

COLUMBIA JOURNALISM REVIEW

With every issue, CJR produces a study guide for journalism students to delve into the areas we've covered, providing topics for classroom discussion and additional activities to test the ideas put forward.

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1. WEIGHING ANCHORS (pp. 14–20): The three major nightly news broadcasts begin to target themselves to different viewerships.

- a) If you were in charge of a nightly network newscast, how would you determine the top stories of the day? Do you think they should be the most interesting stories to viewers, or the most important ones? How would you try to determine what's relevant to viewers' lives?
- b) Do you and your classmates watch TV news shows? What, if anything, would make you start watching on a regular basis?

BEYOND THE CLASSROOM: c) Watch the three nightly news broadcasts for the same night. (Full archived broadcasts are available at nbcnightlynews.com, abcnews.go.com/WN, and cbsnews.com/evening-news.) What differences do you notice among the type of stories covered, and how they're presented? Which would you choose to watch again? Why? **d)** Look up other news items from December 20, 2011. Which would you consider as possible "insurgent" leads? Write up a story memo making a case for leading with another story that wasn't the top one on the other nightly newscasts. **e)** Visit at least three of the video journalism websites mentioned in "Networks schmetworks" and compare them to your viewing of the network TV news shows. Would you watch any of these regularly, or recommend any to friends? Do you think any of them could replace the network shows? Could they be improved? What, if anything, would be lost if network news shows either ceased to exist or were transformed into something different?

2. SOMETHING FISHY (pp. 24–30): How John Solomon's plan to reinvent the Center for Public Integrity foundered on a story about black-market tuna.

In This Issue



Just over 40 years ago, members of the all-female research staff at *Newsweek* took a small but momentous step: They filed suit against their employer for refusing to promote any women to jobs as reporters or writers. The resulting uproar—as recalled by Lynn Povich, one of the plaintiffs then, and today a successful reporter and editor—led to the first crack in the glass ceiling for women in the journalism industry, one that female reporters continue to muscle their way through.

Today, having women in the newsroom is more commonplace, but still not as common as it could be. In this issue, *CJR* looks at some of the outstanding female reporters of the past and present, and the challenges that they face both in the newsroom and in the field.

Also in this edition, Paul Friedman examines how the three major networks are choosing different paths for distinguishing their nightly newscasts from their competitors; Ben Adler looks at the struggles of young journalists in a pay-for-clicks economy; Mariah Blake looks at John Solomon's troubled term at the Center for Public Integrity; Alysia Santo interviews *Prison Legal News's* Paul Wright about reporting on prison abuses while behind bars; and Steven Rosenbaum and Pat Aufderheide explore the nuances and pitfalls of copyright and fair use.

- a) What do you think of Solomon’s plan for CPI to reinvent itself as a “daily destination”? In retrospect, does this seem the right fit for the Center’s journalistic strengths? How should a news organization go about deciding what niche to fill in the increasingly complex 24/7 news world?
- b) Do you agree with Solomon that Kaplan’s team violated journalistic ethics in reporting the bluefin tuna story? What, if anything, would you have done if you were Kaplan’s supervisor?

BEYOND THE CLASSROOM: c) Read CJR’s past coverage of Solomon’s “gotcha without the gotcha” reporting (bit.ly/cjr-solomon). Is it a fair assessment of his journalistic work? Given his track record, do you think he was a good choice to lead CPI?

3. CELL COVERAGE (pp. 32–34): A pioneering reporter tells how he started a career in prison journalism while behind bars.

- a) Why does Paul Wright contend that it reflects “a skewed sense of priorities” that no mainstream media outlets were interested in his reports on prison beatings, but when he was punished for reporting on it, the *Seattle Times* put it on its front page? Should major media outlets be doing more to report on conditions inside prisons?
- b) If you were reporting on criminal justice issues, how would you report on crime fairly without alienating your sources in police departments and prosecutors’ offices? Are the ethical issues here any different from covering other subjects where access is controlled by powerful forces (politics, sports, corporate finance, and so on)?

BEYOND THE CLASSROOM: c) Visit the Prison Legal News website (prisonlegalnews.org), and come up with a story idea that you could investigate in your own local area. Write a one-page story pitch, including how you would conduct your research, and how you present your findings in a way that was fair and accurate, as well as making it accessible to readers without intimate knowledge of the justice system.

4. THE SIXTH W (pp. 38–47): It’s been a long and contentious road for women in journalism.

- a) Does anything surprise you in Lynn Povich’s story about the *Newsweek* lawsuit? What lessons can today’s women in journalism learn from the experience of Povich and her colleagues?
- b) Do you agree with Povich that women are raised to be as ambitious as men in our society, they just aren’t encouraged to *show* their ambition?
- c) What are the implications of the fact that nations where women advance to the top in journalism are those with strong childcare policies? Is there a fairer approach that would benefit both female and male reporters?
- d) What do you think Katherine Boo means when she says that writing is the “tax” she pays for reporting? Do you or any of your classmates feel this way?

BEYOND THE CLASSROOM: e) Select one of the women profiled in “The divine sisterhood” and read as much as you can find of her writing. Does she bring a particular perspective to her work that a male reporter wouldn’t? Or is fairness in the workplace just a matter of rewarding excellent female journalists the same as male ones? **f)** Read some of Boo’s writing for *The New Yorker* (bit.ly/cjr-boo). Do you think that she reports these stories any differently than a male reporter would? What other things can you learn for your own writing from the way she conducts her research and reporting? **g)** Find and propose an addition to the “20 women to watch” list, and write up your own paragraph summary that shows why your subject deserves to be followed.

Quick Takes

Read these short articles in class and discuss:

- 1) A Helping Hand (p. 4):** Do you think that for-profit news outlets should be eligible for foundation grants? Why or why not? If so, what criteria do you think should be used to ensure that grant money is used to fund more public-service journalism, and not just to boost profits?
- 2) Piecemeal Existence (pp. 21–23):** If young journalists are expected to accept writing multiple blog items a day for minimal pay—or for pay that varies based on hit counts—how will that affect who can afford to go into journalism? How does it affect the number of journalism jobs available that pay a living wage? Has it always been the case, as Choire Sicha insists, that working for free was a standard way to get started in journalism, or have things changed dramatically?
- 3) Copywrong (pp. 36–37):** Discuss the three scenarios presented by Pat Aufderheide. Where do you think the legal line is drawn on fair use in these cases? Where do you think the line should be drawn?