

Gender and sourcing in student journalism from Australia and New Zealand

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Abstract

Although the proportion of female reporters has increased in almost all regions across the world in recent decades, news content continues to be dominated by male voices. Numerous studies from around the world have found that men generally comprise about 70 per cent of people quoted in news coverage. To date, these studies have focused on mainstream media coverage by established journalists. This article contributes to the existing literature by providing an analysis of student journalism from the Australian aggregated news site, *The Junction*. The analysis considered the gender of sources quoted, the function of the female sources and the inclusion of gender equality issues in the coverage. Overall, the student journalism was found to include a better gender balance, with females comprising about 44 per cent of overall sources and 46 per cent of expert sources. However, gender equality was the subject of very few stories, and almost all of these were all produced by female students. These findings are considered in relation to a growing body of research calling for gender education to be made compulsory for journalism students.

Keywords: news sources, student journalism, journalism education, gender, women in the news, diversity

Introduction

Once considered a male bastion, the profession of journalism has gradually attracted increasing numbers of women since the 1950s (Geertsema-Sligh 2019). Overall, women comprise about 40 per cent of reporters (GMMP 2021), but in many developed countries such as the United Kingdom and the United States that figure is around 45 per cent (Kassova 2020). In Australia, women have held the majority of journalism jobs for some time (Hanusch 2013). Female interest in journalism as a career is reflected in enrolments in university journalism programs,

with most countries experiencing gender parity in journalism graduates (Kassova 2020). In many countries, more than 60 per cent of journalism students are female (Geertsema-Sligh 2019). Yet, despite these changes to the gender composition of journalism students and the reporting workforce, most positions of news leadership are held by men, and the news that contemporary journalists produce is “overwhelmingly about men” (Kassova 2020: 63). The Global Media Monitoring Report (2021), which analyses news subjects across more than 100 countries on a set day every five years, found that in 2020 women made up just 26 per cent of sources in newspapers, 26 per cent of television news sources, 23 per cent of radio news sources and 28 per cent of online news sources. The proportion of females deemed to be ‘expert commentators’ was lower, at 24 per cent, – although this was an improvement on the 19 per cent recorded in the 2015 GMMP. Across all forms of traditional media, women were the main focus of 6 per cent of stories, and 9 per cent of stories from news websites. Issues relating to gender equality were covered in 7 per cent of the total reporting analysed. In Australia, men were news sources in 68 per cent of the GMMP coverage analysed, while women made up 32 per cent. The proportion of women included as expert commentators was also 32 per cent, a significant improvement on the 14 per cent recorded in 2015 (GMMP 2021). Other Australian research has reported similar findings. The 2019 Women for Media Report (Price and Payne 2019) that analysed the top stories in 15 major news sites over four days in October 2018 found that men accounted for 66 per cent of direct news sources, while women made up 34 per cent. The proportion of male sources was much higher in certain key areas of news coverage including sport (95 per cent), business (82 per cent) and law and crime (79 per cent).

Another comprehensive, recent review (Kassova 2020) of gender and sourcing that examined news coverage from throughout 2019 in India, Kenya, Nigeria, South Africa, the United States and the United Kingdom reported that the proportion of women quoted in news coverage varied from 29 per cent in the UK down to 14 per cent in India. The research also

considered gender diversity in newsrooms, women as sources of news expertise, news stories with women protagonists and coverage of gender equality issues. According to author, Luba Kassova, the report revealed a “dire picture of women’s under- representation in the news”:

It shows that women’s representation in the news has flatlined (if not reversed) in the 21st century and that women are marginalized in governance/leadership roles in news organizations. In the six analyzed countries, less than 1% of news stories cover gender equality issues. In 2019, women’s share of protagonists or of quoted experts/sources in the news was between 14% and 30% in the six countries.

(Kassova 2020: 25)

Women were much more likely to be used to provide personal experience, popular opinion or eyewitness accounts than as experts, protagonists or spokespeople (Kassova 2020).

After pooling the results from three key datasets – the GMMP, the Global Report on the Status of Women in the News Media and The Women in Media in Europe, Djerf-Pierre and Edstrom (2020: 32) concluded that the news media was lagging behind the rest of society in terms of gender equality. “The combined analyses across countries and over time reveal a persistent global gender gap in the representation of women and men in the news media. Women are, to various degrees, marginalised in news content in almost every country in the world.” This has major implications because news media attention signals importance, credibility and authority. As Ross (2007: 454) argues: “Who is invited to speak as commentators on and in the news says crucially important things about who ‘counts’ in society, whose voices have legitimacy and status.” News that does not give equal coverage to women’s voices and perspectives excludes them from public debate and conveys the message that men and male perspectives are superior. Furthermore, news that is dominated by male voices cannot claim to accurately represent the community. According to the GMMP (2021: 5): “The failure to represent the diversity of people and opinion present in society not only has implications for

public discourse and decision-making, but it also plays a role in eroding trust in news journalism.” Recognising this, a growing number of news organisations around the world including the British Broadcasting Corporation, the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (Hobbins and Prior, 2019) and Bloomberg (Bloomberg, 2020) have introduced initiatives specifically aimed at increasing the inclusion of females and people from other marginalised groups in their coverage.

Quantitative studies such as those outlined above have focused on mainstream news outlets and the work of established journalists. But what about the journalists of the future? This study adds to the existing literature by shifting the attention to gender and sourcing in student journalism. It provides an analysis of news coverage produced by student journalists representing 21 universities from Australia, two from New Zealand and one from the South Pacific. The 420 news stories analysed were published on the Australian-based student journalism news website, *The Junction*, throughout the course of 2020. Member universities pay an annual fee to publish their students’ stories on *The Junction*. A key objective of the site is to aggregate original student journalism and showcase it to a wide audience. As most of the journalism programs in Australia are members of *The Junction*, the news coverage published on the site provides a good representative sample of Australian student journalism. The aims of this research were to examine the gender breakdown of sources across the student journalism, categorise the function of female sources with a particular focus on ‘expert’ sources and to identify any stories that referred to gender equality or inequality. These elements were included because a major review of the existing literature (Kassova 2020) found that most of the academic work on this area has focused on women as protagonists in the news and gender in newsrooms while there has been relatively little research about women as experts and the coverage of gender equality.

The findings outlined below regarding student journalism from Australia and New Zealand provide a valuable point of comparison to studies of gender and sourcing in mainstream news media. Student journalism is an appropriate source for analysis, this article argues, because it gives an insight into sourcing practices among the journalists of the future, before they have entered, or been influenced by, newsroom practices and cultures. Furthermore, a growing number of researchers (Geertsema-Sligh, Bachmann and Moody-Ramirez 2020; GMMP 2021; Kassova 2020; North 2015) have argued that explicit education about gender should be included in journalism program curricula as part of efforts to address gender inequalities in news content and in the journalism profession.

Women as sources in the news

A significant body of research has looked at how women are portrayed in news coverage, but that is beyond the scope of this study. The focus here, and in the literature outlined below, is on the extent to which females have been included in news coverage. Research about the inclusion of women in the news has encompassed all types of news platforms, photographs and social media. Across all areas, women have been found to be marginalised as news sources. In a study that focused on 450 Australian television news stories, Cann and Mohr (2001) found that men made up 80 per cent of overall news sources and that this increased to 86 per cent for expert sources. More recently, researchers have considered gender in news photographs, online news sources and social media. Yun et al. (2007) hypothesised that contemporary online news magazines from the United States, Britain, Korea and Mexico may contain a better balance of news sources than traditional news media. However, an average of only 3-5 per cent of articles featured women protagonists. Women sources were more prominent in photographs, according to Len Rios et al. (2005), appearing in about 35 per cent of photos in two American newspapers in a sample of articles over 3 weeks. However, when it came to news sources, women comprised 25 per cent. Artwick (2014) questioned whether an examination of news sources

quoted on Twitter would show greater diversity as women were more active on social media than men. However, her analysis of 2733 tweets from journalists from 51 US metropolitan daily newspapers found that men accounted for 80 per cent of all sources quoted in tweets.

In her 2007 study of English regional papers, Ross (2007) discovered the proportion of women included as sources was about 33 per cent, which was a slight improvement on English metropolitan newspapers. Despite this, she concluded the regional news was still heavily biased towards men. After reviewing the 2010 GMMP data for the United Kingdom and Ireland, Ross and Carter (2011, p. 1150) made a similar claim, arguing that journalists tended to rely on a narrow range of sources “most of whom are white, middle-class and middle-aged professional males”. This was particularly true in the case of ‘expert’ sources. Other research has also noted the pronounced lack of women amongst ‘expert’ sources. In the 2021 GMMP, the most common function of female sources across the news websites analysed was to provide ‘personal experience’ (41 per cent), followed by ‘popular opinion’ (39 per cent), an ‘eye witness’ account (30 per cent), as a ‘subject’ (28 per cent), ‘spokesperson’ (25 per cent) and ‘expert commentator’ (25 per cent). Similarly, a Danish study that specifically examined the use of academic researchers as expert sources, found that about 80 per cent of the researchers quoted in the 640 news items were male.

In one of the few comprehensive studies to focus on the gendered nature of expert commentary in the news, Finnish researchers (Niemi and Pitkänen 2016) analysed news from television and print media, interviewed journalists and editors and surveyed social scientists from three universities. Despite noting that Finland was “a progressive Nordic country, famous for its commitment to gender equality and high education” (p. 356), men were found to account for 72 per cent of expert sources quoted, even though men and women were represented equally among the university staff. After interviewing the journalists, the researchers concluded that reporters tended to approach sources that they, or their peers, had interviewed before and that

most of these established experts tended to be male. Vandenberghe, d’Haenens and Van Gorp (2020: 240) reported comparable findings when surveying Flemish print journalists about their attitudes towards including female and ethnically diverse sources in their stories. Reporters leaned towards using the sources they knew best and who were likely to provide interesting comments. Overall, diversity was a “marginal criterion” (Vandenberghe, d’Haenens and Van Gorp, 2020: 238) for most journalists. In a British study (Howells and Singer, 2017) of television and radio news that included interviews and surveys of broadcast journalists, most of the reporters (33 of 40 surveyed) said they actively tried to include women as expert sources. Despite this, a review of 161 radio and television newscasts found that male experts outnumbered females four to one. There was a perception among some of the journalists that women experts were “harder to book” (p. 1075) and required more persuasion. This view, however, does not align with findings from interviews with female experts, who have generally reported a willingness to be interviewed about their area of expertise (Niemi and Pitkänen 2016; Shine 2021). Furthermore, recent related research (Greve-Poulsen et al 2021) has found that news audiences perceive female expert sources to be as credible and competent as their male counterparts.

Gender and journalism education

There is relatively limited research about the inclusion of gender education in journalism university programs. What is available suggests that gender education is rarely a core component of journalism curricular. A review of units in journalism and communication units in Spanish universities (Larrondo and Rivero 2019) found that 28 per of the courses offered a subject involving some degree of gender education. Interviews with the teaching staff revealed that such content was introduced due to the personal initiative of individual staff members. An audit of gender in journalism and media units across 25 institutions in 13 Southern African countries (Made 2010) found that few had gender components integrated into course content

and there was an overall lack of gender-related course materials. In Australia, a review (North 2010) of units from the 30 universities that offered a journalism degree or major reported that there was no unit devoted to gender across the journalism offerings. Five universities noted some aspect of gender or feminism in journalism unit descriptions – Griffith, La Trobe and Macquarie universities, the University of Melbourne, and the University of Tasmania. However, the author noted that these references were confined to media representations of gender and argued that some of these “seemed almost accidental” (p 108). In conclusion, North (2010:11) made a strong case for compulsory gender education in journalism curriculum content:

It is problematic that gender issues – and in particular the specificities of the gendered production of news – are not taught in journalism programs. This lack of attention to gender fails to address the educational and experiential needs of both male and female journalism students. Journalism programs should make transparent obvious cultural and gendered aspects of professional practice and, should adapt curriculum content to address and challenge systemic gender inequity.

North subsequently created and introduced a unit titled ‘Gender, race and journalism’ at Monash University in Victoria. Describing the unit in a subsequent research paper, she said:

The unit examined media content and production processes through a gendered (and raced) lens. It asked students to consider whether the influx of women into media industries had changed the “news”, how gender was implicated in newsroom culture and the impact of the numerical domination of men in positions of power in most media organizations.

(North 2015: 178)

Student ‘overwhelmingly’ (North 2015: 180) reported, in formal and informal feedback, that they had not previously learnt about the concepts included in the unit and that they had been

surprised by the facts and theories presented. Since then, progress in this area seems to have stalled in Australia with Wake et al. reporting in 2020 that most journalism and communication tertiary students receive ‘limited exposure to gender informed materials or curriculum’ (Wake et al. 2020: 7). Around the world, gender education in university journalism courses continues to be limited (Bachmann 2020; Geertsema-Sligh, Bachmann and Moody-Ramirez 2020; Payette and Lebel 2013), despite the fact that a growing number of researchers (North 2010; GMMP 2015; Kassova 2020; Geertsema-Sligh, Bachmann and Moody-Ramirez 2020) have called for gender issues to be included as compulsory content. Recognising the importance and value of gender education, the United National Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) has led the creation of various resources for teaching gender in journalism education. These include a course on gender and journalism as part of the *Model Curricular for Journalism Education* (Payette and Lebel 2013) and more recently, *Gender, Media & ICTs: New Approaches for Research, Education and Training* (French et al. 2019). The Global Media Monitoring Project, in conjunction with the International Federation of Journalists, has also produced a two-volume ‘kit’ for journalists (Macharia & Morinière 2012) aimed at redressing gender inequalities. How widely and consistently such resources are used in journalism education is unknown.

The study

The online news website, *The Junction* (www.junctionjournalism.com.au), was chosen as the news source for this analysis because it publishes student journalism from universities located across Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific. In 2020, the year that was the focus of this study, 24 universities published student journalism on the site. These included universities from every state in Australia except for the Northern Territory, plus Massey University and Auckland University of Technology in New Zealand and the University of the South Pacific. While it is standard practice for journalism programs in universities to publish student work

through a newspaper or website, *The Junction* is a rare example of a publication that brings together student journalism from a large number of universities within a region. When describing the project that led to the creation of *The Junction*, the editors described it as “unique in its scope and breadth” (Dodd et al. 2018). *The Conversation* (www.theconversation.com.au) was named as a close comparable model except that it aggregates the work of university researchers, rather than students. Participating journalism programs pay an annual fee, dependent on student numbers, to contribute to *The Junction*. The Journalism Education and Research Association of Australia is the publisher of the site, and it is overseen by an editorial committee, comprising members from eight Australian universities. Staff at participating universities publish their students’ work directly to the site. In a relatively small number of cases, a link to the story in an external student publication is provided instead of the complete story being published on *The Junction* site. For the purpose of this study, those stories were deemed to be published on *The Junction* and were included in the analysis. There is no limit to the number of stories that any university can publish on the site and the number varies significantly between the member universities. For some journalism programs, *The Junction* is the only publication outlet for students. Most however, have their own dedicated student journalism publications in addition to publishing to *The Junction*.

Rather than analysing student journalism from several university student publications, the decision was made to analyse student work published on *The Junction* as it is broadly representative of student journalism in Australia. For this study, each of the 420 stories published on the site in 2020 was analysed according to the author, the university from where it originated, the number of sources included and the way/s in which the story was reported. In line with comparable research that has examined gender and sourcing in news coverage (Kassova 2020;GMMP 2015), the gender of the sources included in each story and the function of each female source was identified. As part of this analysis and also consistent with existing

comparable research, the researcher also identified any stories that included references to gender equality or inequality. A discussion about the nature of these stories is included in the analysis below.

This research examines gender in news sources based on numbers of females and males included in the news content. The researcher recognises that gender is non-binary and that the use of the terms ‘women’ and ‘men’ or ‘male’ and ‘female’ may be exclusionary. The authors and sources were coded as male or female based on their names and/or the pronouns used to describe them in the story. Such an approach is based on assumptions and is not a perfect system. However, all major analyses of news content to date that have examined gender have relied on the same method. To effectively compare student journalism from Australia and New Zealand to the existing research, a similar approach was applied. Significantly, there was not one story among the coverage that used gender-neutral pronouns to describe a source. This is not to say that there was not someone among the sources quoted who preferred to be referred to as ‘they’, but that such a preference was not apparent in the stories analysed. In a small number of cases, it was not possible to make an assumption about the gender of the author or source, and these sources were excluded from analysis relating to gender.

Findings

During 2020, a total of 420 news items were published on *The Junction*. The majority of these stories (301) were text-based including a photo or photos, while 71 were deemed to be multimedia in that they combined text with video and/or audio elements. There were 32 audio and 16 video stories published over the course of the year. The number of stories published to the site by member universities varied significantly, with some universities publishing fewer than 10 stories over the course of the year. LaTrobe University in Victoria published the most stories (64), followed by The University of Melbourne (52), Murdoch University in Western Australia (39), the University of the Sunshine Coast in Queensland (35), Auckland University

(28) and University of South Australia (28). Not surprisingly for 2020, a relatively high proportion of the stories (43 per cent) included some reference to COVID-19.

As previously discussed, university journalism programs tend to attract more female than male students. This was reflected in the ratio of female to male authors of stories published to *The Junction*. Of the 420 items coded, 248 (59 per cent) were produced by students with names typically associated with females, while 152 stories (36 per cent) were considered to be produced by male students. For 20 of the stories, it was not possible to establish whether the author was female or male.

Within the published articles, 1109 original sources were quoted. These were sources contacted by the student as a primary source. Cases where the source and the quoted information was taken from another news source, such as a report by the ABC, were not included. The number of original sources quoted in a story varied considerably, from 0 to 14. Stories containing 2 original sources were most common among the coverage (100), followed by stories with 3 sources (77), stories with 1 source (75), stories with 0 original sources (56), stories with 4 sources (47) and stories with 5 sources (24).

Of the original sources in *The Junction* coverage, 586 (52 per cent) were male, 490 (44 per cent) were female and 33 (3 per cent) were unidentified. Consistent with other analyses of gender sourcing in news (GMMP 2021; Kassova 2020), the primary 'role' of the female sources in each story was also identified. The roles were defined as such: personal – a source that spoke about their own personal experiences or feelings; political – a source that held a political position such as a mayor or Member of Parliament; expert – a source such as a doctor or an academic who was qualified to speak on a topic due to recognised expertise; spokesperson – a source who spoke on behalf of an organisation or group of people and stakeholder – a source with an interest in the topic or who may be affected by who was speaking as an individual rather than as a representative. Among the female sources, 212 or 43 per cent were

deemed to have a ‘personal’ role, 154 (31 per cent) were considered a ‘spokesperson’, 94 (19 per cent) were an ‘expert’, 17 (3 per cent) were ‘stakeholders’ and 13 (2 per cent) were considered to be ‘political’ sources. For the purpose of this research, analysis relating to male sources was confined to identifying ‘expert’ sources among the males included in the coverage. Within the male sources quoted, 110 (18 per cent) were deemed to be ‘expert’ sources, compared to 94 women. Hence, overall, 53.9 per cent of expert sources quoted were male, compared to 46.1 per cent of female expert sources.

	Male	Female	Unsure
Student bylines	152 (36%)	248 (59%)	20
Original sources	586 (52%)	490 (44%)	33
Expert sources	110 (54%)	94 (46%)	0

Table 1: Breakdown of students, total sources and expert sources by gender.

Of the 420 news stories, 13 were identified as including references to gender equality. This equates to 3 per cent of the coverage. All of the stories were produced by female student journalists except one which was produced by two students - a female and a male. One student from The University of Melbourne produced two of the stories. Gender equality was only covered by students from a relatively small number of universities: The University of Melbourne (3 stories), RMIT (3), The University of South Australia (2), Deakin University (2), Monash University (1), University of the Sunshine Coast (1) and Griffith University (1).

Reporter	University	Headline
Ruby Buetefuer	University of South Australia	Cracks in the glass ceiling: Female journalists fight to reach the top of the ladder

Tyler Powell	University of South Australia	Footy empowers women and girls
Gillian Aeria	Monash University	Size me up: The need for women's tailored football boots
Emily-Layne Kapetanovic	RMIT	Seeking truth: How women are being put back into the music industry equation
April Austin and Nick Angus	RMIT	Gender and the screen: Are women given a fair go?
Alexandra Middleton	RMIT	Regional, rural and remote women need resources to fight family violence
Darcy Goss	University of the Sunshine Coast	Australian music skips a beat on gender equality
Fia Walsh	University of Melbourne	Sound the alarm: Women losing sleep over gender inequality
Fia Walsh	University of Melbourne	Who are you calling hysterical? Why fangirls get to scream and shout
Jordyn Beazley	University of Melbourne	As pandemic adds to mother lode, calls for mental health support
Monique Mita	Griffith University	QLD election explainer: Domestic violence in Queensland
Emily Rawle	Deakin University	What it's like to live with a fear of having kids
Bonnie Parfitt	Deakin University	A small but spectacular mark in AFL history

Table 2: Stories about gender equality and inequality published on *The Junction* in 2020.

Most of the stories were longer, feature-style pieces. Almost all of the stories dealt with issues of gender inequality – this ranged from inequality in the workplace and in sport, to health and other problems that disproportionately affect women. One of the stories described how the COVID-19 pandemic was causing additional stress to mothers and expecting mothers. Another reported that sleep issues disproportionately affect females and described how gender

inequality contributed to this problem. Women's health was also the focus in a story on the relatively unknown health problem known as tokophobia, described as anxiety around getting pregnant. One story discussed the lack of women in senior management in the Australian music industry. Two other similar stories highlighted gender inequality in relation to female musicians and singers. A long form audio story defended 'fangirl' culture, explaining that women have historically and unfairly been described as hysterical. Two of the stories described improvements in gender equality in terms of changing attitudes to women playing AFL football, and increased female participation in the sport. One of the other stories was about the lack of football (soccer) boots designed for women, despite high numbers of girls and women playing the sport. Another feature story outlined why women in regional and rural areas of Australia needed more resources to combat family violence, and argued that gender inequality contributed to violence against women. A shorter, news story provided an 'explainer' about the upcoming Queensland state election by outlining where the parties stood in terms of issues that affected women.

Discussion and Recommendations

Of the original sources in *The Junction's* 2020 coverage, 586 (52 per cent) were male, 490 (44 per cent) were female and 33 (3 per cent) were unidentified. Perhaps more significantly, the breakdown of male to female expert sources was similar, at 54 per cent male and 46 per cent female. These are encouraging findings, given that, on average, men have been found to comprise about 70 per cent of news sources and that this number has often increased to around 80 per cent of 'expert' sources. Indeed, some researchers would argue that the student journalism analysed here has already achieved gender parity in certain areas. Djerf-Pierre and Edstrom (2020), for example, have suggested, allowing for some latitude, that a normative target of 40:60 distribution of sources in all relevant roles and positions may be appropriate. These findings tend to support a hypothesis put forward by the GMMP (2015) that as the

number of female journalists increase so will the proportion of female sources. This was based on a finding, from 10 successive years of monitoring, that stories by female reporters were more likely to include a central female source than stories by their male counterparts. Among stories by women journalists, 14 per cent were found to focus centrally on women, in contrast to 9 per cent of stories by their male counterparts. Given that 59 per cent of the stories produced by the student journalists were deemed to be produced by female students, compared to 39 per cent of stories by males, you might expect to see more balanced sourcing. Nevertheless, the results outlined here are even better than may have been expected.

There are a number of possibilities that may explain the discrepancy between the student journalism analysed and the mainstream news coverage. It may be that the better gender balance shown in the student journalism reflects a shift in attitudes among aspiring (often young and female) reporters, and a greater awareness of the need for gender equality. This explanation is supported by other research that has found that younger members of the public are more likely to support gender equality (Pew Research Centre 2018). According to Kassova (2020:15), this finding “holds potential for advocacy efforts engaging primary and secondary schools as well as universities in general and journalism programs in particular.” Or the explanation may be simpler, and less encouraging, in that students may be seeking out female sources because they consider them to be more approachable than males. There is no research to confirm this, but anecdotal evidence from students suggests this may be a factor. Relatively inexperienced student journalists often lack confidence to approach people to interview, particularly high-profile sources who are more likely to be men. However, until we seek feedback from students about their attitudes and approaches to news sourcing, we can’t be sure about their intentions and motivations. This is an area of research that needs more attention.

Even if student journalists are actively seeking to achieve gender parity with their sourcing, some researchers argue that these attitudes and practices may change when they enter

the workforce. Journalism has a long history as a male-dominated profession and this has shaped, and continues to shape, journalism practices and production. Kassova (2020: 16) contends that ‘women journalists adapt to these default male-biased professional standards and “masculine” values as the universal cultural norm, in order to fit in in the newsroom and to progress in organizations, or because they are unaware of an alternative way of operating.’ Men continue to make the majority of editorial decisions in newsrooms around the world leading to gender inequity in news coverage, which can have far-reaching repercussions. It is essential then, that efforts are made to better educate the journalists of the future about gender inequality more broadly, but also about how gender influences news content (North, 2015). Without this kind of education, the lack of diversity in news content is unlikely to be addressed, according to Geertsema-Sligh, Bachmann and Moody-Ramirez, who argue that journalism educators have an obligation to change this:

The debate now has more to do with *how* than *whether* journalism educators should train students on matters of gender and inequality, be it within a single class, across curricula or both. Regardless of the approach, the key is to reflect seriously on these issues. The world is diverse, and it is crucial to convince students that they need to be open and listen to diverse voices. It would be negligent of journalism educators to do otherwise.

(2020: 71)

The limited attention given to issues relating to gender equality in the student journalism analysed here tends to add weight to the arguments outlined above. Overall, 13 of the 420 articles included some references to gender equality of inequality. This equates to 3 per cent. This is relatively low compared to the 7 per cent of coverage identified in the GMMP (2021) but higher than Kassova’s (2020) review which found gender equality issues constituted less than half a per cent of all news coverage in India, the UK, the US, and Nigeria and less than

one per cent in South Africa and Kenya. While 3 per cent is an improvement on those, it is still a low figure. Stories about gender equality were present in coverage from only 7 of the 24 universities. Given the prominence of equality issues such as the #metoo movement in recent years, it is surprising to see so few stories covering these topics. There's no denying that news content from around the world in 2020 was dominated by the coronavirus pandemic but one of the key messages to emerge during this time was that the pandemic was disproportionately affecting women. Hence, you might expect that gender equality would be a more prominent topic among the student journalism. The stories that were published reflected a sophisticated understanding of the extent and consequences of gender equality but the fact that stories about gender equality accounted for a small proportion of the coverage, combined with the finding that all but one of the stories was produced by female journalists, suggests this remains very much a niche area of coverage that seems to be considered a 'women's' issue.

Various researchers have put forward recommendations about how to improve gender equality in news content, some of which relate to newsrooms and others to journalism education. Kassova (2020) suggests that gender education be introduced as a compulsory module for all students of news journalism. She also makes a range of recommendations aimed at news providers, but which also have relevance in journalism education. For example: make journalists and students aware of the gender bias in news content and encourage them to include more female sources in their stories. She also suggests linking gender equality stories to other issues that are considered 'important' such as the state of the economy, politics and health. Another idea is to compile lists of women contributors and experts for journalists (and students) to use. In Australia, the ABC has already done this as part of its 50:50 project aimed at achieving gender parity in its news coverage. Various non-news organisations have also tried to make it easier to identify and approach women expert sources by establishing searchable databases such as the UK-based The Women's Room (<https://www.thewomensroom.org.uk/>)

and the Australian-based Women for Media (<https://womenformedia.com.au/>). Journalists and students should be encouraged to use such resources. For journalism educators, a number of other resources are also readily available. These include the course on gender and journalism in the *Model Curricular for Journalism Education* (Payette and Lebel, 2013), the Gender, Media & ICTs: New Approaches for Research, Education and Training (French et al. 2019) and the kit for journalists produced by The Global Media Monitoring Project, in conjunction with the International Federation of Journalists (Macharia & Morinière 2012). According to Geertsema Sligh, Bachmann and Moody-Ramirez, making journalism staff and students aware of such resources is key, as is providing examples of exemplary reporting of gender. Universities should include gender and inequality issues across the journalism curriculum, they argue, ‘integrating them in classroom discussions, research, presentations and hands on activities’ (p.72). There is much flexibility in how this might be achieved. For educators seeking more guidance, North’s (2015) description of the ‘Gender, race and journalism’ unit introduced at Monash University in Melbourne presents specific ideas about possible content and assessment.

Conclusion

This article has presented the findings of an analysis of student journalism published throughout 2020 from the Australian news website, *The Junction*. Overall, the coverage achieved a better gender balance than what has been seen in mainstream news coverage to date. Females comprised about 44 per cent of overall sources and 46 per cent of expert sources. While gender parity was not achieved, this is an encouraging finding. However, it is difficult to know why this was the case and whether it stemmed from an overall greater awareness of gender equality issues among student journalists. The other key finding about the extent of coverage about gender equality issues among the student journalism was not as promising. Only 3 per cent of the coverage was in this category and all but one of the stories were produced

by female students, suggesting that there is a perception among the students that these types of topics are women's issues rather than broader societal issues. So, while the gender breakdown of sources was an improvement on mainstream journalism, the findings outlined here point to the value of gender education for journalism students, in line with recommendations from related research (Geertsema-Sligh, Bachmann and Moody-Ramirez 2020; GMMP 2021).

It's important to reiterate that the coverage analysed here is a sample of student journalism. It does not capture all of the student journalism produced throughout Australia. Nor does it capture all of the stories published by students from *The Junction* member universities as some of these universities publish most of their students' work on their own dedicated student news sites. This research is intended as a starting point from which other studies about gender and sourcing in student journalism will hopefully develop. There is no doubt that there is a dearth of such research available and a lack of research overall about the nature of student journalism and student journalists' approaches to identifying and interviewing news sources.

The intention of this article is to raise awareness about gender sourcing and the reporting of gender inequality in student journalism from Australia and New Zealand and encourage educators to think about how to incorporate gender education into their courses or units. It is not aiming to prescribe how they might do so, but to highlight the existing resources and present various recommendations from some of the experts in this area. As Geertsema-Sligh, Bachmann and Moody-Ramirez (2020: 71) have acknowledged, there is no consensus on the best approach to solve these problems. Gender education is not about men versus women, they argue, but about being 'gender sensitive'. 'A good starting point is to acknowledge nonbinary conceptions of gender as well as intersectionality, the overlapping markers of difference including those based on gender, race, class, ability, gender identity and nationality.' There is a strong case for the inclusion of content of this type in all tertiary courses

but given the ongoing gender inequality in the journalism profession and in news content, the particular relevance of these topics for journalism students is clear. Not only is this likely to make the students better reporters, it will likely make them more employable. An increasing number of media organisations around the world including the BBC, the ABC and Bloomberg are actively seeking to improve diversity in their reporting and are seeking journalism graduates with a nuanced understanding of issues such as gender inequality.

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