind that you're not just in fear of the danger of kidnapping or being shot, but of being sexually violated. That's something we always carry with us.

-Judith Matloff, *Women on War*.

INTRODUCTION

When covering areas of conflict, female correspondents have been, and are at continued risk of becoming victims of sexual assault. This issue of rape, although not widely documented, is a well known, prevailing issue for women war reporters while working in the field. Before 1970, only 6 per cent of foreign correspondents were women¹, when the main concern seemed to have been gaining access to the areas of conflict in the first place.

However, considering documented reports of sexual assault are scarce, the theory that instances of sexual assault did *not* occur at this time cannot be assumed. Nonetheless, with the tally steadily rising in recent years, female reporters are the norm, not the exception, and the added dangers for women on foreign assignment in war-torn areas need to be finally addressed. As a rule, female journalists that are subject to abuse do not report their respective assaults for a variety of different reasons, one of which is the stigma of the 'vulnerable' label: the adverse effect on gender equality and the possibility of subsequent refusal from assignments because of the potential danger for the weaker gender. Therefore, this abuse is effectively 'hidden' from the public domain and hence imperative support structures for these women are not in place. If there is no issue, there is no need for specific training.

In areas of conflict with corrupt figures in authority, rape is used as a retribution tool for 'outspoken' published articles and as a weapon to silence local female journalists in developing nations, primarily in parts of South America and Africa. These local journalists face the added risk of politically motivated attacks. The only known reported instance of sexual assault on a journalist is the case of Jineth Bedoya Lima who was kidnapped and gang-raped in Bogota Colombia in 2000 in what she took to be retaliation for her newspaper's coverage of the conflict between the

¹ Dietrich, H. (2002) *Women in war zones: more female journalists are covering foreign conflicts, but many are still fighting old taboos*. Retrieved May 12, 2010 from http://www.accessmylibrary.com/coms2/summary_0286-26740178_ITM

Colombian government and paramilitary groups. Winning the International Women's Media Foundation's (IWMF) Courage in Journalism Award in 2001 for her continued reporting after the horrific ordeal, Bedoya continues to cover the wars between the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), the paramilitary groups, the armed forces, and the government.

“Unspoken. Foreign correspondents and sexual abuse”² by Judith Matloff is perhaps the only available published article that highlights the issue of sexual abuse of female war correspondents and the fact that its secrecy is a real problem. Matloff worked as a foreign correspondent for 20 years in a total of 62 countries, reporting on major world matters. In addition to other projects, she is also on the advisory board of the Dart Center for Journalism and Trauma, that is “dedicated to informed, innovative and ethical news reporting on violence, conflict and tragedy”.³ “Unspoken”⁴ cites many unnamed sources (both friends and colleagues of Matloff) who were subjected to some form of sexual assault when covering conflict. Not only were these attacks not reported but the general feedback is that, despite the hidden nature of these occurrences, many correspondents are aware of what goes on. It is, as Matloff’s title affirms, simply unspoken. Accepted as part of the job, especially in countries where women are seen as second class citizens, minor sexual assaults appear to come with the job specification, while forced intercourse is viewed as an occupational hazard to be quickly smothered for the sake of current and future assignments. The abuse tends to be viewed 'in perspective' in regards to the war atrocities they are covering. Matloff’s article was inspired when researching for a completely different project, her source spoke of a personal assault in Iraq, and upon mentioning this to a close friend, her friend revealed a similar experience. These cases and dozens more were revealed to the seasoned reporter.

² Matloff, J. (2007). Unspoken: Foreign correspondents and sexual abuse. *Columbia Journalism Review*, 46(1), 22-23. Retrieved from Academic Search Complete database. [Appendix 1]

³ *DART CENTER FOR JOURNALISM & TRAUMA*. Retrieved April 10, 2010 from <http://dartcenter.org/overview>

⁴ Matloff, “Unspoken”

The International News Safety Institute (INSI) that aims to “create a culture of safety in media”⁵ conducted a survey in 2005 to identify issues of safety faced by females in the media who work in areas of conflict. Only 29 questionnaires of 150 that were sent to international journalists were returned in the survey that is referred to in “Unspoken”⁶. The small ratio of replies, despite the anonymity of the survey, suggests the reluctance to discuss these issues, whether victims of assault or not. Discomfort at addressing the subject of sexual assault, reluctance to relive a particular incident, or perhaps doubt in the possible benefit participating in such a survey, may all be reasons for the low tally of respondents. However, more than 50 per cent of the respondents admitted experiencing sexual harassment, and two disclosed being subjected to sexual abuse. The poor response rate and the affirmation that there *are* safety issues and concerns indicates a need for a more extensive full scale scientific study.

Newsroom conventions and ease of discussion surrounding sexual issues is a key area to address as it is, from this base, that the majority of the correspondents on foreign assignment form their outlook on what is expected of them, what would hinder their career going forward, and which colleague (if anyone) would be appropriate to ask for advise, training, consolation, or to simply be a non judgemental ear on the subject. Mick McCaffrey, Security Editor with *The Sunday Tribune*, vocalises his perception of the newsroom setting as a pre-conflict platform in terms of the relationships between editors and journalists, male and female, and the general attitude towards issues of sexual abuse in the workplace.

The respondents in the INSI survey also suggested issues with the hostile environment (HE) training currently in place, specifically sexually inappropriate behaviour. The training and preparation correspondents receive before entering a war zone is essential, and so acceptance of discriminatory attitudes prior to embedding these danger zones does not suggest a circle of trust or

⁵ *About INSI*. Retrieved April 10, 2010 from http://www.newssafety.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=133&Itemid=100060

⁶ Matloff, “Unspoken”

protection that female reporters could rely on.

Research into the effects of the coverage of areas on conflict on the health of journalists is only beginning. Taking a combination of previous studies of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), the Dart Centre indicates a high percentage of PTSD in war correspondents in particular. Symptoms of the disorder, apart from persistent re-experiencing and increased arousal/hyper-vigilance, include an avoidance of stimuli associated with the trauma, such as talking about the event. In addition, trauma after sexual assault taxes the psychological resources of an individual further as reporting may incur reactions of disbelief and hostility from colleagues and police. Feelings of shock, fear, and guilt that are associated with this type of assault may have the effect of silencing the subjects of sexual attacks. They suffer alone as the conviviality of sharing war stories of wounding and near death experiences is not associated with the shame of physical violation. Speaking to Gavin Rees, director of Dart Centre Europe, who has done extensive research into the impact of violence, the added danger of this isolation following a foreign assignment is that it will be accepted by colleagues as a result of exposure to the war elements and atrocities, and not necessarily an indication of a personal sexual assault.

The aim of this thesis is to analyse the factors why the correspondents are reluctant to go on record to report this sexual abuse; and to continue to highlight the very real problem that exists. An understanding of why these women keep the assaults under wraps and why a well known issue is so little documented may help deter future instances or at the very least inspire an environment that encourages and comforts without stereotype and patronage. With limited records and because of the secrecy around sexual assaults, it is hard to judge their frequency. Primary sources of both genders were contacted for their own experiences, knowledge and opinions on the subject. Contributions from Matloff, Rees and McCaffrey were welcomed in addition to interviews with former and current war correspondents, aiding the well of information sought for the benefit of this thesis,

considering the severe lack of documented research previously completed.

The strange paradox is that these women, whose morals as journalists compel them to expose the truth for better or worse, unfortunately feel restricted by their fears and keep their worst personal secret to themselves.

CHAPTER 1: THE SEED OF SECRECY

Reflecting on the feedback from the interviews conducted, and as a prelude to the relationships established in the newsroom, the theory of social conditioning is definitely something that has to be taken note of. To truly understand the framework set and maintained between journalist and editor in the period prior to a foreign assignment, this historical, albeit perhaps unpopular, approach is required. The purpose of this thesis, as I stress throughout, is not to highlight the differences in gender for their own sakes, but how these differences contribute to the final decision a female war correspondent makes when it comes to reporting a sexual assault that occurred while working in a conflict zone. Classroom culture inevitably translates to newsroom etiquette with the aid of media representation and construction. Perceptions of what roles men and women should occupy although somewhat evolved from the caveman era, still have not reached equilibrium. It is a combination of this lack of growth in these perceptions, the oblivion of this lack, and paradoxically an overcompensation for this lack that affects the relationships founded when a woman begins her career as a journalist. The contrast of this overcompensation is seen when differences between gender fail to be addressed regarding issues of protection, especially prior to travelling to a country of war, in addition to the inadequate general openness and levels of trust in the newsroom when it comes to reporting or even speaking about sexual assault. The strength of the relationship established initially between a female journalist and her editor and colleagues is essential in providing a supportive and ultimately safe environment in which to express fears, expose vulnerabilities, make suggestions, and report assaults.

Social Conditioning

From toy trucks and building blocks to Barbie doll houses, the implantation of ideas of what life should be like for a particular person based on society's criteria begins before one can even speak.

Granted, the 'odd' child may rebel against what has been given as a birthday present, preferring to play with their sibling's knick-knacks instead. The mindset that it is unnatural for a 3 year old boy to don a pink apron and cook a plastic egg in his mock mini kitchen has been placed there by society's culture and solidified through mainstream media. Gender roles are the expected behaviours, attitudes, obligations, and privileges that a society allocates to each sex.

With cases like the well adjusted toddler above, society has come to accept that there are exceptions to their typecast rules, despite strongly suggested guidelines of what way each gender should behave. Enter the ambitious young female reporter. Generally speaking 'normal' feminine traits would not be appropriate in a 'typical' reporter, so we see a short-lived relief as the journalist casts off her gentle disposition and puts down her sewing needle only to don a scowl and a chip on her shoulder as she lifts her pen and notepad. The concept of journalism as a 'macho' profession is yet another social construct, notwithstanding substance for the stereotype, that women are expected to conform to if procuring the role. Marlowe suggests they begin on a back foot, sensing they must prove themselves worthy of the role from the outset. She believes that "women feel they have to be twice as good as men to get the same recognition...this kind of self conditioning."⁸

To become the epitome of the ambitious, hardened reporter that is sought after when a journalistic career first beckons, women enter an environment where they feel they should leave all feminine traits at the door. Sally Lehrman, an award-winning medical reporter and director for the Society for Professional Journalists (SPJ), emphasises the expected role of the journalist.

Today, many editors will tell you they know exactly what they want in an 'ideal journalist' - in job postings on journalismjobs.com, they seek reporters who are 'goal driven' and 'aggressive', prepared to compete with the 'big boys'. Important qualities, certainly, but is this male stereotype really all there is to it? What about being persistent, verbally talented, or good at developing trust with sources? These skills, stereotypically female, are just as important.⁹

⁸ Phone Interview with Lara Marlowe. April 8, 2010

⁹ Lehrman, S. (2010) *Unconscious stereotypes slow newsroom diversity*. Retrieved May 12, 2010 from <http://www.spj.org/rrr.asp?ref=8&t=diversity>

There is a clash in perceptions, expectations, and requirements; or rather an urge to have a specific box (black or white please) to place everything and everyone in. Women are raised in a social construct that approves of docility, domesticity, and duty in the female gender. The fact that not all women want to adhere to these characteristic suggestions does not necessarily mean that the exact opposite must therefore apply. Utilising the qualities, traits and talents that they *do* have to ensure the best reportage as a journalist, and in this case as a war correspondent, is more effective than morphing into an editor's ideal as one of the 'big boys'.

Herein lies another anomaly. While women journalists recently polled by the International Women's Media Foundation overwhelmingly agreed (92%) that women bring a “different, more human perspective” to news coverage “at least some of the time”¹⁰, Kazickas recalls with distaste the bracket she felt she was expected to write in during the Vietnam War. ““Why aren't you writing about orphans and refugees and the social life of Saigon?’ We were still prisoners of the women's pages then,” she remembers, “Very few females reported on the war itself.”¹¹

Social conditioning and gender constructs, as theories by definition aspire to label and distinguish rules for each sex clearly, only serve to confound and irritate, as in the case of Kazickas. Whether male or female, with a penchant for compelling real life stories or an urge to get into the thick of the fighting, the quality of the work produced is the basis on which the journalist should be regarded.

Yet there is one gender specific attribution that may not be ignored, particularly in relation to a female journalist who is set to cover a war in the field. The conflict that women encounter today between having a successful career and being a good mother tends to be that employers feel that both areas cannot be performed to the optimum at the same time.

¹⁰ *About the IWMF*. Retrieved April 10, 2010 from <http://www.iwfmf.org/about.aspx>.

¹¹ Amoruso, C. *Women on War*. Retrieved May 12, 2010 from http://www.imdiversity.com/villages/hispanic/latinas/women_war0401.asp.

Although a female might adequately (but perhaps not superbly) manage the responsibilities of both motherhood and career, many employers, although the opinion is not openly discussed, are not likely to choose her for a promotion because the fear is that she will most probably allow parental duties interfere with job performance. This anxiety is increased with the possibility that the woman may have another child, thereby requiring maternity leave and a temporary replacement at this time. On the other hand, for men, the role of parent does not carry this stigma. Of course they do not actually *harvest* the baby themselves but aside from maternity leave and a recuperation period, mothers and fathers are viewed differently in the newsroom, a perspective Foreign Correspondent for *The Sunday Times* Christina Lamb finds unfair.

... I frequently get asked about you know, 'How can you as a mother go off and leave your child and go into these dangerous situations?' Which is fair enough to ask but I don't see my male colleagues being asked that and I don't really see why it should be different. I've always been doing this; I trust that I kind of don't make stupid, reckless decisions on the ground. Of course, having a child does change you. I don't take some of the risks that I would have taken before.¹²

Some women correspondents report that their willingness to put themselves in harm's way diminishes at the birth of a child. Is this the 'extra mile' forsaken that editors feel produces an excellent journalist? Judith Matloff is one mother who, before her son was born, considered integrating her new role as mother into her correspondent work in the world's conflict areas. However, when he was born, her priorities changed. "How could I do anything that would leave him motherless?" she thought.¹³

The many questions that the above subject alone raises corresponds to an uneasy relationship between male and female colleagues, whether editor or reporter. The result of this unease is a creation of yet more of an atmosphere that is neither inviting enough to allow the expression of fears, nor comfortable enough in addressing differences between gender. Because of so many 'grey'

¹² Han, E. *Women Reporting from war zones*. Retrieved May 12, 2010 from <http://www.abc.net.au/correspondents/content/2009/s2670584.htm>.

¹³ Amoroso, C. *Women on War*.

areas caused by conflicting constructs and stereotypes, highlighting yet another barrier, the issue of sexual abuse, in the glaring abyss between male and female journalists is akin to adding salt to an open wound. Nobody wants to do it, and nobody wants to be responsible for it.

Newsroom Culture

In any context, the contrasting roles of reporters and editors inevitably lead to a special frictional dynamic. Traditionally, the editor is the moderator (and sometimes destroyer) of the reporter's precious and sensitive craftsmanship. This relationship does not need to remain unsteady however, with an improved relationship having a direct influence on the performance of news production and output according to McCaffrey.

Relationships between reporters and their editors are vital. If an unhappy work environment exists then you will see it in the quality of the papers...I have heard of newsrooms where reporters are constantly shouted at and belittled by their editors. I personally do not see how that helps to get out a good paper. I was the victim of that bully-boy behaviour in a previous job and it really damages morale and creates fear and resentment.¹⁴

Specifically in relation to the subject of rape while on assignment, or even the subject of sexual assault, this relationship between editor reporter is key in forming an environment that allows frank discussion and unbiased support. However despite McCaffrey insisting he uses “close relationship with the staff to address any issues”¹⁵, this openness can be made more difficult when, in the majority of cases, the editor is male. Despite two national newspaper editors in Ireland being female; according to a 2001 study by Northwestern University's Media Management Center, the general figures are slightly more disappointing with only about 30 per cent of women holding top editorial positions and filling senior management jobs in newspapers.

Whether it is in relation to anxieties a female reporter may have regarding the safety of an assignment, or an awareness or involvement in a sexual attack that she needs to feel comfortable enough to share with a colleague; a framework of trust between male editors and female journalists

¹⁴ Email interview with Mick McCaffrey. May 29, 2010.

¹⁵ Ibid.

is imperative to allow this openness and prevention of future assaults to occur. Rees reflects that:

It comes down to admitting the possibility of being a victim in the future, and how male editors address this. It *is* constructive to talk about it (potential sexual assault). It may depend on the personality of the editor, how *they* would feel talking about these issues in the future.¹⁶

Although McCaffrey asserts a solid relationship of trust and support between himself and his reporters, he does admit that although it may be “a daunting prospect for a reporter to go directly to the editor with a complaint”, “it is all about relationships though” and his female editor “is very approachable...if people needed to talk to her then they would feel comfortable doing so.”¹⁷

Between a reticence on the side of the woman journalist in her pressure to be like 'the boys' and the personal discomfort and embarrassment of the individual male editor to discuss these potential dangers and incidents of rape, before and after the fact; the chances of creating an ease in the newsroom environment to allow adequate discourse appear slim. Sharon Schmickle, a foreign affairs reporter for the *Minneapolis Star Tribune* and contributor to the work of the DART Center agrees that the lack of open communication in the newsroom on the issue of the dangers of, and incidents of, sexual assault can affect the chances of a female journalist reporting the attack.

It is consistent with a broader reluctance in journalism to report or even acknowledge psychological trauma from covering war for fear of not being seen as tough enough. I am sorry to say that newsrooms are in the dark ages on these subjects - behind, even, the military. Of course, it's not an acceptable reason for hiding the abuse.¹⁸

Even the attitudes of male colleagues in the newsroom seem affected by the suppression of discussion of genuine concerns and instances of sexual abuse. The fact that it is not addressed properly across the newsrooms can possibly explain the humour and lax attitude towards gestures and acts of sexual harassment. Matloff outlines her own experiences of “plenty of harassment, guys hitting on me or making inappropriate comments or pinching...probably the most inappropriate comments came from colleagues.”¹⁹

¹⁶ Phone interview with Gavin Rees. April 19, 2010.

¹⁷ McCaffrey interview.

¹⁸ Email interview with Sharon Schmickle. April 14, 2010.

¹⁹ Email interview with Judith Matloff. April 12, 2010.

These acts could easily translate to a more serious assault if not tackled in the appropriate way. However, McCaffrey is anxious to point out that while he has been a journalist for seven years and in senior editorial positions for five of those years, no incident of sexual assault in the newsroom has occurred as far as he is aware²⁰. The concern of this study is not to highlight and expose the risk of sexual harassment and inappropriate behaviour in the newsroom, however, but to analysis the effect of the culture of the newsroom on the decision of a female journalist to report a sexual assault while covering war. Lack of structure and policy in the newsroom in combination with the aforementioned attitudes and learned behaviours of both genders translates to potential dangers of sexual assault where the attacked journalist is not convinced that her report of the rape will be addressed in an appropriate way. This in turn does not bode well in the prevention of further possible assault, as the first incident has not been highlighted and addressed. Each subject feels isolated with no framework of support, while possible assailants are effectively protected by this negligent structure in the newsroom. As the risks of sexual assault for the female journalist in an area of conflict are heightened, the objectives and groundwork before being allocated a foreign assignment are even more essential.

Unless these editor-reporter relationships and newsroom cultures are strengthened to accept that sexual assault for female journalists *is* a very real issue, while dismissing the immature reaction and repulsion of the subject, the danger for these war correspondents is only increased.

Training or lack of..

The coverage of war conflict in general *is* an aspect of journalism that has begun to be addressed as not just another facet of the job, but a highly dangerous avenue requiring prior training and post war (trauma) counselling. A new international Code of Practice²¹, published by the International News Safety Institute (INSI), has been developed and formed by the International

²⁰ McCaffrey interview

²¹ *International Code of Practice*. Retrieved on May 12, 2010 from <http://www.journalistsatrisk.org/?article=21>

Federation of Journalists with the International Press Institute and other professional organisations. The INSI “is dedicated to the right of all journalists to exercise their profession free from persecution, physical attack and other dangers to life and limb.”²² The institute realises that while some risks cannot be avoided no matter what training or experience is held by a particular journalist, it aims to “strive for the elimination of unnecessary risk, in peace and in war.”²³ This code outlines the basic safety measures and precautions that should be taken and adhered to by both editors and journalists before entering a hostile environment, with a strong emphasis on preparation and prior knowledge of the area of conflict. Certain practices included in this code would also contribute to the protection from and prevention of sexual abuse for female war correspondents in these hostile areas, including an urge to provide mandatory risk awareness training for journalists and free confidential counselling after involvement in distressing events.²⁴

Awareness is required by top level management and editors on responsibility, financial liability, and operational issues. This includes condemning unnecessary risk-taking, making assignments to war zones or other hostile environments voluntary only, and providing proper training and equipment for those assignments.

Apart from editor and management being conscious of this need for prior training and for putting hands in pockets for the funds to allow this, the onus is ultimately on the journalists themselves as it is they who will be working in these conflict zones. Journalists in dangerous situations must constantly re-evaluate risks and know when to back down.

As Terry Anderson, Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) honorary co-chairman and former Associated Press Beirut bureau chief, who was held hostage for nearly seven years in Lebanon, has said:

²² *About INSI*

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ *International Code of Practise.*

Always, constantly, constantly, every minute, weigh the benefits against the risks. And as soon as you come to the point where you feel uncomfortable with that equation, get out, go, leave it. It's not worth it. There is no story worth getting killed for.²⁵

The trouble is that the the specific area of sexual abuse of female war correspondents in war coverage has yet to be effectively addressed, and with the continuing trend of suppression of these attacks as a result of the factors outlined in this thesis, and without further research and analysis on the subject, rape of these journalists fail to be seen as a genuine concern. Matloff attempts to highlight this 'unspoken' rape issue so that more specific training courses geared for, and taught by, women come to fruition.

INSI is trying to put together a safety course for female journalists in Afghanistan. That's the only one that I know of which is specifically geared towards prevention.²⁶

Simple tips such as informing an editor at home of the day's schedule in detail, and abandoning competitiveness in favour of safety by informing at least one trusted individual of this itinerary, can act as an aid for developing an emergency contingency plan should a female journalist disappear. It won't however protect against unwanted sexual attention against a source, a translator, a colleague, or a native; nor will it encourage the reporting of such an incident to a colleague or superior after the fact.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Matloff interview.

CHAPTER 2: CIRCUMSTANCE & CONCEALMENT

Despite efforts to dismiss and active protests against differentiation between men and women reporters as outlined in chapter 1, the mere force with which many female reporters in the journalism profession employ to maintain this balance can reveal difference enough. One of the leading female war correspondents who resented the male-female distinction was Gloria Emerson:

For many years after the war there was one question posed to me, over and over again, that I refused to answer because it was frivolous. What people kept asking me was this: “What was it like being a woman in Vietnam?” as if I might discuss a career opportunity. I wanted the harder questions. Recently, in a radio interview, I was asked it once more and said: “I don't know; I've never been a man.”²⁷

This quote however is included in the introduction to *WarTorn*, a book that compiles a set of stories gleaned from female war correspondents that covered the Vietnam War. The book effectively reveals what is *was* like for a woman covering the war, a difference that Emerson eventually decided to acknowledge by lending her voice to the book.

This chapter outlines these differences between men and women journalists in a conflict setting. The intention of this thesis is not to simply highlight these differences, but to note that as a result of these differences, among other factors, sexual abuse is firstly more likely, and then, subsequently hidden from the public domain. Fear of sexual assault is one defining emotion that is rarely discussed. It is still shameful for a woman to admit to rape and a regrettable comment on a male-dominated work culture that, to this day, it cannot be reported openly to one's superiors.

Refusing to accept that they are not ‘one of the boys’, or on the opposite end of the scale, playing up their gender in a ‘flirty’ way, can result in female correspondents placing themselves in risky situations that may have otherwise been avoided. This recklessness or second guessing after the fact incurs feelings of guilt that are explored below, and explain to some extent (and in some instances) the reluctance to tell of the assault.

²⁷ Bartimus, T. et al. *War Torn: The Personal Experiences of Women Reporters in the Vietnam War* (London: Random House Publishing Group, 2004) p.xv

Of course, these ambitious women are concerned with the trajectory and prospects of their career. The framework of trust established with their news editor, as explained in Chapter 1, can go a long way to the final decision a reporter may make on revealing an assault. This chapter concludes with an analysis of the fear of the ‘vulnerable’ female being removed from current or future assignments.

Divisions of Culture and Gender

As the number of female war correspondents continues to grow, simple day to day living in areas of conflict is amended to include and accept the presence of women as natural. From adapting flak jackets allowing female journalists to use them as urine stalls to abandoning vanity in the face of hair growth and noxious arm pits, joviality tends to mask any discomfort caused by the more obvious gender differences. Katie Webb fondly albeit bashfully recalls one particular incident in Vietnam:

As I marched out into leech-infested paddies one day, my turn came to pass a top sergeant handing out condoms. “Jesus, Katie, I don't have a cork!” he said.²⁸

Yet, despite these attempts to blend in and close the gender divide, the culture divide *is* nonetheless apparent in the attitudes of foreign cultures, particularly towards Western women journalists. This serves to expand the gender differences further, socially acceptable or not. Whether it is the clothing they wear, the profession they follow, or the ‘masculine’ attitudes towards drinking and sex the female journalists may have, the acknowledgement of this behaviour is even less acceptable in areas of conflict than in the newsroom. Western women are seen as promiscuous at best.

In Islamic countries only 55 per cent of the population believe in gender equality and only 35 per cent approve of divorce, compared with 82 per cent and 60 per cent respectively in Christian countries. In general the view in Islamic countries is that women should be in the home rather than at work. Even educational opportunities are widely thought to be wasted on women in Islamic countries, for instance in Egypt about 40 per cent of the population think that "university is more

²⁸ Ibid. P. 83

important for a boy than for a girl" whereas only about 5 per cent of respondents in Britain believe this.²⁹

Women in general in many areas of conflict including parts of the Middle East and Africa are treated as second class citizens. In some countries women can be raped and killed without any police intervention.

I believe there are countries where women correspondents would be targeted for rape and other abuse. I say that because I have interviewed women who live in those countries and heard stories of hideous and widespread abuse. In a culture where such treatment of women is tolerated, there is every reason to think foreign women could be targeted too.³⁰

Schmickle believes that the restrictions and abuses on the female gender in these countries coupled with the very dim view of Western women as loose and immoral does not present the most ideal setting for the female correspondent.

The Grey Areas: Sexism v Bad Judgement

Contrasting with the earlier image of refuting anything that would mark a difference between male and female journalists, there are then examples of those who wear the feminine 'costume'.

Donned as a gateway to a story that is inaccessible to their male counterparts; as a method of pressing sexually repressed men for information or interviews; or out of simple ignorance of what is 'correct', this 'sexy' attire can serve to cause resentment in male reporters as what they may see as a misuse (or hypocritical use) of the female gender. Do female reporters have the right to use their guile in whatever way they see fit considering they have had so much to fight for to get to an even keel with male reporters? Does this expression of sexuality diminish what they have fought so hard for? Could wearing these clothes in an area where Western women have already been cast as wanton hussies make it harder for a female reporter (or themselves) to report an assault? The reason

²⁹ Norris, P. & Inglehart, R., 2002 *Islam & the West: Testing the Clash of Civilizations*. Thesis. KSG Working Paper. Harvard University.

³⁰ Schmickle interview.

for the questions is because this area is very grey (and somewhat politically incorrect), yet I feel essential to be addressed in this context. The responses (and behaviours) of the war correspondents themselves vary so greatly that this possible factor of subjugation of a sexual incident is approached as a discussion of the subject below.

Lara Marlowe revealed her shock at a well known but unnamed female correspondent's actions:

About 15 years ago I read a story written by a particular woman journalist..covering in Yugoslavia...(she spoke of) wearing a pretty, sexy flowery dress and would use her charms to talk to men³¹

While obviously not agreeing with the means with which this particular journalist obtained her interviews, Marlowe also acknowledged the youthful ignorance of other reporters when it came to clothes especially in the instance of a blonde Swedish girl who wore 'very short shorts and tank tops' on assignment. The attractive reporter was repeatedly very upset at the harassment she received but the fact that her dress sense may have been inappropriate in that conflict area did not seem to occur to her.³²

One war correspondent that openly admits to shedding the flak jacket is Maggie O'Kane. Her belief is that her dress wearing allows to her to slip into the crowd effectively and penetrate dangerous areas of conflict that ordinarily media would be restricted from.

If I'm walking down a road on the front and a sniper spots me he's more likely to shoot if I'm wearing khaki or look in any way like a combatant. But if someone slightly suspicious is walking down the road in a war zone wearing a pretty flowered dress, a sniper is more likely to pause for a few seconds before pulling the trigger. He's more likely to check it out. It's worked so far.³³

O'Kane believes that embracing the feminine dress code can even mean the difference between life and death. The question in this study is not whether the dress code can mean the difference of sexual assault or not, because it would completely outrageous to say these women were 'asking for

³¹ Marlowe interview

³² Ibid.

³³ Ricchiardi, S. (1994) *Women on War*. Retrieved on April 20, 2010 from <http://www.ajr.org/article.asp?id=1513>

it' depending on what they wore. Yet it is this tiny niggling cloudy section in the human mind, that irritating, perhaps irrational doubt, that could mean the hiding of an assault. 'If I report this attack, is that what people will think?' 'Is it my fault?'

We see in Matloff's "Unspoken" that the type of clothes worn on two separate occasions of assault on female journalists were at opposite ends of the spectrum; from "jeans secured with a thick belt" to a "bikini-clad woman who was raped by a hotel employee while sunbathing on the roof in a conservative Middle Eastern country."³⁴

The point Matloff stresses to make is that clothes do not necessarily entice or invite a rapist,

I don't think anyone who wears a pretty dress is inviting rape or harassment. Yes, there are people who dress seductively or flirt on the job but nearly everyone I know who was assaulted dressed and acted professionally. They in no way invited rape.³⁵

This may very well be the case, but the shame and guilt that accompanies rape, can only be magnified by the subsequent self-questioning ('could I have done something differently?') and prevailing aspect of human nature to associate sexy attire with sexual looseness. Highlighting the instance of the bikini clad journalist to Kazickas, she reveals her reticence at the outfit worn:

"sunbathing in a bikini..she probably thought she had some privacy.. though I wouldn't even bring a bikini to a mid east country!"³⁶

However sexist the idea may be, I challenge the reader to ask themselves would their belief in a raped woman's account be questioned if it was revealed that she wore 'sexy' clothing in a situation where it was considered dangerous to do so.

Two other main factors that contribute to this disbelief are regular use of sex and alcohol.

However, in an intense war situation, female reporters are entitled to (and do) exercise vast

³⁴ Matloff, "Unspoken".

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Email interview with Jurate Kazickas. April 13, 2010.

quantities of both for comfort. Vietnam war correspondent Dency Fawcett reveals her “own opiates were Scotch whiskey..and sex”³⁷ to soften the edges of the war she was covering.

Rees attempts to define this promiscuity and thirst as he insists that "being surrounded by trauma heightens the senses and wants." The unfortunate side affect of this is that “boundaries can get screwed up” as “emotional dangers and issues of trust become greater”³⁸

A 2002 study by Feinstein et al. published in the American Journal of Psychiatry revealed that, beyond the famously high rate of alcoholism amongst all reporters, women war correspondents evinced a rate of alcoholism three times that of their female colleagues in cooler spots around the globe.³⁹

Matloff's opinion on mixing alcohol with assignments is less lenient than her attitude to what female correspondents should wear.

The only way they may have exercised bad judgement was to drink with sources alone. Alcohol slows down the ability to think and act. It can make some men more aggressive and they might associate drinking with sex.⁴⁰

This 'bad judgement' of the female correspondent is bound to play on her mind when it comes to making the decision on whether to inform someone that she was raped after drinking with her assailant.

There are of course those female reporters who mark their defiance of the possible threats and continue to work on their assignments refusing to acknowledge that they should behave any differently to their male counterparts. The lack of trust in a male colleague, or the unwillingness to vocalise fears for safety at the risk of being seen as the ‘weak link’, can be the orchestration of a

³⁷ Bartimus et al., *WarTorn*, p. 5.

³⁸ Rees interview.

³⁹ Amoruso, C. *Women on War*.

⁴⁰ Matloff interview.

dangerous situation. Meeting sources alone in a foreign setting where protection of female security is not a number one priority for the authorities is not necessarily gaining points for gender equality issue. Rees outlines an elementary but possibly effective deterrent for a sexual attack.

Some risks can be easily avoided by the simple presence or awareness of a male colleague. ...(this presence) can put a stop to inappropriate behaviour and some threats.⁴¹

CBS correspondent Elizabeth Palmer reveals a particular instance in a discussion held by the Dart Centre that highlights Rees' point:

I can remember in Afghanistan being very concerned about the security of the house we were all living in because I was quite aware that at night somebody could creep in silently and come into my room, probably armed, and rape me. It was an issue for me in a way that it wasn't an issue for the men, because I felt much more vulnerable in that respect or perhaps more targeted.⁴²

In this instance, Palmer voiced her fears and increased safety measures were put in place. She readily admits that her telling was directly influenced by the amount of trust that she had in her fellow male colleagues. It also shocked her how oblivious her counterparts were to what she saw as a very real fear until she highlighted the issue.

Following a sexual attack in this scenario, not only is the woman journalist bound by the very reason that stopped her expressing the fears in the first case, but now the added guilt is of failure to possibly prevent the attack by voicing her concerns.

Staying Silent to Protect Career

Women working as journalists in areas of conflict are no longer an exception, but more of a rule. The simple quantity of female journalists alone in this area does not increase the awareness of their male editors, unless they have been made aware. Yet women remain reluctant to be named even in *Unspoken* as they do not wish to be viewed differently or highlight a concern that could

⁴¹ Rees interview

⁴² *Women Reporting War*. A transcript of the Frontline Club Discussion. Retrieved on April 20, 2010 from <http://dartcenter.org/content/women-reporting-war-0>

adversely affect their careers. War correspondent Hannah Allam expresses her opinion on the suppression of sexual assault by the female journalists themselves.

I think the fear of rape is definitely more on the minds of women reporters in conflict situations because rape has been used as a weapon in so many horrendous wars across the globe...And, yes, I found myself very reluctant to discuss those fears in public or exhibit any fear to colleagues or sources because you want them to respect your work, see you as 'one of the club.'⁴³

One of the most dominant fears of reporting an assault is that if issues start to be raised that distinguish women as different, their careers could be penalised. Unfortunately, this camouflage of abuse results in maintaining the vicious circle of oblivion. The framework in a newsroom context remained unchanged, and the lack of training and awareness leaves the potential risks for other female correspondents overlooked.

However, concern about their position in the newsroom is not limited to a fear of how the knowledge of the sexual assault will change perceptions of the female journalists. A justifiable apprehensive is how this information will be accepted, depending on who the assailant is.

Marlowe reveals a personal experience of her own that occurred when she was starting out as a journalist working with CBS. Rejecting the advances of and being sexually harassed by a male colleague when working out on the field put Marlowe in an awkward position. "He was an important guy in the newsroom...he made my life a misery."⁴⁴

Not only did this man take his squashed ego out on the young reporter, but she was afraid to report the incident and treatment afterwards because of his status.

One of the only known cases of a female journalist going on record is the case of Jineth Bedoya Lima, a reporter for *El Espectador*, a daily newspaper in Bogota, Colombia. Bedoya covers the conflict between the Colombian government and paramilitary groups. She continued to report

⁴³ Amoruso, C. *Women on War*.

⁴⁴ Marlowe interview.

on the violent drug wars in Colombia after being kidnapped, tortured and raped in 2000 by groups most likely tied to right-wing paramilitary forces.

In a February 2009 report, the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) noted “powerful drug traffickers fighting for turf in Mexico, paramilitary gangsters in Brazilian slums, guerrillas and paramilitaries in strife-ridden areas of Colombia, and violent street gangs in El Salvador and Guatemala are terrorizing the press.”⁴⁵ CPJ ranked Mexico among the most dangerous countries in the world for journalists and published lists of attacks against the media throughout Latin America.

Winning the International Women's Media Foundation (IWWMF) Courage in Journalism Award in 2001 convinced Bedoya that she could stay in Colombia, despite receiving death threats and being kidnapped again in 2003. Bedoya has proved that reporting her vicious attack did in no way hinder her career. In fact, the IWWMF Award is a symbol of her courageous stance, not an mark of frailty, and she continues to work passionately in the career she believes in.

⁴⁵ Ricchiardi, S., (2010) *A New Guide for Disaster Journalism in Latin America*. Retrieved on April 13, 2010 from <http://dartcenter.org/blog/guiding-disaster-journalism-in-latin-america>

CHAPTER 3: REACTIONS, RECEPTIONS, REPURCUSSIONS

In the aftermath of a sexual assault, the female correspondent faces an internal struggle, a personal war of their own. There are psychological and ethical barriers to overcome, not to mention discouraging conviction rates to ignore, before making the decision to report the assault and admitting that such an attack occurred. Whether it is the glory of the best story, the loyalty towards an important source, or the revulsion felt at the thought of reliving the experience; hiding and forgetting what happened can seem like the best option. No matter what the circumstances outlined in chapter 2 may have been, to conquer the reluctance to report caused by any one of those factors, appears to give rise to yet more debilitating reasons to stay quiet.

Proven Futility of Reported Rape?

Historically, systematic rape has been a deliberate military strategy employed in many armed conflicts as a weapon of war. From Nanking to Bosnia to Rwanda to the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the ubiquity of war rape continues despite valiant efforts from the United Nations Action Against Sexual Violence in Conflict. In such lawless lands, the local police force may not be the first point of contact for an assaulted female correspondent. Working for months or years at a time in areas where Western women are seen as promiscuous at best, thoughts of reporting one assault among the hundreds of thousands of ongoing rapes seems fruitless, and even dangerous, in context.

Matloff highlights this point from one of her sources' accounts in "Unspoken":

A more typical case is of an award-winning British correspondent who was raped by her translator in Africa. Reporting him to a police force known for committing atrocities seemed like a futile exercise. Like most foreign correspondents who were assaulted, those women were targets of opportunity. The predators took advantage because they could.⁴⁶

The lack of action predicted by the women affected prevents them from even bothering to make the

⁴⁶ Matloff, "Unspoken".

report in the first instance. Kazickas says that she too is not surprised that female correspondents do not report assaults. She affirms that their role in a country where culturally men are superior to women is fragile enough without damaging this position further,

Females in a man's world attract so much attention anyway, some might be considered a nuisance. As a woman you don't want to cause trouble. You're there to do a job and when something like that happens and gets out... talk might get around that you were 'asking for it'.⁴⁷

The sad fact is that this lack of trust and feeling of protection is not limited to the corrupt authorities of the war torn country they are covering, but also to their colleagues-stemming from a number of factors covered in chapter 1. This leaves the women in a difficult situation, no-one to confide in and a job still to do. Fear of not being believed after being brave enough to come forward and report the assault is a justified concern, even on returning to the newsroom and their home country (if the assailant is a fellow work colleague and native.)

Even if an assault case comes to court, the ordeal for the courageous journalist is not over. Strangely enough, female jurors, who one would think more likely to empathize with the (usually female) complainants, also frequently doubt the complainant, perhaps due to a belief in a just world. The need to see victims as the recipients of what they deserved can be explained by what psychologists call the *Just World Hypothesis*. This hypothesis encourages the jurors to believe that assault of this kind could not exist or occur. If they contemplate the fact that it HAS occurred, it means that the idyllic world they live in and feel safe in is turned upside, and that they are potential victims in this now dangerous environment.

According to an article in *The Guardian* 13 March 2009, conviction rates of rape in the UK (of those that were reported) remain frightening low.

⁴⁷ Kazickas interview.

Of the rapes that were reported from 2007 to 2008, only 6.5% resulted in a conviction, compared with 34% of criminal cases in general. The majority of convictions for rape resulted from an admission of guilt by the defendant, whereas less than one quarter of all those charged with rape were convicted following a successful trial.⁴⁸

The mediocre percentage rates cannot solely be explained on the effects of this hypothesis, but the very real figures *can* explain a reluctance to report. In Ireland, the meagre convictions mirror that of their British counterparts.

JUST 7pc of rapes reported to gardai result in convictions, one of the most extensive studies ever carried out on the subject has found. The landmark study was given unprecedented access to almost 600 files held by the Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP) and looked at more than 170 Central Criminal Court trials and transcripts of cases. It found just seven out of every 100 suspected rape cases reported to gardai led to convictions.⁴⁹

The above article appeared in *The Independent* on 7 December 2009 and highlights the failures in the judicial system in approaching and understanding rape cases. The mindset of rape equalling a stranger attacking a well dressed sober woman in a dark alley remains to be broken.

The Protection of Sources v The Passion for the Story

The National Union of Journalists (NUJ) and the affiliated organisation, International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) set out the main principles of British and Irish journalism, and these principles mirror the moral code of journalists globally. All journalists joining these organisations agree to adhere to these basic principles of ethical journalism. Members of the NUJ and the IFJ are expected to abide by these guidelines including that of the protection of the identity of sources who supply information in confidence. The material gathered in the course of her/his work is therefore protected by this agreement. This can result in moral turmoil for the female correspondent if her source reveals, during questioning, an incident where he has been a sexual assailant or if he assaults the reporter herself. Journalist Loretta Tofani wrote several articles on the pattern of gang rape inside a Maryland jail. Tofani was obliged, under Maryland law, to testify against these sources as

⁴⁸ Hirsch, A. *Rape conviction rates still very low. The Guardian*. Retrieved on May 16, 2010 from <http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk/2009/mar/13/rape-convictions-low>.

⁴⁹ Heffernan, B. *Alarm at rape conviction rate. The Independent*. Retrieved on May 16, 2010 from <http://www.independent.ie/national-news/alarm-at-rape-conviction-rate-1966140.html>.

she had named them in her articles.

In the end this relationship I had with the rapists came back to haunt me because there was an implicit understanding. I told them I am a reporter. It's okay to talk with me, and they believed me. They talked. They admitted their crimes. So it was very chilling some months later when, after the series came out, the rapists were indicted for the rapes and I was given a subpoena to testify against them.⁵⁰

Tofani's initial aim was to expose the atrocities that were occurring on an ongoing basis in the jail, but her sense of integrity and source loyalty resulting in her being cited for contempt of court. The dangers of working closely with a source in an unfamiliar setting, especially in a war situation has been highlighted in chapter 2, yet following such an assault, what does the journalist's instincts tell her to do? The relationship that she has built with the source may be enough to contemplate ignoring the crime he has committed, to a fellow colleague or to herself. The point here is not that the correspondent will have developed and maintained feelings for her rapist after an assault, but that her moral code is too important to her to reveal her source by naming her assailant. There is a conflict between revealing the assault and publishing the original story as intended, aided by the source's information.

Gavin Rees believes that this turmoil exists and that in every instance of sexual assault, the female reporter who reveals or experiences it is not obliged to be named and go on record,

It is highly likely that sexual abuse exists...(re reporting assaults) there is a conflict between victim and anonymity. Obligation might not be the word. Every journalist has responsibilities towards others, towards sources. It is up to the individual and their own judgement.⁵¹

Rees maintains that the loyalty of the profession towards protection of sources can be a deciding factor in the covering up of a sexual assault.

⁵⁰ *Reporters Relationships With Sources*. Retrieved on May 10, 2010 from <http://www.nieman.harvard.edu/reportsitem.aspx?id=102163>.

⁵¹ Rees interview.

If this stubborn loyalty is difficult to believe, especially in the face of sexual assault and the adverse effect not reporting it may have, the battlegrounds highlighted in chapter 2 perhaps need to be remembered. The foreign setting, the heightened senses, the daily atrocities that the female journalist encounters; the reason she is there is to report on these crimes of war that may otherwise never come to light. Asking the question of what they recall as their most memorable or rewarding experience of covering conflict as a foreign correspondent, several female journalists revealed their reasons why their role was so important:

Most memorable (experience) was an Iraqi toddler who had stepped on something explosive. U.S. Navy doctors tried first to save his legs. Then they tried to save his life. They failed on both counts. This is what war looks like up close. I can't forget it.

-Sharon Schmickle⁵²

(The GIs) were so kind, so sweet, so young! Most of them were barely 20 - so I was an old woman at 24! - from small Southern towns, they were just so innocent. My heart went out to them, thinking that so many would never make it home. It was a privilege to tell their stories.

-Jurate Kazickas⁵³

The focus of reportage is solely concerned with those affected by the war they are assigned to: from the suffering of the country's citizens to those maimed and killed as 'collateral damage' to the baby faced soldiers drafted for battle.

Lara Marlowe passionately affirms that "whatever dangers are abound, it is not as bad as the lives of the war victims."⁵⁴ Marlowe believes that the concern of sexual assault of female war correspondents is "not that big an issue", and that focussing on this potential danger is "too self-indulgent" and "precious"⁵⁵ in comparison to the atrocities that are very real and currently unfolding.

⁵² Schmickle interview.

⁵³ Kazickas interview.

⁵⁴ Marlowe interview.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

While the incident of one rape of a female journalist may seem incidental in comparison to the masses of women that are violated as civilian victims of war, this is perhaps the outlook of one who has fortunately never been assaulted.

Apart from the compelling desire to 'do good', these female journalists know the areas of conflict they are covering have the potential to produce the best story. Marlowe honestly admits that one of the most rewarding aspects of covering a war is being the author of the most important scoop.⁵⁷ Her plain speaking is reflected in the responses of other war correspondents, including Sharon Schmickle.

One reason is high-minded (why cover areas of conflict): It's the job of a journalist to watch the government, and I can't think of a more important time to do it than when the government is invading or bombing another country. A second reason is more base: These were big stories and what journalist doesn't want to cover the big ones?⁵⁸

For more than ethical reasons, sources of information, have the capacity to remain protected, despite their actions.

Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)

It has been assumed that journalists are not permanently impacted by the exposure to the traumatic events they cover. Viewed as within their job description and a standard hazard of the profession, PTSD among journalists has only recently begun to be recognised as an issue needing to be addressed.

Chantal McLaughlin wrote the following in a case study published on-line:

The American Psychiatric Association characterizes PTSD as at least one month of recurrent and intrusive recollections of the event, emotional numbing, and avoidance of people and places that are reminders of the event. Another common symptom is hyper arousal, which may include irritability, jittery behaviour, poor concentration, sleep disturbances and feeling a lack of security. Trauma survivors often become depressed and have trouble with work and family relationships. People with the disorder may not understand what is causing their symptoms and may never be diagnosed, suffering in silence, perhaps for years.⁵⁹

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Schmickle interview.

⁵⁹ Hight, J. & Smyth, F. *Tragedies & Journalists*. Retrieved on April 20, 2010 from <http://dartcenter.org/content/tragedies-journalists-7>.

The anxiety disorder can develop after exposure to an ordeal in which grave physical harm occurred or was threatened. Of the many traumatic events that may trigger PTSD, violent assaults, rape, physical abuse and military combat are but a few. A 2002 study by Feinstein et al. published in the *American Journal of Psychiatry* reported that the lifetime prevalence of PTSD (post traumatic stress disorder) amongst all war reporters was 28.6%. The additional danger for female reporters of sexual abuse in this war setting may indicate the increased potential of suffering from the debilitating disorder. Although the statistics in the Feinstein study were not gender specific, psychologist and former war correspondent, Mark Brayne, spoke at a Dart Center symposium in 2005, saying that women were more likely to suffer PTSD after covering conflict than men.⁶⁰

Years after her coverage of conflict in the Vietnam War, Tad Bartimus voices the negative affects this experience has had, and continues to have, on her and the people close to her,

When I met my future husband four months after I left Vietnam, he told me I was a “grenade with the pin pulled.” Some days I still am. My war experience remains for me an emotional minefield that even now explodes if somebody trips the wire.⁶¹

PTSD sufferers, like Bartimus, have trouble functioning in their jobs or personal relationships. The similar symptoms that affect reporters following exposure to military/war atrocities and subsequent to a violent sexual attack allow the sexual abuse issue to remain hidden as the symptoms can be mistaken for one and the same. Admitting to suffering from the adverse effects of war conflict is easier than revealing a sexual attack, especially in a newsroom setting that has not yet come to terms with addressing the need for a formalised structure in dealing with sexual abuse at home and on foreign assignment.

Even though the shame associated with sexual related trauma is more intense, the reluctance to report suffering from any sort of vulnerability as a women in the 'macho' world of journalism is

⁶⁰ Amoruso, C. *Women on War*

⁶¹ Bartimus et al. *War Torn*. P. 19

prevalent. Gavin Rees explains the dialectic of trauma than can confuse and deter would-be 'counsellors'.

While victims of assault ultimately long for contact and comfort, they also want to shy away from addressing the issue and admitting the assault.⁶²

The hazard is in assuming that journalists are immune from trauma simply because of the role that they employ. Without treatment and relevant counselling, PTSD is unlikely to disappear.

Kazickas outlines the need to appear self sufficient without relying on the crutch of other female reporters in the war setting in the Vietnam War. The relief of venting to a partner, a house mate, or fellow colleague at the end of a hard day is an essential exercise for anyone in any profession.

Looking back I regret I never got to know the other woman reporters. Perhaps my periodic feelings of loneliness and alienation as a woman in a war zone could have been assuaged by someone who knew exactly how it felt.⁶³

To feel obliged to keep one's feelings to themselves after a day's work reporting conflict is unnatural and unhealthy. Speaking to someone that will not judge, mock, or doubt can be one of the best source of therapy of all. Suppression of all things feminine is something that has become commonplace and makes everyday life more difficult for female reporters in war coverage. According to Matloff in a forum in London arranged by the International News Safety Institute (INSI) in 2005,

Another issue, I'm going to raise it, it's the 'M word', menstruation. People don't talk about it. I can't tell you how many colleagues take hormonal pills so they don't menstruate when they're on a job. This is dangerous, it can cause cancer later. It's not healthy but they do it because they're too ashamed or embarrassed to ask their male bureau chiefs to send in another box of Tampax when they're on an extended assignment in a place like Baghdad. It should be up to the male bureau chief perhaps to say 'do you need any female supplies?'⁶⁴

If the journalism etiquette between female reporters and male chiefs is at the degree where the request for tampons is an embarrassment, what hope is there for an attacked journalist to feel at ease enough to report a sexual assault?

⁶² Rees interview.

⁶³ Bartimus et al. *War Torn*. P. 188.

⁶⁴ *Women Reporting War*.

Dr. Sherry Ricchiardi aids the Dart Centre, working with journalists, including Jineth Bedoya Lima, who cover dangerous assignments including war and organised crime cartels. In providing *A New Guide for Disaster Journalism in Latin America* for the International Center for Journalism, Ricchiardi reveals that medical experts have warned that journalists who operate in countries where they are targeted for their work tend to be at higher risk for traumatic stress. In Latin America, training programs and establishing official guidelines of trust for reporting can literally define the difference of life and death for these journalists. The sole case of the brave report of Bedoya is not enough to rely on for others to follow.

CONCLUSION

This thesis is not without its contradictions or its unanswered questions, and rightly so as this area of hidden sexual abuse in female war correspondents has not been researched or illuminated to a satisfactory degree. The aim of the study was to highlight an obvious gap in this field, and to present valid reasons that this gap should be closed through more extensive study. The reliance on qualitative research, in conjunction with the fact that the thesis is based on the theory that sexual abuse in war correspondents is *hidden*, meant that definitive results and closed arguments were never the final goal. The success of the thesis is not marred by the establishment that each female war correspondent *is* remarkably different; in fact it is more authentic than that the factors that ensure rape in conflict areas remain undocumented are so varied and numerous.

A kind of social conditioning for journalists was broached in chapter 1 and the link with military thinking on these gender constructs cannot be avoided. Women in the military are trained to rid themselves of their female 'softness', although not so much that they become men and therefore compete with the 'real' guys. The support roles these military women are almost always assigned to bear striking similarities to the human interest stories female journalists are expected to cover.

In this military environment of strong male identity and readiness for combat, sexual assault on women in the military is a frequent occurrence. Some estimates suggest perhaps one out of every three military women faces sexual violence, but according to 2003 survey 30 per cent of female veterans said they were raped in the military.⁶⁵

The figures of those military women that reported these crimes do not necessarily translate to proposed figures for female war correspondents who have been attacked; yet considering the

⁶⁵ Olsen, O. (2010) *1/3rd of Women in US Military Raped*. Retrieved on May 13, 2010 from <http://newsjunkiepost.com/2010/01/26/13rd-of-women-in-us-military-raped>.

affinity in the expectation of gender roles between both professions, and the hostile environment in which they both operate, it would be remiss not to identify the comparisons.

The requirement for prior training and confidential post-trauma counselling specific to the needs of female correspondents was also addressed in this thesis. Again there are some barriers and resistance to establish these precautions and policies in the guise of female journalists loathe to be seen as self indulgent and “precious.”⁶⁶ Male editors like McCaffrey are of opinion that special distinctions should not be made either:

I always give the same advice to males and females before they go on dangerous assignments. Don't do anything stupid to put yourself in vulnerable positions and just generally keep your wits about you.⁶⁷

For them, a stipulation of attendance to a gender specific course sets gender equality back decades.

So, there can be a rebuke on this valid argument. Does the training course actually need to be gender specific? The theory that rape occurs only to women may be proven in the majority of cases, but there are always exceptions to the rule, according to Rees.

As in the Just World Hypothesis, male rape is unthinkable. Yet I am aware of one male (journalist) rape case.⁶⁸

Male rape, either by another man or a woman, is even more immersed in secrecy, because of the associated double standards and stigma attached. That is not to say that it does not occur, and scornful as they may be in attending a course to prevent sexual abuse in war conflict, at the very least male correspondents can come away with more awareness of the vulnerabilities of women in a hostile environment.

Feelings of guilt, as highlighted in chapter 2, need to be a key area that is incorporated into

⁶⁶ Marlowe interview.

⁶⁷ McCaffrey interview.

⁶⁸ Rees interview.

any proposed training scheme in the prevention of rape during war reportage. Guilt and blame can often be the most lasting residual feelings after a sexual attack.

A correspondent for a major U.S. newspaper says that for some time she needlessly blamed herself for her rape by a Russian paramilitary policeman. How, she asked herself, had she not anticipated that he would follow her back to the hotel after an interview and force himself into the room? She believes that training 'would have relieved me of the guilt that I had done the wrong thing.'⁶⁹

Matloff reveals yet another colleague's story in "Unspoken" who tortured herself with the idea that her rape was a result of her own failure to predict it. Combating these attributions of blame in counselling would, if not definitely improve the rates of reports of these sexual crimes, succeed in allowing the attacked journalist to overcome the assault without self depreciation.

Figuring out and understanding why these female correspondents do not report their sexual attacks is central to this study, and Schmickle ponders on yet another inconsistently in this trend.

I respect the women's privacy but I also think it's oddly 'anti-journalistic' to hide something like this. We're in the business of uncovering sensitive stories, supposedly.⁷⁰

Just as the protection of sources was flagged in chapter 3 as a factor for allowing sexual abuse to remain hidden, is the moral code of the journalist not compromised anyway by *not* reporting it?

A very real fact however in dissuading any woman subject to rape from reporting and reliving the assault in court, is the aforementioned poor conviction rate of rapists. However, this low percentage rate is in itself beginning to be noted as unacceptable, with some countries adopting simple but effective means in aiding their somewhat inept legal systems. In response to a reprimand from Yakin Erturk, the United Nations' (UN) representative on violence against women, regarding one of the lowest European rape conviction rates, Sweden launched a new rape kit box in 2008

⁶⁹ Matloff, "Unspoken".

⁷⁰ Schmickle interview.

developed at Uppsala University with input from the State Criminal Laboratory. A simple substitution of paper containers instead of those made from plastic in the new kits are more compatible with preserving evidence taken from a rape scene that could mean the difference of ensuring a conviction.⁷¹

This particular example is an positive indication that these convictions *are* important, and there are authorities and monitoring systems in place to continue to strive to improve the amount of rape convictions that succeed in making it to trial.

No matter what the respective factors are for each individual female correspondent deciding to stay silent on attacks of a sexual nature, Matloff's article, together with this study, reveals that at the very least, extensive study and research should be completed globally on the issue of rape of female war correspondents in conflict zones. The responses from the interviews undertaken for this thesis succeed in re-enforcing valid reasons for the suppression of these sexual attacks, and strengthen the argument that, despite unnamed sources and limited literary material, the sexual abuse *does* exist.

⁷¹ Tornkvist, A. (2008) *SWEDEN STEPS UP DNA COLLECTION FOR RAPE CASES*. Retrieved on May 10, 2010 from <http://www.feminist.com/news/vaw108.html>.

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APPENDIX

Appendix 1

ON THE JOB JUDITH MATLOFF

Unspoken

Foreign correspondents and sexual abuse

THE PHOTOGRAPHER WAS A SEASONED OPERATOR IN SOUTH ASIA. SO WHEN she set forth on an assignment in India, she knew how to guard against gropers: dress modestly in jeans secured with a thick belt and take along a male companion. All those preparations failed, however, when an unruly crowd surged and swept away her colleague. She was pushed into a ditch, where several men set upon her, tearing at her clothes and baying for sex. They ripped the buttons off her shirt and set to work on her trousers. "My first thought was my cameras," recalls the photographer, who asked to remain anonymous. "Then it was, 'Oh my God, I'm going to be raped.'" With her faced pressed into the soil, she couldn't shout for help, and no one would have heard her anyway above the mob's taunts. Suddenly a Good Samaritan in the crowd pulled the photographer by the camera straps several yards to the feet of some policemen who had been watching the scene without intervening. They sneered at her exposed chest, but escorted her to safety. Alone in her hotel room that night, the photographer recalls, she cried, thinking, "What a bloody way to make a living." She didn't inform her editors, however. "I put myself out there equal to the boys. I didn't want to be seen in any way as weaker." Women have risen to the top of war and foreign reportage. They run bureaus in dodgy places and do jobs that are just as dangerous as those that men do. But there is one area where they differ from the boys—sexual harassment and rape. Female reporters are targets in lawless places where guns are common and punishment rare. Yet the compulsion to be part of the macho club is so fierce that women often don't tell their bosses. Groping hands and lewd come-ons are stoically accepted as part of the job, especially in places where western women are viewed as promiscuous. War zones in particular seem to invite unwanted advances, and sometimes the creeps

can be the drivers, guards, and even the sources that one depends on to do the job. Often they are drunk. But female journalists tend to grit their teeth and keep on working, unless it gets worse. Because of the secrecy around sexual assaults, it's hard to judge their frequency. Yet I know of a dozen such assaults, including one suffered by a man. Eight of the cases involve forced intercourse, mostly in combat zones. The perpetrators included hotel employees, support staff, colleagues, and the very people who are paid to guarantee safety—policemen and security guards. None of the victims want to be named. For many women, going public can cause further distress. In the words of an American correspondent who awoke in her Baghdad compound to find her security guard's head in her lap, "I don't want it out there, for people to look at me and think, 'Hmmm, This guy did that to her, yuck.' I don't want to be viewed in my worst vulnerability." The only attempt to quantify this problem has been a slim survey of female war reporters published two years ago by the International News Safety Institute, based in Brussels. Of the twentynine respondents who took part, more than half reported sexual harassment on the job. Two said they had experienced sexual abuse. But even when the abuse is rape, few correspondents tell anyone, even friends. The shame runs so deep—and the fear of being pulled off an assignment, especially in a time of shrinking budgets, is so strong—that no one wants intimate violations to resound in a newsroom. Rodney Pinder, the director of the institute, was struck by how some senior newswomen he approached after the 2005 survey were reluctant to take a stand on rape. "The feedback I got was mainly that women didn't want to be seen as 'special' cases for fear that, a) it affected gender equality and b) it hindered them getting assignments," he says, Caroline Neil, who has done safety training with major networks over the past decade, agrees. "The subject has been swept under the carpet. It's something people don't like to talk about." In the cases that I know of, the journalists did nothing to provoke the attacks; they behaved with utmost propriety, except perhaps for one bikini-clad woman who was raped by a hotel employee while sunbathing on the roof in a conservative Middle Eastern country. The correspondent who was molested by her Iraqi security

guard is still puzzling over the fact that he brazenly crept into her room while colleagues slept nearby. "You do everything right and then something like this happens," she says, "I never wore tight T-shirts or outrageous clothes. But he knew I didn't have a tribe that would go after him," That guard lost his job, but such punishment is rare. A more typical case is of an award-winning British correspondent who was raped by her translator in Africa. Reporting him to a police force known for committing atrocities seemed like a futile exercise. Like most foreign correspondents who were assaulted, those women were targets of opportunity. The predators took advantage because they could. Local journalists face the added risk of politically motivated attacks. The Committee to Protect Journalists, for example, cites rape threats against female reporters in Egypt who were seen as government critics. Rebels raped someone I worked with in Angola for her perceived sympathy for the ruling party. In one notorious case in Colombia in 2000, the reporter Jineth Bedoya Lima was kidnapped and gang-raped in what she took as reprisal for her newspaper's suggestion that a paramilitary group ordered some executions. She is the only colleague I know of who has gone on the record about her rape. The general reluctance to call attention to the problem creates a vicious cycle, whereby editors, who are still typically men, are unaware of the dangers because women don't bring them up. Survivors of attacks often suffer in lonely silence, robbed of the usual camaraderie that occurs when people are shot or kidnapped. It was an open secret in our Moscow press corps in the 1990s that a young freelancer had been gang-raped by policemen. But given the sexual nature of her injury, no one but the woman's intimates dared extend sympathies. Even close calls frequently go unmentioned. In my own case, I never reported to my foreign editor a narrow escape at an airport in Angola in 1995. Two drunken policemen pointing AK-47's threatened to march a colleague and me into a shack for "some fun." We got away untouched, so why bring up the matter? I didn't want my boss to think that my gender was a liability. Such lack of public discussion might explain why, amazingly, there are no sections on sexual harassment and assault in the leading

handbooks on journalistic safety, by the Committee to Protect Journalists and the International Federation of Journalists. When one considers the level of detail over protections against other eventualities—get vaccinations; pack dummy wallets, etc.—the oversight is staggering. No one tells women that deodorant can work as well as mace when sprayed in the eyes, for example, or that you can obtain doorknob alarms, or that, in some cultures, you can ward off rapists by claiming to menstruate. For women seeking security tips, hostile-environment training is the way to go. Yet those short courses also rarely touch upon rape prevention. The BBC, a pioneer in trauma awareness, is the only major news organization that offers special safety instruction for women, taught by women. Most women recognize that even the most thorough preparation cannot prevent every eventuality. Yet victims of assault say that some training might have helped them make more informed decisions, or at least live with the outcome more easily. A correspondent for a major U.S. newspaper says that for some time she needlessly blamed herself for her rape by a Russian paramilitary policeman. How, she asked herself, had she not anticipated that he would follow her back to the hotel after an interview and force himself into the room? She believes that training "would have relieved me of the guilt that I had done the wrong thing." The reluctance to call attention to the problem creates a vicious cycle, whereby editors, who are still typically men, are unaware of the dangers because women don't bring them up.

CJR

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