WHERE ARE THE WOMEN IN THE EBOLA CRISIS? AN ANALYSIS OF GENDERED REPORTING AND THE INFORMATION BEHAVIOR PATTERNS OF JOURNALISTS COVERING A HEALTH OUTBREAK

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Health officials estimate that the 2014 Ebola crisis disproportionately victimized women, who made up 75% of the disease's victims. This interdisciplinary study has two main goals. The first is to evaluate the news media's performance in relation to their representation of women caught up in the Ebola crisis because the media play an important role in influencing public responses to health. This study sought to understand the information behavior patterns of journalists who covered the Ebola crisis by analyzing how job tasks influence a journalist's information behavior. This study employed qualitative methods to study the perceptions of journalists who covered the 2014 Ebola outbreak. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with Liberian and American journalists who covered the outbreak to understand the choices that guided their reporting of the Ebola crisis. A content analysis of *The New York Times*, *The Times*, and *The Inquirer* was also conducted to examine the new media's representation of women in an outbreak which mostly victimized women. The findings suggest that covering a dangerous assignment like Ebola affected the information behavior patterns of journalists. Audience needs, the timing of coverage, fear, and the accessibility of sources, were some of the factors that influenced the news gathering decisions taken by the reporters. The findings also suggest that women were mostly underrepresented by the media as sources, experts and subjects.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

> *So that is how to create a single story, show a people as one thing, as only one thing, over and over again, and that is what they become.*
>
> Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie

A “jungle or desert landscape” whose people are “licentious brutes” who “speak unintelligible languages,” engage in pointless battles against each other and practice strange customs are a few of the stereotypes Americans perceive of the continent of Africa (Harth, 2012, p. 9; McCarthy, 1983, p. 12). These stereotypes are mostly based on United States and European news media reports, which depict Africa as a region incapable self-government and burdened by “political upheaval, pestilence, natural disasters, and famine, while minimizing or ignoring positive breakthroughs” (Swain, 2003, p. 146). It is, however, true that some of these assertions are verifiable about the continent, including those about the rapid spread of some diseases. In fact, the Sub-Saharan African region accounts for 80 % of AIDS deaths, even though it only accounts for 10 % of the global population (Swain, 2003).

It is also true that in March 2014, the Ebola virus surfaced in the southeast region of Guinea in western Africa, and barely eight months after the first Ebola cases were reported, the World Health Organization (WHO) reported 13,241 cases of Ebola primarily in Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone (Friedrich, 2014; Rainsch, Shankar, Wellman, Merline & Meltzer, 2014). Ebola is a deadly virus that causes a hemorrhagic fever which originated in the Democratic Republic of Congo, formerly called Zaire (Fox, 2018). It is spread through:

> Close contact with the blood, secretions, organs or other bodily fluids of infected animals such as chimpanzees, gorillas, fruit bats, monkeys, forest antelope and porcupines found ill or dead or in the rainforest. Ebola then spreads through human-to-human transmission via direct contact (through broken skin or mucous membranes) with the blood, secretions,

> organs or other bodily fluids of infected people, and with surfaces and materials (e.g. bedding, clothing) contaminated with these fluids. (WHO, 2018)

Due to the fact that there were more cases and deaths in the 2014 to 2016 Ebola outbreak than in all other outbreaks combined, the World Health Organization Ebola declared it as “the largest and most complex Ebola outbreak since the virus was first discovered in 1976” (WHO, 2018).

It is estimated that there were 28,331 cases of Ebola in the 2014 Ebola crisis, and about 11,310 people are estimated to have lost their lives to Ebola (WHO). These statistics resulted in the Ebola outbreak in West Africa being declared an international public health emergency, and the largest and worst Ebola pandemic in history (CDC; Saul, 2014; UN Women, 2015; WHO). While the Ebola virus mostly rampaged countries like Sierra Leone, Liberia, and Guinea, it was also transmitted in Western nations, although on a limited scale. Two American nurses contracted the virus while treating the first Ebola patient in the U.S., Thomas Eric Duncan. Duncan who had traveled from Liberia to the U.S., was treated at the Texas Health Presbyterian Hospital Dallas, where he died. A Spanish nurse contracted the disease in Spain while treating a Spanish priest who had done aid work in Africa. In total, 11 people were treated for Ebola in the Western world during the 2014 to 2016 crisis. On March 29, 2016, the WHO lifted the PHEIC (A Public Health Emergency of International Concern) status on West Africa (CDC). The WHO declares countries free of transmission if no new confirmed Ebola cases are reported for 42 days, which is two incubation periods of the virus.

Like other diseases such as cholera and AIDS, and the swine influenza pandemic, the Ebola crisis caught the attention of the mass media, which has historically mediated coverage of epidemics (Machungo, 2012). Even health officials recognize the importance of news media coverage of health issues and are said to be “sensitive to the persuasive power” of the media (Leask, Hooker, & King, 2010, p. 1). After all, some research has found that media are the preferred source of health information, coming just after physicians, family and relatives (Martinson & Hindman, 2005). Due to the fact that mass media play an important role in framing how people think about health issues, it is important to study how journalists make decisions to cover health epidemics and how they seek and use information when covering such assignments (Leask et al, 2010).

The focus of media coverage of the Ebola crisis has been criticized by some for being “narrow,” unbalanced” and “disproportionate” (Lancet, 2014, p. 1641). The American news media, for example, is said to have paid more attention to the nine American victims of Ebola, compared to the thousands of Ebola victims in Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone (Lancet, 2014). As recently as March 2015, more than 150 writers and scholars wrote an open letter to Jeff Fager, the executive producer of CBS’ “60 Minutes,” faulting the show for its “frequent and recurring misrepresentation” of Africa during coverage of the Ebola crisis in Liberia (Byers, 2015).

Columbia University journalism professor Howard W. French, who led the group of dissenting voices, faulted CBS' Lara Logan of “60 Minutes” for not giving the people of Liberia a voice. These writers state that such coverage presents the Liberians as “silent victims of Ebola,” “whose thoughts, experiences and actions were treated as if totally without interest” (Byers, 2015). They argue that CBS misrepresented Liberians by airing only the voices of white foreigners who were contributing to the fight against Ebola; meanwhile Africans, some of whom have also contributed bravely to this fight, were only talked about by Logan instead of interviewed themselves (French, 2015).

French (2015), who has extensive reporting experience in Africa and the U.S., argues that such elevation of Western characters in the reporting of Africa is one of the major flaws of

American media coverage of Africa. The American media is said to have failed in its coverage of foreign events, especially Africa, which receives the least coverage because the attitude toward foreign news coverage stems from a perception that Africa is not a viable news region and that Americans are uninterested in world events that may not affect their lives or country's future (Fenton, 2009; Swain, 2003).

Such rhetoric is reminiscent of past criticisms of Western media coverage of Africa. Such journalism has been criticized for being inadequate, oversimplifying issues, and responsible for legitimizing US foreign policy, thus giving Westerners a negative impression of the African continent, and reinforcing assumptions of African underachievement and backwardness (Anderson, Diabah & hMensa, 2011; Branston & Stafford, 1999; Fryman & Bates, 1993; Mahadeo & McKinney, 2007; Seib, 2004; Shurnik, 1981; Swain, 2003). About 100 years ago, after World War I, Arnold Guyot, a professor of geology and physical geography at Princeton University, described Africa as a "savage land" inhabited by "heathen idol worshippers" (McCarthy, 1983, p. 126).

Despite the criticism of media coverage of the Ebola crisis, some media organizations have been recognized for their contributions to addressing the Ebola outbreak. *The New York Times*, which won the 2015 Pulitzer Prize for its international coverage of the Ebola outbreak, prides itself on being the first American newspaper to send a reporter in July 2014 through bush plane to report on Ebola from remote areas of West African forests (New York Times Nomination Letter, 2015). The Pulitzer was awarded to the New York Times for its "courageous front-line reporting and vivid human stories on Ebola in Africa," and for "engaging the public with the scope and details of the outbreak while holding authorities accountable" (Pulitzer.org, 2015).

The BBC World Service on its part launched bespoke public service resources for West African communities, particularly Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea, the three most afflicted nations in September 2014 (BBC Media Centre, 2015). One of the services offered by the BBC World Service in its Ebola coverage was a series of special radio broadcasts on the BBC's English service aired in several languages including Hausa, Swahili, French, Somali and Kinyarwanda/Kirundi. The BBC also set up an Ebola Community Facebook page and a BBC Ebola Service on WhatsApp, a mobile messaging platform, which sent two to three messages a day to BBC subscribers containing practical information on how to prevent the spread of Ebola (BBC Media Centre, 2015). This initiative by the BBC World Service earned it the prestigious George Foster Peabody Award for what the committee described as "an incredibly important and consequential response to a global crisis" (BBC Media Centre, 2015).

While French and his associates criticize the media for misrepresenting players in the Ebola crisis, another group that plays a critical role in this struggle and yet is not receiving as much attention is women, especially African women. Research suggests that African women are "often utilized to embody human suffering and signal a need for outside intervention" (Ruginyte, 2011, p. 2). There is, however, a need for a more recent study of media representation of African women because this group has been disproportionately victimized by Ebola (Saul, 2014). This is because women serve as nurses, primary caregivers, traders, cleaners and laundry workers in hospitals in their communities, thus increasing their risk of contracting the disease (Saul, 2014, UN Women, 2015).

Problem Statement

Health officials estimate that women made up 75 % of Ebola victims, indicating that the disease disproportionately victimized women in Africa (Saul, 2014; UN Women, 2015). Even in the US, where there were only two reported cases of Ebola transmission, female nurses were the ones who contracted the disease. Yet, there was a lack of communication and outreach services specifically targeting women in the humanitarian response (UN Women, 2015). This indicates that there is a need to evaluate media performance in relation to their representation of women, who were most at risk of contracting Ebola, because the media are understood to play an "enormously influential role in public responses to health issues" (Leask, et al., 2010, p. 1). It also raises the need to understand how the information-seeking behavior of journalists covering the Ebola crisis influenced their reporting choices. This study therefore has a dual purpose, the first of which is to analyze the representation of women caught up in the Ebola crisis. Studying media representation is important because the media are "potentially powerful agents of socialization and social change," who help shape their audiences' understanding of world through their construction and representation of meaning about the world (Gallagher, 1979, p. 3; Mahadeo & McKinney, 2007). The second objective of this study is to study the information behavior patterns of journalists who covered the Ebola outbreak, and how these patterns influenced their reporting and subject choices.

Significance

This study will seek to understand how the media represented women, who made up the majority of the disease's victims, in their coverage of the 2014 Ebola crisis. Previous research on media coverage of Africa has focused on the tone of the coverage. This study, however, takes a different approach as it focuses on analyzing media performance as concerns a particular group that has been affected by a health outbreak. Not only is this likely to fill a gap in communication research, but it has the potential to reveal media patterns that could possibly result in guidelines on how to cover victims of health disasters for communication scholars and practitioners.

Studying media representation is important because mass media play an important role constructing meanings about the world through representation, thus helping their audiences to make sense of it and experience the world (Mahadeo & McKinney, 2007). Branston and Stafford (1999) paint a bigger picture of the importance of media representation as they state that "the mass media have the power to represent, over and over, some identities, some imaginings, and to exclude others, and thereby make them seem unfamiliar or even threatening" (p. 15). Since the "main centres of information production and dissemination are located in the affluent and powerful 'Western' parts of the world," it is important to study how information is produced because information production is "pregnant with powerful cultural and ideological assumptions about what is 'normal' and 'acceptable'" (Mahadeo & McKinney, 2007, p. 15).

This study, which has disciplinary connections to both Information Science and Journalism, has as a second objective to study the information-seeking behavior patterns of journalists covering the Ebola outbreak. Research on journalists in both the communication and information science discipline can be described as lacking in certain aspects. While the process behind news making has been studied extensively by communication scholars, few have focused on the sources used by journalists (Manning, 2001). On the other hand, while the information sources used by journalists have been studied extensively in Library and Information Science (LIS), none of these studies have attempted to understand how job tasks and the nature of the assignments influence a journalist's information behavior. No information behavior study so far has been identified which sought to understand how journalists seek, use and share information when covering dangerous and risky situations. By examining the sources of information used by journalists, and how these professionals seek information in a health crisis, specifically during the Ebola crisis, this study will not only fill the existing gap in the literature, but it will enlighten us on how information behavior patterns are influenced by the nature of work tasks. This will serve as a building block for future studies on health communication and LIS research on journalists.

Research Questions

1. (a) How did the media represent women in their coverage of the Ebola crisis between March 24, 2014 to September 24, 2015?

   (b) How did media representations of female Ebola victims differ according to geographic location of the victim?

2. (a) How has the Ebola crisis affected the information behavior pattern of journalists?

   (b) How did the nature of reporting on a health crisis influence the reporting of the Ebola crisis?

   (c) How has the Ebola crisis influenced journalists' choice of subjects during a health crisis?

3. (a) What is the satisfaction level of journalists with the information they found when covering the 2014 Ebola crisis?

   (b)For what purposes did journalists use the information they collected from sources during the Ebola crisis?

Conceptual Definitions

- *Information*: Information does not have a singular meaning. Case (2012) suggests that for an object to be classified as information, it requires utility, physicality, structure/process, intentionality, and truth.

- *Information behavior*: Information behavior "encompasses information seeking as well as the totality of other unintentional or passive behaviors (such as glimpsing or encountering information), as well as purposive behaviors that do not involve seeking, such as actively avoiding information" (Case, 2012, p. 5).

- *Information seeking behavior*: "Information seeking is a conscious effort to acquire information in response to a need or gap in your knowledge" (Case, 2012, p. 5).

- *The media*: The media refer to communication media and the specialized and separate institutions for which people worked: print media and the press, photography, advertising, cinema, broadcasting. Newspapers are the medium of interest in this study.

- *Media representation*: These are the "images, stories, voices, and accounts that appear in the media on a daily basis and feed the ways in which we imagine the world: how we come to see, think of, and feel about the world, and our place and relations with others in this world" (Orgad, 2012, p. 3).

- *Risk information*: Risk information is one of the attributes of quality information. It is defined by the National Academy of Sciences as "an interactive process of exchange of information and opinion among individuals, groups, and institutions. It involves multiple messages about the nature of risk and other messages, not strictly about risk, that express concerns, opinions, or reactions to risk messages or to legal and institutional arrangements for risk management (Covello et al, 2001, p. 383).

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW AND MEDIA THEORY

Historical Media Coverage of Health Crises

Few studies have attempted to address the factors that influence the reporting practices of journalists covering health crises, which is a gap this study will attempt to fill. One contribution of this study will therefore be to examine what factors influenced the information seeking behaviors of journalists covering the Ebola crisis, and how this resulted in the quantity and quality of coverage produced by these journalists.

Mass media serve as important sources of health information, and health professionals turn to the media to promote awareness about diseases, and behaviors that should be avoided (Andsager, 2013; Krieger et al., 2013; Leask et al., 2010; Martinson, 2005). Media coverage of health issues is also important because the rising rates of diseases such as cancer, obesity and Alzheimer's are only expected to rise in the coming decades, while scientists are increasingly concerned about infectious diseases, especially those that spread from animals to humans (Andsager, 2013; Evensen & Clarke, 2012). News coverage of health issues is therefore important because of the public's reliance on media sources for information about health risks and how they should respond to these risks on personal and societal levels (Evensen & Clarke, 2012). Andsager (2013) actually posits that reliance on the media for health information by individuals in developed countries has even has never been higher than it is currently. Media coverage of health issues is therefore an important, but mostly overlooked aspect of reducing health inequities (Krieger et al., 2013).

An area of research gaining traction in the communication field is the study of the content, quantity, and quality of health information provided by the media (Evensen & Clarke, 2012; Krieger et al., 2013). After all, it is understood that “effective communication is critical to the successful resolution of any type of health, safety, or environmental controversy” (Covello, Peters, Wojtecki & Hyde, 2001, p. 382). Dudo et al. (2007) however, acknowledge that “knowledge itself is not a sufficient antecedent to the formation of rational science risk-related attitudes or behaviors,” which is an important point raised because interpersonal channels play a more influential role in impacting individual-level risk judgments (p. 447).

However, this does not imply that dissemination of efficacy information by the media is irrelevant, because mass media messages affect social-level risk judgments, and the media even serve as a primary source of information in the event of science and environmental risks, which are often not directly experienced (Dudo et al, 2007). Media efficacy information is therefore important because the availability of “quality scientific risk information at least provides the opportunity for readers to come to an informed risk assessment” (Dudo et al, 2007, p. 447).

The quality of health information and quantity of coverage are two factors related to media coverage of health inequities (Krieger et al., 2013). As concerns the amount of coverage given to a health issue, the media do not always adequately report on health inequities and health risks even though the health risks might be newsworthy (Kitzinger & Reilly, 1997; Krieger et al., 2013). The amount of coverage given to a health issue matters for several reasons: disproportionately low media coverage compared to the burden of the disease results in the likelihood that community members do not perceive the health problem as being personally or communally relevant (Krieger et al., 2013). Low perceived relevance in turn results in a reduced likelihood that these individuals will take any precautionary steps to protect their health (Krieger et al., 2013).

It should be noted that mass media are increasingly paying attention to health threats (Kitzinger & Reilly, 1997). However, according to Krieger et al. (2013), even when the amount of media coverage is commiserate to the burden of the health problem, the content is far from ideal. In spite of increased risk coverage, media coverage of health risks is seen as problematic because it often offers reassurance while abstaining from emphasizing health risk; overlooked severe public health threats and sometimes only belatedly attended to social problem (Kitzinger & Reilly, 1997). Media coverage of sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), for example, has been found to exclude information about prevention of those diseases (Kitzinger & Reilly, 1997).

In a study on Australian journalists' perceptions and reporting practices during an influenza pandemic, Leask et al. (2010) found that the production of high quality health and medical stories by journalists was primarily influenced by time constraints, access to resources, and technical expertise. Journalists were found to seek information passively through media releases and contacts, and actively through making contact with medical experts and doing research in medical journals. They were also found to engage in acquiring information for their reports by increasingly obtaining their material from syndicated sources such as Reuters, which "prevents a degree of critical journalism" (Leask et al., 2010, p. 5).

Also important in studies of media coverage of diseases is the media's provision of efficacy information and risk information in their content (Dudo et al, 2007; Evensen & Clarke, 2012; Roche & Muskavitch, 2003). Having access to quality information is critical to making informed decisions when dealing with risky situations (Dudo et al., 2007, p. 429). Dudo et al. (2007) propose that quality information that should be disseminated to individuals to help them increase their self-efficacy as it relates to avoiding the risk should fulfill several requirements. Firstly, quality information should include references to known risk scenarios that are similar to the risk issue at hand, to serve as a comparison; it should contain minimal sensational content; and finally, quality information should a contain a relatively equal distribution of thematic and episodic content (Dudo et al., 2007).

While Roche and Muskavitch (2003) acknowledge that there are numerous objectives of articles that are published on health issues, they argue that these articles “all have the responsibility to communicate information regarding the magnitude of the described threat, the symptoms of the threat, and measures that can reduce the chance of being affected by the threat” (p. 355). Providing such essential and relevant information to the public should not be too difficult for the media to do because it would only take a few sentences to share such information (Roche & Muskavitch, 2003). By providing precise information risk-magnitude information, the media “can help the public to take reasonable precautions against diseases that can impose large personal and economic costs, diseases that may also increase in frequency in the United States if global climate change continues” (Roche & Muskavitch, 2003, p. 355).

More specifically, efficacy and risk information do several things for the public such as: informing people of the probability of getting infected and becoming acutely ill or dying from the disease; informing people how a particular risk compares to other risks, informing people of the actions they need to take to reduce their risk; and emphasizing whether these actions are effective at avoiding morbid outcomes, and the methods that make them effective (Evensen & Clarke, 2012; Roche & Muskavitch, 2003). Risk information contributes in “assisting people to make informed lifestyle, consumer, and voting choices; in minimizing unnecessary anxiety; and in ensuring that individual and societal resources are focused on higher magnitude risks and not unduly invested in lower magnitude risks” (Roche & Muskavitch, 2003, p. 354).

While the following studies do not address the information behavior of journalists and how that affects their reporting choices and content, these studies provide findings on the media's provision of efficacy and risk information when covering infectious diseases. A study of 335 emerging infectious disease events that occurred between 1940 and 2004 found that 60.3% of these diseases, including Ebola and severe acute respiratory syndrome virus (SARS), were zoonotic in origin, meaning that they originated from animals (Evensen & Clarke, 2012). Ebola, which is the disease that constitutes an integral part of this study is an infectious disease which is "a rare and deadly disease caused by infection with a strain of Ebola virus" (CDC). As stated above, the provision of efficacy information has the potential to prevent morbidity and mortality because it arms individuals and societies with tools to respond to risks (Evensen & Clarke, 2012).

Research suggests that many media images and stories play an important role in shaping the public's understanding of health risks and infectious diseases (Evensen & Clarke, 2012; Roche & Muskavitch, 2003). However, previous content analyses of newspaper coverage of contagious diseases, namely, the West Nile Virus (WNV) and Avian Influenza (AI), suggests that the media's reporting of these diseases usually lacks information about the risks associated with these diseases (Evensen & Clarke, 2012). Even though efficacy information is only one of many factors which shape risk perception and behavior, it has been shown to be important because it gives the public and important societal actors such as policy makers, the opportunity to make "informed risks assessments" and behavioral changes which impact both the health of individuals and the population (Dudo et al., 2007, p. 447; Evensen & Clarke, 2012).

In a study of the coverage of the WNV by major newspapers in North America in 2000, Roche and Muskavitch (2003) found that 40% of the 359 articles analyzed provided information on disease symptoms, but the articles rarely provided comparisons of the risks of the West Nile Virus with other health risks (Evensen & Clarke, 2012; Roche & Muskavitch, 2003). While 98% of the articles mentioned mosquitoes, only, 26% suggested actions that could be taken to eliminate mosquito vectors (via reducing/eliminating stagnant pools of water), and 27% provided information on "personal protection" measures that could be taken to guard against disease exposure (Evensen & Clarke, 2012; Roche & Muskavitch, 2003). Furthermore, only 13% of the articles included information on eliminating mosquitoes and personal protection (Evensen & Clarke, 2012; Roche & Muskavitch, 2003).

A 2007 study by Dudo, Dahlstrom and Brossard suggested that news media had improved in their dissemination of quality risk information, although the authors state that these newspapers only succeeded in some regards in providing this information. Dudo et al. (2007) analyzed 360 print media articles on AI published by four major newspapers in the U.S., (namely: *The New York Times*, *Los Angeles Times*, *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, and *Washington Post*) between January 1, 2000, and January 31, 2006. Their findings revealed that these newspapers heavily covered avian flu (Dudo et al., 2007). However, only 9% of the articles mention personal protection measures, while 12% of these articles contained information on the symptoms of the disease, which could help people determine if they were infected (Dudo et al., 2007; Evensen & Clarke, 2012). While 38% of the articles analyzed compared the health risks of Avian Flu with other health risks scenarios, only 12% of this 38% compared two or more separate risks (Dudo et al., 2007).

A more recent content analysis of newspaper coverage of two infectious diseases, the WNV and AI, studied the provision of efficacy information by print media (Evenson & Clarke, 2012). This study explored the provision of both personal efficacy information, which includes “descriptions of clinical signs/symptoms of a disease” and “descriptions of personal protection measures,” as well as the provision by the media of information on societal efficacy, that is, how society can respond to the health risks (Evensen & Clarke, 2012, p. 397). The researchers analyzed articles published by *The New York Times*, *Washington Post*, and *USA Today* on the Avian Flu from the period between January 1, 1997 to December 31, 2008, and on the West Nile Virus from January 1, 1999, through December 31, 2008 (Evensen & Clarke, 2012).

Evensen and Clarke (2012) found that newspapers disseminate different forms of efficacy information, especially societal efficacy information at varying frequency. The statistics show that 88% of the sample on the WNV and 89% of the AI sample contained at least one measure of efficacy information. Fifty-one percent of the WNV sample presented at least one personal efficacy action, while only 36% of this sample mentioned more than one action (Evensen & Clarke, 2012). Similarly, 55% of the AI sample presented at least one personal efficacy action, but even fewer (13%) sample mentioned more than one action (Evensen & Clarke, 2012). Regarding information on the symptoms of the disease, only 10% of the AI sample mentioned such information, while 32% of the WNV articles shared information regarding the symptoms of the disease (Evensen & Clarke, 2012). The WNV sample contained information on societal efficacy action 64% of the time, even though only 18% of the articles mentioned more than one action; while the AI sample provided information on societal efficacy action 81% of the time, and 53% of the articles mentioned more than one action (Evensen & Clarke, 2012).

The studies on media-produced efficacy information, specifically the study conducted by Evensen and Clarke (2012), are important for several reasons. Firstly, such studies give journalists an idea of how much emphasis they need to place on a particular form of efficacy (Evensen & Clarke, 2012). Secondly, Evensen and Clarke (2012) postulated that their study would educate health officials how to communicate with journalists, in order to ensure that the coverage of zoonotic diseases would include efficacy information (Evensen & Clarke, 2012).

Early studies and critics of media coverage of the Ebola crisis seem to confirm the assertion by Krieger et al (2013) that the quantity of media coverage of health risks though increased might not be commiserate to the burden of the disease. Already, there have been claims thrown at the media for producing “hysterical” and “irresponsible” coverage of the disease. According to Robert Fullilove, associate dean of community and minority health at Columbia’s Mailman School of Public Health, the coverage of the Ebola crisis “is a little bit out of proportion to the nature of the threat that we in this nation actually face” (as cited in Mulholland, 2014). In a piece for the *Harvard Political Review*, Mulholland (2014) argues that media were responsible for the American public’s hysteria over Ebola, even though only a total of 10 Ebola patients have been treated in the U.S., with only two casualties recorded.

David Redlawsk, who conducted a poll of New Jersey residents to measure their rising anxiety about the Ebola crisis, agrees that news media are to blame (Boehlert, 2014). The poll revealed that 69% of New Jersey residents were concerned about Ebola spreading to the U.S. (Boehlert, 2014). A more interesting finding from the poll showed that people who consumed the most information on the Ebola outbreak knew least accurate information about the disease (Boehlert, 2014). Examples of the content of media coverage of the Ebola outbreak shed some light into the misinformation Americans had +about the disease. Among the actions taken by news media that have helped spread the hysteria are: the invitation of fiction writer, Robin Cook, who wrote an Ebola thriller in the 1980s, as an expert on the disease; scary crawls at the bottom of TV screens, such as “Ebola: ‘The ISIS of biological agents” on an October 6, 2014 segment on CNN, and the 9 minutes of airtime given by Fox News to Gil Mobley, a Missouri doctor who walked through the Atlanta Hartfield-Jackson International Airport wearing a hazmat suit with the words "CDC is lying" painted on the back (Boehlert, 2014; Mulholland, 2014).

Media coverage of the Ebola crisis in the U.S. has even been mocked by comedians such as Stephen Colbert, who made fun of Fox News for questioning whether the CDC was telling Americans the truth about Ebola; and Jon Stewart, who mocked the overexcited coverage of Ebola on TV, saying that it's almost as if the media are "crossing their fingers for an outbreak" (Boehlert, 2014; Mulholland, 2014). Boehlert (2014) writes that while it is unfair to characterize most of the coverage of Ebola as hysterical, or that none of it has served an important purpose, he maintains that a good amount of the coverage has been "based on fear and hypotheticals."

Mulholland (2014) cites monetary incentives, political gain, and xenophobia as reasons for the exaggerated media coverage of Ebola in the U.S. To solve this problem, Fullilove recommends that media narrative about the Ebola crisis should be aimed at finding ways to address the public health crisis in West Africa (as cited in Mulholland, 2014). In an interview with HPR, Fullilove stated that "we're playing up the degree to which we're threatened, and not playing up the degree to which, as the greatest, most powerful nation in the world, we have a responsibility to do what we can to contain this epidemic before more people are killed (as cited in Mulholland, 2014).

These criticisms of media coverage of the Ebola crisis, however, have a few limitations, which this study will attempt to address. Firstly, these studies lack a global perspective because they are limited to the coverage of Ebola and its victims in the U.S, and do not analyze the coverage of Ebola coverage by the international press. Another important component, which is also missing in early studies of media coverage of the Ebola crisis, is an analysis of the quality of the information disseminated by the press on Ebola. This study tries to fill that gap, as it will also be analyzing the performance of news media in regards to the provision of efficacy information in their coverage of the Ebola crisis. Considering the importance of efficacy information and the fact that the Ebola crisis, is still ongoing, it is therefore important to add to the body of research on media efficacy information in their coverage of the Ebola outbreak. Findings from this study could provide a wakeup call to media outlets that are still engaged in covering the Ebola crisis or other health crisis, and guide their coverage of the pandemic.

Theory: Framing: Gendered Framing

Frames are defined as “organizing principles that are socially shared and persistent over time, that work symbolically to meaningfully structure the social world” (Reese, 2009, p. 17). Framing is also defined as “the selection of a restricted number of thematically related attributes for inclusion on the media agenda when a particular object is discussed” (McCombs & Shaw, 1997, p. 37). These frames are “ritualized ways to understand the world,” and of “presenting a reality that excludes/includes, and that emphasizes/plays down certain facts” (Byerly & Ross, 2006, p. 39). Tuchman (1978b) states that even the news is a frame, created by news organizations in order to “disseminate information that people want, need, and should know” (p. 2). In the process of disseminating the news, the media circulate and shape knowledge, shape the opinions of news consumers especially on novel topics, influence political and social attitudes, and also influence the political agenda set by news consumers (Tuchman, 1978b). Frames are therefore unavoidable since they are used to organize the world for both audiences and the journalists covering the news (Allan, 2004). The ability to recognize information, process this information in large quantities quickly and routinely, assign the information to cognitive categories, and package this information for dissemination to audiences are the ways in which frames help structure the world for journalists (Allan, 2004).

Media frames when structuring the world for audiences are stated to provide an interpretive structure, context, and a suggestion of what issues are through the use of a variety of non-value free techniques such as: emphasis, elaboration and exclusion in news reports of issues and objects of interest (Byerly & Ross, 2006; Carlin & Winfrey, 2009; Tankard, Hendrickson, Silberman, Bliss & Ghanem, 1991). The significance of how news frames structure the social world is explained in the following definition of frames provided by Byerly and Ross (2006), who propose that frames are:

> highly orchestrated ways of understanding social (including gendered) relations that encourage a commitment to share a particular interpretation of and ways of seeing the world that are entirely partial and that preserve the male-ordered status quo (p. 39-40).

The audiences that consume media, particularly television, which has large audiences, learn about women's roles and lives from media messages because the media "increasingly provide the common ground of information, symbols and ideas for most social groups" (Byerly & Ross, 2006; Gallagher, 2001, p. 3). Media content surrounds us and saturates our daily lives (Croteau & Haynes, 2003). According to data from Nielsen's Q3 2015 Total Audience Report 2015, American audiences aged 18 and older consume 32 hours of TV content on a weekly basis. This means that TV content is consumed 2.5 times as much as much as radio (second most used medium), and nearly 4 times more than the third ranked medium, smartphone app/web usage (Nielsen, 2015; TVB, 2015). Americans' news habits are increasingly changing in favor of online news and social web (Mitchell, 2015). The Pew Research Center estimates that 62% of adults in the US get their news from social media sites like Facebook which are increasingly enhancing their video streaming capabilities (Mitchell, 2015; Mitchel & Holcomb, 2016). Also worth noting is that most of the Internet traffic to 39 of the top 50 digital news websites comes from mobile devices (Mitchell, 2015; Mitchel & Holcomb, 2016).

With such large audience numbers, the media are able to serve as “primary definers and shapers of the news agenda” and are capable of creating stereotypes or popularizing existing ones because they help in shaping society’s perceptions and understanding of gender relations and gender (Byerly & Ross, 2006, p. 40; Nwabueze, 2012). Media content and products are said to “correct, create and foster” positive new impressions about specific genders, gender relations and gender roles (Nwabueze, 2012, p. 222). Research conducted by scholars in different countries has criticized media representation or lack thereof of women (Corbett & Mori, 1999; Liran-Alper & Tsarfaty, 2015; Nwabueze, 2012). According to Steeves (2007), the media’s tendency to neglect and distort women’s and feminist issues is an ongoing area of concern (p. 196).

In its 2010 and 2015 studies on gender in the world’s media, the Global Media Monitoring Project (GMMP), a media-monitoring organization founded following a 1994 conference on Women Empowering Communication, found that only 24% of the people heard or read about in traditional media outlets were female (GMMP, 2010, 2015). Also, only 19% of spokespersons and 20% of experts featured in news reports were women (GMMP, 2010; Steeves, 2007). However, the gender gap differed according to topic, which can be explained by the fact that men are often in charge of covering the serious news or hard news stories in an “objective” manner, while women are relegated to cover features and news about or important to women, highlight backgrounds and consequences; privilege audience needs, and approach ethical dilemmas contextually” (Everbach, 2013; GMMP, 2015; Steiner, 2012, p. 202). Women are least represented in political stories, while the gender gap is narrowest in stories on health and science (Everbach, 2013; GMMP, 2015).

This study also found that women are still more likely than men to be presented as victims, as 18% of female subjects as opposed to 8% of male subjects were presented as victims (GMMP, 2010). The 2015 GMMP data also shows that women are now 4 times more likely to be depicted as victims of domestic abuse (27%) than they were 10 years ago (6%) (GMMP, 2015). The countries where the media were more likely to report stories that reinforced stereotypes are located in the Middle East (81%), Africa (77%) and North America (61%), as seen in Figure 1 (GMMP, 2010). As concerns news subjects, this study revealed that 10% of all news stories now focus on women as a central character, which is a slight drop from 13% in 2010 (GMMP, 2010; GMMP, 2015). Prior to the claims made by the 1960s women's movement, the explanation for this gender disparity was that women and men had different interests (Steiner, 2012).

Key Findings: 1995–2015

	1995		2000		2005		2010		2015		%Change (Δ)	
	%F	%M	%F	%M	%F	%M	%F	%M	%F	%M		
A. People in the news											(%F)	
Newspaper, Television, Radio	**17**	**83**	**18**	**82**	**21**	**79**	**24**	**76**	**24**	**76**	▲ 7	Δ 20 yrs
Newspapers	16	84	17	83	21	79	24	76	26	74	▲ 10	
Television	21	79	22	78	22	78	24	76	24	76	▲ 3	
Radio	15	85	13	87	17	83	22	78	21	79	▲ 6	
News websites and media Tweets									**26**	**74**		
News websites							*23 (pilot)*	*77 (pilot)*	25	75		
News media Tweets									28	72		
Scope of Story. Newspaper, Television, Radio											(%F)	
Local	22	78	23	77	27	73	26	74	27	73	▲ 5	Δ 20 yrs
National	14	86	17	83	19	81	23	77	23	77	▲ 9	
National/other	17	83	15	85	18	82	20	80				
Sub–regional/regional									24	76		
International / Foreign	17	83	14	86	20	80	26	74	24	76	▲ 7	

Figure 1: Key findings: 1995-2015

The media's record on female representation is similar to its representation of people of color – they have been marginalized (Croteau & Haynes, 2003). Numerous studies have been conducted on the representation of women in mass media, which show that the media indeed play an “important affirmatory role in reinforcing dominant gender norms (Byerly & Ross, 2006, p. 40). These studies have found that overall media coverage of women is narrow and non-positive (Byerly & Ross, 2006; Gallagher, 1979). Some of the flaws of mass media coverage of women are the “routine omission – or symbolic annihilation” of women from mass media, as well as the stereotypical portrayal of women in traditional domestic roles or as sex objects, victims, romantics, irrational, indecisive, passive, inferior, indecisive, and dependent beings, who are always subservient to men (Byerly & Ross, 2006; p. 17; Everbach, 2013; Gallagher, 1979; Tuchman, 1978a; van Zoonen, 1994).

The media not only render women invisible in their coverage, but when they are visible in media content, the “manner of their representation reflects the biases and assumptions of those who define the public – and therefore the media – agenda” (Gallagher, 2001, p. 3). By portraying women primarily in domestic roles, the media ensured that women were included in media content, but mostly in secondary and not lead roles (Croteau & Haynes, 2003). Women who are likely to dominate the news and make news headlines are female entertainment and fashion figures, while most of the problems faced by women are treated as “unnewsworthy” (Gallagher, 1979, p. 9; Van Zoonen, 1994). The underrepresentation of women in media is even more jarring due to the fact that the US Department of Labor estimates that 57% of women now participate in the workforce.

The representation of women by the media in the twenty-first century can be best described as complex because while increased gender activism and advocacy has resulted in an increase in the range and scope of news and feature articles that focus on women’s experiences, women are still commoditized by the media (Bosch, 2011; Byerly & Ross, 2006). The stories on women are undermined by “patriarchal framing of stories, ill-considered language and non-contextualized reporting” (Bosch, 2011; Gadzekpo 2009, p. 74). The representation of women in advertising, which dominates the space of newspapers and magazines seems even less balanced as women are "reduced to less than the sum of our body parts," which are "primed and ready to be fetishized" (Ross & Byerly, 2006, p. 37). This is a worrying trend because these images are regularly and persistently reproduced, thus "defining the contours and limits of the 'proper' ways of looking and being female," thus resulting in maintaining gender inequality (Ross & Byerly, 2006, p. 37; Smith 2000). Furthermore, the media's symbolic annihilation of women "will endanger social development" and the participation of women in the workforce as girls and mature women who consume media messages "will lack positive images on which to model their behavior" (Tuchman, 1978a; Van Zoonen, 1994, p. 16).

It is important to note that the gender media bias against women goes beyond profession and nationality (Anderson et al., 2011). According to Gallagher (1979), women are "grossly underrepresented" and mostly admitted in secondary roles compared to men in mass media and journalism in almost every region in the world. Even when women are successful at "crashing through the glass ceiling" to achieve positions of power in politics in both the developing and the developed world, the negative and critical portrayal of these women by the media discredits their credibility (Anderson et al., 2011 Sapiro, 1993). Other times, emphasis is laid on the personality, family relationships, voices, faces, emotional state, age, and external appearance of female politicians in stereotypically feminine terms, while downplaying their political accomplishments (Anderson et al., 2011; Byerly & Ross, 2006; Carlin & Winfrey, 2009; Everbach, 2013; Liran-Alper & Tsarfaty, 2015; Lithgow, 2000). Such representations are dangerous for women because it "trivializes them and strips them of power," while raising questions about their viability because the traditional roles assigned to women are not compatible with political power (Anderson et al., 2011; Everbach, 2013, p. 15; Liran-Alper & Tsarfaty, 2015; Lithgow, 2000).

Female politicians are also treated as a novelty, despite the fact that women have participated in politics for decades (Anderson et al., 2011). Take for instance Sri Lanka's Sirimavo Bandaranaike who was the first woman in the world to rise to her country's highest political office in 1960 (Lithgow, 2000). Presenting women in power as a novelty is a troubling trend because when the media focus their reporting on women to instances where women are victims of violent crimes, instead of also reporting on women in powerful positions such as politicians, judges, business leaders, this conditions the audience to think that men are less likely to be victims of violent crimes or that women in power do not exist (Byerly & Ross, 2006). These examples support the data from the Global Media Monitoring Project’s 2015 monitoring exercise, which suggests that the gender gap in media coverage is actually widest in news on politics, where women only make up 16% of people in news under this topic. In the case of female politicians, previous research has shown that voting patterns are affected by negative coverage because journalists serve as “powerful intermediaries in politics,” and “furnish us with one of the lenses through which we view the world, a 'reality' with which we attempt to understand what surrounds us” (Lithgow, 2000, p. 2).

Another aspect of media coverage of women that has not yet been addressed is news coverage of women’s health issues. This is especially important for this study which among other things aims to understand how, if at all the media shaped their coverage of the Ebola crisis to target women, who constitute a majority of Ebola victims because they work in caregiving roles and trade across borders (Saul, 2014; UN Women, 2015). It seems logical to target health information toward women because according to Andsager (2013), women are more likely to seek out health information, especially online. In fact, because women traditionally assume caregiving roles, health information for men, children, aging parents, and family pets have historically been placed in Women's magazines (Andsager, 2013). Women who actively seek information through media reports are also reported to pay higher visits to health providers (Andsager, 2013).

Ironically though, previous research has shown that medical news affecting women have received less attention both in news media and medical communication (Andsager, 2013). It took the passage of legislation requiring the inclusion of women in general medical studies (such as studies on heart disease and cholesterol) to regulate the treatment of women by the medical establishment (Andsager, 2013; Corbett & Mori, 1999). As concerns the news media, while the coverage of women's health issues has increased, women's health news still receives less prominent coverage in media than general health news (Andsager, 2013; Corbett & Mori, 1999). In reporting on breast implants, journalists have placed more emphasis on the views of the manufacturers, and not the recipients of the implants, thus confirming that news coverage of women's health does not to necessarily represent women (Corbett & Mori, 1999). One possible explanation for this underrepresentation of women's health issues in the news is because of the underrepresentation of women in the media and in the medical fields. News practices and routines encourage journalists to seek information from expert sources, who in the health and medical fields are health physicians and medical doctors (Andsager, 2013; Everbach, 2013). These health professionals who are predominantly male and White, provide journalists, who are also predominantly male and White with ideas for health news and technical explanations (Andsager, 2013; Corbett & Mori, 1999; Everbach, 2013). Male predominance is evident even in the health blogosphere, where women blog more from a patient/consumer perspective, while men primarily blog from a professional perspective as health professionals (Andsager, 2013).

However, results from some studies have weakened that argument because even though some female reporters attempt to seek more gender balance in health news coverage, some studies have shown that both male and female journalists include twice as many male than female sources in their health news coverage (Andsager, 2013; Corbett & Mori, 1999). Women's empowerment advocates however argue that women's health news could better be shaped by women in health and medical fields as women specialists, physicians and health providers are more "knowledgeable and more trustworthy than male providers" when it concerns women's health news (Andsager, 2013, p. 42).

An understanding of media coverage of women of color is another important facet of media coverage that could help provide context for the news coverage of recent female Ebola victims. This section is important because a majority of Ebola victims were Black African women. The misrepresentation and underrepresentation of women on media is even more glaring with the representation of Black women. Essence Magazine reports that there is twice as much negative imagery of Black women as there are positive depictions (Cheung, 2015). Griffin (2014) blames the use of "controlling images" to depict women of color by the media to media ownership. According to Griffin, the media, which is "largely White owned and controlled, has "historically been and remains rooted in oppressive racial ideology" (p.183). Even though there is currently more diversity of Black female characters on TV, Donna Mejia, an assistant professor at the University of Colorado Boulder and a dance scholar, argues that this did not "equate to power, choice and an identity of our own choosing" (Cheung, 2015). Black female characters are still depicted by media using controlling imagery such as mammy, welfare queen, and jezebel, a practice that some critics have called oppressive (Everbach, 2013; Griffin, 2014).

Owing to the fact that this study focuses partly on media representation of women affected by the Ebola crisis, this section on media representation of women would therefore be incomplete without an analysis of media coverage of African women, which will also provide a foundation for the current media representation of Black women. Such an analysis is important because African women are the primary victims of Ebola. Ruginyte (2011) argues that the relationship between the media and African women is not better than in other regions. African women have historically been subject to a “derogatory Western gaze” (p. 11). However, the Western media are not responsible for the origination of stereotypes of Africa and its people. Instead, European colonialists created these stereotypes in an attempt to justify their imperial efforts to exploit and appropriate Africa and other countries around the world (Harth, 2012; Ruginyte, 2011). Some of the stereotypes promoted by the Europeans include the portrayal of Africans as sexually insatiable, “lazy, licentious savages incapable of progress” who live on the “Dark continent” (Ruginyte, 2011, p. ii; van Zoonen, 1994). However, while the Western media may not have created the stereotypes of Africa, they have been accused of recycling colonial stereotypes (Ruginyte, 2011).

The stereotyping of African women, therefore, has roots in the colonial era. Ruginyte (2011) asserts that African women have played a crucial and complex role in the relationships between African and Western nations during the colonial and slavery eras. During the colonial era, African women were used by the Europeans as concubines who helped the Europeans survive in the new environments, while their reproductive capacities were also exploited on American slave plantations. Gilman (1986) asserts that the central function of the black servant in eighteenth century and nineteenth century visual art was to “sexualize the society” in which they were found, and they were portrayed as symbols of deviant sexuality (p. 209).

In the nineteenth century, European medics examined the bodies of African women to conclude that the black female was inferior because she “possessed 'not only ‘primitive’ sexual appetite but also the external signs of this temperament – ‘primitive’ genitalia” (Gilman, 1986, p. 213; Ruginyte, 2011). Black women were even stated to copulate with apes because of their “animallike sexual appetite” (Gilman, 1986, p. 212). Female genitalia defined the 19th century, as evidenced by the public exhibition of a black woman called Saartjie Baartman (also known as Sarah Bartmann or "Hottentot Venus") in London and France in the 1810s order to present not even her genitalia, but her protruding buttocks, which European audiences believed to be an anomaly (Cheung, 2015; Gilman, 1986). According to Gilman (1986), Bartmann's sexual parts, genitalia and buttocks served as the central image for the nineteenth century black woman.

Blue Telusma, a columnist for the Grio.com argues that the equating of blackness to eroticism is not only “fetishism in its purest form,” but is also a means of mocking otherness while pretending to celebrate it, (as cited in Cheung, 2015). According to Telusma, such representation has severe repercussions, as human beings are defined by the genitalia and not as whole people (as cited in Cheung, 2015). It is therefore important for the media to provide accurate representations of women in the news because the media are "potentially powerful agents of socialization and social change" which are capable of “presenting models, conferring status, suggesting appropriate behaviors, encouraging stereotypes” (Gallagher, 1979, p. 3).

Efforts to End Misrepresentation of Women in the Media

Croteau and Haynes (2003) state that the history of media representation of women is characterized by “injustice, inequality, and change” (p. 212). What is peculiar about media coverage of women and the women’s movement from its unofficial inception in the mid-1960s is is that although it was not a resource poor group, early coverage was laced with ridicule and ostracism (Tuchman, 1978b). The media jokingly wrote “light and witty” reports about the women’s movement, even though its members came mostly from professional and upper-middle class circles and had fairly extensive media contacts (Tuchman, 1978b, p. 138). While the media mostly portrayed “simple, blatantly stereotypical images” of women in the earlier years, pressure from the movements fighting for women’s rights have led to “a wider diversity of images and roles for women” (p. 212). Since the 1960s, the women’s movement has engaged in a “systematic and constant critique of media institutions” because “media representation of women has kept them in a position of powerlessness” (Gallagher, 2001, p. 3).

Due to stereotypical media representations of women, van Zoonen (1994) argues that is obvious that “the media had had to become important targets” of the women’s movement in America (p. 11). Feminism, which is known for being a “political commitment to the advancement of women” is concerned with fighting for “equal rights and opportunities for women (Opoku-Mensah, 2001, p. 25; van Zoonen, 1994). Another issue that is very important to the Feminist Movement is representation; thus, the movement is engaged “in a symbolic conflict about the definition of femininity” (van Zoonen, 1994, p. 12). Gallagher (2001) states that because women are either invisible in media coverage, or represented in a way that “reflects the biases and assumptions of those who define the public” (the media – agenda), the women’s movement has since the 1960s engaged in a “systematic and constant critique of media institutions and their output” (p 3). Furthermore, scholars who engage in feminist media studies have also began to thoughtfully explore the “intellectual and political connections between feminist theory and the field of communication research” (Opoku-Mensah, 2001, p. 25).

However, in spite of the work of the women's movement, which has worked assiduously over several decades toward the goal of achieving greater equality, media coverage remains favorable toward men thus implying little progress has been made in ending the marginalization of women by the media (Byerly & Ross, 2006; Everbach, 2013). The findings about media representation presented by the GMMP which has conducted research on the subject in five-year cycles since 1995 suggest that things have hardly improved over the years. According to the GMMP (2010), the results from the 1995, 2000, and 2005 studies show that not only are women as compared to men grossly underrepresented in news, but that there is a paucity of women's voices in the news, which has resulted in "an imbalanced picture of the world, one in which women are largely absent," and "news that presents a male-centred view of the world" (p. 1). Gallagher (2001) goes further to state that by negating women's voices and experiences, the media, which "increasingly provide the 'common ground' of information, symbols and ideas for most social groups" help in keeping women in a "place of relative powerlessness" (p. 3).

In its first study of female representation of women in global media, the GMMP found that women made up only 18% of those who were featured in the news, and that they were mostly casted as wives, mothers, and victims (GMMP, 2010). In 2000 and 2005, the GMMP found that the number of women featured in the news had actually risen by 1 % and 3 %, but that women were still portrayed primarily as victims (GMMP, 2010). Findings from the GMMP's monitoring exercise in 2010 shows a little progress, as women make up 24% of individuals featured in news stories, a number which has not changed even in the latest GMMP monitoring exercise in 2015 (GMMP, 2010; GMMP, 2015). Despite the progress noticed in 2010, women still remain more likely to be portrayed as victims, as opposed to men (GMMP, 2010; GMMP, 2015). By portraying women as victims, the media seems to be a doing a disservice to the audience because they are not informed that men are more likely than women to be victims of serious crimes (Byerly & Ross, 2006). Figure 3 below shows statistics about female representation of women from the GMMP's monitoring exercises from 1995 to 2015.

	1995		2000		2005		2010		2015		%Change (Δ)		
	%F	%M	%F	%M	%F	%M	%F	%M	%F	%M			
Main Story Topics. Newspaper, Television, Radio											(%F)		
Science & Health	27	73	21	79	22	78	32	68	35	65	▲ 8		Δ 20 yrs
Social & Legal	19	81	21	79	28	72	30	70	28	72	▲ 9		
Crime & Violence	21	79	18	82	22	78	24	76	28	72	▲ 7		
Celebrity, Arts & Sport	24	76	23	77	28	72	26	74	23	77	▼ 1		
Economy	10	90	18	82	20	80	20	80	21	79	▲ 11		
Politics & Government	7	93	12	88	14	86	19	81	16	84	▲ 9		
Function in Story	n/a	n/a	n/a	N/a							(%F)		
Personal Experience					31	69	36	64	38	62	▲ 7		Δ 10 yrs
Popular Opinion					34	66	44	56	37	63	▲ 3		
Eye Witness					30	70	29	71	30	70	■ 0		
Subject					23	77	23	77	26	74	▲ 3		
Spokesperson					14	86	19	81	20	80	▲ 6		
Expert					17	83	20	80	19	81	▲ 2		
											(%F)	(%M)	
% Portrayed as Victim	29	10	19	7	19	8	18	8	16	8	▼ 3	▲ 1	Δ 15 yrs
% Portrayed as Survivor					4	8	6	3	8	3			
% Identified by Family Status	n/a	n/a	21	4	17	5	18	5	19	5	▼ 2	▲ 1	
% In Newspaper Photographs	n/a	n/a	25	11	23	16	26	17	30	23	▲ 5	▲ 12	
% Quoted			33	35	50	50	52	50	61	61	▲ 28	▲ 26	
B. Reporting and Presenting the News. Newspaper, Radio, Television													
% Stories presented	51	49	49	51	53	47	49	51	49	51	■ 0		Δ 15 yrs
Television			56	44	57	43	52	48	57	43	▲ 1		
Radio			41	59	49	51	45	55	41	59	■ 0		
% Stories reported	**28**	**72**	**31**	**69**	**37**	**63**	**37**	**63**	**37**	**63**	▲ 6		
Television			36	64	42	58	44	56	38	62	▲ 2		
Radio			28	72	45	55	37	63	41	59	▲ 13		
Newspapers			26	74	29	71	33	67	35	65	▲ 9		
% Stories Reported By Major Topic. Newspaper, radio, television											(%F)	(%M)	
Celebrity, Arts & Sport			27	73	35	65	38	62	33	67	▲ 6		Δ 15 yrs
Social & Legal			39	61	40	60	43	57	39	61	■ 0		
Crime & Violence			29	71	33	67	35	65	33	67	▲ 4		
Science & Health			46	54	38	62	44	56	50	50	▲ 4		
Economy			35	65	43	57	40	60	39	61	▲ 4		
Politics & Government			26	74	32	68	33	67	31	69	▲ 5		
% Female news subjects and sources, by sex of story reporter. Newspaper, radio, television	n/a	n/a	24	18	25	20	28	22	29	26	▲ 5	▲ 8	
C. News Content													
											(%stories)		
% Stories with Women as a Central Focus. Newspaper, radio, television	n/a		10		10		13		10		■ 0		Δ 15 yrs
Celebrity, Arts & Sport			16		17		16		14		▼ 2		
Social & Legal			19		17		17		8		▼ 11		
Crime & Violence			10		16		16		17		▲ 7		
Politics & Government			7		8		13		7		■ 0		
Science & Health			11		6		11		14		▲ 3		
Economy			4		3		4		5		▲ 1		
% Stories that Challenge Gender Stereotypes. Newspaper, radio, television	n/a		n/a		3		6		4		▲ 1		Δ10 yrs
% Stories that Highlight Gender (In)Equality. Newspaper, radio, television	n/a		n/a		4		6		9		▲ 5		
% Stories that mention gender equality policies or human and women's rights legal instruments. Newspaper, radio, television	n/a		n/a		n/a		10		9		▼ 1		Δ5 yrs

Figure 2: Who makes the news: GMMP 2015

Other studies have adopted an approach similar to the one used by the GMMP to study media representation of women in particular countries and continents. A 1999 study by the European Commission similarly found that women are underrepresented in media, but overrepresented as victims (Byerly & Ross, 2006). In an analysis of photographs taken by the Associated Press during and after the Taliban regime in Afghanistan, Shahira Fahmy (2004) found that these photographs were more reflective of "the realities of a more complex set of social relations" as the women mostly pictured as more "interactive, more involved, and symbolically equal to the viewer, even though most of the women still wore burqas, even after the fall of the Taliban regime (Byerly & Ross, 2006, p. 42; Fahmy, 2004).

Several suggestions have, however, been made in a bid to improve media representation of women. Some of the suggested strategies are: creating and strengthening alternative media and feminist networks, offering media literacy trainings to consumers, organizing and publicizing conferences, and using the media for development to address structural inequities (Steeves, 2007). Other calls have been made for increasing the number of women who work for the media (Corbett & Mori, 1999; Steeves, 2007). The findings of the 2010 GMMP shows evidence of the benefits accrued from having increased participation of females in the media. Even though 46% of news stories reinforce gender roles, stories that are reported by female journalists are more likely to challenge stereotypes (GMMP, 2010). Not only is this solution beneficial, but it is plausible, as women now account for more than half of all college students, and almost two-thirds of all journalism college students (Creedon & Cramer, 2007).

However, those numbers are not reflected in newsrooms as female journalists are still outnumbered by male journalists. According to Everbach (2013), female journalists are likely to leave the profession within the first five years because some of them find it "unfriendly" and “discouraging” (p. 17), thereby confirming the assertion by Willnat and Weaver (2014) that journalism has a problem retaining women. Not only do these women report that they lack mentorship in male-dominated newsrooms, they also cite sex discrimination, low salaries, inflexible schedules, and the lack of recruitment and advancement as reasons why they left the journalism profession (Everbach, 2013; Everbach & Flournoy, 2007).

Another explanation for the departure of female journalists from the profession is patriarchy (Steiner, 2012). Newsrooms have hierarchical and bureaucratic structures constructed historically by male desires, needs and definitions of news” (Everbach & Flournoy, 2007, p. 53). Women are therefore the minority in this patriarchal system, where they face an “intractable male-oriented social structure” (p. 209). The failure by their colleagues to recognize the discrimination faced by these women pushes them to either incorporate or quit (Elmore, 2007; Steiner, 2012). Some of them incorporated by attempting to meet the standards of their male colleagues and managers. Their goal was to “become ‘one of the boys’” and the highest compliment for a female reporter until at least the 1950s was that her work was “just like a man’s” (Steiner, 2012, p. 210).

In interviews with 15 women who quit their reporting jobs, Elmore (2007) found that men sustained a patriarchal system in newsrooms by applying exclusionary strategies, making news decisions on the basis of sex, encouraging assertiveness and toughness, and wanting to ‘‘rescue’’ women from unpleasantness and ‘‘unfeminine’’ tasks, such as covering wars (p. 18). Another study of 17 female journalists who left their reporting careers found that these women felt like they “were part of a subordinate class at the male-dominated organizations where they worked” and that their editors were against them reporting the news from a “female perspective,” which would have allowed different approaches than dictated by traditional news values (Everbach & Flournoy, 2007, p. 59).

Media industries have therefore remained the "'man's world' of the media" as described in a 1987 UNESCO report because they are dominated by men, specifically, White men in the Western world (van Zoonen, 1994). That assertion still remains true over 20 years later, as the GMMP (2015) reports that globally, the number of female presenters and reporters in TV, radio and newspaper has not changed in 10 years, despite fluctuations in places like Asia (-6 points) and Africa (+7 points). Women still make up only 37% of reporters on traditional media, and the "proportion of female reporters in news stories falls well below parity in all topics except science and health where the ratio is at par" (GMMP, 2015, p. 2).

In the U.S., while over 62% of journalists report that their newsroom workforces have shrunk, the number of women working in newsrooms rose slightly from 33% in 2002 to 37.5% 2013 (Willnat &Weaver, 2014). Despite this slight increase, the most recent census by the American society of News Editors (ASNE) on the state of diversity in newsrooms shows that men outnumbered women in the following categories in 2015: 64.7% of supervisory positions were occupied by men; 58.6% of copy/layout editors or online produces were men; 62.1% of reporters were male; and 72.1% of photographers/artists or videographers were male (ASNE, 2015, Table L). The underrepresentation of women in newsrooms persists even though women were added to the Federal Communications Commission's list of minorities in 1971 (Corbett & Mori, 1999). What is even more shocking is that the number of women working in newsrooms has barely budged since the 1980s (Anderson, 2015; ASNE, Table L, 2015; Willnat &Weaver, 2014). Thus, America's newsrooms seem to be failing at representing not only the diversity in journalism classrooms, but also the diversity in the nation.

These numbers when broken down into different forms of media reveal that radio news is the only venue where there has been an increase in the number of the females in the workforce (Anderson, 2015). The number of female radio reporters has grown from 22% in 2003 to 38.1% in 2014 (Anderson, 2015; Willnat &Weaver, 2014). It has been argued that the rise of women in radio can be attributed to the fact that there is decreased male competition for jobs in low prestige media, such as radio news, which has lost some of its prestige to TV news in the Western world (van Zoonen, 1994). Not only has radio news lost its audiences to TV, but TV has also overtaken radio as a news medium (van Zoonen, 1994). Television however has the highest number of female reporters (42.4%), followed by weekly newspapers (42%), and news magazines (33.3%), and online news media with 31.5% female correspondents (Willnat &Weaver, 2014). This lack of progress in diversifying newsrooms has been called “frustrating” by Karen Magnuson, co-chair of the ASNE Diversifying the News Committee and editor of the Rochester Democrat and Chronicle (ASNE, 2015 Census). Magnuson argues that newsrooms that lack diverse voices and are not inclusive are incapable of accurately reporting on what is happening in communities (ASNE, 2015 Census).

It would be unfortunate to examine the misrepresentation of women in African media without discussing how the political landscape has influenced African media. According to Bosch (2011), the media, are “sites of social and political struggle” (p.27). The African media in particular has been significantly transformed by political and economic developments on the continent (Bosch, 2011, p. 27). After years of military dictatorships, post-independence political instability, and authoritarian regimes, many African governments engaged in the process of redemocratization in the 1980s and 1990s (Gadzekpo, 2009). Under the old political paradigm of autocratic dictatorships or military rule in Africa, women’s movements were captured by first ladies and/or quasi-state machineries in an effort to build strong political bases, in order to sustain their "parochial power-maintaining agenda" (Gadzekpo, 2009, p. 69). Also under the old order in Africa, the media was considered an inhospitable site for female employees and gender activism because of the harassment and intimidation journalists faced at the time (Gadzekpo, 2009).

However, Africa has enjoyed a more liberalized and pluralistic media environment since the last decade and a half (Gadzekpo, 2009). The transition from state monopoly of media to a liberalized media happened after the redemocratization process taken by African governments in the late 1980s and 1990s, after decades of post-independence political instability on the African continent (Gadzekpo, 2009). Since then, African nations have witnessed an opening up of the political space, some de-regulation of telecommunications industries, a growing ICT industry, a reinvigorated civil society, and energized women's organizations and movements (Gadzekpo, 2009; Opoku-Mensah, 2001).

Non-state actors have since had the opportunity to mobilize around feminist agendas, thus revitalizing the women's movement in Africa (Gadzekpo, 2009; Opoku-Mensah, 2001). Women's research institutes and gender centers such as the Center for Gender Studies and Advocacy (CEGENSA) in Ghana and African Gender Institute in Cape Town have contributed to the growing body of research on women's development, empowerment, and areas of concern (Gadzekpo, 2009). Institutes like the Media Institute of Southern Africa (MISA) and the Media Foundation for West Africa (MFWA) have since redemocratization worked to fill the gap on scholarship on media, politics, and gender in Africa (Gadzekpo, 2009). However, Gadzekpo (2009) argues that there still exists a gap in "critical studies that interrogate the democracy–media–gender nexus in Africa, especially in areas outside Southern Africa" (p. 70).

Due to the hostility journalists faced in Africa before the redemocratization process, it is not surprising that active discourse on media and gender in Africa only started after the delegates who attended the first United Nations World Conference on Women, held in Mexico City in 1975 returned to the African continent committed to examine the status quo in their nations (Gadzekpo, 2009). Upon her return, Kate Abbam, the publisher of a women's magazine in Ghana, observed that a majority of the 71 female employees at the Ghana Broadcasting Corporation (GBC) which is the state-owned media house, occupied positions at the bottom-end of the organization, while only two women occupied decision-making positions (Gadzekpo, 2009).

While men still outnumber women in media houses in Ghana by a 2:1 ratio, and only 28% of women are in managerial positions, progress has been made. The number of news organizations in Ghana has increased to about 100 print media publications, 130 radio stations (mostly privately owned), and six TV stations (Byerly, 2011; Gadzekpo, 2009). Nigeria, which is a more populated country is now home to about 300 print publications, 209 TV stations, and 97 radio stations (Gadzekpo, 2009). Each of the 36 states in Nigeria run their own radio stations, and almost all the states run their own TV stations (Byerly, 2011). Another interesting fact about the Nigerian media is that women (41.9%) are nearing parity with men at the junior professional level (editors, writers, and producers), but are still mostly absent from governance and top management positions (16.7%) (Byerly, 2011). This is a completely different picture of the African media landscape in the 1980s, when the African continent was reported to have the smallest number of dailies in terms of its total population (Gadzekpo, 2009).

As stated above, redemocratization has enabled African countries to have a pluralistic media system (Gadzekpo, 2009). With media pluralism came optimism that the representation of women by the media would improve in the following ways: women would become more visible in the news as decision makers, newsmakers, employees, and subjects of the news; there would be an improvement in the representation of women that would be more balanced, less stereotypical and sexist, women would have more access to the media, and thus participate more in public discourses and debates; and lastly, that media content would be more sensitive and respectful of women (Gadzekpo, 2009). Gadzekpo (2009) states that on the positive side, over a decade after media pluralism in Africa, women have undertaken initiatives to counter the negative portrayal of women by setting up and sometimes managing community radio stations, publishing their own magazines and newspapers, and even producing their own TV and radio programs (sometimes in collaboration with NGOs). As mentioned above, there has been increased work by advocacy groups such as Gender Links and The Association of Women Communication Professionals (APAC, a Pan-African association) in driving a feminist media agenda (Gadzekpo, 2009). However, the impact of the work done by these groups in the media and communication sectors have not been as consistent as they have been primarily “preoccupied with development issues in relation to the media and communications – strengthening and building capacity amongst women to effectively utilize media resources and enhance access” (Opuko-Mensah, 2001, p.26).

While no studies have been identified which examined media representation of women exclusively in the entire African continent or the Western region of Africa which was hit hardest by the Ebola outbreak, the Gender and Media Baseline Study (GMBS) conducted media representation studies across 12 Southern African countries in 2002. Results from the data gathered by the GMBS found that African news media also underrepresent women (GMBS, 2003). In fact, women only make up 17% of the people seen in the news, a statistic very similar to the GMMP’s 1995 findings. Southern African news media were also found to misrepresent women as women only dominated the news in the categories of beauty contestants, and homemakers, sex workers, and were blatantly represented in sexist ways as objects and temptresses (Byerly & Ross, 2006; the GMBS, 2003, p. 12).

A more extensive study of 522 news companies in 59 nations by the International Women's Media Foundation (IWMF) was able to offer a global baseline study of women's status in news companies (Byerly, 2011). In the Middle East and Northern African for example, the study found that women are generally marginalized, although the degree of marginalization is less prevalent in countries like Egypt, than Jordan, where men outnumber women by a 5:1 ratio in newsrooms (Byerly, 2011). Women were also found to occupy lower-level positions in all occupational categories and experienced the glass ceiling in middle management occupational level (37.6%), except in Morocco, where the glass ceiling was at the senior management level. In general, both female and male reporters were predominantly employed in the junior-professional category (those tasked with news gathering and writing), but the women only made up 33.4% of the journalistic workforce (Byerly, 2011). These statistics are hardly surprising as Carolyn Byerly, the principal investigator for the study, states that company policies on the whole across the region, except for Morocco showed fairly low concern for equality (Byerly, 2011). Only 27% of the companies surveyed had a specific policy related to gender equality, although most of them had a maternity leave policy (97%), and offered both child care assistance (60%), as well as education and training to women (73%) (Byerly, 2011)

More data on the status of women's status within the African news industry was collected from 117 news organizations in Sub-Saharan region of Africa. Two organizations: the IWMF (in Cameroon, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria and Uganda) and Gender Links (in DRC, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Zambia and Zimbabwe) collected this data during a common time frame (Byerly, 2011). These studies reveal once again a predominance of male journalists as women make up only 9,215 of the 22,100 journalists employed in the organizations surveyed (Byerly, 2011). Female participation in the journalism workforce varies according to country, as South Africa actually has a slightly higher number of female journalists, but men outnumber women by a 4:1 ratio in Cameroon, and a 7:1 ratio in the Democratic Republic of Congo (Byerly, 2011). The IWMF, however, attributes the South African numbers to the high representation of females in senior management positions in South Africa (75%), where they serve as editors-in-chief, managing editors, and bureau chiefs, among others. The companies surveyed for the most part had policies on gender equality (69%), sexual harassment (67%), maternity leave (89%), and 56 % of them offered educational training (Byerly, 2011). However, only 37% of them had a policy on paternity leave or offered childcare assistance (19%). Once again, women were not only underrepresented in reporting positions, but also in managerial positions in the Sub Saharan media (Byerly, 2011).

While the gap between the number of female and male journalists is closing in some countries, these studies show that women remain underrepresented in top-level management positions, and few of them actually own or manage mainstream media organizations (Gadzekpo, 2009). These statistics show that increasing the number of women in the media could lead to positive results for women's representation in the media, and so it is particularly important for women to not only be part of the media, but to climb up the ranks to positions of power in the media.

It has been said that there is a possibility that women are not prominently featured in media products because they are not in positions of control at media outlets (Croteau & Haynes, 2003). This assertion is supported by the fact that female publishers and especially editors are said to "cultivate more family-friendly newsroom cultures, hire more women, and be less rule-bound" (Steiner, 2012, p. 202). However, few women have managerial positions in mainstream media and therefore are not involved in deciding the creation and production of media images because women are primarily employed as reporters (Bosch, 2011; Croteau & Haynes, 2003). Women make up 40% of the workforce at newspapers and broadcast media, and 37% of radio employees, but only 20% of news directors at newspapers are women, 22% are directors at news radio and 34% work in supervisory roles at newspapers (Croteau & Haynes, 2003).

Women are increasingly entering the journalism profession worldwide, but the impact of the link between the producers of media content and its producers is "greatly attenuated" by factors such as demands by advertisers, institutional policies and professional values (Gallagher, 2001, p. 3-4). It is therefore necessary to increase female participation and leadership in the media because some of the gains that have been noticed in increased content about women in the media has happened due to the presence of female media employees who not only work for the media, but have advanced in decision-making and creative ranks (Byerly & Ross, 2006).

Steeves (2007), however, writes that the latter measure alone is inadequate because of the level of entrenchment of the patriarchal political-economic power structures. According to Gallagher (2001), what is at stake is not "simply a matter of notching up a few percentage points in the share of women's time" or the number of women seen in the media, but most importantly "the weight of the voices" of the women who appear in the media" (p. 7). According to Gallagher (2001), the central point regarding media coverage of women is not who is telling the story, but how the story is told, because "it is not so much who is on top of the journalism totem pole that determines what kind of treatment women receive ... as prevailing public attitude" (p. 8).

Care must be taken when producing content for women, as this does not necessarily result in positive outcomes. Even though increased gender activism has resulted in increased media coverage of women, this reporting has been undermined by “patriarchal framing of stories, ill-considered language and non-contextualized” (Bosch, 2011; Gadzekpo, 2009, p. 74). Thus, even though the media might produce more media destined for women, “women and their voices may be considered unworthy of serious consideration,” and there remains a possibility that this content might still deprive women of “their right of expression” (Gallagher, 2001, p. 6, 7). This is evidenced by the Tanzanian example, where media content for women shows them primarily as housewives, mothers, and attendees of lectures given by authorities visiting their villages, who are not shown dialoguing with these authorities (Gallagher, 2001). In other places such as South Africa, the GMMP has found that media content for women increases dramatically only in the weeks preceding the celebration of the National Women’s Day on August 9 (Gallagher, 2001). Even during those weeks of increased coverage, the media fails to depict women as active participants in society, as the focus of the coverage is placed mostly on the status of women as victims of crime, wives and mothers living happily “within the limited confines of domesticity” (Gallagher. 2001, p. 7).

Gallagher (2001) therefore suggests improving media representation of women through “a wide-scale social and political transformation in which women’s rights – and women’s right to communicate – are truly understood, respected and implemented both in society and at large by the media” (p. 8). Decisions on news coverage are usually based on editorial assumptions of the public’s interest, in particular, issues or their need. However, the public can play a more active role in determining the stories covered by news media and how they should be covered. Working with the public on defining and expressing prevailing public attitude, and in turn persuading editors to take account of it, Gallagher (2001) argues, should be the starting point of and mission for media monitoring and advocacy.

Despite the slow progress in more accurate media representations of women, it is worth recognizing the work of women media activists who have worked over the years to ensure a less biased media. Women media activism is defined as “any organized effort on women’s part to make changes in established media enterprises or to create new media structures with the goal of expanding women’s voice in society and enabling their social advancement” (Byerly & Ross, 2006, p. 101). Based on research that was conducted in 2003 and 2004 on the varied ways in which women across the world had entered into media activism, Byerly and Ross (2006) proposed a new Model of Women’s Media Action. This model consists of four components or paths consisting of both new as well as some already-mentioned suggestions on how to solve the problem of media misrepresentation of women. These paths to organizing mechanism for women’s media activism show the ways in which specific activities have been helpful in giving women access to mainstream media or the opportunity to reach like-minded women over three decades (Byerly & Ross, 2006).

The first path, known as politics to media, refers to the decision by feminists to use the media to produce content that fosters their feminist work (Byerly & Ross, 2006). Media profession to politics is the second path, which describes a set of strategies used by formally trained female media professionals to improve women’s professional status in the media by reforming media policies and also to expand media content related to women (Byerly & Ross, 2006). The third path, called advocate change agent, refers to the strategy, often consisting of media analysis and research, used by women to pressure mass media to improve their treatment of women (Byerly & Ross, 2006). The fourth path, called women’s media enterprises, gives female media activists a greater amount of power as the women are in charge of producing their own content and determining its distribution (Byerly & Ross, 2006).

One of the tools that could be used to improve on gender issues in the media is the use of information and communication technologies (ICTs) by women's groups to "create new spaces to promote diverse voices and promote networking" (Bosch, 2011, p.30; Opuko-Mensah, 2001). Opoku-Mensah (2001) therefore suggests that women's groups take advantage of the information revolution to train women how to use ICTS to tackle a wide range of economic and social issues, which should be followed up by research on the effectiveness of the training.

Nature of the News Machine Resulting in Female Misrepresentation

The issue with media stereotyping, misrepresentation, and underrepresentation of women is that it goes against media claims of authenticity (Byerly & Ross, 2006). According to Byerly and Ross (2006), while filmmakers can assert that they are following their creative muse to defend their portrayal of female actors in the entertainment industry, which is said to be based on "mostly male-ordered constructions" that are hyper-unrealistic, the same defense cannot be used to defend the news media's portrayal of women (Byerly & Ross, 2006). This is because despite the controversial nature of news programs, the news media purports to show audiences "the real world" or claim that their news reports are mirrors of society (Allan, 2004; Byerly & Ross, 2006, p. 39).

The media do not actually attempt to represent the real world for reasons such as limited time and resources (Croteau & Haynes, 2003) Epstein (1975) adds that "journalists are unable to tell the truth" because they must rely on a source's testimony, which they are unable to cross check either for fear of losing a scoop, or alienating the source (as cited in Katz, 1989, p. 245). Katz (1989) however states that despite journalists' dependence on sources for information, there is the increasing tendency by journalists, particularly electronic journalists to cross-examine their sources.

Also, the news selection process, media functions and protocols are decided in a way that is similar to the internal logics behind fictional programs such as soap operas (Byerly & Ross, 2006). While soap operas rely on disasters and changing relationships to create dramatic tension, the media base their decisions of news content and "good" news stories on a "myriad selection decisions that follow journalistic conventions," which they do not acknowledge to their audiences (Byerly & Ross, 2006, p. 39). Some of these conventions include the news values of conflict, relevance, negativity, and reference to elite persons (Allan, 2004). Croteau and Haynes (2003) maintain that even when the media attempt to represent reality through documentaries, media content still does not accurately reflect the realities of the social world because these representations are based on "the result of processes of selection" which result in the neglect and highlighting of certain aspects (p. 196). The news is therefore a social construction of reality, it "can never find its analog in some external benchmark, a 'mirror' of reality" (Shoemaker & Reese, 2014; p. 4; Tuchman, 1978b).

The metaphor of journalism as a reflective mirror has been rejected by critical researchers because it is simplistic, and has a vast number of "blind spots" (Allan, 2004, p. 60). As Edward R. Murrow, a pioneering broadcaster in the U.S. once said, for broadcast journalism (but which can be applied to all forms of journalism) to serve and survive, it "must hold a mirror behind the nation and the world" and that "mirror must have no curves and must be held with a steady hand" (Allan, 2004; MacDonald, 1979, p. 310). Murrow also encouraged the media to show their audiences the complete picture reflected in this mirror: "If the reflection shows racial intolerance, economic inequality, bigotry, unemployment or anything else – let the people see it, or rather hear it" (MacDonald, 1979, p. 310).

In a seminal work on news construction, Tuchman (1978b) suggests that it would be difficult for the media to reflect a true picture of reality as news selection processes seem to lead to the exclusion of certain groups from news coverage. News nets cast by the media seem "intended for big fish" such as public figures from institutions such as police headquarters and federal courthouses (Tuchman, 1978b, p. 21). This results in inequitable media access enjoyed by people of different social-class backgrounds. The beneficiaries of this system are affluent people, with incomes in the top 5 percent of the income distribution, who are presented as public figures, (Gans, 2004). The news nets, are however not narrow enough to capture as much news about lower class and ordinary working-class groups, who are sought after most often in instances where "their activities produce social or moral disorder news" (Gans, 2004, p. 81; Tuchman, 1978b).

Another issue with the news selection process is that news organizations and reporters sometimes borrow news stories from competing news organizations and share information with colleagues from these organizations. The issue with news duplication is that it serves to maintain the status quo, and leaves the "same sorts of holes in the news net," instead of "blanketing the world" with independent angles of news coverage (Tuchman, 1978b, p. 23). While Tuchman's (1978b) study is significantly dated, her findings remain relevant in understanding how the media works. This is because while the media has changed (smaller audiences, technology, etc.) in the almost 40 years since she conducted her study, Gans (2004) states that the methods and processes used to determine newsworthiness, as well as the "values and assumptions that underlie news judgements" have remained much the same (p. xvii).

While the media may not accurately represent the real world, it remains important to study media representations even in fictional programs because of the potential social significance that media products have (Croteau & Haynes, 2003). Media audiences are said to develop some understanding and sense of the social world through their exposure to media commentary (including make-believe fantasies) on the social world (Croteau & Haynes, 2003).

It is important to note that a majority of journalists worldwide are male, which partially explains why the media is gendered (Byerly & Ross, 2006). Although women make up two-thirds of the undergraduate student population in journalism schools, journalism remains a white middle-class male-dominated profession, which is "shaped by patriarchal norms, values and traditions" (Allan, 2004, p. 119; Byerly & Ross, 2006; Creedon & Cramer, 2007). Women in the profession have been regarded as the "intruder, the exception, the problem," and less capable of relaying news than their male counterparts (Irvin, 2013; Steiner, 2012, p. 201). It is therefore not surprising that the male-dominated profession tends to marginalize women's voices, although it remains inexcusable that the media does not reflect the reality about women's lives and experiences.

Another reason that accounts for gendered media is the use of official sources, which is preferred in journalism for reliable information (Allan, 2004; Byerly & Ross, 2006). The use of official sources is beneficial to the journalists because it "enhances the credibility of the journalist's account" (Allan, 2004, p. 54; Byerly & Ross, 2006). Reporters with access to such "star sources" enjoy an elevated professional status as they are considered "star reporters" (Tuchman, 1978b). However, this results in non-expert sources having a harder time gaining access to the media (Allan, 2004). This reliance on information provided by official sources is also problematic because it is a blind-spot in journalism serving as a mirror of society because the media have gone from being perceived as agenda setters to gatekeepers who manufacture "consent for dominant special interest groups (Allan, 2004; Byerly & Ross, 2006; Hout & Jacobs, 2008, p. 62). This raises the possibility that the reality presented by the media has the potential to become "the version of reality government officials would like to present to the public" (Allan, 2004, p. 60).

Another issue with source selection by journalists is their tendency to select sources that are similar to them in class position, gender, race, and other characteristics (Everbach, 2013; Gans, 2004). No wonder many news magazine stories, for example, focus on upper-middle class individuals (Gans, 2004). The routines and practices of journalism which force reporters and editors to focus on the government, corporations, as well as authoritative and powerful sources, has led to increased media access for white, middle-aged men, who "hold the reins of legitimized power" (Everbach, 2006, p. 478; Lennon, 2013). This has also resulted in a subjective and gender bias news system that favors a masculine agenda (Everbach, 2013).

Journalists, who are predominantly male, tend to consult official sources, who are also predominantly male, thus resulting in a "buddy-buddy world" which emphasizes male concerns (Allan, 2004; Byerly & Ross, 2006, p. 47; Everbach, 2006). Statistics from previous research confirm this discrepancy as female sources are mostly presented in the news as private citizens, and only appear 20% of the time as experts or commentators, and only 19% of the time as spokespersons in the news (Byerly & Ross, 2006; Everbach, 2013; GMMP, 2010). These source selection habits are dangerous because the presentation of the news from a male perspective results in a gendered media that marginalizes and trivializes women's voices (Byerly & Ross, 2006; Everbach, 2013). By reflecting the biases of "the largely white male establishment" who run media organizations, the media are able to reinforce the notion that men hold the power in society (Everbach, 2013, p. 19).

Although some studies have found that female journalists are more likely to cite female sources, in many instances, both male and female reporters use more male than female sources, implying that women in newsrooms have failed to change the definition of newsworthiness (Steiner, 2012). Reasons for this include the following the overriding influence of organizational and extra-organizational factors: namely time constraints, sources lined up by bookers, the importance of stereotypes on story assignments, and the socialization and indoctrination of women into male definitions of newsworthiness and news values such as politics, finance and crime (Everbach & Flournoy, 2007; Steiner, 2012; Lennon, 2013). Even female editors adopt "tough male characteristics" and act like men, to the detriment of female reporters as women who attempt to cover more news from a female perspective are often seen as "deviants" in newsrooms (Hardin & Shain, 2005, Steiner, 2012, p. 210).

Critiquing International Coverage in Context

International news coverage is another important aspect of news framing that is examined in this study. The news media provide audiences with regular updates on events happening in the social world; however, these reports differ from domestic news coverage in several ways (Byerly & Ross, 2006; Gans, 2004). International reports tend to be briefer and are "treated with less detachment and explicit value judgements that would not be considered justifiable in domestic news coverage" (Gans, 2004, p. 31). Another characteristic of foreign news coverage is that it is dominated by news on select countries such as Israel, Japan, England, France, and mainland China; meanwhile, other countries mostly capture the attention of the American news media after they have witnessed dramatic events such as major disasters and coups d'états (Gans, 2004).

Foreign news stories covered by the American media usually fall in seven categories (Gans, 2004). Two of these seven categories, specifically, disasters and foreign activities that affect Americans and American policy, might help explain the coverage given to the most recent Ebola crisis (Gans, 2004). While the American press might usually write one or two articles about other disasters that kill Africans in the thousands (Hans, 2004), the Ebola outbreak attracted more attention from them because it affected both Africans and Americans who served both in Africa and here in the U.S.

Another characteristic of international news coverage is that it often fails in providing the broader context necessary in making these events meaningful (Byerly & Ross, 2006; Fahmy, 2004). When it concerns international reporting, the lack of context often leads to the reinforcement of stereotypes about the West being intellectually and culturally superior (Fahmy, 2004). By doing so, the media frame the news "into the existing paradigm," thereby reinforcing stereotypes and existing political and social agendas (Fahmy, 2004, p. 93; Pavlik, 2001).

One of the reasons why Western news media have the tendency to provide reports on foreign nations without context is because of the difficulties related to covering international affairs. Economic factors are cited as the main reason behind such coverage as international reporting is said to be expensive, time consuming, and difficult (Fahmy, 2004). Journalists on international assignments need to have knowledge of the foreign culture and/or language in order to provide a more complex perspective of the international event. This argument is exemplified by findings from a study in the Curacao Island, which showed that foreign journalists on the island who were viewed as outsiders had difficulties obtaining information because they were not familiar with the culture (Fahmy, 2004, 1998; Vreekamp, 1995). These journalists had to do more research and be creative in obtaining information for their news reporting, while their colleagues who were insiders in these communities relied on their community ties to seek and obtain information for their reporting (Chinn, 2001; Vreekamp, 1995).

In a bid to enforce cost-saving measures, many news organizations have resorted to closing their foreign bureaus and firing experienced journalists who covered international affairs (Fenton, 2009). The news media have, however, tried to compensate for the absence of reporters in foreign countries by adopting some different measures to obtain international news. These measures sometimes include the purchase of videos from news agencies, which they edit to give the illusion that they were present at the scene, a practice that Fenton (2009) describes as deceptive. Some other news agencies choose to approach this problem by parachuting journalists and camera crews with no experience into crisis zones, thus proving the assertion that negativity increases the probability of an event being perceived, recorded and favored (Allan, 2004; Fahmy, 2004; Galtung & Ruge, 1965). Journalists who are rushed into international situations are pressured to produce news "as a baker produces bread" (Fahmy, 2004, p. 93).

Revered American journalist Walter Cronkite disagreed with this practice, as he argued that it is a late response since the action is already underway (Cronkite, 2005, as cited in Fenton, 2009). Also, because news events happen quickly and foreign journalists are rushed in to cover the news, this usually results in reporting which lacks context, understanding or "thematic framing that allows the connection of isolated events and trends in society and their links to international developments" (Fahmy, 2004, p. 93; Pavlik, 2001). Western journalists covering international events are also accused of engaging in maintaining their culture by contrasting it with others; implying that during their reportage, they usually "find symbols that match with western ideals about appropriate social policies" while ignoring native ones (Fahmy, 2004, p. 93).

Such situations arise because once a particular frame has been selected for a news story, the framing principles of selection and rejection “ensure that only material that is considered legitimate and appropriate within the conventions of newsworthiness” is allowed into the final news story (Allan, 2004, p. 59). This framing can be attributed to the following traditional news assumptions that: “news concerns the event, not the underlying condition; the person, not the group; conflict, not consensus; the fact that “advances the story,” not the one that explains it (Gitlin, 1980, p. 7, as cited in Allan, 2004, p. 59).

It is evident that most of the critique on media misrepresentation of women and international events is focused on the Western media. This is not to imply that only the Western media produce reporting that is sometimes misrepresentative of certain populations. After all, findings from the GMMP’s (2010) monitoring activities show that African media recorded the second highest level of reinforcements of gender stereotypes, coming only after the media in the Middle East, meanwhile the GMBS (2003) study found that evidence of blatantly sexist remarks about women were still present in Southern African media. While most studies on media performance as relates to coverage of Africa focuses on the performance of Western media, few have paid attention to the quality and quantity of press the African press give to African issues and events.

In a piece for *The Guardian*, Gathara (2015) asked the question: “Just who gets Africa right?” In this essay Gathara (2015) argues that like the Western media, African media are culpable of inadequate and stereotypical coverage of the African continent. In fact, African media houses “do not think of Africa so much as a story that needs to be covered,” but focus their attention on reporting or not reporting news happening in their home countries (Gathara, 2015). The Western media actually seem to serve as gatekeepers of African news for the media outlets in Africa because they take their cue on reporting events happening in Africa from their Western counterparts.

Shrinking budgets and severe government restrictions have been cited as some of the reasons why the Western as well as the African media provide limited coverage of Africa (Fahmy, 2004; Fenton, 2009; Gathara, 2015). However, Gathara (2015) accuses the African media of not even trying to cover Africa as a continent, as few of these media houses have bureaus or correspondents stationed in foreign countries (Gathara, 2015). Instead, they choose to "rely on the same western reporters they delight in bashing" (Gathara, 2015). Not only do such media practices result in keeping Africans uninformed about happenings on the continent, but it also produces reports on African affairs that are devoid of context or explanations for occurrences. As Gathara (2015) explains, the Kenyan media, which is based in a country that has suffered from Somalia's instability, in its coverage of Kenya's intervention in Somalia in their coverage (while it lasted) were "too busy beating the patriotic drum." Instead of explaining to their audiences the reasons behind Kenya's intervention or the origins of the anarchy in the region, Kenyan journalists simply "regurgitated Western tropes about fighting terror and Islamic extremists" (Gathara, 2015).

Maybe the reason behind this complacent attitude of African media about their underrepresentation of African issues is fostered by their belief that their coverage remains within their borders as Gathara (2015) states that many African media houses are spared from censure because they mostly broadcast to discrete home audiences. Many Western media organizations do not enjoy the luxury of uncensored coverage because Africans across the continent have access to foreign networks like the BBC, CNN, and Al Jazeera, and thus can be "appalled" by the ways they are portrayed on these media (Gathara, 2015). However, Africans in

Kenya, for example, hardly ever consume news media from other countries and so are not aware of how they are portrayed in African media (Gathara, 2015).

The Western media cannot be blamed completely for their absence in foreign countries. In a study on global press freedom, FreedomHouse, a New York-based "independent watchdog organization dedicated to the expansion of freedom around the world" suggests that global press freedom is at its lowest level in over a decade (Karleker & Dunham, 2014; FreedomHouse, 2013). This fact is important because many Sub-Saharan African nations historically have not had a free press, due to their strict control government control of the media (Brooke, 1987). While FreedomHouse states that some positive trends in press freedom in regions such as Sub-Saharan Africa as of 2014, African countries still makeup a significant percentage of the countries in the world studied by FreedomHouse that do not have a free press (Karleker & Dunham, 2014; FreedomHouse, 2013; Kelly, Cook & Truong, 2012).

These restrictive African government media policies impede not only the ability of local journalists to practice their profession freely, but also limit foreign journalists' reporting abilities. This is problematic because foreign news outlets play a vital role of "covering sensitive stories and spreading the word" of events in these countries to a global audience (Karleker & Dunham, 2014, p. 2). State control of the media in countries like Cameroon is so tight that foreign news services are required to partner with the state-owned national station (CIA World Factbook, 2007).

In other countries that restrict the coverage by local reporters such as in Russia, China, Nauru and Egypt, efforts were also made to hinder the work of foreign reporters (Karleker & Dunham, 2014). Among the acts of media undertaken by these countries are the threat by China and Russia to withhold visas for prominent reporters, the harassment and detainment of Al

Jazeera journalists in Egypt, the expulsion of former Moscow correspondent and Russian scholar, David Satter from Russia, and the drastic raise in the visa fee from $200 to $8,000 for foreign journalists entering Nauru, which is home to a controversial detention center for asylum seekers attempting to enter Australia (Karleker & Dunham, 2014).

The studies on global press freedom offer just a glimpse of the real life situations that impede the ability of journalists to practice their profession, and possibly their information behavior habits. In a letter of support sent on behalf of Satter by the Russian human rights organization Memorial to the Russian Foreign Minister, Sergei Lavrov, the organization argues that banning Satter from entering Russia for five years will affect his practice of his profession which necessitates that Satter should be able to check and recheck information (A. Roginsky, communication, January 15, 2015). This situation shows that there is a relationship between a journalist’s location, access to information and even the receptiveness/attitude of the leadership in an area and their reporting, which is confirmed by information behavior research examined in depth below. What is missing from the literature, which is one of the objectives of this study, is to understand how practicing in unfamiliar and unfavorable conditions in turn impacts the ways in which reporters represent a group of people.

CHAPTER 3

LITERATURE REVIEW AND INFORMATION BEHAVIOR THEORY

Information Behavior

Information behavior is a subset of Library and Information Science (LIS) which is a term used to “describe the many ways in which human beings interact with information, in particular, the ways in which people seek and utilize information” (Bates, 2010, p. 2381; Julien, Pecoskie & Reed, 2011). More specifically, information behavior is interested in: understanding people’s information needs, the reasons behind those needs, understanding if those needs can be identified and satisfied, and understanding how people find, evaluate, manage, give, and use information in their everyday lives, and even how people actively avoid information (Case, 2012; Fisher & Julien, 2009; Greifeneder, 2014; Singh & Sharma, 2011).

It is worth noting that information behavior is concerned with both active and passive information seeking patterns and is increasingly being referred to as information practices (Fisher & Julien, 2009; Julien, Pecoskie & Reed, 2011). While the term might be understood to imply that information behavior is a study of the behavior of information, it focuses only on the interaction humans have with information (Greifeneder, 2014). Wilson’s (2000) definition of information behavior is more comprehensive than those already discussed. According to Wilson (2000), information behavior is:

> The totality of human behavior in relation to sources and channels of information, including both active and passive information seeking, and information use. Thus, it includes face-to-face communication with others, as well as the passive reception of information as in, for example, watching TV advertisements, without any intention to act on the information given. (p. 49)

Historical accounts of the beginnings of information behavior studies trace the earliest user behavior studies to 1902 or the 1930s, although information behavior and interaction was only recognized as a research area in the early 1960s (Case, 2012; Fidel, 2011). However, emphasis on the users of information only happened in the 1970s (Case, 2012). According to Case (2012), early information behavior research focused more on information sources (books, artifacts, libraries, and radio broadcasts among other), rather than users of information and their individual needs. Information behavior is now identified as the fourth major branch of research in the library and information science (LIS) discipline (Given et al., 2012). While the name and definitions of the field have evolved, the goal of information behavior remains “to investigate the behaviour of people when they interact with information” (Fidel, 2011, p. 61). The populations studied, and the research approaches used to conduct information behavior studies have also evolved.

Early studies on information behavior research conducted in the first two decades were carried out using the quantitative research approach and large-scale questionnaires that relied on counting and is inappropriate for such research (Fidel, 2011; Wilson, 1999). Qualitative methods are now used in more than half of all information behavior studies (Vakkari, 2008). Numerous noteworthy changes have happened in the conduct of information behavior research since its early days. Surveys, interviews, and content analyses are now the predominant research instruments, and there is a rising trend for mixed method approaches, which are defined by Greifeneder (2014) as the combination of several methods. While earlier information behavior research focused on information searching and sharing, there has been an increase in the variety of topics studied by information behavior researchers (Greifeneder, 2014; Vakkari, 2008). The breadth of information behavior research now includes information activities such as information creation, saving and learning, even though information seeking still remains the core of information behavior research, while information use has decreased as a topic (Greifeneder, 2014).

Another change that has happened in the conduct of information behavior studies is that researchers are increasingly studying people engaged in everyday activities (Julien et al, 2011, Vakkari, 2008). It is noteworthy to mention that some of the marginalized groups that are now included in information behavior research include people with Alzheimer's disease and refugees (Greifeneder, 2014). However, students, scholars, and professionals remain the most-studied groups in information behavior research, and it is unclear if these groups are chosen out of convenience, or if it is based on their research interests (Julien et. al, 2011, Vakkari, 2008). Case (2012) provides an explanation for the focus on certain groups over others in information behavior research. According to Case (2012), even though everyone uses information, the stakes are higher for certain people in some situations. It is because of the stakes in play that these groups are studied, because “higher stakes are more likely to create situations that attract research” (Case, 2012, p. 10). Leckie (2005) explains that by examining the information behaviors professionals, researchers are able to determine which improvements can be made to the information practices undertaken by professionals in their completion of assignments.

Information Behavior of Journalists

Journalists who covered the Ebola crisis are the human subjects of this research. Since the 1960s, information behavior researchers have employed mixed empirical methods, particularly interviews, to study their expanded list of subjects, which now consists of more than just scientists and academics (Fisher & Julien, 2009, 2011). A multitude of studies have thus been carried out in Library and Information Science (LIS) to understand the information behaviors of different categories of people including professionals, scholars, and even understudied populations such as the elderly, janitors and even prisoners. With journalistic work being so information-centered (they are both information producers and consumers), it is no surprise that since the mid-1980s, LIS researchers have conducted over a dozen studies to understand the information behavior of these professionals (Abdulla, 2006; Anwar & Asghar, 2009). However, empirical studies on what journalists do is fairly recent, and it is interesting to note that these studies have mostly been conducted in North America, Europe and Pakistan (Abdulla, 2006; Case, 2012).

Journalists in general are an interesting group to study in the context of information behavior because “journalism is largely information seeking” and sharing (Case, 2012, p. 313). In fact, the profession is said to breathe “on the oxygen of information,” as its mission is to inform masses of events happening worldwide (Ansari & Zuberi, 2010, p. 71). As Katz (1989) stated in his analysis of journalists as scientists, one aspect that differentiates journalism from other professions is that the objective of journalism is to make information, even privileged information public. Some journalists therefore assume a “publish and be damned” stance because their true vocation is to publish (Katz, 1989, p. 239).

Journalists are not only an interesting population to study because of their daily work with information, but also because of the ways in which they seek information. They are required to use wide and varied sources of information due to the nature of their job and the news process, but unlike other professionals, journalists tend to use the easiest way of finding information (Attfield & Dowell, 2003; Campbell, 1997; Chaudhry & Al-Sagheer, 2011; Singh & Sharma, 2011). Byerly and Ross (2006) argue that choosing convenient sources such as familiar expert sources or sources with whom journalists share similarities is done for reasons such as laziness and tight deadlines. Staff shortages are one of the reasons why many journalists only actively pursue a small number of regular news sources, and rely on wire services or other local and national media for news ideas (Gans, 2004). Based on their tight deadlines, journalists have to make source determination decisions quickly, while adding the least strain to their organization's budget (Gans, 2004). They base their decisions on the following factors: past suitability, productivity, reliability, trustworthiness, authoritativeness, and articulateness (Gans, 2004).

It has been argued that selecting the easiest information option available does not make the journalist's information search strategy less valid than those used by other professionals such as librarians and lawyers (Campbell, 1997). While this strategy might be valid, the fact remains that by choosing the easiest information source, the news becomes slanted towards powerful, skilled, and eager sources (Gans, 2004; Tuchman, 1978b). However, this process of news construction prevents reporters from spending long periods of time evaluating and scrutinizing the best sources of information and formulating complex search strategies (Campbell, 1997; Hossain & Islam, 2012). In television news, for example, deadlines are "immutable," while deadline extensions in magazines are accompanied by high additional expenditures, thus, journalists have to make decisions based on these deadlines (Gans, 2004, p. 82). Journalists almost always have too much information to work with, and they have to make news selection decisions based on limited staff and the limited time they have to cover events, while competing for limited air time or space which are scarce resources (Gans, 2004).

Journalists use sources that are unique to journalism, such as conversations, phone-ins, and daily news diaries (Attfield & Dowell, 2003). However, they are encouraged to gather information by talking to human sources including victims, officials, and experts, among others, partly because time is limited in news-construction and human sources give reporters comments or explain complex issues in simple terminology (Attfield & Dowell, 2003; Campbell, 1997). The reliance of journalists on expert sources is particularly highlighted when they report on complicated health topics (Andsager, 2013). As stated above, expert sources are mostly cited in news reports because they are the "voice of authority" (Allan, 2004; Andsager, 2013; Byerly & Ross, 2006). However, due to the fast pace and deadlines of news reporting (most journalists have to assemble and write their reports between 10 a.m. and 2 p.m.), these sources have to be available rapidly to provide interviews or background information (Laesk et al., 2010).

Studying the sources used by the news media is important because it leads to an understanding of the degrees of access enjoyed by the media (Manning, 2001). The study of journalists working on the isolated Curacao Island in the Netherlands revealed some similarities to Elfreda Chatman's insider-outsider sort of communities (Vreekamp, 1995). Results from the study showed that journalists who were native to the region had easy access to news sources, and were familiar with the parochial attitudes of these communities, while reporters from the outside had to be more creative in the ways they obtained information and conducted research (Hossain & Islam, 2012; Vreekamp, 1995).

One characteristic of previous studies on the information behavior of journalists worth noting is that a majority of them do not use any research models. Even Fabritius' (1999) qualitative study of Finnish journalists, which has been said to "stand out for its depth," lacks a theoretical foundation (Case, 2012, p. 313). Fabritius' (1999) study examined the challenges and opportunities triangulation as a multi-perspective strategy in qualitative study of information seeking behavior of journalists confronted when they triangulated in the stage of data gathering. Attfield and Dowell (2003) used Grounded Theory in their study of journalists at *The Times*

London, and thus instead suggested a new model of newspaper report research and writing process. The studies conducted by Anwar and Asghar (2009), Ansari and Zuberi (2010), Hossain and Islam (2012), on the information behaviors of journalists on Pakistan are not an exception, as they do not have a theoretical foundation.

Another trend that has been observed in information behavior studies of journalists is that the focus has increasingly turned to the use of Information Communication Technologies (ICTs) by journalists. Researchers like Poteet (2000), Ketterer (2003), and Abdulla (2006) studied the use of ICTs by journalists because these new technologies have changed the ways in which data is shared and communicated, thus transforming the media landscape. The research instrument of choice in these studies has mostly been different forms of questionnaires as evidenced by analysis of all the studies read for this study and as stated by Chaudry and Al-Sagheer's (2011) analysis of six previous studies on the information seeking of journalists.

Unlike most studies on the information behavior of journalists, Attfield and Dowell (2003) provide an account on the constraints and activities of news and feature research and writing. In a study of 25 journalists working at *The Times* in London, Attfield and Dowell (2003) found that once journalists were assigned a beat, the information-seeking process started, with an initial database search known as an originality check. The results of the study showed that the originality check, which is conducted for reasons such as acquainting the journalist with their subject matter often conflicted with deadline constraints. Deadline constraints were not the only impediment to initial information seeking, as the journalists described the process of developing personal understanding of issues as "'frequent' but 'difficult,'" and novices and journalists working "off-patch" were more often identified with the need to develop more understanding of their subject matters (Attfield & Dowell, 2003, 195). Due to these factors, the journalists reported that their information-seeking consisted of searching for personal profiles if their subject was a person, or searching electronic cuttings archives, especially for articles from broadsheet newspapers (Attfield & Dowell, 2003).

The next step undertaken by journalists in Attfield and Dowell's (2003) study was to gather all the useful information they had collected on their subject into a dedicated word processor or holding document, where they could highlight, cut and paste the information they needed, thus saving time (Attfield & Dowell, 2003). Attfield and Dowell (2003) argue that during the process of gathering information, journalists review their writing intentions. Another finding from this study suggests that the angle and word count of a final report are the two constraints which have the potential to destabilize, or overturn the process of researching and writing news or feature articles (Attfield & Dowell, 2003).

In a study of journalists working in Scotland, Campbell (1996) found that there were differences between the information-seeking habits of journalists working in different types of media. Although the journalists' information strategies were impacted by the space and time available to them, broadcast journalists were reported to use the library less often than print journalists due to time constraints. Even though the Scottish journalists interviewed for this study were environmental reporters, they generally made use of human sources, experts and other media more than they did the library facilities, which they rarely used to search for any type of information, including that which was environmentally-related Campbell (1996).

Nicholas, Williams, Cole and Martin (2000) studied about 350 people working in more than 50 British news organizations - the sample was made up of journalists and librarians, who were either interviewed individually or in groups, sent questionnaires or observed. The study suggested that student journalists (97%), journalists working on new media such as newspaper websites (93%) and librarians (94% interviewed, and 74% who filled questionnaires) used the Internet extensively. On the other hand, out of the 50 journalists from the *Times* who were surveyed, it was discovered that two-thirds of them did not use the Internet, while only 16% of 24 trainee journalists from various regional and local newspapers said that that they used the Internet. Surprisingly, the results did not indicate that age or training played a significant role in determining who used the Internet or not. A majority of the journalists used the Internet to find online newspapers, then to find sites run by other sources such as the government and institutions such as universities. Considering that this study is 16 years old, it is to be expected that if this study were to be conducted again, the results might be different.

In the one study identified on the information behavior of African journalists, published in 1993, Edem found that over 70% of the 140 Nigerian journalists studied were unaware of their information needs and therefore recommended "aggressive user education of library and archival resources for trainee journalists as a step towards performance effectiveness" (Edem, 1993, p. 1). This is because only a small percentage of the journalists made use of library or archival resources. While only 24% of Nigerian journalists made use of these library resources. Edem (1993) states that in order for the quality of news reporting to improve in Nigeria, the nation's news organizations need to be equipped with well-equipped libraries and librarians. A similar study in Pakistan revealed that although 49.4% of the respondents said their organizations had libraries, only 12 of them used these facilities at least twice a week (Anwar & Asghar, 2009).

Research also shows that certain news organizations have failed to provide their employees with the necessary IT developments. In a study of Kuwaiti journalists' information seeking behavior, the researchers found out that 53 of the study's 92 participants were provided with Internet connections and search facilities by their employers (Anwar, Al-Ansari &

Abdullah, 2004). However, only 34.8% of the Kuwaiti journalists stated that their news agencies had provided their staff with in-house electronic libraries, even though about 2% of them never made use of this resource (Anwar, Al-Ansari & Abdullah, 2004). In Pakistan, where information and communication technologies are said to be diffusing at slow speeds, only 36 of 87 journalists who participated in a study said that their media organization provided them with Internet access or search facilities (Anwar & Asghar, 2009). They are therefore reported to be deficient in information searching skills (Anwar & Asghar, 2009).

Theory

Having a theory is “today the mark of research seriousness and respectability,” and a requirement that disciplines seeking for the scientific status have to meet (Brookes, 1989; Pettigrew & McKechnie, 2001, p. 62). However, Information Science has been criticized for lacking good and explicit theories (Hjørland, 1998). In fact, Brookes (1980) stated “theoretical information science hardly yet exists” (p. 125). A scientific theory is “an explanation. It is a large system which has withstood some very, very rigorous testing - literally, attempts to debunk it and it has survived all those attempts” (Forrest, 2007). A theory could also be defined as “a set of explanatory concepts” (Silverman, 1993) or according to Vogt (1993) it is “a statement about how some part of the world works - frequently explaining relations among phenomena (as cited in Pettigrew & McKechnie, 2001, p. 62).

Camp (2000) asserts that the definition of a theory depends on the research approach, but attempts a comprehensive definition that he thinks should be applicable to either qualitative or quantitative research. According to Camp (2000) “a theory is a set of interrelated constructs, definitions, and propositions that present a rational view of phenomena by explaining or predicting relationships among those elements" (p. 6). While Van Maanen (1998, as cited in Pettigrew & McKechnie, 2001) recognized that theories were not only important to a discipline because they are helpful in the organization and communication of unwieldy data, Chatman (1999) noted that theory within a discipline was important if a researcher had to undertake the study of a group of people who were yet to find a voice in literature.

Despite the criticisms of the lack of theory in Information Science, Attfield and Dowell (2003) state that a number of information science researchers have conducted research on small groups of people, including professionals. This has led to the development of theories, some of which focus exclusively on professionals. The two models used in this study to analyze the information behavior patterns of journalists covering the Ebola crisis are the General Model of the Information-Seeking of Professionals and Byström and Järvelin's Work-Task Information Seeking and Retrieval Model. These theories are important because the tasks executed by workers determine their information needs and information-seeking processes, because these tasks can only be completed if one meets the requirements imposed by the tasks (Byström & Järvelin, 1995).

The General Model of the Information-Seeking of Professionals

The first model used for studying the information behavior patterns of journalists in this study is the General Model of the Information-Seeking of Professionals, which attempts to differentiate between the information needs of professionals and other groups such as scholars and scientists (Leckie, Pettigrew, & Sylvain, 1996). See Figure 2. The term profession "is used here in the classic sense to mean those service-oriented occupations having a theoretical knowledge base, requiring extensive formal postsecondary education, having a self-governing association, and adhering to internally developed codes of ethics or other statements of principle" (p. 162). Leckie et al. (1996) reviewed the research about the information-seeking behaviors of three different groups of professionals: health care professionals, lawyers and engineers.

Numerous studies have already been done, and models created on the information seeking behaviors of scholars, but Leckie et al. (1996) assert that professionals differ from scholars, and thus should be studied separately. These groups differ because scholars are knowledge producers whose main purpose is to produce knowledge; while professionals have task-oriented jobs that necessitate that they produce services and provide services to clients in the most efficient way possible (Leckie et al., 1996). Also, professionals face different constraints in their work and have access to alternate sources and types of information, while playing many distinct roles throughout any given day (Leckie et al., 1996).

The Leckie model assumes that a person's information needs creates their awareness of information sources, which motivates them to examine these sources (Case, 2012). Existing research on the information seeking behaviors of journalists seem to suggest that the journalists' information seeking is influenced by several of the variables which Leckie et al. (1996) list as the most important in the information seeking process. These variables are: familiarity, prior success with a source, trustworthiness, timeliness, accessibility, cost, quality and packaging of the source.

Individual demographics and aspects of the information need are said to be variables that shape a professional's information need. The individual demographic factors include: a person's age, profession, specialization, career stage/position, tasks and geographic location (Case, 2012; Leckie et al., 1996). Aspects of the individual need include the context, importance, predictability, frequency, and complexity of the need situation (Case, 2012).

Several themes emerge from models and studies that attempt to map the information seeking activities of professionals (Leckie et al., 1996; Leckie, 2005). Firstly, Leckie et al. (1996) suggests that researchers studying the information activities of professionals should closely examine and understand the broader working context in which professionals work (Leckie et al., 1996). Secondly, they recommend that researchers must examine the details of the professional's work in order to understand the information-seeking process of that individual, and these tasks and responsibilities are complex (Leckie et al., 1996; Leckie, 2005). Researchers are advised to keep in mind that due to the fact that the professional's responsibilities might have dimensions and might prompt other tasks, these tasks might create further information needs which have to be met before the task is successfully completed (Leckie et al., 1996). For example, even though professionals specialize in one area, their job position might require them to assume other responsibilities (Leckie et al., 1996; Leckie, 2005).

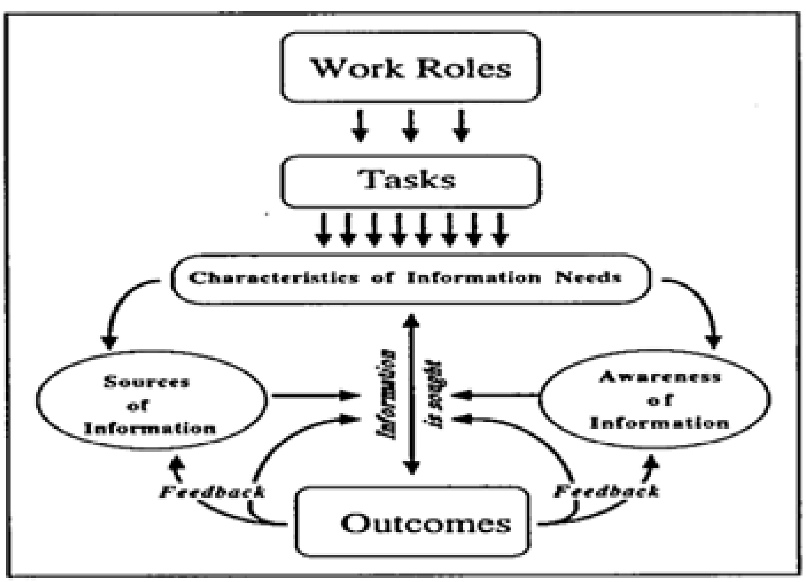

Figure 3: A model of the information seeking of professionals (Case, 2012)

The professional's work roles usually are associated with tasks, which are likely to prompt information needs and in some cases, information seeking (Leckie, 2005). When these information needs arise, professionals are sometimes faced by intervening factors which facilitate or impede their access and use of information, and they sometimes have to make more than one attempt to find the necessary information (Leckie, 2005). Leckie et al. (1996) therefore emphasize the need for information seeking models to incorporate enough flexibility to allow for "the complexity and unpredictability of information-seeking processes," which sometimes frustrate professionals in their search for relevant information (Leckie et al., 1996, p. 179).

There are some disagreements about whether journalism is a good fit for professionalism for reasons such as: differing training standards of professionals, the information sharing nature of journalists, and the practice of journalism in organizations, and the fact that professionals such as doctors and lawyers are independent practitioners who serve clients and journalists do not (Katz, 1989; Miller, 1998). According to Katz (1989), journalists are motivated to enter the profession in order to contribute to society; thus, he concludes that journalism is "an occupation based on the primacy of public service" (p. 238). While professionals such as teachers and clergy, like journalists, have a service to society, Katz (1989) states that journalists differ from these other professions because the authority of journalism is "anchored in rationality rather than tradition or charisma," meanwhile the authority of the other professions is "tempered by tradition and charisma" (p. 239).

Professionalism, Katz (1989) argues, is "anchored in an accumulated body of specialized knowledge and an intensive period of study," while the same requirements do not hold true for journalism (p. 239). The professional model has training requirements which professionals must complete, which do not hold true for journalists, who in some cases have never taken a journalism class (Katz, 1989; Miller, 1998). Journalists have no entrance requirement, license or decisive institutional reprimand; neither do they have a formal body of knowledge, formal tested skill or doctrine (Miller, 1998).

Professionals are also governed by a set of ethics and have self-governing association (Leckie et al, 1996). Professions like medicine and law are more “intellectually and morally” developed in comparison to professions like journalism because they have had codes and theories dating back to Hippocrates and Hammurabi (Miller, 1998). In the case of journalists, even though they do not obtain all the “perquisites and powers” enjoyed by professionals in the legal and medical professions, they are indeed professionals (Gans, 2004). Organizations like the Society of Professional Journalists (SPJ) are filling the gap with regards to their lack of ethical standards. The SPJ’s goals are to “improve and protect journalism,” and they are “dedicated to encouraging the free practice of journalism and stimulating high standards of ethical behavior” (SPJ). Another organization that serves as an indication of professionalism in journalism is the Radio Television Digital News Association, which is also dedicated to professional continuing education (Cavanaugh, 1995). Cavanaugh (1995) also lists the professional environment, which places more emphasis on quality rather than quantity of the output as an indication that journalism is a profession.

The general model of the information-seeking of professionals, therefore, seems to be a good fit for a study on the information behavior habits of journalists covering the Ebola crisis because journalists are “unquestionably professionals” with demanding jobs (Cavanaugh, 1995, p. 324; Miller, 1998). Journalists perform different roles at the job site and work for different types of media, which correlates well with the Leckie model's emphasis on work roles and tasks as prime motivators for information seeking (Case, 2012).

While Katz's (1989) position might have held true at the time of his writing in 1989, journalism has witnessed several changes which now qualify it to be a profession. According to Meyer (2002), advances in communication technologies have resulted in journalism evolving from a craft model to a profession. Journalism functioned as a craft and not a profession when it "remained in a steady state with neither the skills nor the environment in which they were applied changing very much" (Meyer, 2002). The role of journalists in present day has changed from mostly finding and transporting information to a hunter-gathering model, which requires them to get information into people's hands and also in their heads (Meyer, 2002).

Byström and Järvelin's Work-Task Information Seeking and Retrieval Model

A second model that will guide this study is Byström and Järvelin's work-task information seeking and retrieval model, which posits that a worker's information-seeking behavior is dependent on the tasks they have to complete, and the problems they encounter while completing these tasks (Byström & Järvelin, 1995). While there has been a substantial amount of research conducted on the relationship between information-seeking behavior and various types of tasks, like the Leckie model, Byström and Järvelin's research aims to study the relationship between task types and the kind of information that is needed to execute those tasks (Byström & Järvelin, 1995).

This model proposed by Byström and Järvelin (1995) assumes that the information-seeking process begins when a task has been delegated to the professional or identified by the professional (Wang, 2011). The next step entails an analysis of the information need by the professional, which results in a determination of the information necessary to satisfy the need, taking into account time constraints and the nature of the task (Wang, 2011). This is followed by plans for the actions that could be taken to satisfy the need, and a partial or full execution of the plan, which allows the professional to move forward with the task (Wang, 2011). The information-seeking process ends with an evaluation of the outcomes to determine if there is a need for more information (Wang, 2011). This model lists personal factors, organization, and information-seeking style as pre-conditions to the information seeking process (Wang, 2011).

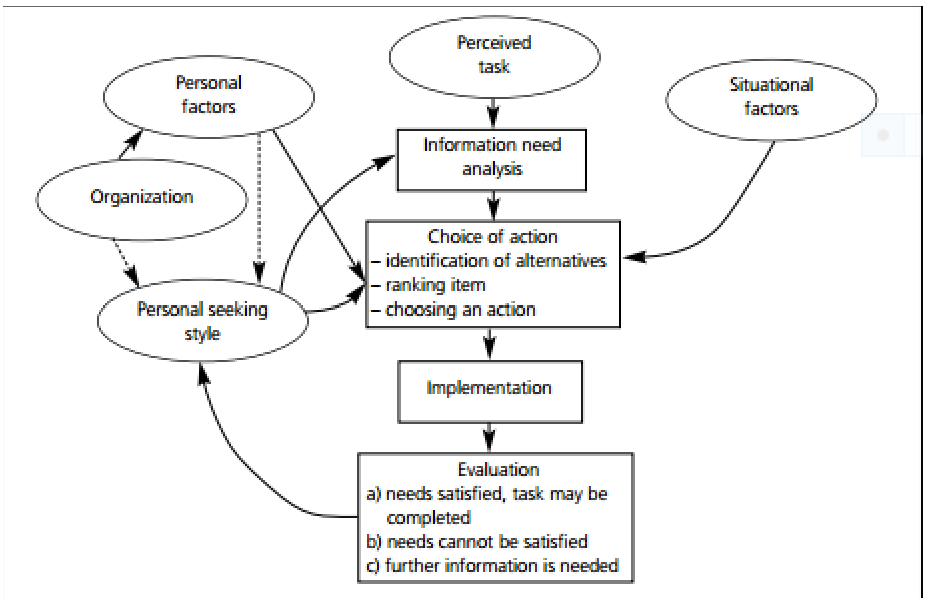

Figure 4: Byström and Järvelin's work-task information seeking and retrieval model (Wang, 2011, p. 19)

Byström and Järvelin's (1995) research is particularly important to this study because it analyzes the relationship between task complexity and information seeking, which relates to the present study because covering the Ebola crisis can be considered a complex task. Byström and Järvelin (1995) study how task complexity affects the type of information sought and the sources of the information, which is one of the purposes of this study, to understand how the information behavior of journalists covering the Ebola crisis was affected by the fact that they were covering a risky and dangerous health outbreak.

This model is used in addition to the model of the information seeking of professionals because it addresses more specific variables which impact information behavior, the role played by organizational context as a pre-condition to information seeking (Byström & Järvelin, 1995; Wang, 2011). This model also takes into account the fact that professionals in their needs analysis take into consideration the nature of the task and the time constraints before planning actions to satisfy their information need (Byström & Järvelin, 1995; Wang, 2011).

Context, is an important variable that will be examined in this study. While user behavior studies tend to treat context as a background factor, Byström (1999) notes that organizational context affects how tasks are handled as well as the outcomes of the task that are expected (as cited in Wang, 2011). In his history of information behavior, Greifeneder (2014) states that although researchers ignored contextual factors, and approached information behavior entirely based on users' needs, researchers now accept the need for context to be considered in information behavior research. However, there is still a continuing deficiency of context parameters in information behavior research (Greifeneder, 2014).

From the information studies perspective, "context is complex, dynamic, and it includes consideration of resources and power relations" (Fisher & Julien, 2009, 2011, p. 74). Context has been considered in a variety of ways, depending on the particular area of research. For example, in studies on the digital divide, Hargittai and Hinnant (2006) adopted a sociological perspective on context and made the argument that the availability of information to individuals does not necessarily guarantee accessibility (as cited in Fisher & Julien, 2009).

Kari and Savolainen (2007) interpreted context as personal development, and the general motivation for information seeking (Fisher & Julien, 2009; Kari & Savolainen, 2007). They defined context as "all those things which are not an inherent part of information phenomena, but which nevertheless bear some relation to these" (Kari & Savolainen, 2007, p. 47). A 2006 study explored the ways that temporal factors (qualifiers of access to information) act as contextual qualifiers of information, meaning, how time factors influence information seeking activity (Fisher & Julien, 2009; Savolainen, 2006).

Context has also been interpreted differently by information science researcher who assert that information activities (needs, seeking, and use) are part of the task performance process, and "do not possess an independent value or goal," but rather are "assessed through their context" (Byström, 2002, p. 581). Context is an important variable in the study of the information behavior of professionals because tasks are an immediate context for information activities, and the formulation of tasks depends on the interaction between the individual (e.g., prior knowledge and motivation) and the environment (e.g., demands and resources) (Byström, 2002, p. 581). Wang (2011) provides real-life examples of the importance of context by stating that "people behave within a specific context; context provides structure, norms, worldviews and expectations" (Wang, 2011, p. 24).

The focus on context in communication research seems to emerge once coverage has already been conducted and is concerned primarily with the "so-what factor," while research from the information studies perspective tends to focus on context especially at the moment a task is assigned to a professional. As has been pointed out above, communication researchers have stated that journalistic coverage that lacks context disseminates information which fails to make events meaningful (especially in foreign countries), and also promotes stereotypes about people and regions (Byerly & Ross, 2006; Fahmy, 2004).

Information Science researchers like Byström and Järvelin see context as a determinant of the performance of a task in the first place. The definition preferred in this study is that of context as "the particular combination of person and situation that served to frame an investigation" (Case, 2012, p. 13). Based on these facts, it would therefore be important for the purposes of this study to examine not only if the coverage of the Ebola crisis lacked the context to make it meaningful, but also to assess the a priori knowledge of the journalists who were given the task of covering the epidemic. Examining the contexts of journalists' information need while covering the Ebola crisis was a component of this study.

The importance of studying the impact of organizational context in the work of journalists is particularly important because journalists are not independent agents, but they draw upon and conform to institutional practices (Miller, 1998; Tuchman, 1978b). Journalism is a "collective enterprise" with topical departments, assignment desks, editorial conferences, advertisers, city editors, and reporters, among others, with "enormous pressures of time and space, and commercial breaks" for words from sponsors (Gans, 2004; Miller, 1998, p. 1; Tuchman, 1978b). News organizations are actually bureaucracies that function more as "assembly lines on which people must work together to manufacture a product against a deadline" (Gans, 2004, p. 98). This implies that each story passes through several hands before it is delivered to the audience (Gans, 2004). This practice has led publications like *Newsweek* receiving criticism for practicing group journalism, but that is in reality how most news organizations operate (Gans, 2004). Even in instances where journalists may individually make important decisions, they do so "within the boundaries, and under the impetus, of that collectivity" (Miller, 1998, p. 1-2).

In Tuchman's (1978b) sociological study on the social construction of news, she chose to study reporters not as "individuals with personal concerns and biases," but to instead analyze how "professionalism and decisions flowing from professionalism are a result of organizational needs" (p. 1-2). This collaboration between reporters and their organizations could be one of the reasons why some might doubt that reporters are a professional group, and thus, not a good fit for the General Model of the Information Seeking of Professionals. While there are usually conflicts between the interests of professionals and organizations, who tend to battle each other for the right to determine how work will be conducted, Tuchman's (1978b) study shows that journalists' professionalism develops in conjunction with their news organizations. Journalists are a different kind of professional group who despite a few conflicting interests with their organizations, are able serve their organizational needs (Tuchman, 1978b).

News organizations are bureaucracies that are structured in a manner which appears to separate the business side of the organization from the news reporting side (Gans, 2004). The corporate officers in news organizations are at the top of the management chain. They have unlimited powers and can intervene in the news, but they typically avoid exercising their power on a daily basis (Gans, 2004). Daily management of the newsrooms is left to senior editors and executive producers who consult with executives on touchy stories (Gans, 2004). By focusing on their other responsibilities, the executives give journalists autonomy, even though individual autonomy in a group enterprise such as journalism is often illusory (Gans, 2004). One of the ways in which executive decisions impact news coverage is through budgetary decisions. While the executives do not make budgeting decisions to impact story selection, lower budgets make it difficult for reporters to cover the news (Gans, 2004).

Attfield and Dowell's (2003) study on British journalists is a good example of how the Byström and Järvelin model explains journalistic work. Firstly, this study sheds more light on the role of organizations in the coverage of events by reporters. Findings reveal the involvement of editors in the assignment of beats (news stories or tasks), and the determination of the angles of approaches that should guide the coverage of these stories (Attfield & Dowell, 2003). According to Attfield and Dowell (2003), the determination of good angles is constraint driven, and once determined, angles become “a dominant constraint or goal determining the work that is to follow” (Attfield & Dowell, 2003, p. 192). Good angles lie at the intersection of several constraints namely originality, correspondence, and newsworthiness. The determination of an angle “is an insight that depends on knowledge of this context, and as such is a function of journalistic expertise” (Attfield & Dowell, 2003, p. 193). However, it is important to note that angles are only provisional in the early stages of a reporting assignment, as editors or journalists can motivate changes to the angle in order to maximize newsworthiness (Attfield & Dowell, 2003).

Originality, which is the first of three constraints that emerged from the process of determining angles, requires that an angle of a news story be representative of a proposition new to the readership (Attfield & Dowell, 2003). To ensure the originality of an angle, participants in Attfield and Dowell’s (2003) study reported initially searching databases in order to find out if other media outlets had covered that angle of a story, and also to find background content that could be used in their own stories. These originality checks were useful for several reasons, including the fact that they led to more focused information seeking by the reporters (Attfield & Dowell, 2003). By conducting an originality check, reporters aimed at developing a personal understanding of their subjects, in order to provide their reading audiences with “an informed interpretation of events” (Attfield & Dowell, 2003, p. 195).

The truth or correspondence constraint requires that news angles should be representative of a true situation being covered (Attfield & Dowell, 2003). By skimming through information during the originality check, reporters attempt to verify whether their editor’s ideas were correct, in order to support facts (Attfield & Dowell, 2003). The newsworthiness constraint, on the other hand, requires that the news angle should engage audiences (Attfield & Dowell, 2003). However, it is important to keep in mind that these are only three of many likely constraints that guide the determination of news angles (Attfield & Dowell, 2003).

CHAPTER 4

METHOD

The aim of this study was twofold. Firstly, this study sought to understand how women, who make up a majority of Ebola victims, were portrayed in worldwide news coverage of the Ebola crisis. Secondly, this study sought to understand how the information activities undertaken by journalists covering the Ebola crisis affected their representation of the female stakeholders as well as the quality of their reports. While there are numerous elements that affect the information behavior of the journalists who covered the Ebola crisis, this study focused primarily on analyzing elements such as specialty, geography, familiarity with the terrain, gender and access to sources and resources among others. This approach was selected because "controlling or ignoring the other elements makes it possible for a researcher to focus on the elements of interest" (Fidel, 2011, p. 63). As Fidel (2011) states, human behavior as well as information seeking behavior are complex, and it is impossible to investigate all the elements that shape information seeking behavior.

Research Approaches

This study used qualitative research methods because these procedures are "ideal for exploring complex phenomena about which there is little knowledge" (Krathwohl, 2009, p. 236). It is important to keep in mind that qualitative research in the LIS discipline has grown over the last 20 years, stemming from the paradigm shift from traditional methodologies to more contemporary ones (Cibangu, 2013; Yu, Abdullah, & Saat, 2014). Qualitative research is appropriate for this study because qualitative data "are a source of well-grounded, rich descriptions and explanations of human processes" (Miles, Huberman & Saldaña, 2014, p. 4).

Qualitative research also helps reduce uncertainty about phenomena or questions as it allows the researcher to have open-ended questions at the developmental phase which become more specific but still open-ended as the research evolves (Sofaer, 1999). The interpretive strand is the methodological approach used for this study because it assumes that “meaning does not exist independent of the human interpretive process” (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011, p.17). This implies that humans’ interactions with objects and fellow humans are responsible for the construction of meaning (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011).

Qualitative research is said to follow the inductive method of reasoning. While this is a qualitative study, both the inductive and deductive methods of reasoning were employed in this study because both methods have advantages (Fisher, 2011). The deductive approach is a top-down approach and is mostly used in experiments and studies requiring the use of questionnaires (Fisher, 2011). Deductive research is a guided a priori structure or theory and researchers have to make decisions regarding the questions to ask, experimental conditions, and the measurements to be used before launching their studies (Fisher, 2011). Deductive designs are fixed and are therefore “often resistant to change,” even when faced with the development of new conditions in unexpected directions (Fisher, 2011, p. 73).

Researchers who use inductive reasoning, also known as a bottom-up approach, analyze the details and specifics of their research without an a priori structure or theory, in order to discover themes, patterns, and interrelationships (Fisher, 2011). This implies that there is the possibility of adapting to new conditions during the conduct of inductive research, because they can have an open design (Fisher, 2011). Miles et al. (2014), however, emphasize the importance of having initial study parameters, even though qualitative studies allow for continuous redrawing and refocusing of these parameters. Based on the characteristics of both reasoning methods, it is therefore seemed more beneficial to use both methods of reasoning for this study, which allowed for shifting from one method of reasoning to another as a research project progresses (Fisher, 2011).

Data Collection Tools

Content analysis was the research design of choice in examining media representation of women in the Ebola crisis. Interviews of journalists who covered the Ebola were conducted in order to understand the factors that influenced their coverage of the Ebola crisis, and their information behavior patterns.

Content Analysis

Data was collected for this multi-method qualitative study textual content analysis of news reports produced by select newspapers. Content analysis, which is “the primary message-centered methodology,” can be used in qualitative or quantitative studies, and allows for the systematic analysis of verbal, visual or written documentation (Neuendorf, 2002, p. 1; Wilson, 2011b). The qualitative content analysis process begins with the researcher querying a topical area from their epistemological standpoint and embodied standpoint, followed by a topical examination in relation to the research question (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006).

Even though content analysis technique has traditionally been used in quantitative studies, the content analysis technique is considered as an “inherently mixed method of analysis,” which has both “deductive and inductive capabilities” (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006, p. 286-287). This implies that although data for this study was analyzed qualitatively, the content analysis technique allowed for a quantitative analysis of the data as well. While quantitative researchers employing the content analysis method follow a linear research design, qualitative researchers employ a spiral research design (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006).

The linear design requires that researchers follow a set of preconceived steps in a vertical path as they go through each phases of their research (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006). The spiral design, on the other hand, offers the researcher the option to "metaphorically dive in and out of the data" during the research process (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006). Such flexibility ensures that as researchers gain new understanding of their data, they are able to return to previously analyzed data to re-analyze data and analyze additional data (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006). According to Macnamara (2005), qualitative content analysis recognizes that media texts are polysemic (open to multiple meanings to different readers) but attempts to determine the likely meaning derived by audiences by paying attention to the media, audience, text and contextual factors.

The main aim of researchers now conducting textual analysis is to provide a critical analysis of texts, a trend was influenced by post-modern and poststructural thought (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006). There has been an "implosion of media forms," which has blurred the difference between "the imaginary" and "the real" (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006, p. 292). Post-modern scholars argue that specific power relations are imbued in these media forms during their production and dissemination, therefore prompting a need to investigate the material aspects of culture of these objects (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006). According to Foucault (1978), there is an inextricable link between power and knowledge, thus implying that "all knowledge is contextually bound because it is produced within a field of shifting power relations" (as cited in Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006, p. 292). Using the example of societal acceptance of confessions in the West since the Middle Ages, Foucault (1978) makes the argument that even though confessions are "the effect of a power that constrains us," the obligation to confess is so ingrained in us that it is now perceived as a means to liberate the truth, which is "lodged in our most secret nature" (p. 60).

In line with Foucault's argument on the presence of power on our understanding and knowledge of subjects, it is recommended that researchers investigate and reveal the embedded worldviews situated in texts, as well as the silences (marginalized or excluded content) found in these texts (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006). Foucault (1978) suggests an archeological approach to examining texts, meaning that the origins (production and distribution of the texts) should be studied in order to understand the power structure in the text (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006). The literature on the relationship between power and knowledge is important in the conduct of a content analysis because it gives the researcher pointers on cultural aspects to look out for and question their presence or absence while analyzing data.

Foucault's thesis is especially significant in a study of journalistic output, which as previously stated has been called a mirror of society. This assertion has been criticized by some media critics, and the criticism become more relevant once it is understood that texts are not only mirrors of society, but are "a component in shaping reality" (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006, p. 292). The fact that the main centers of information production are found in the West further validates Foucault's argument that power structures are embedded in texts. Based on Foucault's logic, it can be deducted that a Western point of view would be present in the coverage of the Ebola crisis, especially in the Western press. Given the affluent nature of the Western press, they have the ability to influence coverage of issues. It is therefore possible that some elements of Western power or truth about Africa and Africans might even be evident in the coverage of the Ebola crisis by the African press, which is less affluent.

Post-structural thought is another critique of social scientific knowledge construction, which favors conducting internal critiques of texts using a method known as deconstruction, which assumes that there is no fixed or single meaning of a text (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006). A deconstructive analysis of a text is aimed at exposing information that is concealed from, but haunts a text (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006). What post-structuralism suggests is that there is always a meaning, truth, authorship, or authority “other” than the one upheld by texts (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006). However, a post-structural approach is “not to find the truth of a text,” but to “displace assumptions within the text” (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006, p. 293).

Three newspapers: *The Inquirer* from Monrovia, Liberia, *The Times* of London from the United Kingdom, and *The New York Times* from the United States were analyzed for the purposes of this study. Newspapers were selected for the content analysis because newspapers are considered to be “the medium in society that imparts the most accurate information” on most subjects (Wade & Schramm, 1966, as cited in Spink & Cole, 2001, p.55). Newspapers are also more suitable sources for health information because they have room for in-depth analyses of complex concepts, and can be read and re-read at any desired pace (Amzel & Ghosh, 2007). The analysis of the African publication fills an existing research gap. While a good deal of emphasis is paid on how the Western media cover Africa, very little research focuses on how the African press covers African issues. This is expected to encourage Africans to tell their own stories. After all, as Chinua Achebe, one of Africa's literary giants once said, “If you don't like someone's story, write your own.”

The New York Times was chosen because it won a 2015 Pulitzer Prize for its coverage of the Ebola crisis. Also, as Tunstall (1977) stated in his seminal work on the media, *The New York Times* is a prestigious newspaper that is characterized as being a political force with numerous affluent readers. *The New York Times* was also selected because it is “an elite newspaper that stresses ‘information’ over ‘story in its writing style’” (Dudo et al., 2007, p. 439; Pew Research Center, 2015). This publication is also stated to have the potential to influence how other media outlets report stories (Dudo et al, 2007; Evensen & Clarke, 2012).

Another reason for the selection of *The New York Times* and *The Times* of London, a fellow prestigious newspaper, is that they have served as an inspiration for the modeling of important newspapers from other countries (Tunstall, 1977). Circulation is also one of the reasons why these two newspapers were chosen, because they reach wide audiences. With a daily average circulation of 2.1 million, *The New York Times* ranks third in terms of print circulation in the U.S., and, receives the second highest digital traffic among the top 25 newspapers worldwide (Pew Research Center, 2015; Stynes, 2014). *The Times* ranks seventh in daily circulation in the U.K. but was actually “the best performing national newspaper,” circulating 390,765 papers daily (Jackson, 2015; Turvill, 2015). In a year when British newspapers lost half a million in daily sales, *The Times* emerged as the best performing newspaper in terms of year-on-year because it only lost 0.9% in sales (Jackson, 2015). *The Inquirer* for its part was chosen because it was an accessible African newspaper, and also because it is the oldest post-war independent newspaper in Ebola-affected Liberia (AllAfrica, 2015).

Interviews

In-depth interviews of journalists who covered the Ebola crisis were the second data collection tool used for this study. These interviews were expected to yield descriptive, exploratory and explanatory data (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006) on the information-seeking behaviors of journalists who covered the Ebola crisis, and how this affected their coverage of the crisis and its victims. Interviews are an appropriate way to gain and understand information from individuals on a focused topic (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006). Interviews were used because they serve as a “rich source for exploring people’s inner feelings and attitudes,” as a means to gain knowledge of complex social or individual behavior (Dilshad & Latif, 2013, p. 191; Krathwohl, 2009).

Interviews were used in this study instead of surveys, even though they require more effort, because this method “provides better possibilities for thorough analysis of information needs and seeking” (Byström & Järvelin, 1995). The most prominent reason why interviews were used in this study is because interviews offer researchers the opportunity to access and understand marginalized voices (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006). While journalists are not exactly subjugated voices, journalists who cover Africa, specifically health crises in Africa, can be considered a subjugated voice because of the relatively minimal amount of coverage given to Africa. Also, there was the intention to interview journalists from Africa who covered the recent Ebola crisis for this study. The voices of African journalists are even rarer in mass media. Conducting interviews with the above-mentioned group of journalists therefore had the potential to access their ideas, memories and thoughts in their own words (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006).

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with at least eight participants over the phone or computer (Skype or a similar communication tool) in order to provide the researcher the flexibility to ask follow-up questions that came up during the interviews. Semi-structured interviews allow for conversations to flow in a more natural manner because although a set of questions were developed to guide the interviews, questions arising during the interview from the participants’ statements were also included, and respondents had more latitude to talk about issues that are of interest to them (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006). Hesse-Biber and Leavy (2006) state that the researcher's role in the interview is greatly impacted by the degree of structure imposed during the interview, meaning that researchers impose more control if they impose more structure on the interview.

The semi-structured interview consisted of both open-ended and closed questions. While closed-ended questions give the researcher a high level of control over the interviews, open-ended questions afford the researcher the opportunity to obtain a "deep understanding of seeking behaviour," and "encourage the participants to include in their responses the complexity they think is required" (Fidel, 2011, p. 70). A majority of the questions posed to the journalists who covered the Ebola crisis were therefore open-ended, because when such questions are posed to research subjects, they are able to fully express their opinions, and if need be, they are able to provide explanations to their responses (Fidel, 2011).

As recommended by Hesse-Biber and Leavy (2006), the interviews consisted of the researcher asking the participants questions, leaving the participants to do most of the talking. The researcher stayed engaged and moved the conversation with probes, including sounds such as "mmm" and single words such as "right;" and gestures such as nodding (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006, p. 130). The researcher also picked up on markers offered by the participants in order to show interest in them, and gain more knowledge from them (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006). A marker is an important piece of information mentioned by a respondent during an explanation of another topic (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006). The interviews consisted of "active asking and listening to varying degrees by both the participant and the researcher" (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006, p. 119). The goal was to build rapport with the participants by showing genuine interest in their stories (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006). Building a rapport with participants is essential in qualitative research because qualitative interviews are considered more as "a conversation between co-participants" (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006, p. 135).

The issue of difference between the researcher and respondent arises because of the usual differences in backgrounds, gender and ethnicities between the two groups (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006). While positivistic researchers try to standardize their participation in interviews by being objective, qualitative researchers attempt to take into account the differences in all phases of a research study, thereby representing the voice of the researcher, and maximizing objectivity (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006). Harding (1993) urges researchers to recognize that their questions are not value free, but reflective of the researcher's attitudes, values and agenda. Harding (1993) encouraged researchers to ask themselves a series of questions questioning the effect of their values, attitudes and belief on their research; if the questions are asked only from their perspective; the impact of their agenda on shaping their results; and the impact of their position on the gathering, analysis and interpretation of their data (as cited in Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006).

Reflexivity is said to be required at the heart of qualitative interviewing groups because it requires researchers to take into account how factors such as their age, gender, social class, and race set them apart or liken them to their subjects (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006). Reflexivity is defined as the "process through which a researcher recognizes, examines, and understands how his or her social background and assumptions can intervene in the research process" (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006, p. 141). In my case, I am a college-educated African woman, who has post-graduate training. I have journalism training from Cameroon, and also some limited reporting experience at the Cameroonian government-owned radio station. As an immigrant in the U.S., I have had the time and the means to study Western media reporting of Africa.

However, I have no reporting experience in the U.S., and so have observed the reporting as an outsider, although one with journalism training from an American institution of higher learning.

Sample: Content Analysis

It has been suggested that samples for content analyses “should not be driven by concerns for representativeness, but by a conceptual question” (Macnamara, 2005, p. 18; Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 29). This is because selecting a sample based on random methods or the “researcher’s whim” may not yield results that would allow the researcher to conduct an in-depth study of certain themes. Miles and Huberman (1994) therefore suggest that the criteria used in selecting a sample for a content analysis should be: selecting apparently typical/representative examples; selecting negative/disconfirming examples; and selecting exceptional or discrepant examples (p. 34). This research strategy was selected because it gives researchers the opportunity to study images, texts, and audiovisual material from datasets both holistically, as well as in relationships to other images, texts, and audiovisual material (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006). The content analysis conducted for this study included only a textual analysis of newspaper coverage.

Based on a recommendation by Hesse-Biber and Leavy (2006) that studies on media representation could be conceptualized using theory, the examination of media representation of women affected by the Ebola crisis was analyzed using gendered framing, which asserts that mass media distort or neglect women’s reality in their coverage (Steeves, 2007). The examination of media coverage of female Ebola victims employed a descriptive analysis of multimedia messages in order to examine to what degree women and girls were misrepresented in media coverage of the Ebola crisis.

Three major newspapers were analyzed to study media representation of women in the Ebola crisis. The papers were selected from the U.S., Africa and Europe, in order to offer an international perspective of the topic. The articles were selected from a one-and-a-half-year period, starting from March 24, 2014, when the Ebola outbreak was declared, to September 24, 2015. Even though health officials suspect that a two-year-old Guinean boy was the first Ebola victim (also known as patient zero), news coverage of the Ebola crisis was only collected from March 2014 because it was at that time that Guinea announced the outbreak of the Ebola epidemic, and Liberia announced that the virus had crossed their boundaries (Fletcher & Oatis, 2014; Yan & Smith, 2015). The end date of data collection is September 24, 2015 because this date is three weeks after the World Health Organization declared Liberia as the latest country to be free of the Ebola virus. The additional time added to the September 3, 2015 date gave the opportunity to examine the media's reaction to the latest Ebola news.

The selected newspapers were: *The Inquirer, The Times,* and *The New York Times*. The articles were located through the Lexis-Nexis Academic database using the search terms: *Ebola, Ebola crisis, and Ebola outbreak.* The population was made up of all newspaper content published by the aforementioned newspapers between March 24, 2014 and September 24, 2015, while the units of analysis for the multimedia analysis were the individual articles and media images. The population for the content analysis was made up of a total of 3,224 newspaper articles. A breakdown of this number shows that a total of 1,486 *New York Times* articles that made mention of Ebola were published from March 24, 2014 to September 24, 2015. During the same period, *The Times* and *The Inquirer* published 853 and 885 articles respectively, which mentioned the keyword Ebola.

The sampling method used to obtain a smaller representative sample of the population was the stratified random sampling method. This sampling method was selected instead of a simple random sample (SRS) because the “cyclic nature of media content can render simple random sampling inefficient (i.e., more editions must be sampled), compared to other types of sampling” (Lacy, et al., 2001, p. 837). For example, *The New York Times* published almost twice as many articles as the other two publications. Stratified random sampling method solves the problem of content variation through the use of constructed weeks, an approach which ensures the equal representation of each day of the week (Lacy et al., 2001). In a constructed week sample, all Mondays (and other days of the week) are identified and then one is selected, thus ensuring that there is cyclic variation in the sample.

Although Lacy et al. (2001) state that one constructed week is adequate to represent six months, they also add that two constructed weeks are better. This implies that an entire year of newspaper content could be reliably represented using two to four constructed weeks. Considering that the data collected for this study covers a one-and-a-half-year period and that an initial selection of three constructed weeks contained few articles (155 articles), the determination was made to have six constructed weeks of newspaper coverage of the Ebola crisis. See the constructed weeks in Appendix H. This process resulted in the selection of 256 articles from all newspapers divided in the following way: *The New York Times* had 119 articles; *The Inquirer* had 83 articles; *The Times* had 54 articles.

Once the sample was drawn, the next step was to proceed with the exclusion of unwanted articles, in order to have a sample that is made up of articles that focused primarily on the Ebola crisis and the people affected by the crisis. Other categories of articles that were excluded from the population include: editorials, letters to the editor, opinion pieces, reviews, schedules, and briefs shorter than 100 words, and articles which mentioned the Ebola crisis only in passing. Duplicate articles were also eliminated from the sample. This “weed-out” strategy is consistent with the strategy used by Dudo et al. (2007), and Evensen and Clarke (2012) in their studies of mediated coverage of infectious diseases.

Once the weed-out strategy was conducted, the sample included 127 articles. Of these, 38 articles were from *The New York Times*; 70 articles from *The Inquirer*; and 19 articles from *The Times*. The decision was made against further randomly selecting within each strata because of the size of the sample. Also, while *The New York Times* and *The Times* had fewer articles than *The Inquirer*, these articles were longer and contained more information than the articles from *The Inquirer*.

Sample: Interviews

Samples in qualitative studies are usually smaller because these studies tend to be in-depth analyses of these samples (Miles et al., 2014). As in other qualitative studies, the number of participants who are interviewed in this study was not based on a pre-determined estimate (Miles et al., 2014) Instead, conceptually driven sequential sampling was favored, which meant that the sample for the interviews will evolved as the fieldwork was conducted (Miles et al., 2014). According to Hesse-Biber and Leavy (2006), qualitative researchers stop recruiting participants for in-depth interviews once they reach a point of “theoretical saturation” or “data adequacy” (p. 72).

While interviewing a small number of participants might seem limiting, a researcher is able to account for representation by choosing participants in a manner that would allow them to test relevant theory (Miles et al., 2014). The sample for this study was selected with the following considerations: most importantly, the journalists must have covered the Ebola crisis; secondly, the region covered by the journalists, and the nationality and residence of the journalists were taken into account when choosing interview subjects. The goal is to have representation in terms of the location where the journalists covered the Ebola outbreak. It was be important to get the perspective of journalists who both covered the Ebola crisis here in the U.S., and those who worked in Liberia, Sierra Leone or Guinea. It was especially important to have participants in the sample who were African and had covered the Ebola story in their country, and reporters from Dallas, because the two cases of Ebola transmission that occurred in the U.S. happened in Dallas. Due to the fact that many Western news agencies have closed their foreign bureaus, while African media are said to do limited reporting in foreign countries, it was expected that there would be a small pool of journalists to select for interviews (Fenton, 2009; Gathara, 2015).

Quota sampling was used to determine the participants in the study. This kind of sampling is purposive with the goal of "selecting information rich cases…that provide the greatest insight into the research question" (Devers & Frankel, 2000, p. 264). In order to locate participants, articles that were written by journalists who covered the Ebola crisis were identified. Contact was made with these journalists to request their participation in the study. I also accessed her existing social networks, such as contacts in the journalism profession, to obtain basic information facilitating her introduction to possible participants.

Approval was obtained from the Institutional Review Board (IRB). Participant informed consent was obtained before the interviews were conducted. An ethical concern that arose here was that reporters might be portrayed in an unfavorable light because their information-seeking or use practices. In order to ensure that none of the participants suffer from such repercussions, the participants were given the choice to have speak anonymously.

Research Instrument

Semi-structured interviews consisting of mostly open-ended questions were used in collecting data for this qualitative study. Some of the questions that were asked during the interviews for the content analysis were adapted from a variety of sources. These guides were selected because the questions they asked were not restricted to simple counting categories (Gallagher, 2001). As Gallagher (2001) advises, the best way to study news media is to ask questions. She cautions that researchers have to keep in mind that while some questions are universally relevant, some will be determined by particular cultural concerns (Gallagher, 2001). The questions used for this study were adapted to fit this particular study and the geographic locations where the stories were covered.

Some of the questions on the information behavior of journalists used for the interviews were adapted from the Chaudhry and Al-Sagheer's (2011) study of the information behavior of Kuwaiti journalists. Although the Chaudhry and Al-Sagheer study did not use the General Model of the Information-Seeking of Professionals, and it focused more on improving systems usability for journalists, the questions provided a basic foundation or guideline for this study. Some of the questions for this study included: what type of information was needed; how did they start looking for information; what channels and sources (human, electronic, documentary, etc.) did they use; where eventually they found needed information; what difficulties were encountered in finding the information; how satisfied they were with the information they were able to get; and what suggestions they would make if they thought the information-seeking process needed to be facilitated.

Other research instruments that guided the drafting of a coding scheme and an interview guide included a ten-point checklist developed by Michielsens Magda in 1995 and adapted by Gallagher (2001) to guide Belgian media practitioners studying the differences in media portrayals of women and men (Gallagher, 2001). The adapted version of this guide is provided by Gallagher (2001) and is available as Appendix B of this study. Other guides that were used in this study include a guide produced by the Media Report to Women (2000) and M. Junior Bridge, who studied media representation of men and women in the US between 1989 and 1996. These guides are available in Appendices C and D.

Data Analysis

Data analysis, which is the process that facilitates the drawing of interpretations for data that has been collected, started while I was still in the field, after she concludes gathering her data, or even before she begins the data-gathering process, because they have pre-determined codes which are applied as data is gathered (Krathwohl, 2009). Data analysis for this study began from the onset of interviews, as some of the variables that were examined were pre-determined and included: types of information sources (formal or informal sources) used by journalists; searching skills in situations where they are at risk of infection, satisfaction level with information sources; and problems encountered during the search for information (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006). David Karp, a sociologist, stresses the importance of beginning data analysis early, stating that the analytical work done by the research during the collection process is as important as the collection of data (as cited by Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006).

Starting data analysis early was helpful for several reasons. Firstly, the simultaneously conducting data collection and data analysis phase, gave me the opportunity to revise the interview guide. Hesse-Biber and Leavy (2006) recommend that the interview guide should be reevaluated after a series of interviews have been conducted (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006). Secondly, beginning data analysis early ensured that I could test hypotheses that emerged from the research, or go in search of new data if I noticed gaps in the already-collected data (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006; Miles et al., 2014). Secondly, evaluating the data while in the field helped in eliminating data that was of no consequence to the research. While some of the following data analysis techniques might seem more suitable for the interviews over the content analysis or vice versa, most of them are actually effective analysis strategies for both forms of data.

One of the ways analysis of data collected for this project was conducted was through memo writing, which gave me the opportunity to think without needing to self-censor my writings and thoughts (Miles et al., 2014). Memoing is an important tool in the analysis of interviews because it gives researchers an idea of major directions they may have ignored, or ideas that ought to be reevaluated (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006). It was therefore important for the writing of memos to be prioritized, and the writing of memos began during the first day of data collection interview and ended only at the production of the final report (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006; Miles et al, 2014). Karp suggests the writing of two- to three-page long concept or idea memos, in order to introduce emerging research ideas (as cited by Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006). In addition to concept memos, Karp also suggests another type of memos called data memos, which are written after the researcher has drawn a theme from her data (as cited by Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006). These data memos have more data than a research paper but are beneficial to the researcher because they present good pieces of data that they can be used at a later time (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006).

The creation of memos is also instrumental to data analysis because they strongly contribute to the development and revision of the coding scheme (Miles et al., 2014). Krathwohl (2009) suggests coding as a good and efficient strategy for selectively attaching tags to potentially important data, thus distinguishing it from the rest of the data. Coding, which is covered in depth in the next section, was another data analysis strategy. Coding is an interpretive, continuous, and analytic method that assigns “symbolic meaning to the descriptive or inferential information compiled during a study” (Krathwohl, 2009; Miles, et al., 2014, p. 71).

While it is assumed that quantitative studies analyze data numerically, while qualitative data is analyzed descriptively, this study employed both numerical and descriptive analyses. because unlike quantitative data, data analysis in qualitative studies can be conducted using both descriptive and numerical methods of analysis (Fisher, 2011).

NVivo 11, which a qualitative software package that does text and multimedia analysis was used to facilitate the data analysis process. The researcher participated in training sessions offered by the IRA Lab at the University of North Texas, offered training on NVivo11, which was beneficial. Another step in the data analysis project was to relate the findings of this project to those of other researchers, and then writing the report.

Coding

Coding is a part of the data analysis process that is supposed to help in condensing the data by prompting or trigger deeper reflection (Miles et al., 2014). In a qualitative content analysis, categories and codes are developed as the analysis takes place, and inferences about the messages in the text are suggested in the results (Wilson, 2011b). This is known as conceptual analysis, where content is "coded for certain words, concepts, or themes, and the analyst makes inferences based on the patterns that emerge" (Wilson, 2011b, p. 177). One of the categories of ways to induce themes from qualitative data, which was used for the purposes of this study, is to scrutinize large blocks of text (Krathwohl, 2009). This means that among other things, there was a search for missing information, as well as a comparison of data (Krathwohl, 2009). Eventually, these chunks of texts were categorized in smaller categories also known as pattern chunks (Miles et al., 2014). When themes begin to emerge from the data, researchers are encouraged to find cases that do not fit their emerging themes, because their writing is supposed to reflect the complexity in the world (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006).

The coding process for the content analysis and interviews differ in one major way. While pre-determined codes were used to analyze data for the content analysis, codes for the interviews were mostly developed during data analysis. This type of coding is known as provisional coding, which is usually preferred in studies that corroborate previous research (Miles et al., 2014). The codes in such instances are often generated after preparatory investigation is conducted (Miles et al., 2014). These codes for the content analysis are based off similar coding mechanisms developed in previous research studying both media representation and the information behavior studies of journalists. While these studies did not exactly study the representation of Ebola victims, they studied similar populations such as women and journalists.

While codes for the content analysis were pre-determined, I had the flexibility of revising, deleting, expanding, or modifying the coding scheme during data analysis (Miles, et al., 2014). Some of the measures that were used to assess media representation of women during their coverage of the Ebola crisis include victim status, traditional stereotypical roles, and subject expertise. Appendix A contains a list of coding categories which have been retrieved and, in some cases, adapted from sources identified in that document. Examples of each specific category are also included in the coding scheme. Appendices B, C, and D are a few of the research instruments used in previous studies which examined media representation.

No previous studies were identified that studied the information behaviors of journalists who report on health crises, particularly in foreign countries. It is for that reason that a different approach was used for the analysis of the interviews. The coding scheme for the interviews was be descriptive, which consisted of using single words, or short phrases in generating coding categories (Miles, et al., 2014). While it was expected that descriptive coding will be the most common coding type used for the analysis of data for this project, other coding mechanisms such as NVivo coding (using the participants' words, listed in quotation marks), and emotion coding (which provides insights into the worldviews of the participant, also listed in quotation marks) were relied upon (Miles et al, 2014).

The coding of the interview data began with an initial reading of the data and memos to find common phrases and surprising facts. This first cycle of coding was followed by the re-reading of the data to find relationships and repetitions. Codes were then developed after a series of interviews had been conducted, and initial coding categories were as numerous as necessary (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006). After first cycle coding was completed, the data underwent a second cycle of coding, which summarized the already coded chunks of data into smaller themes, categories or constructs (Miles et al., 2014). The initial code titles were renamed to represent the actual data underneath as the research progressed, and the data was re-coded at an interpretive level, and categorized as patterns (Krathwohl, 2009; Miles et al., 2014). Pattern codes are "explanatory or inferential codes" which identify emergent themes or explanations by coding first cycle coded data into “more meaningful and parsimonious units of analysis” (Miles et al., 2014, p. 86).

Next, the development and testing of a working hypothesis and explicitly defining each code in order to define boundaries of their content was completed. Defining the codes ensured that they were applied consistently (Miles et al., 2014). It is important to note that revisions were made to the interview coding scheme as needed, and while this might have resulted in a tedious effort to manually re-label previously coded data, using software such as NVivo enabled the re-coding of data to be done easily (Miles et al., 2014).

Validity and Reliability

Validity and reliability are two measures useful for maintaining rigor in research (Morse, Barret, Mayan, Olson & Spiers, 2002). Reliability is used to test the consistency of findings over time, while validity tests whether the research measurements are accurate and if the research instrument successfully measures what it is intended to measure (Golafshani, 2003; Lindlof & Taylor, 2002). Although there are debates surrounding the usefulness of validity and reliability as qualitative tools instead of quantitative tools, it has been argued that validity and reliability are equally important in qualitative studies for purposes of quality, and also to ensure that they can persuade their audiences that their research is worth paying attention to (Golafshani, 2003). Krathwohl (2009) adds his support to the importance of having validity in qualitative research when he posits that “explanations are only as good as the data on which they are based (p. 284).

According to McHugh (2012), reliability is one of the components that represents the confidence in the accuracy of a study’s findings. One of the ways to ensure a study’s reliability is to include a procedure to test intercoder reliability. Intercoder reliability is important because of the variability among human observers (McHugh, 2012). Although data collectors might collect the same data, they might experience and interpret data differently (McHugh, 2012). However, several procedures can however be used to test the level of agreement among data collectors, which helps in minimizing the sources of potential human error in a research project (McHugh, 2012).

While reliability might be unattainable at the level of data collection in a qualitative study, it can be observed at the level of data analysis when a researcher checks for the stability of category definitions through intercoder reliability (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002). For the content analysis, intercoder agreement was achieved by having two coders (including the researcher), to participate in coding data for intercoder agreement (Creswell, 2013; Miles et al., 2014). As suggested by Dudo et al., 2007, the coders were trained on how to use the research instrument. The researchers coded three transcripts and assigned codes to certain segments of codes and explanations. Interrater reliability was tested using Cohen's kappa, κ (κ =.70), which "represents the extent to which the data collected in the study are correct representations of the variables measured" (McHugh, 2012, p. 276). The high agreement on data analysis indicated the presence of an insignificant amount of researcher error.

Another means of achieving reliability and validity in this study was the writing of memos during data collection and data analysis, because as stated earlier, memos serve as an "audit trail" in instances of replication (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006). Triangulation, which according to Creswell (2013) is the use of multiple sources, methods, and theories to provide corroborating evidence was also used as a means of providing validity to the findings in this study. In this case, eight participants were interviewed about their coverage of the Ebola crisis.

Some of the participants – participants 1 and 5, and participants 3 and 8, worked for the same organizations.

CHAPTER 5

RESULTS

Part 1: Interview Data

Introduction

The objective of this study is to examine media coverage of the Ebola crisis, with an emphasis on their coverage of women, who made up a majority of the outbreak's victims. Interviews with reporters and a content analysis of newspaper coverage were the data collection tools used in the study. The first section of this chapter contains findings from the interviews.

Eight participants were interviewed for this qualitative research study. A majority of the participants were identified through an online search to identify journalists who had covered the Ebola crisis from Africa. Six of the participants were recruited through messages that were sent to them through email and Facebook Messenger, while two of them were recommended by fellow participants. The sample for this study was selected with the following considerations: most importantly, the journalists must have covered the Ebola crisis; secondly, the region covered by the journalists, and the nationality of the journalists. The goal was to have representation in terms of the nationality of the journalists and countries where covered the Ebola outbreak.

Of the 8 participants, 2 were Liberian, while 6 were American. Only one of the participants was male. The participants in this study are identified as Participant 1 to Participant 8 depending on the dates when they were interviewed. The participants were given the option to choose between being identified in this study or maintaining anonymity. Three participants asked to remain anonymous. The names and employment information of those who were willing to be identified is provided in Table 1. The participants range in age from 28 to older than 50 years and their years of experience as journalists range from 5 to 25 years.

Table 1: Demographics and Ebola Coverage Details

Identity	Age	Gender	Years of Experience	Employment	Area of Coverage	Period of Coverage
Participant 1: Marc Ramirez	52	Male	25	*The Dallas Morning News*	Dallas	October to November 2014
Participant 2: Christiana Saywah Jimmy	41	Female	15	*The Inquirer*	Liberia	Duration of the outbreak
Participant 3: Anonymous	35	Female	5	Freelancer who filed reports for a large news organization with reporters in over 100 countries	Senegal, Liberia	April 2014
Participant 4: Siatta Johnson	42	Female	15	Initially a freelancer. Now works for the National Public Radio in Liberia	Liberia	Duration of the outbreak
Participant 5: Amy Brittain	30	Female	6	*The Washington Post*	Guinea	January 2015
Participant 6: Melissa Repko	28	Female	6.5	*The Dallas Morning News*	Dallas	July 2013
Participant 7: Anonymous	50+	Female	20+	Large American Daily Newspaper based in D.C.	Covered US response from Washington, D.C.	Mid-2014 to early 2015
Participant 8: Anonymous	34	Female	11.5	Freelancer. Sent in reports on Ebola to outlets including: USA Today, Aljazeera, VOA, etc.	Sierra Leone, Guinea, Liberia	July, August 2014. February 2016

Semi-structured interviews were conducted between October 13, 2016 and January 26, 2017. The interviews were conducted over the phone and computer. International calls were made using Skype and Pingo. See Appendix G for the dates when the interviews were conducted. This study received approval from the university's Institutional Review Board.

The predominant themes from the results section are examined in the rest of this chapter.

Fear and Safety Precautions

Fear was the predominant theme in the interviews, especially from the reporters who covered the health outbreak in Africa from the early days of the crisis. However, it was interesting to examine this theme by examining how the different groups of reporters reacted to the threat of the disease. The reporters were categorized into two main groups: reporters based in Africa, and reporters who covered the crisis from the United States. The reporters who covered the story from Africa were further divided into African reporters based in Liberia and Western reporters covering Africa (two of the American freelance reporters were based in Senegal, while Participant 5 reported from Guinea for two weeks). We begin by looking at the reaction of the African reporters reporting on Ebola in their own country.

Participants 2 and 4 who lived in Liberia and thus covered the crisis very early on, repeatedly described the horror they saw: doctors and nurses dying of Ebola, people convulsing for hours and dying before ambulances could reach them, the cremation of corpses in the absence of families, which goes contrary to Liberian tradition and which left them traumatized:

> It was horrible…After some of the parents died, and no one goes to that house. Everybody in that house died. And the baby is just left there. Some of the babies cried to death. Nobody dared go in that house. (Participant 2, 2016)

Experiencing this horror left Participant 2, who had started covering the disease before it was declared to be Ebola, afraid that she could get infected with the virus, contaminate her family, and be separated from them: “I prayed God. Because even if it comes to your family, you are not allowed to go there” (Participant 2).

Even after her employer provided some protective equipment to reporters once it was declared that Ebola was the disease spreading through Liberia, she said she remained scared because she worried that she could contract the disease even from other reporters with whom she went out gathering news, and then infect her family. This point can be explained by the fact that even medical professionals were not safe from the disease.

> Doctors were dying, health practitioners were dying. So, we were scared because if the doctor can die, then what about us who don't even have all the knowledge? We were so afraid. But we have to still go. So sometimes we went to cover the news and people were marveled. Take note that we had we had no option, we had to still go. Because we had to bring back stories fast. (Participant 2, 2016)

To Participant 2, Ebola was traumatizing because it "was like death. That is, we don't know when we'll die." She immediately worried about having the disease if she came down with a fever or headache. Participant 4 actually took more drastic measures due to fear. She and her husband evacuated their family to safety on a rubber plantation before she returned to Monrovia to cover the outbreak. Her fear actually affected her physical health following her first experience of reporting on Ebola:

> From the beginning, I was very, very scared. The first time I was in the ICU, I actually broke down in fear. I cried. I came back I told myself I wouldn't go back to the ICU. I wouldn't cover this crisis anymore. I actually got sick. I think it was because of fear, I actually got sick. I got fever and I got headache. I thought I had made a mistake in ICU and I had gotten infected. I stayed indoors for two more days all by myself... so I didn't go back to the ICU for some time. (Participant 4, 2016)

Another assignment which discouraged Participant 4 from continuing with her coverage of the Ebola crisis was a visit to a crematorium. Like several of the participants in this study who covered Ebola in Africa, one of Participant 4's story angles involved following body collectors and the burial team which performed cremations. During an initial visit to the crematorium, she reports that she had a traumatizing experience.

> I went to a crematorium, where they do the cremation of bodies. And I went to homes that had dead bodies. I have some terrible experience, I had some trauma as a person. Seriously, seriously, I had some terrible experience. I went to a home where they kept a body and that was terrible. That was terrible. I felt so bad. And I didn't go back the next day. (Participant 4, 2016)

Participants 2 and 4 protected themselves from contracting the disease by wearing gloves, staying away from people, and avoiding touching anybody or thing while out reporting in the ICUs. Participant 2 recalled conducting interviews from a car, while Participant 4 said she remembered to keep her gloved hands in her pockets by holding onto an item.

The American reporters for the most part had a strikingly different outlook on their safety while covering the Ebola crisis. Only one of them expressed some fear that she could have contracted Ebola while covering the story. Participant 8 who was based in Senegal and visited Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Guinea admits to being "scared shitless" when she initially began covering the crisis. Her experience and that of Participants 2 and 4 shows that ignorance about the disease was a big contributing factor in how the reporters reacted to the threat of infection. As Participant 8 stated, "the problem was that journalists didn't know what to do because we had never done this before and it didn't seem the doctors could tell us what to do probably at the time. So, we were kind of all consulting each other." She adds that she eventually overcame her fear of Ebola once she was confident that she had the right knowledge to cover it well.

Participant 8's firsthand experience of the grim situation could also be accountable for the fear she felt going into this assignment.

> It was so terrible. I mean I have lived in West Africa for a long time, but this was like so terrible, it was just a manifestation of all these things that seemed to be wrong: infrastructure was bad, healthcare was bad. The international response could have been better, I feel like. It just seemed like this huge storm of things coming together for bad. And it killed whole families. Anytime I was talking to a survivor, he was like: he survived, great! But like their whole family had died. It was pretty grim. (Participant 8, 2017)

None of the other Western journalists reported being afraid of the disease during their coverage of the health outbreak. A lot of their confidence came from understanding that their likelihood of getting Ebola was slim, and the timing of the coverage. Unlike Participant 2 who began covering the Ebola crisis from its onset and Participant 4 who started in August 2013 (which is considered the height of the crisis), the Western reporters only visited the severely affected countries starting in April 2014, when the number of Ebola cases was decreasing. While Participant 3 had covered Ebola from a neighboring African country beginning in 2014, she was unable to travel to an Ebola hot zone before 2015 because of the insurance concerns of a large American multinational nonprofit news agency she freelanced for.

The Western journalists reported not being afraid of covering Ebola because they doubted they could get infected. Much of this can be explained by their knowledge of risk information before going to cover the disease, and the organizational support provided by large Western media organizations.

> It would be extremely rare for me to catch Ebola and die from Ebola. Certainly, there was a great fear of the disease. For me to contract it I would have to make a lot of mistakes, in order to be in a position where I would even touch an Ebola patient and touch myself – it would have to be direct contact. I mean, I would have to make a number of mistakes at that point and then I would have a number of mistakes afterwards, like not getting direct care, not going to a hospital, and getting out of there because you know the studies indicated that if you did get quick care in the western part of the world, that the survival rates were a lot higher for those people…So, I tried to keep that mindset because I wanted to, you know, stay grounded in the reality of the statistics in the situation and not let the fear overwhelm me. So, no, I was never afraid of my life. I was very cautious, and I would say I was anxious, but I was not afraid. (Participant 5, 2016)

Similarly, Participant 1 and Participant 6 who covered the Ebola crisis in the Dallas area expressed a similar sentiment. The nature of their assignment as general assignment reporters was a contributing factor, as Participant 1 was charged with reporting on how public fear of

Ebola had affected businesses such as Presbyterian Hospital, while Participant 6 focused primarily on local cases, the public's reaction to local cases, or such reports of local cases.

> My most direct connection in terms of being anywhere that I might feel that I might contract the disease would have been going to Presbyterian Hospital itself, but being a journalist, you have to keep up with all the information and the facts and I knew that the probability of me contracting Ebola given what we knew about its transmission was really low. I wasn't really fearful. (Participant 1, 2016)

> I wasn't because I was nowhere near any of the ill people. That was one thing that was part of our coverage – was debunking the rumors that were not accurate about how people contracted it. So, I knew kind of how it could be spread by going near someone who could have spread it to me. (Participant 6, 2016)

Participant 5, who volunteered to travel and report on Ebola for *The Washington Post*, mentioned that she was able to keep a no-fear mindset because she knew that she if she got infected she would be evacuated for better medical treatment in the West, thus increasing her chances of survival. This was a privilege that the African reporters did not have. Participant 5 took some precaution against catching Ebola by staying some distance away from people, but took more protective measures against things like car accidents, that she thought had a higher probability of disrupting her trip:

> I did not want to get sick with something else, right. So, I did not want to have a stomach virus or I didn't want to catch fever because God forbid if that happened it will have to shut everything down right. Everyone would have been paranoid, like I would have probably had to have left the country. So, we were really trying to take all these precautions to keep our health up and our energy up. (Participant 5, 2016)

Like Participant 5, Participant 3's feelings were not of fear, as she had covered the crisis from Senegal from 2014 and was properly informed on how to protect herself.

> It may sound crazy, but I was really excited. I had been covering this story, this story had really like taken over my life. You know from the time I started covering it, it was a very emotional story and I think those kinds of stories pull you in more. (Participant 2, 2016)

Participant 3 also took some precautionary measures against Ebola, like wearing Wellington boots to walk in the mud while following a contact tracing team, not going into private homes, and staying three to five feet from interviewees or health teams that they followed to observe their work. Although she reported getting a little closer to some interviewees, she states that she did not touch them, which was a very common practice even among Liberians.

Administrative Preparation

While several of the journalists might not have been afraid to cover Ebola, certain precautionary measures were taken by administrators at their jobs and Ebola-affected countries to protect them from the disease. As Participant 5 mentioned, part of her preparation for the Ebola assignment included attending a hostile environment boot camp in Virginia, where she received training on how to protect herself while covering the Ebola crisis. She and other reporters covering Ebola in Africa were also given a two-week limit for to be in those countries because of safety concerns.

> …the thought was that even if you somehow massively screwed up and came into contact with someone who got Ebola, within the first couple of days on your trip, based on the progression of the disease, you would not show symptoms until like maybe the 10- to 14-day mark. So, that two-week period was set like a safety barrier, like let's not keep anyone in the country beyond that. (Participant 5)

Another measure that media organizations took to protect their reporters was to do risk assessments. According to Participant 3, it is common for Western news organizations to have security chiefs assess the risks levels of their reporters headed to cover dangerous situations and foreign countries. They advise reporters on a vast range of issues such as whether or not they need armored cars, guards, a fixer, and they want to know the hotel where their reporters lodge.

The safety precautions taken by media organizations extended to opting not to send non-staffers to Ebola hot zones. Participant 3 is of the opinion that she would have been sent to one of those countries immediately if the story was not outbreak related, a view shared by Participant 8.

The news organization she freelanced for eventually sent a staffer to cover the Ebola story, but like other media organizations, they initially held back on sending reporters to cover Ebola until they received guidelines from a company that assesses medical risks.

> I saw a lot of news organizations wait to send people and then people flooded in. Once the flood gates kind of opened, they opened! And lots of journalists went. But I do think people hung back a little bit longer than they would have because it was an epidemic and nobody knew initially how to stay safe. (Participant 3, 2016)

Another aspect of fear that arose was the concern by administrative officials that the journalists would contract Ebola while reporting from their countries. They tried to prevent such situations in several ways. Some of the participants mentioned needing press passes to report on Ebola. However, they describe this press pass as more of an administrative requirement that was never checked, something which Participant 3 attributes to nervousness that "that there was going to be this pouring in of like some young people who didn't know what they were doing." While she got her press pass by sending the $100 fee through a fixer or a translator, she was quizzed at the embassy in Dakar by an official who wanted to make sure that she was aware of the risks and precautionary measures she could take to protect herself. Once again, Participant 3 stated that this line of interviewing seemed geared towards vetting her and other journalists "not as journalists, but as like smart people. Just like are these people serious and have they thought about this?"

Bravery

As scary as the Ebola assignment was for some of the reporters, their bravery and courage was very evident in their actions. Participant 5, for example, was not sent to Guinea by her editors to cover the outbreak, but volunteered to travel to the country.

> So, I actually volunteered myself much to the dismay of my parents and family members. I was like wow! I want to go. So, I had no experience covering the Ebola epidemic. I had not been writing about it here. But because they needed someone willing to go, I kind of like got pushed to the top of the list, alright she's ready and willing to go, so send her. (Participant 5, 2016)

This was a brave decision as *The Washington Post* did not have established connections, fixers, or sources on the ground in Guinea, and where language difficulties were expected. Despite being aware of the hurdles that awaited her if she chose to go to Guinea on her first reporting trip abroad, Participant 5 realized that due to the absence of other *Post* reporters in Guinea, her chances of getting a unique story angle there would be higher. The aspect about Guinea that intrigued her the most and propelled her to volunteer for that reporting assignment was the story of Womey, a village where villagers had attacked and killed members of a health care team that went to their village to warn them about Ebola. Fully aware of the difficulties she would face trying to cover this (geographic challenges as it was very far away from the capital and safety concerns due to the violence that happened there), Participant 5still decided to report from Guinea.

Participant 5 also chose to visit the country firstly because of its centrality to the Ebola story – the first Ebola case was reported in a Guinean town called Meliandou. Participant 5 wanted to go back to the village where patient zero died. Given the cultural resistance of the people to government and health workers, she also wanted to find out if the people would willingly participate in the vaccine trials that were starting in Guinea.

The African reporters who lived through the Ebola outbreak also exhibited bravery through their reporting. At the time Participant 2 began reporting on the outbreak, she was not even aware of the gravity of the disease she was covering or that it was an Ebola outbreak. Even after the Ebola outbreak was declared, thus, igniting fear, she pursued her reporting.

> But we couldn't stop because we were reporters. It's not because it's Ebola then you'll say there wouldn't be news. Your bosses will tell you go, go, go, you can't say no. So, you have to go. (Participant 2, 2016)

It is worth noting that as a freelancer, Participant 4 chose to cover the outbreak because she says the reports on Ebola from the international press did not match what she was seeing on the ground. Being that she lives about 50 meters away from a crematorium and an ICU, which attended to Ebola patients, she says she understood the gravity of the outbreak because she saw patients being taken to the hospital by the minute. Her health episode after her first day of reporting on the outbreak from ICU and Participant 2's fears of contracting the disease, show the importance of risk information to reporters themselves. Prior to going on the field for the first time, she had not received any safety training. However, after recovering, she attended a training session for journalists held by the Doctors Without Borders where journalists were given tips on how to protect themselves and their equipment when covering Ebola. At this point, Participant 4 said she her outlook on the crisis changed:

> I started becoming brave. And then it became like an everyday thing. And every morning I would wake up and go to the ICU. (Participant 4, 2016)

She eventually covered four countries, going as far as the border between Liberia and Sierra Leone, "So actually, I was just like going to where it was hardly hit. Anytime there was a new case and it was hardly hit, I would go there and report from there" (Participant 4, 2016).

In spite of the difficulties of reporting on Ebola, several participants indicated that they would be willing to go back and cover it again if given a second chance. As a matter of fact, Participant 8 was still continuing her coverage of Ebola in 2017 and intended to visit another Ebola-affected country in February 2017. Other respondents like Participant 4 indicated that she would have gotten involved in reporting on the Ebola crisis sooner if given another chance, considering that “the media became really involved when everything went bad” (Participant 4, 2016).

Efficacy Information

Regarding the inclusion of efficacy information in the news reports, the findings suggest that several of the participants included efficacy information in their reporting so that their audiences could protect themselves. This includes information such as the importance of regular hand washing, and how to protect oneself, steps to take in caring for sick family members such as children. They reported obtaining this information from several sources, including the daily press briefings that were organized by Liberia’s Ministry of Health, which featured government officials, medical professionals, and representatives from organizations such as the World Health Organization (WHO), U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF).

Participant 2 cited the Ministry of Information in Liberia and international doctors as the sources of efficacy information that she provided in her reporting.

> Key in their message was how we handle dead bodies. That was the medium by which the disease was being spread. How we took care of our dead ones. Every time we had these press conferences they were always telling us: do not take care of the sick. If you have a sick person at home, call the health practitioners. They had a hotline. They gave us the phone number to call the hotline. Whenever we saw someone sick in a community, we should not go near. Even if it’s in your own home, you should call the hotline so they send people to our homes. And because of that, though some people were using the hotline, but other people were not because they had sick people that they did not want to let go because they were scared that they will say Ebola. So, they kept them indoors and never will call the hotline. (Participant 2, 2016)

The timing of the coverage and the targeted audience were also determining factors in whether reporters included efficacy information in their reports. Both Participant 5 and

Participant 3 felt that based on when they arrived Guinea and Liberia respectively, their efforts would be better spent focused on writing about the future and implications of the outbreak:

> It was very late on in the crisis. So, I felt like all that kind of information had been covered. So, it was beyond that will be what I will call first tier of reporting that was done like on the Ebola crisis. We were kind of like much later into the crisis at that time – like how do we actually stamp this out. How do we truly get down to zero Ebola patients? (Participant 5, 2016)
>
> I went into that trip thinking you know the stories now are about like what next? That was kind of the question I went in with. And so, I did a story on schools reopening which was kind of like one of the first return to normalcy for people after this really intense traumatic outbreak. And then I did the story about how do you actually get to zero you know and things were like under control. (Participant 3, 2016)

However, unlike Participant 5, who had not reported on the crisis prior to visiting Guinea (a different *Washington Post* team had travelled to Africa to cover Ebola before she did), Participant 3 had reported on Ebola since 2014 from another West African country. Some of her early reporting from this neighboring country had included efficacy information, but she based the decision on whether or not to include efficacy information on her perception of audience needs. For instance, when her American audiences worried about Ebola spreading in their country, she reassured them of the likelihood of Ebola spreading in the U.S. was slim.

> Yes, there is this like incredible outbreak going on, but it was kind of a real perfect storm of circumstances that brought it about and that those circumstances just do not just exist in the U.S. and Europe. So, yeah, there will be cases, we are not cut off from the world. But what is happening in West Africa just could not happen you know in an American hospital. There's just more infection prevention and control in a western hospital. So, you just wouldn't get the huge clusters that you were getting in West Africa. So, I was very conscious of that, because I felt like the more hysteria there was around the disease in the U.S. or in Europe, the less focused they would be on fighting it where its actually out of control. But, my audience was never really Liberians, or Guineans or Sierra Leoneans. (Participant 3, 2016)

The U.S.-based reporters equally provided efficacy information in their reporting as a way to assuage public fears. As Participant 7 noted, she included information about how the disease spreads and its effects on people because, "If you are writing about an infectious disease outbreak, that is one of the most essential elements of the story. And often the most compelling." Participant 6 agreed, stating that the stakes in this case were higher because their reporting was not only focused on "delivering new developments, it was also setting the record straight."

> I think the stakes were higher because there was so much public fear. And so, there was that much more pressure to get the facts right because you could cause hysteria if you don't explain properly how Ebola does and does not spread. Of course, in any scenario you want to get the facts right, but our goal was kind of two-fold in the sense that: we wanted to keep people up-to-date about what was going on, and also… educating people so that they were armed with information and they weren't reacting out of fear as much as possible. (Participant 6, 2016)

Participant 1 stated that he and his team provided basic explanations about the nature of the disease and how it spreads because of some public fears that the disease was airborne, meanwhile it was spread through bodily fluids. Both Dallas-based reporters noted that other stories that detailed this information were written by other teams and a medical professional who is a writer on their staff.

Mechanisms of Journalism

Journalism as a Collaborative Effort

One theme that carried through the results was that journalism is not a one-person effort. It is a collaborative profession. Participant 6, for example, talks about how collaboration was encouraged in her newsroom in a bid to avoid redundancy and public fear. One of the steps taken to ensure responsible reporting and even redundancy in reporting at *The Dallas Morning News* was the insistence by editors that reporters discuss every article they intended to publish with other editors and managers. According to Participant 6, even though this is how their newsroom normally functions, more emphasis was placed on this rule during their Ebola coverage. Another measure taken in that newsroom was to use Google Docs as an organizing tool for information that several teams could use to avoid overlaps or cause misinformation or public fear.

The results suggest that journalists operate not only in a quest to obtain and disseminate information, but they do so with some civic responsibility toward the public. One commonality between several of the journalists was their view that they were responsible for quelling public fear by reporting responsibly.

> Covering a major breaking news story is always challenging. The additional challenge is to cover the story responsibly, with an appropriate level of urgency that does not succumb to hype and fear. (Participant 7, 2016)

Participant 6 said her newsroom took very specific steps to ensure that they did not create panic, even if this meant that there was a delay in publishing new information. According to her, mistakenly reporting on a different health issue such as an Ebola case could have created public hysteria.

> I remember in the newsroom whenever there was a rumor of another case, we really tried to be proactive in vetting it before we published because a publication of another potential case of Ebola could cause panic… We would really try to think through those kinds of decisions because it's not just your typical news story. (Participant 6, 2016)

Accounts from other participants suggest that the nature of the collaboration was influenced by the nature of the assignment, location, and the nature of the reporter's employment. For Participants 3 and 8 who are freelancers based in Africa at the time Ebola was rampaging the affected countries, collaboration with other reporters was particularly important when no one knew what exactly Ebola was and how they should cover it.

> The problem was journalists didn't know what to do because we had never done this before and it didn't seem the doctors could tell us what to do probably at the time. So, we were kind of all consulting each other. (Participant 8, 2017)

Participant 3 stated that she obliged when she was asked by other reporters to report the risk to them and to use her reporting skills to find out what was safe, and how to stay safe.

> I remember some of these conversations with experts, I would interview them on what I was interested in for the stories I was writing, and then I will say; so, by the way, if I were to go to Guinea, what would you say? What would you suggest? What's the risk? And it was interesting because these experts were all saying, you would not get Ebola if you went to Guinea. You will be fine. But, it was hard to understand that initially I think. (Participant 3, 2016)

The most significant aspect of collaboration that was evident in the interviews was how the journalists worked on teams to coordinate the reporting. All the reporters interviewed admitted that they were not solo players in their Ebola coverage, not even the freelance reporters. As Participant 7 explained, newsrooms like hers had reporting teams both at home and abroad that covered the Ebola story.

> Our foreign correspondents based abroad were responsible for covering the outbreak on the ground. But because the correspondents were in the process of transitioning—the Africa correspondent was heading to Afghanistan and the correspondent in Afghanistan was heading to Africa—we were delayed in getting a reporter on the ground in West Africa.
>
> So, documenting the outbreak and the developments, particularly the response by the United States, became the main responsibility of health reporters on the National staff, including myself, who are based in Washington, D.C. I never traveled to West Africa, but worked with reporters who went to West Africa. (Participant 7, 2016)

Participants 1 and 6, who work for the same media organization in Dallas, painted a clear picture of how reporters tasked with different assignments covered the Ebola story. As general assignment reporters, they said they were "minor" players in the overall Ebola coverage done by *The Dallas Morning News*. The newspaper had other teams that handled different aspects of the Ebola story, including an epidemiologist.

> I was just one of truly dozens of people at *The Dallas Morning News* who covered it and so, I really wasn't the reporter who focused on the story. I was a very minor player. I only handled a handful of stories while other people did much more in-depth pieces of behind the scenes, investigative stuff, all these different kinds of stuff. (Participant 6, 2016)

Similarly, Participant 5 from *The Washington Post* did not think it was necessary to include efficacy information in her reporting because other teams from her newspaper had already reported on that aspect of the crisis and so she focused on reporting on different issues.

> No, because at that point it was very late on in the crisis. So, I felt like all that kind of information had been covered. So, it was beyond what I will call first tier of reporting that was done like on the Ebola crisis. We were kind of like much later into the crisis at that time – like how do we actually stamp this out. How do we truly get down to zero Ebola patients? I didn't report on any of that. (Participant 5, 2016)

The intersection between source selection and story ideas as shown in Participant 3's description of her source selection process shows that there was a collaboration between the governments of Liberia and Sierra Leone and the media.

> Before I went, I had been covering it for a long time, so I knew some basic lines of questioning. But then before I went, I called up a few people who were in Liberia and said: what do you think is that is going on now? And who should like I talk to it about it? And then I came up with these three or four ideas and then I just started calling anyone I could think of who might have something interesting to say. Inevitably, they would say, you should call this person. (Participant 3, 2016)

The people she contacted for these ideas were not reporters, but included "government officials, health officials, regular people, community activist organizers, UN officials NGO Officials, you know people who were working on the outbreak" (Participant 3, 2016). This process also shows that journalists do not work as an isolated entity, but in collaboration with other people as mentioned above.

The Western reporters who reported on Ebola in African countries mostly partnered with fixers and/or translator, and photographers to cover the crisis. Participant 5 reported that her fixer was instrumental in setting up interviews even in remote places like Womey.

> The fixer his name was Yusuf Bah. He was very helpful. I had hired Yusuf to be with me the whole time. And hired a driver as well. That's really a key decision that you make early on in the reporting process – who is your fixer going to be, because

Sometimes the collaboration did not work as well, but that did not imply that foreign reporters did not need to collaborate with fixers. Participant 3 partnered with a photographer and a fixer, but had a less positive experience with her fixer, whom she fired after a day of work. However, this resulted in language difficulties as she conducted interviews, especially in Liberian communities.

Learning on the Beat

None of the journalists interviewed were medical reporters with a medical background. In fact, none of them had ever covered a health crisis and had limited knowledge on Ebola. As Participant 6 stated, “I knew virtually nothing” about Ebola as a disease prior to being assigned the Ebola story. However, from their accounts, it can be gleaned that reporters quickly learn on the job.

> I don’t think so because it’s not all that different from the way that reporters typically do their jobs. We are often thrown into situations where we have to learn quickly and really become a student of that topic in the moment. So, I don’t think that was a real obstacle because there were other people on staff who could do the more technical health stories and I was really just doing the news announcements. So, when I did the news announcements, if I had any questions, I could ask those that were doing the more technical public health stories. The reporters who were assigned those type of stories had more knowledge (Participant 6, 2016)

> I had very little previous knowledge of Ebola except for what I remember reading in books. But when you are a reporter covering a topic, you are forced to learn about the subject as part of the job. (Participant 7, 2016)

According to Participant 1, learning on the job does not imply that a general assignment reporter becomes an expert on an “open-ended story” like Ebola. He said that for reporters like him covering Ebola, their job was to basically assess a broad reaction to the story.

> It is a different type of story and so obviously as a general assignment reporter and just a reporter in general, there’s going to be many different types of stories that you do and some are going to be very narrowly focused, say if you’re doing a profile of somebody or

> really looking at a certain question or issue. This was a very open-ended type of story… where you are basically assessing a broad reaction to something... But you try to paint a broad picture and just give a general sense of what is going on. And so that's how it's different. You're talking to many more sources in order to – or at least trying – in order to gauge a broad reaction as opposed to really getting into detail on one particular thing. (Participant 1, 2016)

Both Participant 1 and Participant 6 who was were general assignment reporters covering the Ebola crisis in the Dallas area, relied on officials such as the Dallas mayor, the Dallas County judge, and Dallas health officials as the three primary sources for information they used to educate themselves on the disease. Hospital officials were also sources they used for information.

Prior to 2014, Participant 5 says all she knew about Ebola was that it was "a deadly disease somewhere in Africa and that it was really bad" (2016). She acknowledged that being new to reporting on health crises and international reporting posed certain difficulties, but she overcame her lack of knowledge by consuming news reports on Ebola from news sources including *The Washington Post*, *The New York Times*, the BBC. Participant 5 had another strategy which she used to ensure that she produced quality stories in spite of the obstacles she faced.

> I think the basic tenets of reporting are the same and that kind of why my mindset is trust but verify. So, trust what you're hearing but always verify it in other ways. You never want to go with anything and just absolutely accept it as fact; I mean that's a risk. Certainly, it's a little bit more challenging, in a place like Guinea where you can't look up someone's full name and age, in a database. I mean, you can't do that. So, that was a bit of an issue and that was something that was little challenging, but you try to verify another way—you can ask someone else in the village if they agree with that story; you can ask a government official if what the people are saying actually happened... So, the basic heart of what I try to do is the same in America as it was in Guinea. You have to adapt, and you know work in certain situations and different ways. It's definitely, absolutely more difficult… yeah, definitely, for sure. (Participant 5, 2016)

At the time the Ebola crisis started, Participant 3's only knowledge on the disease came from stories she had heard about a movie on an Ebola-like virus. Asked what she knew about

Ebola before the outbreak and how she educated herself on the disease, she responded this way:

> I mean only probably what everybody knew about it before this. I didn't know anything about it except the popular imagination like from that popular movie *Outbreak*. Which I hadn't even seen you know, but just even worse than seeing the movie, I had heard about the movie. And actually, I can't remember whether it was in April or May or June probably, when it really started to ramp up and there was this one doctor who had responded a lot to a bunch of Ebola outbreaks and I talked to him all the time. I talked to him probably twice a week. And at one point he said something to me like, I'm sure you've read the book *The Hot Zone*, so it's like this in *The Hot Zone.* And I was like, actually I haven't. And he said, you better read that book. So, I didn't quite visit the library, but I did buy it on my Kindle. (Participant 3, 2016)
>
> My first sources of information about Ebola were WHO press conferences, and experts that I spoke to. I can't really remember how early I started speaking to this one specific doctor who became somebody I went to back to and back to because he was so knowledgeable and also really clear… But I spoke to lots of different experts – people from WHO and then a lot of people who I was connected to through the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine and this institute in Tulane... Anyway, at Tulane you could be connected to a lot of experts through their Department of Tropical Medicine… There were a couple of others like Kaiser Foundation which does a lot of work on policy. And at various points, I just contacted universities and said do you have someone in your school of public health who could talk to me. But I would say that the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, and this institute at Tulane were probably the places I went to for information to get an expert and the WHO and the CDC actually. (Participant 3, 2016)

Satisfaction with Access to Information

The findings show that the journalists relied primarily on two types of information sources: human sources and online sources. Timing was one of the main reasons behind the preference for human sources. As Participant 7 stated, "In this kind of situation, reporters were simply trying to find the best person who could provide the most accurate and timely information" (2016). Having access to information as soon as it was needed was therefore a driving force behind the sources selected by reporters.

> Mostly though, my information came from, with the exception of the WHO website – they just published a lot of information – most of my information came from people. I would call a medical school – there was like a handful of medical schools/think tanks and

> research institutes that had Ebola experts, or public health experts or like epidemiologists. Whatever I needed that day. So, I would call those people and say, can you put me in touch with one of them today? (Participant 3, 2016)

The participants were mostly satisfied with the information they obtained for their reporting. A majority of the participants also stated that official sources were accessible and willing to share information about Ebola both in the U.S. and in the affected African countries. Contrary to the protocol journalists normally go through to have access to administrators, governments in Guinea and Liberia eased the access reporters had to them during the outbreak. As Participant 4 puts it, “we had access to everybody.” Some of the high-ranking officials she and Participant 2 had access to during the Ebola crisis included the current Minister of Health, formerly the medical director in the Republic of Liberia, the Health Minister at that time, the Information Minister, the Health Advisor to the president, WHO representatives in Liberia. Participant 5 and Participant 3 attribute the government’s accessibility to their desire to get attention from the Western world, while Participant 4 and Participant 2 attribute it to wanting to correct their initial mistakes and collaborate with the media to end Ebola. Most of these sources were male, they said.

While foreign journalists reporting in Africa had to obtain visas and in some cases government accreditations to report from Ebola-affected countries, this seemed to be mostly an administrative hurdle described as “mostly expensive and time consuming, but not difficult,” especially for freelancers like Participant 8 who had to pay for the paperwork on her trip to Liberia (Participant 8, 2017). The accreditation and visa process seemed aimed primarily at ensuring the safety and preventing the spread of the disease. According to Participant 8, journalists reporting in Sierra Leone needed the accreditation whether or not they interviewed government sources, but because temperature checks took place at every checkpoint, and reporters needed to be accredited to go past these checkpoints. She thought this process ate into her reporting time.

> In Sierra Leone it took hours to get accreditation. I could have been out reporting, but I was sitting in an office. Like literally just sitting there. So, yeah, it's always time consuming and expensive, and I feel like you could be using that time to do something else. (Participant 8, 2017)

In Liberia, however, where Participant 3 reported, the press pass was required, but never checked: "we just got it so that if anyone ever asked for it, we would you know be complying basically" (Participant 3, 2016). While the press pass was arranged and picked up for her by her fixer, Participant 8 said that an in-person interview at the Liberian Embassy in Dakar during the Ebola crisis.

> And then we met with someone in the embassy in Dakar who kind of said like: do you guys know what you're doing? What precautions are you taking? And they kind of just asked us why we wanted to go and did we know the risks. I did feel like there they were vetting us. Not as journalists, but as like smart people. Just like: are these people serious and have they thought about this? And I think that was new, because there were nervous that there was going to be this pouring in of like some young people who didn't know what they were doing. (Participant 3, 2016)

While the Liberian government became more accessible to reporters, Participants 2 and 3 stated that at the beginning of the crisis, the Liberian government was unwilling to share information about the disease, which Participant 3 thinks led to panic. However, as the epidemic progress, both the Liberian Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Information collaborated to hold daily press briefings. According to Participant 2, they previously did their regular press briefings once a week, but because of Ebola, they did it every day.

> So, it was like every day we went to the Ministry of Information we had a health practitioner, or we had someone to tell us what was happening in the country. So, it was like we had people who were talking every time we went to the Ministry of Information. Maybe they wouldn't be exact to tell us that 10 persons died because they didn't want to be so alarming. But we had people to talk to. We had our press conferences every day. Some people were just posted at the Ministry of Information – we had people from UNDP (United Nations Development Programme), we had people from WHO, we had

> people from the health ministry, we had people from the hospitals, we had the international doctors. Every day we had people giving updates. (Participant 2, 2016)

Participant 4 added that reporters covering Ebola had access to all sources and "there was not much protocol in getting these people." According to her, even local reporters were given an Ebola pass, which gave them access to official sources without "…much requesting, there was not much to do. Everything was smooth." Participants 2 and 4 said they appreciated the availability of these official sources because in normal times, they had to book appointments with officials at least a week in advance, and sometimes they needed to write formal letters requesting for interviews with these sources.

Difficulties Obtaining Information

Although official sources still were the standard for reliable information, the journalists showed a preference for interviewing the survivors, people affected by Ebola, and those working to resolve the crisis and not government sources. Participant 5 called interviews with officials her "least favorite interviews to do" and was of the opinion she could get original content in different ways. Her other reasons for disliking these interviews were:

> Just because I feel like you're not really getting close to the heart of the truth, you know. Not that they are purposefully misleading you, it's just a lot of them live lives that are sort of disconnected from what's actually happening on the ground to the people of Guinea. So, my goal in going over there was not really to spend much time with officials because I was doing a lot of those interviews on the phone or through email – you're not necessarily getting something that's great for the story, that kind of original information that you couldn't have gotten in other ways. (Participant 5, 2016)

While most participants in this study acknowledge that they had access to government and official sources, they still faced difficulties obtaining certain types of information from them.

Participants 2 and 4, for example, were critical of some of the Liberian government's communication with the press. Participant 4, for example, criticized the government for the delay in declaring the crisis deadly when it first started. Participant 2 criticized them for sometimes downplaying information, like the number of people killed by the disease (as mentioned in the quote above). She was not completely satisfied with the government's handling of information because she said: "the difficulty was that we were not being genuinely told information." Participant 2 added that in some instances, government officials blamed other illnesses for killing Ebola patients, and unfortunately, reporters could not go to these places to investigate the truth. Like Participant 4, she complained that relying on official sources constrained her reporting.

> In normal reporting, sometimes you will see I will offer to go beyond if the information I am searching for is not available, I can't go beyond... But in the case of Ebola, I am also afraid for my life, so I cannot go beyond... (Participant 2, 2016)

Access to information was one of the difficulties which greatly affected the work done by some of the reporters interviewed for this study. Participant 3 mentioned logistical concerns as one of the main difficulties she had to accessing government information. Although government officials were mostly willing to talk to reporters, she was promised an interview by the Liberian Ministry of Gender and Social Welfare which never materialized. She, however, blames that on the lack of organization, which stems from the fact that everyone has a secretary in that system, which sometimes results in delays. She believes that if she had spoken directly with the government officials heading that ministry, she would have been granted the interview.

Even though the Liberian government eventually opened up to reporters as the Ebola crisis ravaged the country, they did not always collaborate with the media. Participant 4 attributed the state of confusion in the media and country about Ebola to the failure of the government to provide reporters with information about Ebola

> Initially, the government, they were not being open, they were not granting access to the media. They felt that the media was inflaming the situation. They felt that the media was putting a lot of fear in people because the message I was getting from the onset was: Ebola was deadly. It has no cure. People were not going to the ICU, because they knew if

> they went to the ICU they would die. They were not going to the ICU because they knew that Ebola had no cure. So, from the onset, there was a lot of confusion from the government, the media, and everything was not in place. So, from the beginning, we got a lot of difficult times in getting to government officials... But at the later time when they realized that they were also at fault because they themselves were not giving us information. What they said was what the media reported. They suddenly had to relax. They had to re-strategize, and that was how we got this daily press conference. This daily conference helped everything kind of fall in place. (Participant 4, 2016)

Access to information was also an issue faced even by the reporters reporting on the crisis in the U.S. One issue Participants 1 and 6 faced was the unwillingness of the Dallas locals to speak to the media out of fear of being associated with the crisis. In addition to the participants 1 and 6 facing resistance from the population to speak to reporters, both Participant 4 and Participant 5 talked about dealing with a more confrontational public.

> If you go to a community and you show you are a journalist, and that community was hardly hit, you want to talk to people in the community they will say no. They would say: you can't talk to us because you people are journalists. You are the ones telling everybody that our community is infected with Ebola. We can't say anything from our community. So, even as a community, people they were not fair. They were not informed. They were not saying anything. So, that was how they started to fear badly… Initially, the community members wouldn't talk to any journalists. So, everybody was like confused, until we realized that we needed each other. When we realized that we needed each other, we came together as a team to fight Ebola. (Participant 4, 2016)

In addition to the bad roads, traffic, exhaustion faced by Participant 5, who reported from the Guinean village of Womey (which had a history of hostility toward officials who tried to sensitize them on Ebola), she stated that her team had to go through an extensive process to even gain access to the village.

> And it took a lot of work because we had to meet in Conakry, the capital of Guinea. We had to identify and meet people from the village of Womey to reach out to their relatives who still lived in Womey, and negotiated for us to come in peacefully. Because they had actually at that point a military commander who had come in and was now in charge of the village because the government was so concerned about the unstable situation. So, we definitely had to negotiate a lot to get there, but we got it done. And we had to get like a local translator, as well as my translator because of the language that they spoke there. I believe they spoke Susu. (Participant 5, 2016)

And upon arriving in the village, she and her team met some resistance at the entry office where the military commander was stationed from the village elders. While they were at the office, a group of about 15 people showed up, including two village elders whose oppositions to their presence there had to be handled before they could interview sources in that village.

> There were two women who came in and who were very upset. And I think totally immediately the mood changed. Even though there was a language barrier, there are somethings that can easily translate and that's like body language and anger I feel like you don't need a translator for that, you can just feel it. (laughs). So, they were very upset and I was kind of asking Yusuf what's going on, telling him to translate what's going on. and he was waiting for his translator and basically, they were just very upset. They didn't feel like we should be in the village and they didn't want us there and you know there. And there was some sort of negotiation back and forth I was just kind of looking at the men who had invited us there, and they were just being silent and I just wanted to be like, what the heck is your problem? Speak up! You're the ones who invited us here. Tell the women that we are welcomed. But later I learned in talking to more people about their village that in that village that the women, the female elders, are actually more powerful than men. The men were taking and it was kind of weird to me, the men were taking some sort of subservient role in like deferring to them, which normally I would be like girl power!! Alright I like it. But in this situation, I was just like, what are you doing why are you not speaking up for us right now. So, after a little back and forth, we got it worked out. The women, we just tried to stay away from them and we went into the family home of one of the families who had invited us and shut doors. So, those women could not be like around us. (Participant 5, 2016)

Even though they were granted access to the village, Participant 5 and her team came to an agreement to put their safety first in case they sensed any possible danger.

> So, before we went in there, I told Yusuf, I told Jane, who was the photographer and I told our driver that if anyone feels unsafe, if anyone feels like something is not right, just touch me on the shoulder and then we going to leave. It's not worth the story, it's not worth anything – we would get out of here. So, that was probably the day that was the most difficult. (Participant 5, 2016)

Not all the reporters encountered unwilling or hostile interviewees. In fact, the people of Liberia seemed particularly eager to speak to Participants 3 and 8.

> But I found that in general, that the average Liberian was very willing to speak to journalists and I almost had the sense and this is the first time I was in Liberia. This is country that has had a lot of Westerners come in and write about it. A place that has really struggled over several decades and had like several major problems over the

> decades. And I had this feeling once almost like wow, it's like everyone who grows up here gets a course in media like savviness. Because I think they are just so used to or maybe it's because I came in at the tail end of a major crisis, and so everyone had been interviewed by a journalist already. (Participant 3, 2016)

> I've never had a story where people were so happy to talk to me. I almost felt sometimes like covering a survivor's story in Liberia, it almost felt like therapy. I'm not a psychologist or whatever, but people were so wanting to talk about their experiences. Everybody was always happy to speak, I feel like. (Participant 8, 2017)

While having willing, and media savvy respondents might seem to make a journalist's job easier, Participant 3 stated that it concerned her because she wondered if her interviewees were anticipating what she as a reporter wanted to hear in order to give her the response they thought she wanted to hear. In the excerpt below, she discusses her concerns and how she tried to confront the issue:

> And it was hard to be like no, no, no. Just tell me about your experiences. I'm not looking for anything. I'm just asking a question and if it speaks to your experience, great, tell me about that. If not, tell me about... I talked to some journalists while I was working there and they were saying, well you know every generation here has kind of had its moment. Like whether it was the various stages of the civil war, now Ebola. And then there's just so many development projects there. They are used to being interviewed by UN officials and NGO officials about their lives, that it's like they are just ready for those questions. And so, in a way it was super easy like I felt it was easier, than interviewing people in Senegal. They were like, oh journalist, ok, bring it on! They were so willing. But then sometimes you wondered like did you just package that for me? I did sometimes have that concern and I had to be kind hyper aware of that and ask questions in different ways, and figure out how to kind of explain to people that I generally just wanted to know what you think and what happened to you. It doesn't have to be the perfect story. (Participant 3, 2016)

The lack of data or access to certain official data was also one of the main difficulties faced by Participants 3 and 7, who equally had difficulties accessing information from American official sources.

> It was often difficult to pin down information about U.S. military deployment. And once cases were reported in the United States, especially in Texas, it was often difficult to get information from the hospitals. (Participant 7, 2016)

While this was not a difficulty faced personally by Participant 8, she raised the point about the importance of writing stories about accountability with the funds that were raised for dealing with the Ebola crisis and how challenging it must have been for her colleagues to get data for that story.

> I think there is something to be said for all of the aid money that went in. All of the official side, all of the organizations, the governments who were involved. I don't know how easy it was for journalists to cover that side of the story. I think that should be probably still be ongoing to be honest. But that's not really my field especially because I am a visual journalist. (Participant 8, 2017)

The lack of data or inaccessibility to data was one of the main difficulties Participant 3 faced while reporting on Ebola. According to her, due to the gravity of the Ebola outbreak, certain diseases were no longer being tracked, thus, making it difficult for reporters. In her case, for example, her story on teenage pregnancies during the Ebola crisis did not materialize because she needed data from U.N. agencies, and was promised that data, but never received it.

> For instance, like the teenage pregnancy story, in the end I just couldn't get the data, but I had a lot of people say to me, I'm pretty sure that teenage pregnancy has gone up during the epidemic. But no one could come up with the numbers, which was sort of understandable because that kind of tracking and monitoring had just ceased during the epidemic, because all hands were on deck in terms of stopping the epidemic. And so, I never wrote that story. (Participant 3, 2016)

Participant 3, however, does not see these barriers to her information seeking process as a deliberate effort by the government and these agencies to hinder her work, but as one of the consequences of dealing with an epidemic of such magnitude.

> It's always tough to get someone on the phone, when someone has an important job and is working on a big outbreak like this it's even harder to get them on the phone. I mean it's just always hard to get the interesting people on the phone because they are doing their interesting work. (Participant 3, 2016)

Access to information is therefore critical to the work reporters or important stories which need attention remain untold. Without information that makes a case for why a story is timely and new, stories like the teenage pregnancy story in Liberia are shelved.

> Everybody knows that teenage pregnancy is a problem in Liberia. So, to tell pretty sad stories about girls who are pregnant just doesn't cut it. It's not new, it's not new. I couldn't sell that story basically I needed to meet a higher bar and I couldn't get the data to meet that bar. And that really saddened me because it meant that there were stories that didn't get told. But I was a bit frustrated because I did feel like sometimes people had the data, but they just didn't call me back but then I spoke to enough people who said you know this data is going to be impossible to get, that I think nobody really had it. (Participant 3, 2016)

One last, but important aspect of access to information and information sources is that none of the participants used a library to access information on Ebola. Their information sources consisted mostly of organizations such as the CDC, Médecins Sans Frontier, health officials, and government officials. They also used online websites for organizations such as the CDC, WHO, and Médecins Sans Frontier, as well as Google searches. Part of that seemed to stem from the inaccessibility of libraries and reporter habits.

> Library, no. I mean I'm in Dakar; there's no library. There's a university library probably, but it's not accessible. I did not use the library, but I don't really use the library actually. I mean Internet, yeah. If I can find research studies and other things, but I wouldn't use like Wikipedia or other things like that. With the Internet, it was actually for like other news sources or university studies. (Participant 8, 2017)

Gender Considerations

In this category, most of the reporters covered the Ebola crisis similarly. As stated in the literature review, a majority of the Ebola victims were women, a fact confirmed by Participant 2.

> The reason was because women are caregivers. Women are, in our setting, women are the ones who take care of children, they also take care of the home. So, it's like the men are always out there going to work and the woman is at home. So, that man goes out and the person he's working with sometimes has Ebola. He comes home. Who does he come back to? He comes back home to his wife. He comes to his children. And a mother will

> not want to see her child sick. So, the people who go to hospital most times are children and women. So, the women are always the caregivers. So, there were many infected because they were caregivers… (Participant 2, 2016)

Despite this realization, only Participant 4 clearly stated that she chose the human-interest angle, so she could teach Liberians how to protect themselves from the disease. According to Participant 4, choosing the human-interest angle was inextricably connected to the fate of women in the Ebola crisis. She stated that even when she interviewed male sources, she interviewed from her perspective as a woman to find answers to questions about why women were mostly affected:

> I was looking at the human angle -- the human-interest angle because most of the victims were women, and women are the caregivers, women are the ones who keep the home together, women are the nucleus of the home…Because in our Liberian society, the mothers are the ones that keep the home together. If you are losing a lot of mothers to Ebola, it means that you are losing a lot of families. That was one of the reasons I was reporting from the human angle, the human-interest angle. Really focusing on women, how women were handling it… When it comes to taking care of the home, the children; women were the ones doing it. (Participant 4, 2016)

Participant 4 was the only reporter who specifically covered the Ebola story from a gendered perspective. Most of the other reporters stated that their objective was to get the best sources for their reports. As for Participant 5, she believes that she did not tackle the gender story because of the timing of her assignment.

> But mainly because I wasn't really writing about the dynamics of the victims at that time, it was more different story angles. I think though we did do some coverage early on in Liberia related to that issue though. I believe that one of my colleagues did, but it was not something that I focused on. (Participant 5, 2016)

Participant 3 had a story with predominantly female sources, but acknowledges that it made sense for her to have female subjects and a female official source when writing that story because it was a story on teenage pregnancies. Thus, the story was gender-focused.

> With the exception of the teenage pregnancy story, I would say none. I was looking for good sources. I didn't really care if they were men or women. I was looking more for

> their expertise. Who will know about this? … I just wondered, how do they know what they know you know? I want to find the best person who knows about this topic, who has experience with this topic. (Participant 3, 2016)

Interestingly, Participant 2, who normally covers women-focused stories, said she had to focus on the general audience when reporting on Ebola.

> We did not push gender because Ebola was affecting everyone. Sometimes when you talked to people they didn't even care for gender anymore. It was just getting the best information, because it was so traumatizing. Because at some point now, we knew that we could see the people dying from Ebola could now see that it was no longer about the gender. Because it was about traditional practices now. In our culture, women don't really take care of bodies, as compared to men. So, we were no longer talking about gender, but we were dealing with general information. (Participant 2, 2016)

Access to sources was a big reason why Participant 7 and Participant 1 did not focus on gender selection when searching for sources.

> No consideration was given to gender. In this kind of situation, reporters were simply trying to find the best person who could provide the most accurate and timely information. (Participant 7, 2016)

> For me, I think because it was the kind of story where frankly we were happy to have anyone to talk to. People were so reticent. I'm not sure that we – at least for my purposes, we didn't pay that much attention to it. I was really looking for anyone who would share with me their feelings, so, if that person happened to be whatever gender then that was not really a consideration. (Participant 1, 2016)

Participant 1 went on to note that certain stories, like the ones he did based on interviews with families at the waiting room at the Presbyterian Hospital, had a better gender representation because he mostly found families in that area. Participant 6, in her explanation of why her sources skewed male raises an important point about the gender makeup in many institutions.

> No. I didn't. That didn't really factor into our reporting that I can remember. As in many industries, the health officials we were dealing with and the politicians we were predominantly male. And those were the appointed spokespeople. (Participant 6, 2016)

According to Participant 4 who shares a similar perspective, this gender dynamic in leadership resulted in gendered mortality rates.

> Many men died from the health centers because many of the doctors were men, so we have men dying from the hospitals. But when it comes to the average household, it was mostly women. (Participant 4, 2016)

The African Angle

The interviews with Western reporters who covered the Ebola crisis in Africa shed light on some of the issues with reports on Africa that have persisted. Participant 3, who lived in another African country at the time Ebola was going on, expressed awe at the fact that something that happened in West Africa became the biggest story in the world, which is unusual for the region. She stated that the large multinational nonprofit news agency she freelanced for in 2014 had a difficult time responding to the outbreak because it had limited staff covering Africa. This is problematic because as Participant 5 explained, going to Guinea enabled her to get original material from people affected by Ebola, while Participant 3 stated that “there’s only so much you can learn from the telephone” when covering a story. This shows the value that on-the-ground reporting has in news reporting.

The Ebola crisis showed that Western organizations are still engaged in the practice of parachuting journalists into Africa to cover breaking news stories, a practice Participant 5 acknowledges: “I kind of got parachuted you could say into the crisis. I certainly read about it, but I had not been one of our lead reporters in covering it.” Her account of why she offered to cover Guinea suggests how newspapers like hers have participated in such practices. Her decision to travel to Guinea was influenced by the absence of her news organization in Guinea.

> So, at that point our paper had sent several people to Liberia and at least one I think to Sierra Leone, but we had not sent anyone to Guinea. Not only in the Ebola crisis, like I don’t know anyone if we had ever sent anyone to Guinea. Maybe at some point far before I was a reporter at the *Post*. But my understanding is in the recent history of *The Washington Post*, we had not had any one working in Guinea. (Participant 5, 2016)

It was important to get the Guinea story because the country was very culturally different from Liberia and Sierra Leone in some of the following ways “the way that they were trying to contain the virus – there was a lot of fear and skepticism and cultural resistance within the country that did not exist in Liberia and Sierra Leone” (Participant 5, 2016).

Meanwhile, freelancers like Participants 3 and 8 could not be sent to report from severely Ebola affected countries because they were freelancers and not staffers. However, in the case of the Ebola outbreak, these reporters could not even be parachuted into these countries early because the news organizations were unable to assess reporters’ risk levels. To help solve the problem, some Western journalists asked reporters on the ground in Africa to find out what their chances of getting the disease were.

Another issue with Western media coverage of Africa raised by their coverage of Ebola is that they seem conditioned to cover stereotypical stories of Africa and are not prepared for stories that do not fit that script.

> I think that people did wait a little bit to go in longer than they might have had it just been like a coup or something that was just like recognizable. Dangerous, but recognizable. (Participant 3, 2016)

> These security chiefs in all these news organizations knew how to deal with civil war, and civil unrest, and actual war, like a regular war, and terrorism. They were comfortable with guns and bombs. They knew how to assess the risks of guns and bombs. But this was not guns and bombs. (Participant 3, 2016)

Even though Participant 5 worked for a different news organization, her story about how she ended up covering Ebola confirms that Western newsrooms initially did not know how to respond to the Ebola crisis as a different type of African story:

> The interesting thing is that in our newsroom they were having a lot of difficulty finding people willing to go. Shockingly. From what I heard… there were many people more willing to go into a war zone than they were to go to Africa to cover the Ebola crisis. (Participant 5, 2016)

One last aspect of African coverage is what can be defined as diluted accuracy. Both American reporters faced language difficulties in Liberia and Guinea. Some of these weaknesses were mitigated by working with collaborators, such as fixers. This option helped offset most of Participant 5's self-defined "weaknesses, because her fixer arranged sources for her, provided translation services in French and English, and negotiated a UNICEF flight to Meliandou, saving them a 24-hour drive. He was the one who introduced her the crisis committee chairman who facilitated her trip to Womey, a village wary of outsiders. However, she faced a language barrier in Womey, where she had to hire a second translator to help her communicate in the local language called Susu. And that is what raises the issue of diluted accuracy:

> I would ask a question, Yusuf would translate it into French then the local fixer that we hired to go into that village would translate it from French into Susu and then the person would answer, then it would go back from Susu to French, and French to English. And I was just like, oh God! Who knows what that person actually said you know. So, I tried to keep the quotes very short, the questions very short, didn't want anyone going on and on and on, and drastically mischaracterizing what they had said. That was a concern of mine. (Participant 5, 2016)

Despite Participant 5's attempt to rein in the errors that could be made by speaking in shorter sentences, it is very likely that meaning changed as each message had to be transferred between several translations before arriving its intended receiver. Participant 3 faced a different barrier, which also raised the issue of diluted accuracy. After firing her fixer, who was supposed to provide translation services for her, she was left to navigate the language hurdle on her own. Although the official language in Liberia is English, which Participant 3 speaks, she said she realized the differences between American and Liberian English when she went on the field without a fixer.

> But it's tough when you're speaking to people like in communities, but you know we figured it out…It's funny we are both extensively speaking the same language, which is almost riskier right, because if it were a different language you would know that it's

> different. But you know it is the same language and so there are more pitfalls almost, because we think we understand each other maybe, but we don't. (Participant 2, 2016)

Participant 8, who speaks French and is based in West Africa, also recognized that she still faced language barriers while reporting on the Ebola story, but was able to navigate the issue by using translators or fixers.

> I speak French. But I guess if you went to the rural areas sometimes local languages would be an issue. Or like Liberian English or Sierra Leone Creole – like sometimes that would be a bit difficult. (Participant 8, 2017)

What this shows is that unfamiliarity with the language of a country being covered can result in difficulties collecting information, which will likely impact the quality of reports produced.

Part 2: Content Analysis Data

Introduction

In this second part of the results chapter, the findings from the content analysis of three newspapers are analyzed. The results are presented under themes. The newspapers under study are *The Inquirer* from Liberia, *The New York Times* from the United States, and *The Times* of London. The sample for this study was made up of 127 articles published between March 24, 2014 and September 24, 2015. *The Inquirer* has the most articles in the sample with 55% of the articles, followed by *The New York Times* and *The Times* with 29% and 14.9% of the articles respectively. The research tree below shows a breakdown of the sample per newspaper, and how the sample was determined.

A majority of the articles in the sample were published between July 2014 and December 2014, with the peak coverage month being September 2014 with 20 articles. See Figure 5 for more information about the number of articles published during the time frame for the study.

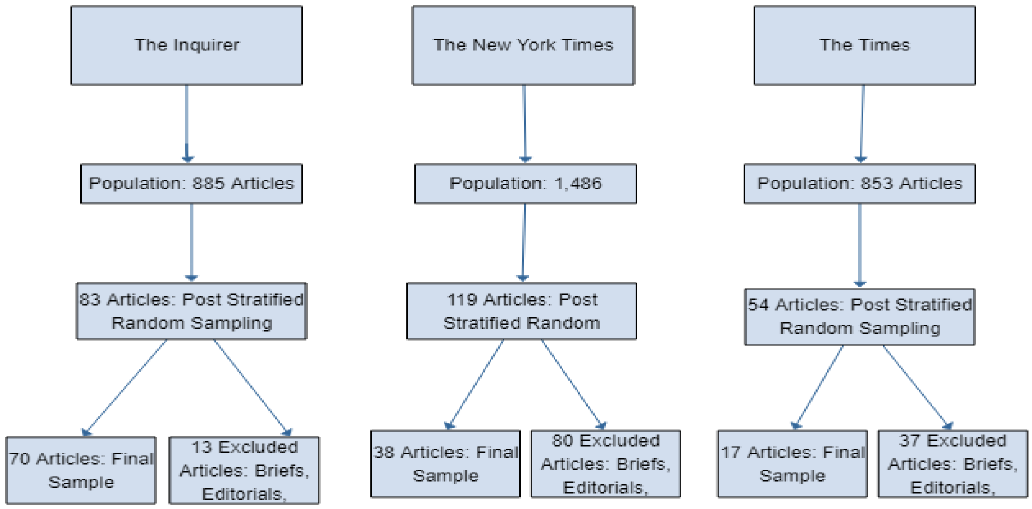

Figure 5: Research tree of newspaper articles

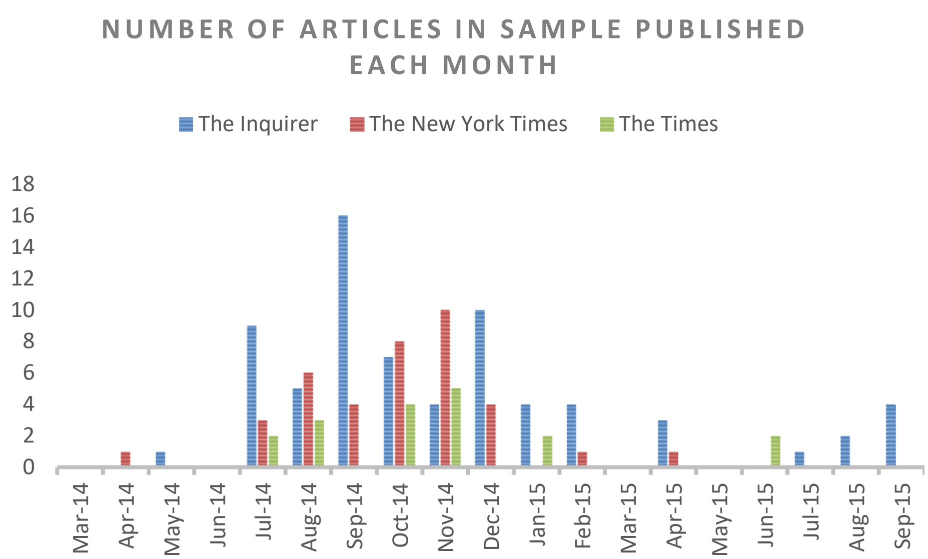

Figure 6: Number of articles in sample published each month

Fear and Resistance

The articles show a grim picture of the countries most afflicted by Ebola, Guinea, Liberia, and Sierra Leone, with the last two countries being the subject of most of the coverage in all three newspapers analyzed. The articles paint a picture of a deadly disease which had several outbreaks. A disease that infected and killed indiscriminately – both the powerful and the poor; African or Western; medical professionals and patients alike. A disease which challenged organizations that usually respond to health outbreaks, and left aid workers afraid to volunteer their services to the fight against Ebola. As of November 6, 2014, when Ebola had already claimed more than 5,000 lives and with the number of new cases doubling every three to four weeks, organizations like the World Health Organization and the Médecins Sans Frontières were overwhelmed by the nature of the crisis.

> Unless the rate of new infections is reduced by December 1, the World Health Organisation said that it would be overwhelmed by an "entirely unprecedented situation for which we do not have a plan."
>
> The medical charity Médecins Sans FrontiÈres warned in September that the world was losing the battle against ebola, and Britain pledged £5 million to fund medical staff and supplies. Three months later, that figure has jumped to £230 million. (Jerome Starkey, November 6, 2014)

It is therefore not surprising that the most common theme that emerged from the content analysis was fear. This fear exhibited itself in many ways, and across different groups. One of the groups prominently featured in all three newspapers was healthcare workers. As those on the frontline fighting the disease, health workers were among the groups that were greatly victimized by the virus.

All three newspapers covered hospital shutdowns and strikes by health professionals in Sierra Leone and Liberia. Nurses and other health workers at several hospitals and Ebola treatment Units (ETU's) like the Phebe Hospital stopped working until they were provided with risk benefits or incentives. The Phebe Hospital shut down until the nurses were provided with risk benefits, and even a newly built Ebola case management center. Nurses at the John F. Kennedy Medical Center, Liberia's biggest hospital, also refused to keep working due to fears of contracting the disease, while the president of the National Physician Assistants Association of

Liberia, Mr. Jerry Kollie, stated that: "Our members are willing to work, but they must be protected," he pointed out. This sentiment was echoed by the Secretary General of the Liberian National Red Cross who stated that:

> The LNRCS Secretary General however called on the Government and its partners to pay more attention to protecting health Care workers who are the front liners in this fight against the Ebola virus.
>
> According to Mr. Tamba, if the health workers are protected, we will regain their confidence to return to the various Health facilities that are currently abandoned across the country. (*The Inquirer*, July 29, 2014).

The Times and *The New York Times* wrote stories about the bravery of two Western doctors who kept on working, even though their staff went on strike. *The New York Times* introduced audiences to Dr. Daniel Bausch, an American physician who cared for 55 Ebola patients with only one doctor because the Sierra Leonean nurses at the hospital had gone on strike or had chosen to stay away out of fear. Dr. Bausch explained that safe Ebola care required “a controlled environment, enough health workers to take care of patients, clean the ward, provide the ancillary services required to reinforce safe practices” (Grady, July 29, 2014). Without such conditions, the risks to health professionals were heightened.

In a November 5, 2014 article, *The Times* introduced us to some of the contributions of British volunteers, doctors, and army to fight against Ebola. In the article, Oliver Johnson, the program director of King’s Sierra Leone Partnership (a team of British aid workers serving in Sierra Leone) details how their team was able to avoid a shutdown at Connaught Hospital after the death of their senior physician and other staff members left nurses and junior doctors panicked. The medical staff also went on strike, leaving only the matron and senior doctor at the hospital. According to Johnson, the situation was so dire that “we had a hospital full of patients and empty of staff.” However, the hospital did not shut its doors.

> What we said here at Connaught was, “This hospital cannot close,” said Oliver Johnson, the programme director of the KSLP and a pivotal figure in Sierra Leone's fight against ebola. “We have to throw whatever we have at it.” (Loyd, November 5, 2014)

They were able to avoid a shutdown by bolstering the confidence of the local staff and seeking more volunteers.

The health workers were not the only ones who took measures to protect themselves from Ebola. Events, like the 2014 National Day celebration in Liberia were poorly attended even by public officials and foreign diplomats because of Ebola fears. *The Inquirer’s* Morrison O.G. Sayon reported that the government officials in attendance at the celebrations, including President Sirleaf, took protective measures such as washing their hands before entering the hall, while gloves were provided to others to avoid contact with possible patients.

The Liberian government took measures to contain the outbreak including closing the borders, except for a few areas where preventative centers were established to test and inspect travelers entering and leaving the country. Entire communities, like West Point, were quarantined by the government. The Deputy Minister of Information, Isaac Jackson, explained that the quarantine was necessary to save lives:

> He stated further that the government imposed the curfew because some individuals are hiding the sick and the dead as a result of the deadly Ebola virus only to use the cover of darkness to bury their dead relatives.
>
> He noted that the curfew is intended to stop this practice as it has the propensity to further spread the Ebola virus to those who are not infected. (Sayon & Seaklon, August 21, 2014)

Other measures taken by the Liberian government included requiring hotels, restaurants, and entertainment centers to play a five-minute film on Ebola awareness. At the Ministry of Finance, where Patrick Sawyer (a Liberian official who died of Ebola while visiting Nigeria) was employed, stricter rules were implemented, including allowing only four people in elevators at a time, handshakes, hugs or any physical contact were banned, and all officials who had been in contact with Sawyer before his trip were placed on a 21-day observatory surveillance. *The New York Times* reported that Sierra Leone instituted a three-day Ebola quarantine, during which 7000 teams of health and community workers went from door-to-door to “root out hidden Ebola patients” (Nossiter, September 7, 2014).

At home, many Liberians resorted to protecting themselves from the disease by buying essential drugs from pharmacies for their homes, using gloves, washing their hands with a mixture of chlorine and water, and avoiding contact with others. Their fear of the disease even caused them to take extraordinary measures such as avoiding hospitals.

> Since the news of the second outbreak of the Ebola virus in Liberia, many have expressed fear of going to the hospitals or clinics for medical treatment as several health workers are escaping from there, due to the rapid spread of the virus. The virus has in recent times killed several health workers in the country and other top Liberian Government officials. (Sayon, July 29, 2014)

This resistance to treatment was sometimes based on fears that most people who went to hospitals died, even though Ebola kills most of its victims, irrespective of their location. Speaking to a reporter from *The Inquirer*, Dominic W. Rennie, the general administrator of the Redemption Hospital in Liberia stated the gravity of the problem:

> “My brother you will not believe it; some people came at the Redemption Hospital and took away their patients,” Mr. Rennie said.
>
> Mr. Rennie told this paper that since the Ebola issue started, only few patients can go to the hospital for medical treatment while the majority of the patients refuse to go to the hospital for medical treatment. (Tweh, July 11, 2014)

Another reason proposed for this resistance is that the treatment style went contrary to African cultural norms. In these countries, patients are taken care of by family members, and families touch each other. They were also not used to washing their hands as often as they had to during the outbreak. Henric Marcus Speares, the head of the Margibi burial team in Liberia, blamed the rising Ebola death toll on the unwillingness of Liberians to follow the rules and regulations proposed by their Ministry of Health.

> Mr. Speares said there are people who are resistant to these rules and regulations adding that it is due to it being strange to Liberians and because of the bad culture Liberians have with respect to hygiene and the basic principle of sanitation which has been in Liberia for centuries.
>
> According to him, the issue of washing hands continually and other rules being a new thing, Liberians are still learning and it will take time for Liberians to get adjusted to these rules.
>
> He noted that Liberians need to be robust in handling the Ebola epidemic that is destroying the lives of fellow compatriots. (Mccay, September 12, 2014)

Not only did residents of Liberia, Guinea and Sierra Leone have to learn new hygienic practices, they also had to learn new ways to interact with other in order to stop the spread of the disease. Helene Cooper describes a culture where touching one another is a natural way of showing affection. Cooper's article in *The New York Times* uses examples of everyday life prior to the Ebola outbreak to highlight how the virus must have spread so much. Guests at Liberian parties spending close to 20 minutes going from person to person, holding each other's hand as they bend down to kiss and chat. Worshippers at church holding hands while singing hymns, and spending an hour after service to greet each other, "going systematically from cheek to cheek." Taxis cramming up to 8 people (sometimes even animals), children pushing and playing with one another. Due to Ebola, all these practices had to come to an end. The government restricted taxis from carrying more than three people at a time. The greeting culture stopped: "many people say they have not felt the warmth of human skin in months. Many do not shake hand or kiss anymore. No caressing No hugging" (Cooper, October 5, 2014). It is no wonder some Liberians told a *New York Times* reporter that Ebola was worse than Liberia's 14-year civil war – because "Ebola had made Liberians fear their own families" (Onishi, November 17, 2014).

Holding on to cultural norms was also trend was common in Guinea, especially in the Forest region, where despite witnessing hundreds of Ebola deaths, the community remained committed to its strong belief in traditional religion, prompting the regional prefect to warn villagers that “there is no root, no leaf, no animal that can cure you” (Nossiter, July 28, 2014). Even in Sierra Leone, *The Times* reported that a woman who was being treated for Ebola at the King Harman Hospital in Freetown was snatched by her family and taken to the house of a traditional healer for treatment. The woman died in an ambulance after she was found by the police and was being returned to the hospital.

Hostilities

Fear also manifested itself in the affected countries in the form of resistance and physical violence. Health workers were a prime target in communities that were skeptical of their mission and the disease. In Liberia for example, a doctor working in the Emergency Treatment Unit evicted from his apartment because the landlord feared that he would infect the other residents. The head of the Margibi burial team even complained that Liberian locals publicly ridiculed the burial team and sometimes carried out acts of mob violence on them. *The Times* wrote about crowds attacking and looting a medical center in West Point, Liberia, driving out the patients, while chanting, “there is no Ebola.” While the 17 patients turned themselves in and were returned to the hospital, the bloodstained sheets that were stolen from the hospital remained missing. This is similar to the hostilities faced by health workers in Guinea.

The order putting West Point under quarantine, and the removal of a government official and her family, sparked protests and the deployment of troops to the area. While residents of the area claimed that the police used whips, live bullets and tear gas to calm crowds that were protesting the lockdown and the evacuation of the Township Commissioner and her family from the area, the government denied the allegations. *The Inquirer*, *The New York Times,* and *The Times* reported on this situation in West Point. *The Times* also reported that the Liberian army's chief of staff, Colonel Eric Dennis, ordered soldiers to shoot anyone crossing from Sierra Leone at night First, you need to send a warning shot. Then you burst their legs" (Ruth Maclean, August 21, 2014). A statement from the Ministry of National Defense published on August 21, 2014 rebutted this information, which the government declared was untrue.

> The Ministry of National Defense wishes to state categorically that the Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL) has not been issued any order to shoot and kill anybody on sight, as was reported by some media outlets….
>
> The Ministry of National Defense assures the citizens of Liberia and its international partners that the AFL remains a force for good and therefore calls on the public for understanding given the current security conditions as the nation collectively unite in the fight against the deadly Ebola virus. (*The Inquirer,* August 21, 2014)

The New York Times was the only paper in the sample that covered Guinea. Their reporter traveled to the remote Forest region of Guinea, where he reported on the hostilities faced by aid workers in the area. In one instance, doctors from the Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) were singled out by panicked youth in Kolo Bengou, armed with slingshots and machetes, who accused them of spreading of the disease. This view was common in several other Guinean communities, like Dandano and Webengou, where aid workers were seen as "propagators of the virus in moon suits" (Nossiter, November 17, 2014). Adam Nossiter described villagers running away at the sight of Red Cross trucks, trees placed on the road to block outsiders, a delegation from Conakry attacked by villagers banging their cars and brandishing machetes, and Westerners met with chants of "Ebola, Ebola!" Local officials and reporters sent to sensitize a local Guinean community about Ebola were even killed by hostile villagers. This fear made the communities inaccessible and contributed to the spread of the disease.

The Ebola crisis was plagued by the spread of false information which had adverse effects. According to Marc Poncin, the emergency coordinator for MSF in Guinea, “this is very unusual that we are not trusted. We are not stopping the epidemic” (Nossiter, July 28, 2014). It was only around mid-November 2014, nearly a year after Ebola started, that a Red Cross team was able to work freely in Dandano, and they required the intervention of a chief, who informed villagers that hiding their sick would result in “death for the whole village” (Nossiter, November 17, 2014). For weeks, officials had tried unsuccessfully to negotiate with religious leaders of Dandano for access to the region. It was only as the deaths multiplied that the elders approached local officials and declared “Dandano open.” In the Macenta District of Guinea, a village elder acknowledged in front of residents that they were wrong about the disease and did not understand the cause of the illness.

> “We refused them because of what was being said; people said if you send 20 away, 19 would die,” said Mr. Cissé, referring to the low survival rates of people with Ebola, even in some treatment centers. (Nossiter, November 17, 2014)

Another cause for resistance could possibly be a fear of stigmatization. Due to the stigmatization of Ebola survivors, there must have been a fear to identify as a bearer of the virus. Dr. Walter Gwanigale, Liberia’s Minister of Health and Social Welfare called on Liberians to stop the stigmatization of Ebola survivors because they were healed and could not contract the disease again. The stigmatization however affected citizens from the Ebola affected countries, whether or not they had ever contracted the disease. In a *New York Times* article about the reception the soccer team from Sierra Leone received while competing to qualify for the 2015 Africa Cup of Nations, the players recall the fear and humiliation with which they were received in foreign countries. They reported feeling like “aliens” or people “walking around with the disease.” According to John Tyre, a reserve goalkeeper for Sierra Leone, “you feel humiliated, like garbage, and you want to punch someone… No one wants to have Ebola in their country. Sierra Leone is struggling. And they shove it in our face" (Longman, October 14, 2014).

The Seychelles soccer team forfeited a match rather than host a match with the Sierra Leonean team; in Ivory Coast, the players received fist bumps instead of handshakes from the opposing team, a gesture which they found offensive because "shaking hands is respect." In Cameroon, the players shook hands with them, but like in the Democratic Republic of Congo, fans mocked the team with chants of "Ebola, Ebola." While the Cameroonian fans eventually applauded them for their perseverance, in Congo, the chants did not cease until the end of the match, causing one midfielder to say that the trip to Congo "would have strained any human being, even Mother Teresa" (Longman, October 14, 2014). In Cameroon, the team was moved to a newly constructed hotel without any other guests because some guests grew alarmed. They also had to submit to temperature screenings during breakfast and dinner while in Cameroon, and these screenings were more regular when they attempted to return to their teams in Europe and the U.S from Congo. They endured all this, even though none of the players had played or lived in Sierra Leone in months.

Hysteria in the West

The fear of Ebola and the resulting resistance were not just a problem in Africa, but in the U.S. and Europe as well. *The New York Times'* Sheri Fink wrote about the paradoxes of Ebola and how it tested the limits of compassion.

> Another paradox - many of the trained responders who run to disasters and wars have been running away from this one. Countries are shutting borders. Airlines are canceling flights. Ships are bypassing ports. Those most in need are be-coming pariahs. Ebola, and the fear around it, shows us something about the limits of compassion. (Fink, September 7, 2014)

The Times tells the story of an American aid worker who after serving in Liberia was forced to travel to Britain for a break because he received a message from the South Carolina Education Board threatening to ban his children from school if he had contact with them. The late Michel Du Cille, a *Washington Post* photojournalist who covered the Ebola crisis in Liberia, was disinvited from a journalism workshop at Syracuse University after students expressed concerns and fear about their safety. At this time, Du Cille was asymptomatic and had passed the quarantine period. He said at the time that the students had missed a great opportunity. Du Cille died of a heart attack December 2014, while covering the Ebola assignment in Liberia.

> "They missed a great teaching opportunity here for the students, to show them how to report the facts and practice good journalism," Mr. du Cille told *Time* magazine. "Instead they went the alarmist route." (Estrin, December 12, 2014)

The New York Times wrote about Europe's unpreparedness to swiftly evacuate infected medical workers. In one instance when a French nurse tested positive for Ebola, it took over 50 hours to get her to Paris for treatment because a private American plane from Georgia had to be chartered. According to Hervé Raffin, the director of Medic'Air, the biggest obstacle was not a shortage of aircrafts, but pilots. Only two pilots in all of Europe were willing to transport Ebola patients. The other pilots felt the risk was too high (Higgins, October 14, 2014).

The Women in the Crisis

Women were underrepresented in the news reports as newsmakers, victims, survivors, sources, subjects, officials, and even as reporters. Of the 35 articles that had bylines in *The Inquirer*, only 15% of them had female authors, male reporters wrote 32.8% of the articles, 2.8% of the articles had both female and male co-authors, and 64% of the entire sample from *The Inquirer* had no byline. Also, only four female journalists reported on the Ebola crisis for that newspaper, while 9 male reporters contributed to their Ebola coverage. Similarly, in *The Times*, four female reporters wrote 15.7% of the 19 articles in the sample, 9 male reporters wrote 63% of the news reports, and15.7% of the articles were written by female and male co-writers. One article in the sample had no byline. While the level of representation is still low, *The New York Times* sample has the highest representation of female reporters: 11 female reporters wrote 29.7% of the articles, 25 male reporters wrote 59.4% of the articles, and 10.8% of the articles had both female and male co-authors. One article had no byline. These statistics are available in Table 2.

Table 2: Gender Representation of Newsmakers in Sample

Roles	*The Times*		*The New York Times*		*The Inquirer*	
	%F	%M	%F	%M	%F	%M
Official Sources	31.3	68.8	13.04	78.6	32.3	67.7
Spokesperson	0	0	0	0	33.3	66.7
Health Professionals/ Expert	38.5%	61.5	26.3	85.3	7.1	92.9
Victims	42.9	57.1	41.5	55.3	27.8	72.2
Survivors	0	0	35.7	64.3	0	0
Eye Witness	0	100	30	70	50	50
Subject	44.4	55	37.5	62.5	60	40
Identified by Family Status	50	50	64.3	35.7	90	10
Percentage of Stories Reported	15.7	63	29.7	59.4	15.7	32.8*

*64.3% of the sample has no byline

There were no significant differences in the type of reports written by the reporters in *The Times* and *The Inquirer*, and *The New York Times*. The length of the articles was also not significantly different by gender in *The Inquirer* which had on average 576.9 words per article written by male reporters compared to 507.7 words per article for female reporters. The difference is bigger in *The New York Times*, where the average number of words written by male reporters was 1,111 words, compared to 788 words per article written by female reporter. The only newspaper where female reporters on average wrote longer articles than their male counterparts was *The Times,* where female reporters for actually wrote 743 words on average per article, compared to the male reporters' 417.5 words per article.

As stated above, women were underrepresented as stakeholders in the media coverage of the Ebola crisis. Females make up only 33.3%, 32.3%, and 13.4% of the official sources used by *The Times*, *The New York Times*, and *The Inquirer* respectively. They were also underrepresented as healthcare workers and professionals in all three newspapers. In *The Times*, women are cited fewer times than men in health professional roles (38.5% to 61.53%). In *The Inquirer* the figure for women is much lower as females were only portrayed as health officials sources 7.1% of the time compared to males making up 92% of the medical sources used in their reporting. *The New York Times* also showed healthcare workers predominantly as men (85%), and then 26% of the time as women.

Women were even underrepresented as victims and survivors of Ebola. *The Times* mentions females as 42.9% victims they wrote about, compared to 57% of male victims. Similarly, *The New York Times* covers more male victims (55.3%) and fewer females victims (41.5%). The disparity is even more jarring in *The Inquirer* which portrayed 72% of the victims in their as males, and only 28% as female victims. Only *The New York Times* covered their subjects as survivors, and males still made up 64.3% of the survivors that they reported on.

The New York Times published three articles which focused on three Western female victims, and eventual survivors of Ebola. The stories of Nancy Writebol, an American aid worker; Nina Pham, a Dallas-based nurse; and María Teresa Romero Ramos, a Spanish nurse, reflect the reality that Ebola's primary victims were female caregivers. However, the reporters do not make that connection in their writing. Even in the articles that covered the female Ebola victims in Africa, the newspaper failed to make the connection between women and the disease.

In another article by *The New York Times* from December 2014, the reporter traces the first Ebola case in Sierra Leone was traced to a single funeral, where 14 women ended up infected. Once again, no explanation was provided as to why so many women ended up infected at that funeral, and why they were the ones who got infected by the virus first. Another article from the same newspaper which follows male and female victims in Liberia, tells the story of caregivers; two male and two female caregivers. This is not reflective of Liberian culture where women are the primary caregivers, which might explain why women were more severely affected by the virus.

Only three articles from *The Inquirer* focused entirely on women: one on mothers discussing school resumption in Liberia; the donation of a rape and sexual assault center by the United Nations Population Fund in Liberia, and President Sirleaf's announcement of a financial assistance program for Liberian girls who were willing to complete their high school education. The last two articles were written by female reporters.

While it was not a predominant theme in all the articles, women were sometimes framed in stereotypical roles. The article by *The Inquirer* which had the most female sources was one about low enrollment at Liberian schools. Schools had been suspended in September 2014 due to the Ebola crisis, and when the government set reopening for January 2015, the paper noticed a trend dubbed "Ebola fatigue," which in the school setting meant that many students were going to skip the school year. A majority of sources cited in this article were mothers whose children had not been enrolled in school for a variety of reasons including poverty, fear of a rebound of the outbreak, and resentment toward the government for not assisting families impacted by Ebola. No fathers were interviewed. The only male source cited in the article was a senator, who is a powerful figure. Another example of women being cast in stereotypical roles, while men are cast in position of power comes from a *Times* article written about the state of the NHS under the leadership of British Health Secretary, Jeremy Hunt. The article only mentions his wife in the conclusion.

> Mr. Hunt's wife has had 3 babies on the NHS while he has been on the cabinet. "When I had my daughter Eleanor in July, seconds after she emerged, a nurse leant over and said, 'I bet you were pleased you kept your job in the reshuffle.' And although it's a tough job, I am glad I did." (Thomson & Sylvester, October 14, 2014)

The Africans in the Crisis

Even though the Ebola crisis was an outbreak that had the most impact on the African countries of Guinea, Liberia, and Sierra Leone, Africans for the most part were underrepresented. The only paper that prominently featured African subjects and sources was *The Inquirer*, which is a Liberian publication. *The Inquirer* portrayed more Africans than Westerners as authorities (92.9%), health professionals and experts (85.7%), victims (100%) and subjects (90%). *The Times*, the reverse was true as Africans were portrayed less prominently as authorities (18.7%), and health professionals (7.7%), and subjects (10.5%). Western and African victims were however portrayed an equal number of times in *The Times*. *The New York Times* portrayed also Africans less prominently as health professionals (12.3%), and officials (32.6%), subjects (33.4%), but predominantly as victims (61%). This data is represented in Table 3 and Table 4.

Table 3: Representation of News Sources by Location: Western Subjects

Roles	%Male	% Female	%Total Western
The Times			
Health Experts	53.8	38.7	92.3
Authorities	62.5	18.8	81.3
Subjects	55.6	33.9	88.9
Victims	25	25	50
Survivors	/	/	0
Eyewitness	/	/	0

Roles	%Male	% Female	%Total Western
Personal Experience	100	/	100
Identified by Family Status	/	100	100
The New York Times			
Health Experts	66.7	21.05	87.7
Authorities	60.9	6.51	67.4
Subjects	50	16.6	66.6
Victims	21.9	17.03	39
Survivors	50	28.6	78.6
Eyewitness	20	/	20
Personal Experience	12.5	6.25	19
Identified by Family Status	16.7	33.3	50
The Inquirer			
Health Experts	14.3	/	14.3
Authorities	5	2	7.1
Subjects	3.3	6.7	10
Victims	/	/	0
Survivors	/	/	0
Eyewitness	/	/	0
Personal Experience	/	/	0
Identified by Family Status	/	/	0

Table 4: Representation of News Sources by Location: African Subjects

Roles	%Male	% Female	%Total African
The Times			
Health Experts	7.7	/	7.7
Authorities	6.6	18.7	18.7
Subjects	/	12.5	11.1
Victims	37.5	12.5	50
Survivors	/	/	0
Eyewitness	100	/	100
Personal Experience	/	/	0
Identified by Family Status	/	/	0
The New York Times			
Health Experts	7.01	5.3	12.3
Authorities	26.08	6.5	32.6
Subjects	16.7	16.7	33.4
Victims	36.6	24.4	61
Survivors	14.3	7.1	21.4
Eyewitness	50	30	80
Personal Experience	62.5	18.5	81
Identified by Family Status	33.3	16.7	50
The Inquirer			
Health Experts	78.6	7.1	85.7
Authorities	62.6	30.3	92.9

Roles	%Male	% Female	%Total African
Subjects	40	50	90
Victims	72.2	27.7	100
Survivors	/	/	0
Eyewitness	50	50	100
Personal Experience	/	100	100
Identified by Family Status	10	90	100

Healthcare workers were the group that received the most attention in the media reports. Ebola killed over 500 healthcare workers in countries with already weekend health systems. The danger faced by health workers and the deaths of health workers like Dr. Samuel Brisbane, the first Liberian doctor to die from Ebola were highlighted in numerous articles by *The Inquirer*. *The Times* and *The New York Times* also covered Western doctors and aid workers who lost their lives to the disease or survived. Both newspapers focused more on the Western health workers, the challenges they faced on the field. Not only does such coverage frame healthcare workers as the group that suffered the most from the outbreak, but it incorrectly frames Western healthcare workers as the group that was most victimized by Ebola. Few African doctors or health experts were even used as sources in the articles published by the newspapers. In *The Inquirer*, Africans make up 85.7% of the health professionals covered by the paper. See Table 4.

The two Western newspapers also focused on the shutting down of hospitals, and the opening of new treatment centers by the British and the Americans. There was a *New York Times* article on a new hospital constructed by the United States military for healthcare workers in Liberia. The air-conditioned facility was staffed by 69 American Public Health Service members and was open only to health care workers from Liberia and foreign countries. This, however, excluded those supporting the Ebola operation like burial team members, caretakers for children, and outreach members. Similarly, *The Times* stated in its coverage that British aid workers were guaranteed treatment at a newly built Ebola facility in Sierra Leone opened by the British. These

Western workers were also provided with protective gear and in cases where transmission happened, health authorities investigated the case to ensure that it did not repeat itself. The African health workers unfortunately did not always have the best equipment. As Sheri Fink stated, these African medics often had to work under deplorable conditions.

> Ebola reveals inequities. We read about doctors and nurses treating patients without so much as running water and gloves in a major hospital in Guinea. What chance do they have to avoid contracting Ebola? Nearly 40 years since the discovery of this virus that kills most of its victims -- that has affected the world's most impoverished people -- there are still no vaccines or specific treatments proven safe and effective. (Fink, September 7, 2014)

Another level of privilege enjoyed by the health workers was the access Western health workers had to medical evacuations. Of all those “whisked away for experimental care” (to Europe or the U.S., only one Sudanese citizen employed by the United Nations benefitted from that service (Fink, November 6, 2014). Although British officials stated that they intended to determine executing medical evacuations for British aid workers on a case-by-case basis, at least these evacuations were a possibility for them. The access Western health workers had to experimental drugs was also not available to most African health workers. *The New York Times* only mentions three Liberian doctors as recipients of an experimental drug, ZMapp, while most Western victims and survivors received drugs like ZMapp and Favipiravir, as well as plasma from Ebola survivors. It was not until April 2015 that *The New York Times* reported that a new drug, TKM-Ebola-Makona, was being tested on patients in Sierra Leone. Sierra Leone was already on the path to recovery at the time of this trial.

Such privilege was particularly highlighted in *The New York Times,* which wrote about African Ebola victims who almost always died, and Western survivors, thus, showing the contrast between the access to better medical services that the Western aid workers had. The narrative of two American doctors who had recovered from Ebola, and a British nurse who was recovering from the disease after receiving ZMapp, juxtaposed with the newspaper's narrative of the African victims who in their articles mostly died, shows that while Ebola might have infected everyone indiscriminately, it did not kill indiscriminately.

As regards female African victims, a. majority of the female victims written about in *The Times* are Western as they make up 25% of the victims written about, compared to the female African victims who made up only 12.5% of the victims identified in the articles. In *The New York Times* and *The Inquirer*, the trend was reversed. The female African victims received more media coverage in *The Inquirer* which did not cover any Western female Ebola victims. *The Inquirer's* coverage focused primarily on Liberians and mostly Liberian victims. In *The New York Times*, female African victims made up 24.4% if the victims, while Western female victims received 17.03% of the coverage. The quality of the coverage given to female Western victims was however significantly better than the coverage of the female African victims in both Western newspapers. Individual African women and Africans in general were not given as much media attention by *The New York Times* and *The Times*, as they were mostly mentioned in passing in the news articles or written about as part of a group of victims.

African women were however used as props in several articles to make the case for Western nations assistance in the recovery efforts of the Ebola affected countries. The image of the helpless pregnant African woman was an image used repeatedly by the two Western papers to depict the dire state of the health systems in the Ebola affected countries. In *The Times*, a British medic uses the example of maternal mortality rates going up in Sierra Leone due to uncontrolled obstructed labor, caused by the failing health system. *The New York Times* shared a story by the president of the Médecins Sans Frontières, Dr. Joanne Liu, who said that her team had met six pregnant women in Liberia on different instances, unable to find facilities to deliver their babies. According to Dr. Liu, by the time the MSF staff could attend to these ladies, the babies had died. The image of the helpless pregnant African mother is used to evoke sympathy and inspire action.

While *The Inquirer* presented Africans more frequently than the Western papers, the quality of coverage of these victims was lacking in many ways, thus, showing that the media should not only be concerned with the quantity of coverage given to a subject, but also the quality. Of all three newspapers, it was *The New York Times* that most highlighted the effects of Ebola on its victims, even the African victims. This paper also highlighted why preventative measures meant to stop Ebola, like not holding hands and quarantining entire towns were difficult to implement in a country like Liberia. In a piece for *The New York Times* that tells the story of several Liberians who contracted Ebola due to cultural practices and family ties, Helene Cooper asks, "can you really not touch an ailing mother?" Cooper tells the story of a Precious Diggs, a 33-year-old mother, who had seen the signs about Ebola but could not stop herself from comforting her ailing 2-year-old daughter, Rebecca. Rebecca passed the disease to her and died. Her mother survived. In the same article, readers were introduced to Levy Zeopuegar, who charted a private car to rush his ailing sister to a hospital. When the driver mentioned the blood oozing from her nose, Zeopuegar used a towel to wipe it. He lost his sister and her husband to the disease, and almost died of the disease himself. In the case of Ephraim Dunbar, his mother was his Achilles heel.

> Ephraim Dunbar couldn't. When Mr. Dunbar, 37, got a phone call in late August that his mother had taken ill, he rushed to her house in Dolos Town, the enclave near Harbel where dozens of people have succumbed to Ebola. He found her in bed, vomiting blood.
>
> His mind went immediately to the precautions against the virus. He did his best not to touch her. But as she grew worse, unable to keep anything down, he gave her milk, and tried to soothe her. His skin touched hers.
>
> His mother died the next day.

> Just after his mother's funeral, Mr. Dunbar's own forehead got hot with fever. For 15 days, he stayed at John F. Kennedy Hospital in Monrovia, fighting the disease. It was a fight he eventually won. But when he got out of the hospital, he found out that four of his sisters, his brother, his father, his aunt, his uncle and his two nephews had died. His entire family, wiped out in days.
>
> On Friday, Mr. Dunbar said he would do nothing different. "That's my ma," he said, "that she the one born me." (Cooper, October 5, 2014)

Stories like Cooper's shed light on the African victims of Ebola like none of the other newspapers did. While *The New York Times* only published a few articles on The African victims, these stories were rich in the details they provided to audiences.

Efficacy and Risk Information

The Inquirer was the paper that published the most efficacy information, with 24.2% of its articles containing some efficacy and risk information. In several articles, the reporters provided basic information about the disease like its history, symptoms, manifestations, deadly nature, and how it spreads. Articles by this newspaper routinely contained information such as: "The spread of Ebola can occur through direct contact with the blood, secretion, or other body fluid of an infected person" (*The Inquirer,* July 29, 2014). There was even an article dedicated to the danger of selling and eating bush meat during the period of the outbreak because that meat was a possible carrier of the Ebola virus. A slightly lower 21.5% and 15.8% of articles from *The New York Times and The Times* contained efficacy and risk information.

Starting on December 2, 2014, newspapers, starting with *The Inquirer,* started featuring articles about the reducing the number of new Ebola patients being reported around Liberia. Even at this phase of the recovery though, these articles, specifically those from *The Inquirer* still contained warnings from health officials urging Liberians to continue observing preventative measures. The articles from all three newspapers reflect the optimism felt by health experts about the significant decrease in the number of new Ebola cases that they were seeing. The newspapers also portrayed them as apprehensive that without the necessary precautions, the Ebola virus could reemerge, like it did in August 2014. Fears that became reality as a July 14, 2015 article by *The Inquirer* confirms a new outbreak of the disease seven weeks after the WHO declared Liberia as Ebola free (May 9, 2015). However, this third outbreak was smaller and health officials like Liberia's Chief Medical Officer, Doctor Frances Ketter, expressed confidence in messages shared with the country.

> "We now have the expertise and we are also well equipped to handle the current situation so there's no need for panic. All you have to do is to inform our team whenever you have information on any suspected Ebola case," Doctor Ketter assured. (Sendolo, July 14, 2015)

Efficacy information was once again shared with the public, urging them to follow the Ebola preventative measures such as seeking medical help and not leaving monitoring locations. This means that *The Inquirer*, unlike the other two newspapers, shared efficacy information for over a one-year span.

The Times articles covered the reactions of many nations to the Ebola outbreak, which included calls to shut borders, airport screenings in the U.K., cancellation of flights and the shutting of borders with regions worst affected by the Ebola virus. *The Times* also published some efficacy information, specifically about how the disease spreads and the death toll. Like *The Times*, *The New York Times* also covered measures and suggestions about how to prevent a possible spread of Ebola to the U.S., including temperature checks for travelers from West Africa at airports like JFK in New York. Another suggestion was to institute a travel ban from the West African countries, which Dr. Thomas Frieden, director of the CDC, discouraged. In line with the British Health Secretary, Dr. Frieden argued that the way to reduce the risk to Americans was to "stop" it at the source in Africa." (Knowlton & Belluck, October 14, 2014).

The Times published several articles which encouraged British medics to go volunteer in treating Ebola, both in West Africa and in Britain because as the British Health Secretary "if we are going to make our country safe, we need to make sure the virus is contained." However, most of the articles from *The Times* contained little to no risk information about the low chances of the disease spreading to the Western world. Only one article mentioned that the risk of Ebola spreading to Scotland were low, even though they had a lab that could test patients for the disease. This seems almost like a missed opportunity because the newspaper had a European audience, and Europe lacked pilots willing to transport Ebola patients because of fear.

Also, since the paper had repeatedly covered misconceptions about the disease, they could have possibly made a difference in public sentiment toward aid workers returning home. An example of when the newspaper had to state explicitly that Americans faced a relatively low Ebola risk was when they published an article about the American aid worker forced to travel to Britain because of the threats he received. While *The Times* article included a quote from Justin Forsyth, the chief executive of Save the Children, an international NGO, calling the threats "appalling" and "ridiculous," and urging "America to stop imposing de facto travel bans because they risked thwarting efforts to curb the spread of the disease," the article fell short of explaining why the risk was low (Starkey, November 5, 2014). That trend continued in the other articles.

Partnerships

Several stakeholders had called for contributions from all avenues to combat Ebola instead of expecting individual governments to fight the virus. The newspapers framed the Ebola outbreak as a global crisis. The British Health Secretary, Jeremy Hunt, called the outbreak a massive challenge and global health emergency which “could get to the scale of the AIDS epidemic, the impact could be absolutely huge.”

The Inquirer placed great emphasis on covering the partnerships between different stakeholders, both local and international to combat the Ebola crisis. Different organizations partnered with health authorities in Ebola-affected countries to provide relief and create awareness. Organizations such as the Liberia Refining Company and the Global Logistics Services Incorporated donated money or services as part of their corporate responsibility to their clients and citizens of Liberia. The Liberia Refining Company donated $75,000 for the purchase of preventative gear for health workers nationwide, while the Global Logistics Services Incorporated waived its agency charge for materials imported to use in fighting Ebola.

Organizations like the Red Cross partnered with the Liberian government on social mobilization and awareness, psychosocial counseling, contact tracing, providing survivor kits to victims, as well as dead body management and burial of Ebola victims in Montserrado. The Liberian Bar Association announced that they would use their company truck to sensitize citizens on the danger of the Ebola virus. The World Lebanese Cultural Union of Liberia also donated several items to the National Task Force to help curtail the spread of Ebola including food and personal sanitation items. *The Inquirer* also covered donations from then president of Nigeria, Goodluck Jonathan, who contributed $500,000 to the Liberian fight against Ebola. As well as the personal contribution of food and $5,000 by then Liberian president, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf to the John F. Kennedy Hospital.

Even religious bodies like the Catholic church organized trainings for health workers including priests, Catholic health workers, instructors, parishioners and catechists. This seminar was meant to teach them about how to support recovered Ebola patients, prevention and community outreach, reopening and care of Catholic health centers, and pastoral support at burial sites. Staff members were also provided with protective gear like masks, thermometers, gloves, soap, overalls, and bleach. Meanwhile Western churches like HIS Church, based in the United Kingdom, donated food and non-food items worth $1.4 million to assist Liberians living in quarantined communities. *The Inquirer's* coverage of donations continued throughout the sample.

The New York Times, *The Times*, and *The Inquirer* each published some articles dedicated to politics and the implication it would have on the fight against. In *The New York Times*, several articles focused on President Obama's request for Ebola funds from Congress after his party lost the 2014 mid-term elections. In *The Inquirer,* the articles focused on appeals for the special senatorial midterm elections to be conducted before the mandate of 15 senators expired in January 2015, since the State of Emergency which led to its suspension in October 2014. There was also another article with advice from a health expert from the CDC, urging the Liberian government to take the necessary precautions to avoid the transmission of Ebola during the special elections.

One of the articles from *The Times* had as subject French far right politician, Jean-Marie Le Pen, talking about Ebola could affect elections happening in May 2014. According to the Le Pen, the founder of the National Front in France, Ebola could solve the issue of African immigration to France, which he said was "in danger of being 'submerged' by African immigrants." He added that this issue of African overpopulation had a quick solution in the Ebola outbreak: "In three months, His Grace Ebola can resolve that." The focus of this article was how Le Pen's remarks could shape the race and President Holland's Socialist Party which was placing third in polls, behind the National Front.

The Times published several articles which underscored the need for Western volunteers to assist the African countries to combat Ebola. Some of the articles even included pleas for help like this one from the chief executive of Save the Children:

> Mr Forsyth said that there was a desperate shortage of medical professionals in Sierra Leone, Liberia and Guinea, the countries that have borne the brunt of the outbreak, meaning that containment efforts and clinics needed international help.
>
> "We need doctors and nurses, and we need some countries that are putting bans on travel to get out of the way and to help," he told the BBC. (Jerome Starkey, November 5, 2014)

Even the British Health Secretary encouraged British medical personnel to go serve in West Africa, stating that containing the virus in Africa was the solution to keeping Britain safe.

Highlighting the Heroes

All three newspapers highlighted the work of their citizens and partners in the fight against Ebola. *The Inquirer* showcased the contributions made to their country by other countries like Nigeria. In fact, donations to Liberia during the crisis were the most-covered topic in *The Inquirer*. Another example of *The Inquirer* highlighting the contributions of Africans was the article on the invention of an automatic Ebola hand washing bucket by a Liberian. The system dispensed chlorinated water when a person stepped on the peddle. This bucket was praised by government officials because it limited touching, which is one way through which the virus spreads.

The Times and *The New York Times* showcased the contributions of the British and the U.S. in fighting Ebola. *The Times* was the paper that published the most pleas for global support. As the Ebola cases reduced, *The Times*' coverage of pleas for help evolved to an appeal for help in the recovery efforts of Guinea, Sierra Leone and Liberia from Oxfam.

> "People need cash in their hands now, they need good jobs to feed their families in the near future and decent health, education and other essential services," said Mark Goldring, the chief executive of Oxfam, on a visit to Liberia. "They've gone through hell, they cannot be left high and dry…."
>
> "The world cannot walk away now that, thankfully, cases of this deadly disease are dropping," Mr Goldring said. "Failure to help these countries after surviving ebola will condemn them to a double disaster." (Starkey, January 28, 2015)

Guinea, Liberia, and Sierra Leone had suffered extensive damage from combatting Ebola. More than 8,600 people were dead, three quarters of Liberians had lost 39% of their income, the three African countries that bore the brunt of the disease saw 12% of their GDPs wiped away, and already weak healthcare systems had been hit hard. As a British medical worker said:

> "From a public health perspective the problem isn't really ebola, it is the complete breakdown of the health infrastructure," said a British medical worker. "For example, if someone has an obstructed labour they will just die. This means that about 2 per cent of pregnancies are likely to result in maternal death." (Starkey, January 28, 2015)

The Times and *New York Times* highlighted the work of aid workers, as well as those who contracted the disease and their evacuations from Africa, like Dr. Kent Brantly, a doctor working with Samaritan's Purse and Nancy Writebol from the U.S., and Pauline Cafferky, and Will Pooley, British nurses who contracted Ebola while serving in Sierra Leone. There were even articles on the first American nurse who was diagnosed with Ebola after caring for Eric Duncan at the hospital in Dallas. The article focused on efforts to understand how the nurse contracted the disease while wearing full protective clothing. They also wrote about the opening of hospitals by the British and Americans in Liberia and Sierra Leone, the development of the experimental Ebola drug (ZMapp) and a vaccine (MVA-BN Filovirus), and the use of these drugs on Ebola patients, especially Western patients, While Westerners constituted a small number of those infected and killed by Ebola, they were portrayed an equal number of times as Ebola victims in *The Times*, unlike in *The New York Times* and *The Inquirer*.

The New York Times and *The Times* also published articles about Western doctors working against all odds to stop Ebola. Both newspapers portrayed more Westerners as health experts, with *The Times* using Western health professionals as sources 92% of the time. *The New York Times* portrayed Westerners in health care roles 87% of the time. As seen in Table 2, only *The Inquirer* used more African sources who work in healthcare roles (85%).

The New York Times and *The Times* described the poor health systems in the Ebola affected countries, hospital shutdowns and striking healthcare workers, to highlight the work done by their citizens. In *The New York Times*, we are introduced to Dr. Daniel Bausch, the American doctor who found himself caring for 55 Ebola patients with only one colleague due to striking nurses at the hospital where he was working in Sierra Leone. Dr. Bausch explained that such conditions heightened the risk to health professionals because for safe practices to be enforced, it was vital to have enough health personnel and a controlled environment.

In a November 5, 2014 article, *The Times* published an article about how British aid workers from the King's Sierra Leone Partnership (KSLP), were able to keep Connaught Hospital open. Their work earned them the praise of the commander of the British Ebola Task Force in Sierra Leone, who called them and the Médecins Sans Frontières "the real heroes of the Ebola story here," and in the process ignored the heroism of the African health workers who worked along the Western doctors, despite not always having the same access to protective equipment and medical evacuations to the Western world. While the British aid workers serving in Sierra Leone were not guaranteed evacuation if they contracted the disease, they were guaranteed treatment at a newly built Ebola clinic in Sierra Leone opened by the British. Evacuations were also a possibility that British officials intended to handle on a case-by-case basis. The African health workers did not have that same privilege.

Accountability

The question of accountability was for the most part not given much attention in the media coverage of Ebola. However, the response to the outbreak was framed by the articles as slow, and even careless, as the disease. The topic of accountability can be examined from the financial angle and the medical response. Several articles from *The Inquirer* referenced the public's distrust in the Liberian government and its ability to handle the Ebola crisis. The quarantining of communities in Liberia and the government's handling of the process and the delay in removing corpses were other reasons why the government of Liberia was criticized. The decision to quarantine the West Point for example was met with protests. In Montserrado County, Liberian police officers had to intervene when angry residents threw stones at the house of their District Representative for his "lack of concern" over their problems. As the District Representative for Montserrado County, Acarous Gray said, the government's response was provocative

> Rep. Gray said the delay in removing bodies from communities despite persistent calls by residents has the propensity to create chaos.
>
> Rep. Gray made the assertion yesterday when hundreds of angry residents set up roadblocks on the Capitol By-pass demanding the removal of the body of a youth who died in the community whose body has been in his residence since Tuesday. (Sayon, September 12, 2014)

The residents were also angry because sixteen patients had been turned away by several treatment centers because they were at full capacity. The residents suspect this resulted in the death of at least one victim. It is ironic that the Liberian government, which sent numerous messages encouraging people to take precautions and seek treatment, was unable to quickly remove Ebola patients and victims, even when residents wanted to curb the spread of the disease in their communities.

While *The Inquirer* published these criticisms about the Liberian government, it mostly adopted a neutral tone in its coverage of the outbreak. There were no questions in the newspaper about the allocation and use of all the resources donated to the government to combat Ebola – donations, which they covered extensively. The lone article which talked about the repercussions for anyone who misused those funds was only a report about a government minister threatening to punish any embezzlers.

An article from *The Inquirer* from September 9, 2015 confirms that the Liberian press indeed did not prioritize stories on accountability relating to the use of Ebola funds. A study by the Center for Media Studies and Peace Building (CEMESP) and the International Research and Exchange Board (IMEX) examined 140 stories on Ebola produced by 14 Liberian newspapers and broadcasters. The CEMESP and IMEX study found that of the 40 news articles in the sample that reported on issues related to Ebola funds or accountability, emphasis was placed on topics like pledges, donations, and benefits and complaints of Ebola workers. This confirms findings in this research which actually found that *The Inquirer* did indeed focus on those topics when reporting on funds and did not ask questions about how the Ebola funds were spent. This study found that 40% of the articles in *The Inquirer's* sample focused on pledges and donations to the Ebola struggle, meanwhile 10% focused on the complaints of health professionals.

As the watchdogs of society, holding officials accountable is the responsibility of the press. As the media specialist for IMEX, Maureen Sieh stated, holding officials accountable for the use of Ebola funds and the impact this has on the population is the media's responsibility. The president of the Press Union of Liberia expressed disappointment that Liberian reporters do not use tools like the Freedom of Information Act to obtain information, while Sieh blamed the failure of Liberian reporters to report on accountability-related stories on inexperience:

> … accountability reporting is new for the Liberian media; although they have reported on corruption but reporting on accountability of Ebola funds remains a challenge. (Sendolo, September 9, 2015)

While this article by *The Inquirer* reports on the failures of the media as regards accountability reporting, it still does not address how *The Inquirer* will address this criticism in their future coverage. Like the other articles, it is a report on media performance with official statements from media experts, instead of an introspective look at the performance of the newspaper.

The Times did not explore accountability as a major topic in any of the articles examined for this study. Only one article hurriedly criticized the Western response to the Ebola outbreak. In an article about the opening of an Ebola clinic in Sierra Leone by the British in November 2014, reporter Jerome Starkey states that the opening of this clinic after Ebola had already killed thousands and was “emblematic of the lag in rich countries' responses to the world's worst outbreak of the haemorrhaghic fever.” This raises the issue of the need for these nations to be accountable for their response to the crisis.

The New York Times’ Sheri Fink provides readers with a backstory on her coverage of the WHO’s performance in responding to Ebola, a story about holding the organization accountable for their “bumbling, insufficient response to an alarming global threat” (September 7, 2014). During her reporting, the director general of the WHO, Margaret Chan defended the organization’s record by suggesting that the WHO should “focus on developing technical norms and standards and should not be considered a direct aid provider or operational first responder in emergencies.” Fink did not consider that as a satisfying response but went ahead to conduct interviews that questioned the validity of Chan’s statement. In one of those interviews, a doctor said she “wondered why, then, the W.H.O. had a department of emergencies and was trying to eradicate polio; it would be a good idea, she said, to put the W.H.O. officials in front of their paradoxes" (Fink, September 7, 2014).

A report by Morrison O. G. Sayon for *The Inquirer* mentioned that despite international help, Ebola had strained the already weak health systems in Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone, and that Nigeria has some of the "least adequate health infrastructure in Africa," despite being the continent's biggest economy and most populous nation (July 28, 2014). Such criticisms raise the need for the media to hold the governments accountable for the state of their health sectors in these countries. Even the European level of preparation was called into doubt in *The New York Times*. First, when a Spanish aid worker who had contracted Ebola in West Africa had to wait for 50 hours before she was evacuated to Spain. In another story examining how a Spanish nurse's aide contracted the disease in Spain, *The New York Times* mentions that the Carlos III Hospital where she worked was once Spain's infectious disease center, which had been dismantled because of funding cuts. This hospital had been hurriedly re-equipped and disinfected in August 2014 in order to treat a Spanish priest who contracted Ebola in Africa.

Insular View

Most of the newspapers focused their coverage on how Ebola impacted their part of the world, which is not surprising because news values emphasize local coverage. Articles from *The Inquirer* focused almost exclusively on the Ebola crisis in Liberia. Even when the paper talked about the death of the first Ebola patient in Nigeria, it was notable that the deceased patient, Patrick Sawyer was a Liberian official on a business trip to Nigeria. There were no articles published about the Western doctors who contracted Ebola while working in Liberia or neighboring countries. There were no articles in the sample that focused exclusively on how Ebola had affected another country, only brief mentions.

A few times when *The Inquirer* mentioned the other countries fighting Ebola, it was in relation to Liberia or its people. Often, the stories that mentioned foreign countries focused on donations that were made to Liberia and these countries, like when President Jonathan of Nigeria pledged $4 million to the Ebola fight, or when the U.S. Assistant Secretary for African Affairs visited Liberia to evaluate the state of U.S. support to the fight against Ebola. Other foreign leaders like President Ernest Bai of Sierra Leone and President Alpha Conde of Guinea were mentioned, it was usually in tandem with President Sirleaf of Liberia to plead for united global action to fight Ebola from the United.

The insular view theme did not just run across the coverage or non-coverage of other countries. Other diseases and conditions requiring care were for the most part not a subject of media coverage during the Ebola crisis especially in *The Inquirer*. This newspaper had three articles that stood out because they focused on non-Ebola related medical needs during the crisis – the opening of a center for female victims of rape and sexual assault, and an article on the HIV rates of the homosexual community in Liberia and the impact of Ebola on this community. Another article focused on the rising mortality rates among the underprivileged because services for disabled Liberians had been abandoned during the Ebola crisis. However, this last story was mostly a plea for help by a social worker and did not contain any data to back the claim. Other than those stories, most articles from *The Inquirer* focused exclusively on the Ebola story.

The lack of data is an issue which came up in *The Times* coverage. In an article which brings up other health issues that had gone unchecked during Ebola, Jerome Starkey asserts that malaria deaths increased during the outbreak, but at an unknown rate because “people were afraid to go to go the hospital at the height of the Ebola outbreak." The difficulty in accessing data for other health-related stories is a topic that came up in the interviews of reporters who covered the Ebola crisis. This shows how important it is for journalists to have access to data for their reporting because otherwise, important stories might not get at much attention as they deserve.

The New York Times raised the issue of rising infant mortality rates, and research to treat and study Ebola in several articles. Experimental drugs like ZMapp received repeated coverage and mentions from *The New York Times*. One article focused on the research being done by scientists to understand the genetic mutation of Lassa Fever and Ebola (two similar diseases), and possible treatments. One of the diseases that was not ignored in *The Times* coverage was AIDS. The paper published a couple of articles which compared the enormity and spread of Ebola to the AIDS crisis, which has killed more than 30 million people. The case was made in these articles by the British Health Secretary, Jeremy Hunt and some scientists that if other nations did not intervene to contain Ebola, it could escape from Africa and follow the same path as HIV. According to Ben Neuman, a virologist the Reading University, this could have been possible because:

> There are many parts of the developing world where conditions are ripe for an ebola epidemic, if the virus is able to escape from Africa. In general, HIV hotspots of today could become the ebola hotspots of tomorrow" (Smith, Sylvester & Thomson, October 14, 2014)

The Nature of the Media through the Lens of their Ebola Reporting

The coverage of the Ebola crisis exposed audiences to the ways in which newspapers work. It confirmed that newspapers work in cycles. Starting in December 2014, the subjects of coverage in *The Inquirer* and *The New York Times* indicated that the crisis had entered a new phase. Ebola cases were no longer increasing exponentially, and *The New York Times* in February 2015 wrote a piece about the Médecins Sans Frontières doctors seeking to understand the declining rates of the disease, as well as why the viral load in new patients was reducing. Articles began to focus increasingly on assessing the damage caused by Ebola and efforts to move on from the crisis. *The Times*' coverage of the Ebola crisis also took another tone in January 2015, when the newspaper published a report on Oxfam's appeal to Western countries to help Sierra Leone, Liberia, and Guinea rebuild. From this point, the articles focused more on development

As more articles in *The Inquirer* focused more on topics related to the reducing number of new Ebola patients being reported around Liberia, there was also more talk emphasis on the recovery effort return to business. School resumption was a common theme from December 2014 to January 2015. There was the article on the economic impact of the outbreak with the Central Bank of Liberia blaming the outbreak for a decline in the country's export earnings in 2014. Iron ore and rubber exports declined by 10.9%, while diamond, gold, and round log export earnings declined from $14.6 million to $8.5 million in June 2014. In the 2015 articles by *The Inquirer*, business seemed to be returning to normal with schools resuming, and businesses reopening. Some companies executing projects in Liberia reduced the scale of their operations, closed their doors and sometimes left the country due to Ebola but returned to Liberia once the epidemic was under control.

The coverage of the Ebola crisis also revealed the differences between the different newspapers under analysis. The content published by *The Inquirer* (mostly reports on donations made to the government of Liberia to fight Ebola) made the newspaper seem less independent compared to the Western newspapers. As suggested by the Liberian reporters interviewed for this study, the Liberian press and the government partnered to eradicate Ebola. This could possibly explain the absence of concerns about government accountability in the newspaper. In an article for *The Inquirer*, Antoinette Sendolo reported that journalists attending one of the regular press briefings at the Liberian Ministry of Information Culture and Tourism took a pledge:

> Meanwhile, several journalists who attended the MICAT regular press briefing as mandated by Minster Brown pledged their commitments to the fight against the Ebola virus and to support the President's Ebola Must Go Campaign which was recently launched by President Sirleaf. (Sendolo, December 12, 2014)

The pledge taken by the journalists reads: “I citizen of Liberia, pledge to protect myself, my family and community because Ebola must go and stopping Ebola is everybody's business.” While this pledge is a commitment to contributing toward ending Ebola, it binds the reporters to the government, thus blurring the role of the journalist as a watchdog of society.

Another aspect of the coverage of the Ebola crisis which differentiated the different newspapers analyzed for this study was their attention to personal stories. *The New York Times* was able to tell stories and paint pictures in the minds of the audience because they published several articles that told stories describing the sights, smell and sound of the countries and suffering experienced people affected by Ebola. Stories about the Sierra Leonean soccer players, the revolting Guinean villagers resisting the presence of health workers, and Liberians who contracted Ebola by caring for sick relatives. Stories like that of Esther, a 5-year-old Liberian girl who as she lay ill on a sidewalk, surrounded by of 100 people standing at a safe distance and was not rescued even by her own father because he was afraid. She died a week later. *The New York Times* also wrote about the experiences of Western victims, like the American missionary, Nancy Writebol, and María Teresa Romero Ramos, the Spanish nurse, both Ebola survivors. Writebol not only survived the disease, but was happy to donate her blood plasma to Craig Spencer, a fellow American battling for his life in a New York hospital.

It was also only *The New York Times* which provided first-hand accounts from Ebola survivors, and families affected by the crisis, which is possibly a contributing factor to the richness of their stories. In *The Times*, the non-official sources featured were aid workers. In *The Inquirer*, the only local sources featured were barely given speaking opportunities. Powerful figures had the most visibility in both newspapers, although it was more predominant in *The Inquirer*. While all three newspapers for the most part described the suffering of the victims, *The New York Times* gave survivors the most opportunity to speak for themselves. *The Inquirer* had a couple of articles that described the effect Ebola had had on residents. One of the few articles that told the story of five Liberians who were found unconscious in their apartment. The other article which had some element of personal storytelling was the articles on parents' reactions to school resumption.

Although *The Times* mostly published brief news reports, they told a few stories that exposed the horror of Ebola through storytelling. A November 2014 article about the British hospital in Sierra Leone's survival in the Ebola era showed the gravity of the outbreak and how it was affecting residents:

> They are civilians, but their eyes carry the same luminosity as exhausted soldiers in a besieged garrison, and a war load of death is present in their every working week.
>
> Most of the patients cared for by the British volunteers at the ebola isolation ward in Connaught Hospital, Freetown, will die. Some of their colleagues have died, too.
>
> A few patients do not even make it past the hospital gates, but die instead in an assessment tent outside the entrance.
>
> Welcome to the chlorine-soaked world of the King's Sierra Leone Partnership, the small team of British medical volunteers at the heart of Freetown's struggle against ebola. (Loyd, November 5, 2014)

It was also only *The New York Times* which explicitly wrote about the struggles reporters face when covering stories like Ebola, which can at times be dangerous for them. If first responders were scared of working on the outbreak, why would journalists, put themselves at risk covering such stories? Reporting on a deadly story like Ebola, as mentioned by the African reporters interviewed for this study took an emotional toll on reporters. Even Sheri Fink from *The New York Times* acknowledged that while it might sound depressing to be reporting on Ebola, it felt good to be doing something at all. *The New York Times* was the only newspaper analyzed which wrote about Ashoka Mukpo, the American freelance cameraman who contracted Ebola in Liberia, and was evacuated to the U.S.

The final difference between the newspapers is that *The New York Times* was the only newspaper to publish reflective pieces by reporters who covered the outbreak. These articles provided the most insight into the information behaviors of reporters who covered the crisis because they showed us how these reporters went about seeking information to use in their reporting. Sheri Fink (September 7, 2014) discusses how she approached a reporting assignment on the WHO’s response to the outbreak. It took her three weeks to cover this story, which involved in-depth interviews with people all over the world. According to Fink, her first step was to begin this assignment by conducting research about the organization, so she could better understand the organization, its history, and leadership. This shows that one of the first steps in the information seeking process of a journalist is to educate themselves on the issues they have to write about. This step is taken before they embark on assignments.

Both Fink and Onishi reveal that sources were not always willing to talk to them out of fear. Onishi however writes that building relationships with the locals helped him reach sources. Onishi, who spent two months reporting on Ebola in Liberia wrote about Mark Jerry, a man they suspected would get sick after intimately taking care of his dying wife. They rushed to find him for an interview before he fell ill, but he went into hiding and turned off his phone, even though he initially agreed to meet them. Onishi's team received a call from Mark's family after he showed up with his daughter in front of an Ebola treatment center. Mark had been in denial.

In the case of the WHO story, it was for fear of fraying "certain patched up working relationships" that several sources were unwilling to publicly criticize the WHO's response to the outbreak. Fink states that "the reluctance to speak highlights a tension reporters often face when working on a story about an unfolding tragedy." She raises an important question the role of a journalist, especially one reporting on a crisis that still requires a humanitarian response to an ongoing tragedy:

> Do we have a responsibility to step back and examine the potential impact or negative consequences of our work on the crisis? Or do we simply press forward and expose the truth, come what may, because it's our role, and it's our general belief that illuminating the workings of powerful institutions is nearly always constructive? (Fink, September 7, 2014)

Fink's dilemma fits within the larger debate among media scholars about journalists as active or passive communicators. Fink's decision to proceed with the story was based on a duty to her audience and her recognition of the influence of *The New York Times*.

> As a Times correspondent, I feel an acute responsibility. Many people read our work, and this drives me even harder to get things right, to dig deeper and get the full story, from the nuances to the big picture. The pressure to produce a story while it's most relevant has meant many summer weeks of late nights and working weekends here in New York where quite a few other reporters and editors have also worked hard gathering news on the disease, as have correspondents elsewhere in the United States and Europe….
>
> Given the awful toll of the outbreak and the huge sacrifices made by the people on the front lines, we owe this story our attention. (Sheri Fink, September 7, 2014)

Journalists also face dilemmas about whether or not they should obtain certain information out of respect to the subjects. In the news articles reporting the death of Michel du Cille, a photojournalist for *The Washington Post* who died in Liberia while covering the Ebola story, *The New York Times* writes of his resolve to cover Ebola, despite the risk of infection.

Excerpts of Michel du Cille's essay for the *News Photographer Magazine* in which he wrote about the dilemma he faced on how to cover victims of Ebola respectfully were shared by *The New York Times*. The following excerpt sheds light into difficult decisions reporters have to make on the field.

> In more than 40 years as a photojournalist I have taken pride in offering dignity to the subjects I photograph, especially those who are sick or in distress while in front of my camera," he wrote in the magazine. "But my recent photo-graphic assignment to cover the Ebola outbreak in Liberia proved exceedingly challenging. Respect is often the last and only thing there is that the world can offer to a deceased or dying person. Notwithstanding my presence at the scene with a camera, it becomes almost too perplexing and it is hard to show that necessary respect. The camera itself seems to be a betrayal of the dignity I so hope to offer. Sometimes the harshness of a gruesome scene simply cannot be sanitized. How does one give dignity to a woman who has died and is lying on the ground, unattended, uncovered, and alone as people walk by or gaze from a distance? But I believe that the world must see how horrible and dehumanizing are the effects of Ebola; the work must be done. So one moves with tender care, gingerly, without extreme intrusion.
>
> It is exceedingly difficult not to be a feeling human being while covering the Ebola crisis. Indeed, one has to feel compassion and above all try to show respect."(Estrin, Dec. 12, 2014)

The experiences of Fink and du Cille show that finding the source of information is just part of the hurdle reporters face. The next is making ethical decisions on the importance of capturing that data. In both instances, both journalists pursued the information because they believed that the gravity of the topic outweighed those concerns.

Onishi's account also shows the extent of investigative work reporters have to do to get a full story. While reporting on a disease like Ebola that had killed so many people, it becomes more difficult for reporters to obtain and verify information. Onishi shows how wide a net reporters must cast to verify information in such situations.

> Beyond the precautions we took while working in neighborhoods and homes affected by the disease, the biggest challenge was grasping the real state of mind of the people at the heart of the family drama. Their perception of events was often misleading and also fluid. But by casting a wide net -- and talking to family members who lived outside the neighborhood, neighbors, family friends, church members, pastors, colleagues -- it

> became possible to piece together what happened. After a while we had a picture of the entire family's story, one that even family members themselves did not have. (Onishi, November 17, 2014)

As a reporter who had previously covered the wars in Liberia and Sierra Leone, Onishi's coverage of Liberia suggests that that familiarity with a foreign country and its history is helpful for journalists sent to cover assignments in those countries. Such an understanding gives reporters an understanding of the people and their way of thinking. An example that buttresses this point is the assertion made by his Liberian sources that Ebola was worse than the Liberian Civil War. Onishi says initially, he thought about the comparison between Ebola and the civil war was hyperbolic because he remembered the brutality of that war. But having covered both events, he understood that that the difference between both tragedies was that Ebola was more brutal because it had made people fear their own families. Fighting Ebola meant that people had to stop themselves from doing common acts of care for their loved ones.

> Ebola is heartless because it punishes the very best human tendencies for caring and for honoring the sick and dying. A simple act -- wiping a fevered brow or kissing away a tear -- can be deadly, because the virus is transmitted through body fluids. (Fink, September 7, 2014)

CHAPTER 6

DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings from this study indicate that reporting on the Ebola crisis was a unique and dangerous assignment for the journalists covering the epidemic, especially for those who worked in the affected areas. In this chapter, the findings of this study are analyzed. I also include a discussion about how these findings fit within the scope of the research questions and the theories that guide the study.

Discussion of Research Questions

1.a) How did mass media represent women in their coverage of the Ebola crisis between March 24, 2014 to September 24, 2015?

Even though women were the primary victims of Ebola, they were underrepresented as sources, subjects, victims, and even reporters in the coverage of the Ebola crisis. As suggested by the findings, men made up 57% of the victims written about by *The Times*, 55.3% of the victims in *The New York Times* coverage, and 72% of the victims in *The Inquirer*. This is in part because journalists did not consider gender a guiding force of their reporting. Some participants explained that there was little or no emphasis on women in their reporting because Ebola was a disease that affected the general population, not just women. For reporters who covered the crisis months after it started, they claimed they were not writing about victim dynamics. Other participants argued that they could not restrict their access to sources by choosing to seek female sources. Thus, they were willing to speak with any available sources.

This finding is consistent with previous analyses which have found that male voices in the news outnumber female voices by a ratio of 3 to 1, which deepens gender biases (LaFrance, 2016; Taub & Fisher, 2018; Yong, 2018). As Adrienne, a reporter for *The Atlantic* found in a review of gender diversity in her previous articles, the need to make her sources diverse was often trumped by deadline pressure and editorial decisions (LaFrance, 2016). Even female reporters (except for Participant 4) in this Ebola study quoted more male than female voices in their stories and for the most part did not specifically dedicate many or any stories to the plight of women affected by the crisis. LaFrance (2016) raises an important point that by not seeking female sources to interview, her reporting was missing "all kinds of viewpoints, ideas, and experiences that might otherwise sharpen and enhance my reporting"

As stated in the Literature Review section of this study, women traditionally assume caregiving roles and are more likely to seek out health information, especially online (Andsager, 2013). It is therefore imperative that the media target women in their coverage of health crises, because women who actively seek information through media reports are also reported to pay higher visits to health providers (Andsager, 2013). This shows the importance of targeting women in media news reports, especially when reporting on a crisis like Ebola which mostly targeted one gender. By framing Ebola as a disease which affected the population equally, the media failed to directly address the population most affected by the disease. This raises the question about whether the media could have had a bigger impact in helping to curb the spread of the disease.

Another example of gendered media which was evident in the content analysis was that only 19 of the 62 (30.7%) reporters who wrote the articles in the sample were female. This is consistent with industry statistics, as the 2017 report on the Status of Women in the U.S. Media published by Women's Media Center (WMC) states that men still receive 62 percent of bylines and other credits in print, TV, Internet, and wire news (WMC, 2017; York 2017). In contrast, of the 8 participants interviewed for this study, only 1 of them was male. This is surprising, as women only make up one-third of the media industry (Byerly & Ross, 2006; York, 2017). This can be explained by the fact that although more male than female reporters were identified and contacted for interviews, only one of them sat down for an interview. The others either did not respond or were unable to make time for the study because of their busy schedules.

Lastly, the media continued to frame men during their coverage of the Ebola crisis as those in positions of power, because more men than women in power were used as sources. Women were both underrepresented as health experts and official sources. Males were presented mostly in positions of authority, while the women were mostly invisible, or shown as victims, even in the media's coverage of Liberia, which at the time of the crisis had a female president. The WHO also has a female leader who was an important player in the Ebola story. Yet, more male than female health officials were cited in the news reports. Participant 6 pointed out that majority of their sources were male because most sources in authority in the fields of health and politics are male, thus confirming existing studies on the gender dichotomy in news reports. It could thus be argued that journalists are just reflecting reality in their work by having more male than female sources and that their responsibility is not to actively seek for diverse sources, but to find the best sources for their stories. To these assumptions, LaFrance (2016) asks: "but why assume that the best source isn't a woman?"

1.b) How did media representations of female Ebola victims differ according to geographic location of the victim?

As stated above, women were underrepresented in the coverage of the crisis, even though they made up 75% of the population victimized by the disease. Even among the women covered by the media, there were noticeable differences in how they were portrayed as victims, survivors, sources, healthcare professionals, and official sources. While all women were underrepresented in the coverage, African women were the most underrepresented group, except in the victim category. Most of the female victims written about in *The New York Times* and *The Inquirer* were African women. In *The Times* however, Western women made up 25% of the victims written about, compared to the female African victims who made up only 12.5% of the victims in the articles.

While the number of mentions of female African victims surpassed that of the Western female victims, the latter group received significantly better coverage than the female African victims in terms of the quality of reports written about them by *The Times* and *The New York Times*. The African female Ebola victims written about in both papers were mostly mentioned in passing in the news articles or written about as part of a group of victims; meanwhile their Western counterparts had articles written about them. Although these stories reflect the reality that most Ebola victims were women, with the exception of *The Inquirer*, the newspapers failed to reflect the reality that African women suffered the most from the virus. Previous research on media coverage of Africa suggests that the continent is usually covered during disasters, but in the case of the Ebola crisis, even an epidemic of this magnitude did not prompt the media to focus on the primarily African victims.

From the interviews with the participants and content analysis, it is obvious that majority of the caregivers in the Ebola story were female. The three female victims and survivors of Ebola who were mostly written about by *The Times* and *The New York Times* were an American aid worker, a Dallas-based nurse, and a Spanish nurse. While this is indicative of the fact that these female caregivers were the population most at risk of contracting the virus, it fails to reflect the reality that most of the caregivers in this situation were African females. Another article from *The New York Times* which focused on African victims and survivors of the virus told the stories of an equal number of male and female caregivers. This is not reflective of Liberian culture where women are the primary caregivers, which might explain why women were more severely affected by the virus.

All three newspapers examined in this study failed to provide efficacy information which women could have used to protect themselves. The first Ebola case in Sierra Leone was traced to the funeral of a herbalist who had treated Ebola Guinean patients. Due to a West African tradition where mourners come into contact with corpses at funerals, about a dozen women contracted the disease at her funeral. However, this was not fully recognized or confronted by aid organizations (Fink, 2014). Once again, the media failed to recognize that African women were most at risk because of the roles they play in those countries. There is a possibility that with more communication targeted toward these women, who were responsible for taking care of the sick and preparing the bodies of the dead, maybe the toll of the disease could have been mitigated.

The reason why this matters is because the mass media have the potential to be catalysts for local and national action with regards to health issues, especially during crises like the Ebola outbreak, which spread for months undetected (Institute of Medicine, 2003). Several factors contributed to the spread of the disease, most of them unique to African and regional practices and or conditions. According to Fink (2014), the crisis would not have had the same magnitude if it had happened in wealthier countries. But because “much of the work of spotting outbreaks was left to desperately poor countries,” which often times lack basic health care, the Ebola virus spread (Fink, 2014). Also, the movement, especially for trade, between these neighboring countries greatly contributed to the worsening of the outbreak.

Even when the W.H.O. learned of the outbreak, critics said “its efforts to help track and contain it were poorly led and limited… and the agency was slow to declare its severity and come up with plans” (Fink, 2014). As stated by the Institute of Medicine (2003), the media “can use its presence and power to lead to the mobilization of societal action that creates the conditions for health” (Institute of Medicine, 2003, p. 307). It is possible that the media could have helped in mobilizing aid to Guinea, Sierra Leone, and Liberia sooner, if they had shed more light on the African practices that contributed to the spread of the disease and focused more stories on the victims.

Based on the discussions in Research Questions 1 a and 1b, it is evident that the mass media continue to underrepresent women at all levels. This underrepresentation continues to cross geographical lines, as African women who bore the brunt of Ebola, were the most underrepresented group in the news reports. This confirms that the gender framing theory is a good fit for this study as the study finds that the media continues to perpetuate stereotypes that women’s problems are insignificant and are not worthy of their attention.

2.a) How has the Ebola crisis affected the information behavior pattern of journalists?

None of the reporters who covered the Ebola outbreak and were interviewed for this study had ever covered a health outbreak and had limited prior knowledge on the disease. The manner in which the reporters handled their inexperience with health reporting and lack of knowledge about Ebola shows how adaptive reporters are. While news organizations hire professionals who are experts in their fields, they also hire general assignment reporters. The reporters interviewed for this study were not health experts, and yet, they were able to cover stories related to the Ebola crisis which showed the human toll of the disease. As several of the participants stated, when covering a subject like Ebola which was new to them, they quickly educated themselves on the topic in order to report on it.

As Participant 7 stated, “when you are a reporter covering a topic, you are forced to learn about the subject as part of the job.” This means that one of the first steps they took when they began their assignments on covering the Ebola story was to educate themselves on the disease and also the affected region. For those who covered the disease on ground, they also had to learn risk information and how to protect themselves while on the field. The participants reported using sources including news reports from organizations such as *The Washington Post* and *The New York Times*; official sources; medical experts; the CDC and WHO websites, and one of them even read a nonfictional thriller about Ebola called *The Hot Zone*. These sources were both trustworthy, easily accessible, and familiar.

Some of the most important variables that affected the information seeking behavior of journalists covering the Ebola crisis were timing and accessibility. The accessibility to sources and data or lack thereof, the limited time given to reporters to cover the crisis, and the timing of reporting assignments all greatly contributed to both the information seeking process of the reporters, and the reporting of the crisis. Timing factors influenced the reporting decisions in several ways. For one, the timing of the reporters’ coverage of Ebola determined what kind of information they believed was important to publish at the time. Participant 5, for example, believed that the first team of reporters that had been sent to cover the Ebola crisis in Africa had handled certain topics such as risk information. Thus, she did not believe that it was her responsibility to provide information of that nature in the articles she wrote. This shows that reporters determine which information they deem important to pursue and report on based on the timeliness of the subject. It also confirms the fact that journalism is a team operation.

In addition to needing timely information, reporters like Participant 5 were parachuted into foreign countries and given very tight deadlines. Participant 5 was given two weeks to report from Guinea, a country which had never been visited by a reporter from her organization. This meant that she had to choose stories to cover based on how much time she had to reach sources. Due to safety precautions, Participant 5 was given two weeks to report in a country that she was visiting for the first time, knew little about the culture or their language, and had no prior experience covering the subject, or any other health crises. Timing is certainly a factor which determines the information seeking decisions made by reporters.

Accessibility was a factor that came up more often and in many instances, was closely tied in to the trustworthiness element. Reporting in foreign countries like Guinea, where the Ebola crisis was more predominant in remote and reclusive areas meant that reporters like Participant 5 had to spend some of their reporting time negotiating for access to the villages. Travelling time to these areas also ate up the time they could use in obtaining stories. In addition, many people were reluctant to be interviewed for the Ebola story, and in some cases hostile toward reporters, which limited the access some reporters had to first-hand information. Even when reporters like Participants 3 and 8 encountered overly friendly and willing interviewees, they questioned whether these sources were giving them the real account, or whether their answers were framed to satisfy the media.

In several instances, the participants in this study stated that there was a lack of official data for some stories they were reporting on. This led to reporters abandoning story ideas that in many cases they had already done some groundwork research on. This was irrespective of how good or important a reporter thought the story was. Participant 3, for example, had to scrap a story she had researched on the topic of teenage pregnancy rates in Liberia because she was unable to obtain official data indicating that it was becoming more prevalent during the outbreak. As she put it, “everybody knows that teenage pregnancy is a problem in Liberia. So, to tell pretty sad stories about girls who are pregnant just doesn’t cut it. It’s not new.”

Financing and privilege were also determining factors in the coverage done by the reporters. This factor made a huge difference in determining when fully employed reporters got to cover the Ebola story in Africa compared to the freelance journalists. For the Western reporters who were employed by news organizations and had accepted to cover Ebola in Africa, they were sent to training sessions to learn about protective measures to use while in Africa. For the Western freelance reporters, their coverage of Ebola was delayed because the news organizations they filed reports for did not dispatch them to Ebola affected countries because they did not have certain protections and benefits offered to the staff. The freelancers (Participants 3 and 8) eventually went into the Ebola affected countries, but at a later time and those trips were mostly self-funded.

The Western reporters covering the Ebola story also had access to medical evacuations by their country or employers, if they contracted the disease when reporting on Ebola. This option was not available for the Liberian reporters who were interviewed for this study, or the African fixers and translators that worked with the Western reporters. Participant 5, for example, admitted that she was not afraid of covering the crisis because she knew that if she contracted the disease, she would be evacuated back to the U.S., but recognized that her fixer, who was African, would not receive such benefits.

Audience considerations also played a role in determining the information seeking decisions made by reporters. This factor was intertwined with the timing factor. This study showed that reporters seek and write information that they believe is important for their audiences to know, thus showing the gatekeeping role of reporters. Participants 2 and 4, for example, began covering the Ebola crisis from the early days of the epidemic and understood that including risk information in their reports could help their Liberian audience take the necessary precautions to protect themselves from Ebola. The Western reporters were, however, writing for Western audiences, who they realized were hardly at risk for contracting the diseases. This seems to show that depending on the reporter's location, audience, and the timing of their reporting, their roles as reporters differ. In this case the African reporters seemed to play a role of educators and advocates for their audiences, while their Western counterparts had the duty of informing their audiences of a predominantly foreign disease.

2.b) How did the nature of reporting on a health crisis influence the reporting of the Ebola crisis?

Reporting on a health crisis like Ebola prompted official sources to willingly share information with reporters. However, this at times was considered problematic because as Participant 6 stated, they held pressers at the same time with a host of news organizations (international, national, and local), thus, making it difficult to get any information beyond the talking the talking points they had prepared. As she stated, "they kind of had certain points and they were sticking to them" (Participant 6, 2016). Participant 6 raised some important questions about how the restriction of the access reporters had to all sources and information had on their reporting – how were journalists to report on the back story of how the virus had been transmitted in Dallas? This suggests that covering a health crisis like Ebola which was tightly controlled by governments limited the journalists' access to information and constrained their reporting.

Reporting on the Ebola crisis, a deadly and highly contagious disease, also meant that reporters could not directly have access to the central characters in the Ebola story – the patients – especially in the early months of reporting. Participant 2 talked about staying several feet away from interviewees with her hands in her pockets, in order to protect herself. Also, reporters who covered the crisis in the U.S. and Africa did not have access to treatment wings where patients were being treated at hospitals. This also restricted them from having access to some family members. In some ways, this limited their ability to cross-check the information they obtained from official sources.

Despite the unique challenges the reporters faced in obtaining information while covering this health outbreak, they held themselves to the same standards that they have when reporting on other topics in different parts of the world. The issue of verification was central to many reporters covering the Ebola story. Participant 5 said that she followed the same procedure when reporting on the Ebola outbreak that she does her stories written about issues happening in the U.S., which is to verify all information she obtains. For reporters like *The New York Times'* Onishi, verifying information for his reports entailed him casting a wide net for interviewing sources. Onishi (2014) states that due to the "fluid" and "misleading" perceptions people had, he had to interview a wide range of people (including neighbors, pastors, family, and friends) to piece together entire family stories.

Like Onishi, Participant 5 also interviewed several sources in order to verify information, because going online to research sources was not an option for she could use while reporting from Guinea. She admitted that covering the Ebola story was "absolutely more difficult" than other assignments, but that reporters have "to adapt, and you know work in certain situations and different ways." Sheri Fink wrote about the difficulties she had in getting sources to speak openly about the WHO's "bumbling" response to the outbreak, because they did not want to fray professional relationships. According to Fink, her duty as a reporter necessitated that she dig in deeper to expose the truth, even if that meant that her work might have some potential consequences on the crisis.

Most important perhaps under the verification factor is a story by Participant 6, who said that her newsroom put in extra efforts in ensuring that information was verified before publication, because they were intent on not causing hysteria: "I think the stakes were higher because there was so much public fear. And so, there was that much more pressure to get the facts right because you could cause hysteria" (Participant 6, 2016). She added that while it is a normal practice to have one's story vetted by multiple sources, the practice was more emphasized during the period when an Ebola patient was receiving treatment in Dallas. Without more frequent and organized partnerships with their editors and colleagues, the reporters might not have had unique leads and could possibly have published sensational stories.

Another way in which reporting on a health crisis impacted the reporting on the Ebola crisis is that it showed that fear and unfamiliarity with the topic caused a delay in Western reporters covering the outbreak. Just as Sheri Fink wrote about the need of the WHO to put themselves in front of their own paradoxes, because those most in need had become pariahs because of Ebola, it is important to also put journalists in front of their own paradoxes. Just as aid organizations such as the WHO had delayed in going into Guinea, Sierra Leone, and Liberia to tackle the crisis, reporters especially from Western countries had delayed in going to these countries to cover the outbreak. According to Participants 3 and 5, Western reporters would have rather covered wars, which they are used to, than the Ebola story: "I heard that they were many people more willing to go into a war zone than they were to go to Africa to cover the Ebola crisis" (Participant 5, 2016). From the content analysis of the newspapers, there was only one article in the sample from *The New York Times* between March and June 2014 about the Ebola crisis. A majority of the articles on Ebola in *The New York Times* and *The Times* were published between July and December 2014. By delaying their coverage of this deadly outbreak, the media might have signaled to their audiences that this was a foreign crisis of little or no significance to them.

Based on the writings and reflections of reporters like Sheri Fink and Norimitsu Onishi, and Participants 2, 4, and 5 especially, covering this crisis took an emotional toll on reporters. These reporters wrote about entire families being eradicated by the disease, and some of them saw bodies of the victims on the street or being cremated in in non-traditional ways. The reporters witnessed the inhumanity of the disease, and its ruthlessness – a disease which caused family members to fear each other, a disease which caused a dad to stay away from his young daughter, even as she lay dying on the streets of the city. Reporting on a health crisis like Ebola pushed reporters to exhibit levels of bravery that were not common in the crisis, for many reporters refused to travel to the affected countries. As Fink stated, while covering this story seemed depressing, it felt good to just be of help by reporting on it.

The interviews with the participants on how the Ebola crisis news coverage differed from their regular reporting jobs, suggest that journalists need partners to help them in their reporting especially when covering a health crisis. This is especially true for reporters who report on a health crisis in a foreign country. Due to the nature of the Ebola crisis, the participants needed more robust partnerships with fixers, translators, other reporters on the job either in their organization or another, as well as government sources to effectively report on the crisis. Without such partnerships with a fixer, Participant 5, for example, would probably not have been granted entry into Womey, an underreported village, which was also Ground Zero for the disease. Without partnerships, Participant 3 would not have been able to help her colleagues based in Western countries with a risk assessment, which could have possibly delayed their travel plans to Ebola-affected countries.

From the response to Research Questions 2a and 2b, it can be argued that the information seeking behavior of journalists is indeed influenced by the type of assignments they cover, as well as the problems they encounter while covering such assignments. This confirms the applicability of the Byström and Järvelin's work-task information seeking and retrieval model to the work journalists do. As discussed in chapter 3, this model focuses on the relationship between task types and the kind of information that is needed to execute those tasks (Byström & Järvelin, 1995). As discussed in chapter 3, the assumption in this model is that the information-seeking behavior of a worker is dependent on the tasks they have to complete, and the problems they encounter while completing these tasks (Byström & Järvelin, 1995).

2.c) How has the Ebola crisis influenced journalists' choice of subjects during a health crisis?

Once again, the response to this question points back to availability and accessibility. For the most part, covering the Ebola crisis made it harder for reporters to connect to some of the sources they wanted to interview. According to several participants, covering the Ebola crisis limited the number of sources they had access to, and so this resulted in them heading out for reporting assignments prepared to scrap stories that they could not find sources and data for. As mentioned before, many reporters did not have access to the Ebola patients because of safety reasons. Covering a crisis like Ebola, as mentioned above to a certain extent muted the voices of the main stakeholders in the crisis, because they were highly infectious.

For Western reporters covering the crisis in Africa, their unfamiliarity with the culture and its people added an extra layer of work to their assignments and subject selection. However, this did not deter Participant 5 said going into Guinea, she had decided which stories she wanted to cover, but was not attached to any of these ideas. Some of the stories she wanted to cover entailed going to Meliendou (Ebola's ground zero), and Womey, a hostile Guinean village that had previously attacked and killed officials sent to sensitize them about the outbreak. Participant 5's photographer (who is based in Africa) had warned her that she "should be prepared for everything to go wrong like this is what happens in West Africa. Like everything that can go wrong will go wrong" (Participant 5, 2016). She however succeeded in covering all the stories she intended to write about.

Participant 3 however had a different outcome as her story on teenage pregnancies shows how choosing stories without knowing if the data would be available failed. This story idea was inspired by the knowledge that many medical conditions, including teenage pregnancies had spiked during the Ebola outbreak. While she was able to find and interview teenage girls, she was unable to get official data backing this claim. This point also raises the issue of the gender of the sources selected by reporters. Participant 5 was able to find female sources for this story, and the reports analyzed for this study showed that reporters could find female sources for some stories. This suggests that there was not a lack of female sources that reporters could have approached. However, female sources were mostly used for stories involving mostly social issues.

Another way in which this crisis changed how journalists choose subjects during a crisis is that it sometimes took the power of choosing the sources they out of their hands. Reporters covering the outbreak described having the information they were privy to tightly controlled by the government and other official sources. This was the case not only for the reporters who covered the story in West Africa, but in Dallas as well. For example, Participant 6 stated that it was difficult for reporters to interview official sources beyond “appointed spokespeople,” both in the government and the Presbyterian Hospital, which had forbidden its employees from speaking to reporters. In Liberia, Participant 4 equally expressed dissatisfaction that the official sources all stuck to the same talking points, implying that it was difficult to get new information from different sources.

3.a) What is the satisfaction level of journalists with the information they found when covering the 2014 Ebola crisis?

The participants reported being generally satisfied with the information they obtained. However, they all faced difficulties which sometimes impacted their reporting and information seeking process. The precautionary measures put in place to protect reporters from the disease sometimes prevented them from often obtaining firsthand information. Journalists had to cover the story while keeping a safe distance from their subjects. Foreign journalists stayed away from Ebola affected countries at the onset of the crisis out of fear. Participant 2, for example, said that because Ebola was a life-threatening disease, reporters were limited in their investigative work, even when they had doubts about the government accounts they were receiving.

Several participants were appreciative of the fact that government officials, particularly in Liberia, Sierra Leone, and the U.S., were more accessible during their coverage of the outbreak. However, a majority of these reporters stated that they had a preference for speaking to locals or people affected by the virus, instead of interviewing officials. Some participants expressed concerns that by having one central source of information, they were limited in the questioning they could do. Participant 6, who covered the epidemic in Dallas, did not like that reporters could not get behind the scenes for information because of the official spokespeople who were the only ones giving out official information. Participant 8, for example, thought it was a waste of time to talk with government sources when she could have been on the field, a sentiment that was echoed by participant 5.

While some Western reporters felt like speaking to government officials was not as useful and more time consuming, the African reporters had a complaint of a different nature – they wanted honesty. What comes to mind is that the Western reporters are used to having access to official sources, meanwhile the African reporters do not, and so are more appreciative of the effort by the government to talk to them without much protocol because of the extraordinary circumstances. It could also be due to the nature of the stories they were covering and their audiences. The African reporters lived and worked in communities affected by Ebola. They needed official information because they were on the beat from the early days of the outbreak when no one knew what was killing the population. It is therefore no wonder that they were the mostly the reporters who provided efficacy information in their reports as they seemed very concerned about helping to stop the spread of the disease.

So far, it is evident that the nature of the Ebola crisis reversed the availability of private and government sources. In both Dallas, and Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone, the governments were more easily accessible to reporters than they normally are, while private citizens were sometimes more unwilling or unable to speak to reporters because of fear of being associated with Ebola, or for preventative reasons. It can be assumed that due to the nature of the Ebola crisis, reporters were not fully in control of the decision-making decisions related to subject. As several participants noted, the official Ebola spokespeople limited their access to other sources that could have possibly allowed them to crosscheck the information they were receiving, or potentially obtain new information. Also, the participants in this study did not express any dissatisfaction with their source selection because they did not consider gender parity to be essential to the Ebola story.

3.b) For what purposes did journalists use the information they collected from sources during the Ebola crisis?

One of the first things reporters did with the information they collected from sources was to inform themselves of the gravity of the situation and how they could use that information to protect themselves. As Participant 3 stated during her interview, she received messages from colleagues in the Western world who wanted her to inform them on the disease. This information was used to make decisions on whether or not they should send in reporters or travel to these countries.

All the reporters covering the Ebola story used the information they obtained to update their audiences on the Ebola story and the progress of the outbreak. Some of the participants in this participant used the information they obtained to provide efficacy and risk information to their audiences and prevent hysteria. Participant 6 stated that her newspaper published information on how the disease spreads in almost every story on Ebola because there was so much fear. However, because she knew that her audience was not at risk of contracting Ebola, she did not think it was relevant to include information on protective measures in her reporting

Some of the reporters used the information they used for collaborations with colleagues. This was two-tiered. The first way was to assist reporters in the West to make risk assessments about sending reporters to West Africa to cover the crisis. This point was raised by Participant 3 who stated that media organizations had contacted her to do risk assessments for them because she was already based in Africa. Another way in which they used information they obtained during reporting to collaborate with colleagues was that several of the participants in this study worked on reporting teams. Participant 7, for example, reported on the crisis from Washington, D.C., in collaboration with colleagues who traveled to West Africa. Participants 1 and 6 were both on teams that handled different angles of the same story within the same city. By collaborating on teams, they were able to paint a more comprehensive picture of the effect of the crisis on the public.

The reporters used the information they obtained while covering the Ebola story to determine story ideas that were unique or not gaining as much attention in the media. Participant 5, for example, decided to cover ground zero in Guinea because she thought it was important to gain a better understanding of how the disease started; Participant 4 was the lone reporter to seek to understand how the crisis had affected women particularly; Participant 3 wanted to find out how the outbreak had affected the teenage pregnancy rates; Ohnishi wanted to understand how Ebola had caused havoc on families; Fink aimed to hold a large organization accountable.

While journalists who covered the Ebola story sometimes faced difficulties obtaining information from sources, several instances showed that despite these difficulties, they did not rush to publish whatever information they obtained but took out time to process whether or not it was vetted, and if it was ethical for them to share certain information. Participant 6 as mentioned before stated that instead of rushing to publish stories, her organization chose to have every story vetted numerous times because Ebola was not a typical news story, but one that could cause panic. Another instance that showed that journalists pause to determine the outcome of their stories before pursuing angles or publishing stories is Fink's determination to investigate the WHO's handling of the Ebola story, while the crisis was ongoing. Her decision to continue with her reporting was based on her belief that as a reporter, she was responsible for covering this story because of the gravity of the crisis and the sacrifices made by those on the frontline. Another example of this ethical dilemma was discussed by the late *Washington Post* photojournalist, Michel du Cille, who had inner conversations about how to show respect to the victims, like those lying dead and unclothed on the streets, while still informing the world about the horror of the disease. These are all important elements which adds an extra factor to the information seeking behavior of journalists.

Research Theories Revisited

The Leckie Model Revisited

In this section, the applicability of the Leckie model, which is one of the three theories used in this study is discussed. The gender framing theory and the Byström and Järvelin model have both been discussed alongside the research questions.

As discussed in chapter 3, the Leckie model sheds light on the information seeking behaviors of professionals. In this model, it is assumed that the information needs of a professional create their awareness of information sources, which then motivate them to examine the sources (Case, 2012). Also, Leckie et al. (1996) list the following variables as the most important variables which affect the information seeking behaviors of professionals: familiarity, prior success with a source, trustworthiness, timeliness, accessibility, cost, quality and packaging of the source.

The findings of this study suggest that even when covering a health crisis such as the 2014 Ebola outbreak, the information seeking of journalists is still influenced by these variables. While all these factors remained true for the reporters interviewed for this study, some of these variables became even more significant in the journalists’ information behavior patterns, while a few additional variables came across in the interviews. Accessibility and timeliness, as well as the quality and trustworthiness of sources were the most prominent variables.

For a health story like Ebola, it was not surprising that the journalists used mostly health officials as sources in their stories. The participants in this study also stated that the online sources they used to inform themselves on the crisis included websites for organizations like the CDC, the WHO. They also contacted sources which they considered as reliable health sources, such as academic health programs including the School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine at Tulane University and London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine. These sources were considered as trustworthy because of their qualifications and specializations. The results of this study show that most of these health expert sources were male. Women in science already face long-standing stereotypes and biases about their intelligence and acumen, and by failing to quote or mention them, journalists become part of the "forces actively contributing to a world in which women's skills and accomplishments are undermined or ignored, and women are excluded" (LaFrance, 2016; Yong, 2018).

Under circumstances when journalists could not rely on the trustworthiness of their sources, there was another variable they relied on, which was extreme and repeated verification. For the reporters who covered the crisis in West Africa, they had to interview a wider array of sources in order to get the best picture of events as they had happened, instead of relying on one source. There was also the repeated vetting of stories in certain newsrooms to ensure that stories were accurate and would not create panic. While reporters always verify the information they collect, the higher stakes in the Ebola crisis pushed them to go through extra levels of verification.

Even though most of the sources cited in the news studies studied (apart from health officials) were official sources, it should not be assumed that the prominence of source was a variable that drew reporters to sources. In actuality, most of the participants in the study stated that they would have preferred to interview non-official spokespeople during their coverage in order to obtain information that went beyond the basic information they were provided during press conferences of meetings with these officials. Human sources however remained key because of their accessibility, nature of the story, subject awareness level of journalists, subject expertise.

One of the greatest influencers of the information seeking behavior of a journalist faced with covering a health crisis like Ebola is fear. The results not only show the bravery of the journalists who covered the outbreak, but also confirm the reasons why journalists make the information seeking decisions that they do, especially under pressure and in dangerous situations. Decisions to refuse reporting assignments in countries battling Ebola, or interviewing sources from cars, are just a couple of examples to show that the nature of the assignment was one that deterred some reporters from the story and pushed others to seek means of protecting themselves from possible transmission of the disease.

Toward a Model of the Information Seeking of Journalists Covering a Health Crisis

Based on the findings of this study, it can be concluded that due to the nature of the Ebola crisis, the information seeking patterns of journalists covering the crisis was altered. From the points raised under the revisiting of the information science theories, it is evident that elements from both the Leckie and the Byström and Järvelin models are both essential to understanding the information behaviors of reporters who cover deadly and dangerous crises like Ebola. Due to the lack of an information science theory of model specific to the information behavior of journalists, Figure 7 below was developed in the course of this study to address that need. This model is an adaption of both the Leckie and the Byström and Järvelin models. This proposed model is based on the behavior patterns of reporters who covered the 2014 Ebola crisis.

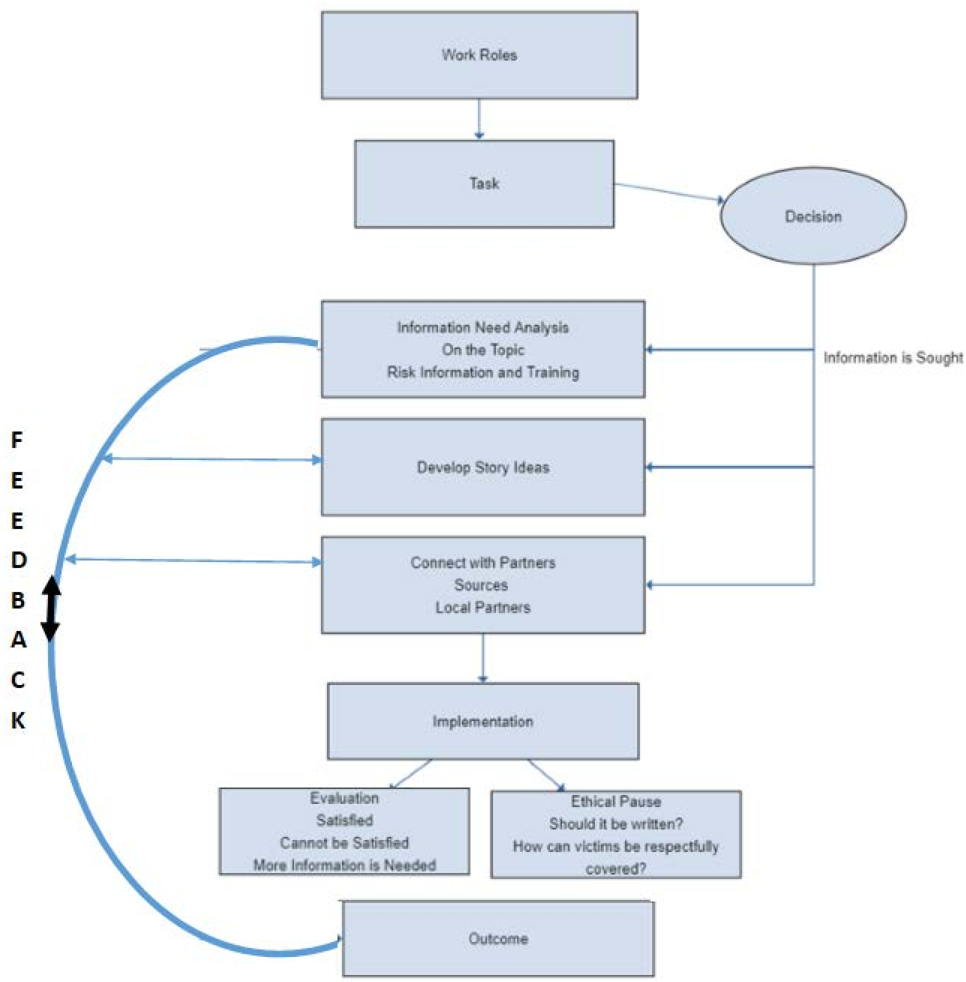

Figure 7: A model of the information seeking of journalists covering a health crisis

Like the Byström and Järvelin model, this model also assumes that the information-seeking behavior of a journalist is dependent on the tasks they have to complete, and the problems they encounter while completing these tasks. The model also places emphasis on the individual demographics of the reporter, because it plays an important role in determining the type of assignments or tasks that journalists cover. For example, general assignment reporters like Participants 1 and 6 said their coverage of Ebola was limited to painting general pictures of the effects of the disease on the public, while more specialized reporters (like a medical doctor in their newsroom) covered the more health-centered stories. This model also acknowledges that prior knowledge of the severity of and risk of covering a health crisis helps reporters determine whether or not to cover a crisis.

Once a decision is made to cover the health crisis, the information seeking process earnestly begins with an information need analysis. For a crisis like Ebola, one of the actions they take is to learn their risk level, which for those covering the crisis in the affected areas leads to a training on protective and preventative methods to use while covering the crisis. At the same time, journalists also begin researching information that enlightens them on the subject of their coverage. As stated above, journalists educate themselves on a topic before embarking on the reporting assignment. Another task reporters execute at this point is to develop story ideas. The next level in this process is to connect with partners. This includes connecting with their local partners on the ground, who also help the reporters find and arrange access to additional sources.

Then comes the implementation which in this case is going on the field, followed by an evaluation of the satisfaction level of the reporter with the information they were able to collect. One new variable which was added to this model is that in addition to evaluating the information they obtain while reporting, journalists also have ethical debates about whether or not to publish or pursue certain stories. Reporters take into consideration whether the story, especially one that might cause disruptions, is essential and needs to be written and published.

Limitations and Delimitations

One limitation of this study is that one research approach was primarily used, especially with the interview data, which will be analyzed only qualitatively. Richer data is obtained in studies where both qualitative and quantitative research methods are combined because of the limitations of both methods (Fisher, 2011). This is a limitation because while the qualitative data will make the journalists who are subject of this study “come alive,” through an inductive exploration, description, explanation of their information behavior patterns, quantitative data would have made it possible to explain, corroborate, and predict from the data (Krathwohl, 2009; Miles et al., 2014). Using a mixed-methods approach would have added validity to the study by protecting against what Krathwohl (2009) calls rival explanations about the phenomena observed in the data.

Triangulation of two qualitative research methods was, however, used to compensate for this shortcoming. Triangulation, which is the combination of several research methods to study the same phenomenon and confirm information, will also help to prevent researcher bias and ensure that there is validity in this study (Fabritius, 1999; Krathwohl, 2009). Also, as stated above, the use of qualitative data as will be used for this study allows for both numerical and descriptive analyses, which will ensure validity of the study (Fisher, 2011). The use of the multimedia content analysis research method also helps in combatting this limitation as this is a “hybrid technique” which has “an implicitly hybridized approach to inquiry” even when it is conducted quantitatively (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006, p. 287).

Regarding the level of generalization aimed for, Fidel (2011) states that when making recruiting decisions such as whom to recruit and sample size, the researcher needs to take into consideration the desired level of generalization. According to Fidel (2011), even though information researchers initially studied only well-defined population segments such as university students, scientists, health workers and engineers, the results of these studies were "claimed to hold true for all the members of the group" (p. 71). While the sample size of this study is made up of a well-defined population, its boundaries are even smaller as the sample only includes journalists who covered the Ebola crisis both in Africa, where the highest number of Ebola victims have been reported, and in the US, where a few cases of Ebola have been transmitted and treated. This implies that the study is an "in-context" study, meaning that the study of information behavior will be studied in the context of a particular activity.

Another limitation to this study is that although two of the participants in this study were Liberian and spoke English, I had difficulties understanding Liberian English. Transcribing those interviews was therefore more challenging and time consuming. In order to ensure that the transcriptions were accurate, another transcriber was recruited to also transcribe those interviews.

The scope of the study was also limited as it focused exclusively on the news media's coverage of one health crisis. It therefore offers a snapshot of their information behaviors in times of health crisis. However, the results of this study are not generalizable because of the limitations in the number of case studies.

Achieving generalization, however, was not a priority in this study, which adopts a descriptive approach. Unlike experiments, which aim to predict future behavior, the goal of this study is primarily to describe a phenomenon and improve the understanding of the phenomenon (Fidel, 2011). No information behavior studies have been identified which seek to understand how journalists go about the business of news gathering and dissemination in a health hot zone. The findings of this study therefore serve as a starting point for researchers interested in studying how professionals seek and use information when working in sensitive and dangerous health crises like the Ebola outbreak, and how this influences their coverage of events.

Future Research

Research on the factors affecting the coverage of crises situations should continue on a larger and more diverse pool of participants. These studies should include medical and health reporters who have more background knowledge on health issues. Also, there should be more of a balance when it comes to the gender and nationalities of the reporters as their experiences might be different due to such factors. Future research should also seek to understand the perspectives of managers and editors who assign these crises stories to reporters.

In order to get a better and more comprehensive picture of how the information behavior patterns of journalists are affected by health crises, future studies should compare the media's coverage of the 2014 Ebola crisis to their coverage of other health crises. A good start would be to compare it to the 2018 Ebola outbreak in Congo. However, due to the smaller number of cases (only 53 cases as of July 1, 2018), it might be best to compare the media's coverage of both Ebola outbreaks and an additional non-Ebola related outbreak. This study could be expanded to include other forms of media including social media platforms.

Recommendations

The first recommendation of this study is that when covering health crises, journalists should in addition to covering the general aspects and population affected by a health outbreak, identify the group that is most at risk for the outbreak. This recommendation is based on the finding that the media failed to recognize that African women were most at risk for Ebola, thus, failing to reach out to them in ways that might have changed some outcomes. There is a possibility that with more communication targeted toward these women, who were responsible for taking care of the sick and preparing the bodies of the dead, perhaps the toll of the disease could have been mitigated. Such communication should not just have included warnings about how the disease is spread – as *The New York Times* article on the African patients showed, the caregivers knew how Ebola was spread and, in some instances, the disease was passed to caregivers transporting their patients to treatment centers. These messages should have also provided African caregivers with practical tools to use in caring for the ill, while staying safe. These solutions should have been tailored to suit the culture they were targeting.

The story of Fatu Kekula, a 22-year-old nursing student who invented a trash bag method to protect herself while caring for four Ebola patients in her family, shows that it was possible for caregivers to protect themselves from Ebola. In Kekula's case, there was no space for her relatives at the hospital when they fell ill. So, for two weeks, she came up with a method to protect herself:

> Every day, several times a day for about two weeks, Fatu put trash bags over her socks and tied them in a knot over her calves. Then she put on a pair of rubber boots and then another set of trash bags over the boots.
>
> She wrapped her hair in a pair of stockings and over that a trash bag. Next she donned a raincoat and four pairs of gloves on each hand, followed by a mask.
>
> It was an arduous and time-consuming process, but Fatu was religious about it, never cutting corners. (Cohen, 2014)

It is noteworthy that Kekula's method had a 25% death rate, which was significantly lower than the expected death rate of 70%. With reporting that suggested practical protective measures, some of the damage caused by Ebola might have been mitigated.

The journalists who covered the Ebola crisis should be commended for the courage they showed in covering this outbreak. This study shows the need for these reporters to have access to risk information to journalists. The more reporters are informed about the risks they face when covering a risky situation, the more likely they are to take the right measures to protect themselves, and the less likely they are to be afraid to cover the story. One recommendation is for freelancers, or journalists from organizations with limited budgets to seek for risk assessments and protective equipment by partnering with the appropriate health departments or aid organizations in the countries they cover.

Several reporters interviewed for this study, or whose articles were analyzed, revealed that sources were not always willing to talk to them out of fear. Onishi for *The New York Times* wrote that building relationships with the locals helped him reach sources. Onishi, who spent two months reporting on Ebola in Liberia, wrote about Mark Jerry, a man they suspected would get sick after intimately taking care of his dying wife. They rushed to find him for an interview before he fell ill, but he went into hiding and turned off his phone, even though he initially agreed to meet them. Onishi's team received a call from Mark's family after he showed up with his daughter in front of an Ebola treatment center. Mark had been in denial. This experience shows how journalists can build relationships with subjects and improve their chances of obtaining information even in difficult instances by spending more with their subjects and gaining their trust. These relationships are especially important when covering a foreign country, and a health crisis, where people are scared of contracting the disease or being associated with the outbreak. Establishing relations is crucial in these instances as it helps in establishing trust between reporters and their sources.

Another important lesson to take from this study is that when covering a subject that affects multiple nations, reporters should tailor their reporting to each country individually. Guinea for example experienced the outbreak in a different way from Liberia and Sierra Leone.

Even though the country was ground zero for the virus, the people of Guinea, specifically the Forest Region resisted efforts to contain the disease. Participant 5 spoke of the skepticism in Guinea toward the disease and health workers. In spite of this, she was the first reporter from her newspaper to cover the outbreak in that country. This shows a flaw in the reporting that had been done because as Participant 5 stated, Guinea was ground zero for Ebola and so it was important to examine the causes of the start of the outbreak and why it had started there.

The issues that plague the coverage of foreign countries, specifically, African countries persist as this study confirms that Western news media are indeed short of staff in foreign countries. In addition to that, depending on the nature of the story, they parachute their journalists late into the crisis, which means that they had either not reported on the crisis before they got there, or, they published reports from others, which might have resulted in a problem with the context of the stories. The importance of having reporters on the ground was even reiterated by the two American journalists who traveled to Africa. Considering the factors that impede the stationing of foreign reporters in Africa, it is recommended that Western news organizations should consider creating more partnerships with local journalists to produce reports about their countries. The presence of these journalists on the ground is bound to fill the gap created by the absence of foreign reporters in Africa.

While *The Inquirer* had a bigger representation in the sample, its articles were very often not in-depth and the focused mostly on providing daily updates. The newspaper was also the publication that relied on official sources the most, which is probably why it had fewer articles on the victims and more reports containing updates from government institutions and their partners. *The New York Times,* which had a smaller representation in the sample, provided investigative reports that showed audiences the victims in a more personal way. The victims almost seem invisible in the coverage by *The Inquirer*, which very often included factual information like the death toll and efficacy information but told few personal stories which showed us the toll of the disease on individuals.

The Inquirer gets credit for consistently providing efficacy information in its reporting and for the volume of coverage the dedicated to the Ebola story. This shows that its journalists recognized the gravity of the situation, and reporters who participated in this story stated that they wanted to help in saving lives through their coverage. It also gets credit for the accessibility of the paper on the LexisNexis database. Many African papers are not uploaded online. However, the quality of the coverage by *The Inquirer* was rather underwhelming because the domination it had in terms of quantity was not reflected in the quality of its articles. For a paper that had twice as many articles as *The New York Times*, the story angles which focused on political stories and sources deprived the audience of personal stories about Ebola victims and failed to hold the government and its partners accountable for how Ebola funds were used. This is a failure because the media had a significant role to play in ensuring that officials were accountable for how they used those resources. This newspaper also failed to depict the suffering inflicted on the people of Liberia by the Ebola outbreak.

Despite the issues with the coverage by *The Inquirer*, there is still a value in partnerships between African media organizations like *The Inquirer*, *The Times*, and *The New York Times*. The African reporters have access and are on site when events like the Ebola outbreak happen, meanwhile the Western reporters have some gaps in coverage because many foreign news organizations no longer station reporters in Africa, and with outbreaks like Ebola, they delay in sending off their reporters because risk assessments have to be made before they are parachuted to cover foreign countries and issues. In order to develop such partnerships such that the reports from the African reporters can complement the reporting style needed in the Western press, these Western media organizations should train the journalists they seek to partner with. For instance, journalists at *The Inquirer* could be taught how to report on crises using the same principles and practices used at *The New York Times* reporter. They could also be taught how to determine news angles, work on in-depth investigative reports and how to seek sources of information, so they do not rely almost entirely on official sources for information.

Another suggestion would be for the Western newspapers to hire reporters who have ties to foreign countries but may not live there. Helene Cooper's article for *The New York Times,* which covered six Liberians who contracted Ebola by taking care of their sick family members, shows that there is an understanding of the people and the culture that she brings to the table. This is probably thanks to the fact that she is a Liberian-born American journalist who spent the early part of her life in Liberia. Her writing stands out as compassionate and authentically Liberian. She was the only reporter who used Liberian English in her writing, which showed us that she understood the people and could have obtained more personal information because of her familiarity with them and their language.

The reporters interviewed for this study make a valid point that reporters learn on the beat. However, for sensitive topics like Ebola where a poorly written article could result in panic, it is important for journalism programs to offer training on crisis reporting in their curriculum. International reporting courses should also be offered to student reporters. Such training programs could also be offered to professional reporters who are already working in newsrooms.

None of the reporters interviewed for this study had visited a library, a library website, or consulted with an information professional for help finding resources. However, they could benefit from the skillset of information scientists. One practical need journalists have is to find sources and experts on different subject matters who are diverse, accessible and willing to speak to them within tight deadlines. One of the ways the information science discipline could assist them would be to create a database of experts that would be easily accessible. This database could be shared with newsrooms.

Conclusion

It is disheartening that the media still relies on old tropes and practices to report on women and Africans. Not only is this important because representation matters, but it impacts the way the world perceives and reacts to events affecting these segments of the population. Their stories matter. Sometimes, their stories matter the most and are worth telling. Women and Africans do not need to be underrepresented or misrepresented in news articles for audiences to care about their stories. Since one of the news media's responsibilities is indeed to be the voice of voiceless, it is imperative that they represent the voice of all in a fair manner. In order to address the misrepresentation of these groups, there is a need for more journalists to serve as advocates and not just passive observers of events occurring around them. These journalists would be purposeful about seeking to tell the stories of minority groups using minority voices that represent both the victim and the heroes.

This study might come across as critical of some of the decisions made by journalists in the process of collecting information. However, it also recognizes their bravery and selflessness in opting to cover such dangerous assignments. Any criticisms of their work should be used to improve their coverage and possible outcomes in the next health crisis they cover.

Conducting a study on the media's handling of Ebola entailed reading and hearing personal accounts from reporters who covered the crisis, including those who witnessed the horrors and devastation on the streets of the countries ravaged by Ebola. This was an emotionally exhausting study because it was one that exposed human suffering, the denial by many to help those in need, as well the bravery of aid workers and journalists. However, this was a study worth doing because it provides us with an opportunity to see how journalists operate in times of crises. By understanding the decisions these reporters made, we will be able to provide better support services for them when they cover the next outbreak or disaster. Like Sheri Fink, this is an acknowledgement that the Ebola story might seem depressing to study, but it feels good to be adding something to the conversation and research.

APPENDIX A

COMPILATIONS AND SOURCES OF CODING CATEGORIES

Category/Theme	Characteristics	Source
Representation of women	Victims	1) Byerly & Ross (2006, p. 42) 2) GMMP, figure 2 3) Gallagher (2001, p. 7)
Representation of women/Role	Subjects versus objects	1) Gallagher (2001, p. 3)
Representation of women/Role	Primary figure	1) Hesse-Biber & Leavy (2006, p.300)
Public vs. private sphere	Are women presented in the public or private sphere? Are they placed in the family/friends category and not for their expertise	1. Croteau & Haynes, 2003 2. Andsager (2013, p. 48)
Setting	Are the women located at home, hospital, school, etc?	1) Hesse-Biber & Leavy (2006, p.300)
Gender Comparison	1) Women vs men: Are they evenly distributed? 2) In what kinds of story are females quoted or referenced or left out? In what kinds of story are males quoted or referenced or left out (Gallagher, 2001) 3) Are women portrayed differently from men? (Gallagher, 2001)	1) Michielsens (1995, as adapted by Gallagher, 2001, p. 120) 2) Global Media Monitoring Project, 2010 3) Byerly & Ross (2006) 4) Gallagher (2001, p. 120)
Type of photographs	Still or action shots	1) Hesse-Biber & Leavy (2006, p.300)
Expertise	basis for credibility (product user, authority or other, p. 301)	1) Hesse-Biber & Leavy (2006, p.301)
Good representation	Women who are better represented are involved, interactive, and symbolically equal to the viewer	1) Shahira Fahmy (2004) 2) Byerly & Ross (2006, p. 42)
Stereotypical roles/Gender roles	1) traditional domestic roles or as sex objects, romantics, irrational, indecisive and dependent beings 2) Traditional roles: wife, mother, and protagonists in spheres defined as important from a masculine perspective	1) Byerly & Ross (2006, p. 17) 2) Gallagher (1979) 3) Gallagher (2001, p. 5, 7) 4) Michielsens (1995, as adapted by Gallagher, 2001, p. 120)

Category/Theme	Characteristics	Source
Stereotyping+power	Powerful women as rarity/novelty	Anderson et al., (2011)
Diversity	1) Are women of diverse age groups, ethnic groups, social classes and professional classes presented? 2) What is the breakdown of bylines by the reporters in terms of gender? 2.1) Which kinds of stories did women reporters write about?	1) Michielsens (1995, as adapted by Gallagher, 2001, p. 120) 2) Center for Media Literacy
Sex-object stereotype.	Women as temptresses and objects	1) The Gender and Media Baseline Study, 2003, p. 12 http://www.genderlinks.org.za/article/gender-and-media-baseline-study-full-text-2009-11-16 2) Michielsens (1995, as adapted by Gallagher, 2001, p. 120)
Silent Victims	Africans as voiceless people are talked about in the news instead of speaking for themselves	Letter from Howard French: http://www.howardwfrench.com/2015/03/how-does-africa-get-reported-a-letter-of-concern-to-60-minutes/ Link to Byers (2015): http://www.politico.com/blogs/media/2015/03/minutes-under-fire-for-africa-coverage-204530.html
People with a voice	1) People with a voice are given a voice and are spokespeople 2) Women are deprived of their right of expression because they are not dialogued with but lectured. 3) Are they represented in a way that allows them to speak with dignity and authority?	1) Letter from Howard French: http://www.howardwfrench.com/2015/03/how-does-africa-get-reported-a-letter-of-concern-to-60-minutes/ 2) Link to Byers (2015): http://www.politico.com/blogs/media/2015/03/minutes-under-fire-for-africa-coverage-204530.html

Category/Theme	Characteristics	Source
		3) Michielsens (1995, as adapted by Gallagher, 2001, p. 120)
Is the subject an expert (African and/or women)	Is expert status only reflected by foreigners or are Africans, especially women shown as experts?	Letter from Howard French: http://www.howardwfrench.com/2015/03/how-does-africa-get-reported-a-letter-of-concern-to-60-minutes/
Attention to primary victims	1) Are issues of special concern to women (who are the primary victims of Ebola) covered? If not, why not? 2) If covered, is it adequate coverage? 3) 3) Where is such coverage – in news briefs, in major articles; in editorials or commentaries; in cartoons? 4) In what sections of the newspapers are they covered?	1) Gallagher (2001, p. 120)
Representative nature of reporters	1) Are they pages with no female references, bylines, or photos? Are there pages with only female or predominantly female references, bylines and photos? 2) Are female reporters assigned to all topic areas? If not, what are they reporting on, and why are they limited to certain subjects? What are the subjects? 3) Do females more than males report on women's health issues? 4) 3) What's the percentage of female and male sources (expert or non-expert) cited by male or female reporters?	1) Gallagher (2001, p. 120) 3) & 4) Andsager (2013, p. 46), Corbett & Mori (1999, p. 397-399)
Representative nature of photographers	1) Who are the photographers: Gender and nationality 2) Photographers often come from the same culture as their subjects, so their photography might	1) Loizos (2000, p. 101)

Category/Theme	Characteristics	Source
	support a cultural view of appropriateness.	
Context of coverage	1) Presence/absence of western ideals about appropriate social policies. 2) Presence/absence of connection of isolated events and trends in society and their links to international developments”	1) Fenton (2009 2) Fahmy (2004, p. 93) 3) Pavlik (2001)
Nature of African representation	Is it backwards? Are descriptions of Africa mostly negative or positive?	1) Seib (2004) 2) Anderson, Diabah & hMensa (2011) 3) Branston & Stafford, (1999) 4) Fryman & Bates (1993)
Evaluating media coverage of Ebola (for interviews)	Availability of self-efficacy/risk information using the following measures: 1) Quantity of coverage 2) Do they mention personal protection measures? 3) Do they contain information on the symptoms of the disease? 4) Do they suggest actions that could be taken to eliminate disease? 5) Was the risk compared to other health risks?	1) Dudo et al. (2007, p. 435) 2) Evensen & Clarke (2012) 3) Roche & Muskavitch (2003)

APPENDIX B

MEDIA REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN

Created by Michielsens Magda in 1995 in Belgium and adapted by Gallagher (2001, p. 120)

1) *Count the women and the subject areas in which they appear*. Are they evenly distributed, or is the balance skewed?

2) *Women speaking*: Are they represented in a way that allows them to speak with dignity and authority?

3) *Gender roles*. Are traditional gender roles reinforced – for example in relation to portrayal of family life or occupation outside the home – or avoided.

4) *Superwoman stereotype.* Are active, independent women represented as if they are ‘superwoman’?

5) *Natural woman stereotype.* Does the content reinforce the stereotype of women as innately docile, emotional, non-analytical, technically inept etc.?

6) *Sex-object stereotype.* Are women represented primarily as objects of male desire?

7) *The beauty myth.* What physical attributes apply to male and female participants – for example in relation to age, body weight, skin tone, clothes?

8) *Violence against women.* Does the material normalise violence? Does it suggest that women accept or enjoy violent treatment? How are victims of violence portrayed?

9) *Multi-dimensionality.* Does the representation encourage us to understand women’s many dimensions in terms of personality, capabilities, tastes, preferences etc.?

10) *Diversity*. Does the material reflect the diversity of age groups, social classes, ethnic groups, physical characteristics of women and men in the community as a whole?

APPENDIX C

STUDYING GENDER IN THE MEDIA

Created by M. Junior Bridge (Gallagher, 2001, p. 120)

- How are females described – by their marital/parental status, by their appearance, by their occupation? How are the males described?

- In what kinds of story are females quoted or referenced or left out? In what kinds of story are males quoted or referenced or left out?

- How are females portrayed in photographs? Are males portrayed differently? If so, is there a valid reason for the differences?

- Are proper names or pronouns used for repeated references to a female in the proportion as are references to males?

- Are they pages with no female references, bylines, or photos? Are there pages with only female or predominantly female references, bylines and photos?

- Are issues of special concern to women, such as reproductive rights or breast cancer, being covered? If not, why not? If covered, is it adequate coverage? Where is such coverage – in news briefs, in major articles; in editorials or commentaries; in cartoons? In what sections of the newspapers are they covered?

- In news of general interest, such as the economy, the job market, war, day care and education, are women's viewpoints, experience and expertise included? Is female commentary being sought out as frequently as male commentary? Are males excluded in the coverage of certain topics, such as teenage pregnancy and childcare? If so, why?

- Are the accomplishments of females covered in the news? If so, how and where? How does this coverage compare to coverage of the accomplishments of males?

- Are female reporters assigned to all topic areas? If not, what are they reporting on, and why are they limited to certain subjects? What are the subjects?

APPENDIX D

HOW TO CONDUCT A GENDER SURVEY OF YOUR LOCAL NEWSPAPER

From Center for Media Literacy: http://www.medialit.org/reading-room/how-conduct-gender-survey-your-local-newspaper

- When women make the news, what is it usually about?
- What kinds of stories do women reporters get to write about?
- What adjectives describe the women shown in photographs?

APPENDIX E

MEASUREMENT OF TASKS CONDUCTED BY PROFESSIONALS

(Byström & JärveliN, 1995, p. 199)

DIARY Date: Time started:

1. Describe your task in detail:

2. Describe the situational factors affecting the task:

3. What is the ambition level you aim at in the task: good, nearly good or satisfactory?

4. Describe in detail what kind of information you think you need in order to perform the task.

(a) thoughts in the beginning of the task:

(b) thoughts emerged later during the task:

5. Which channels and sources do you consider (mention also those you won't use)

(a) thoughts in the beginning of the task:

0) thoughts emerged later during the task:

6. How much time did you use in planning information seeking?

7. Which channels and sources did you use? (Include yourself; mention the names of any colleagues consulted; mention channels used no matter whether or not you obtained the sources):

Source	Whv chosen	Channel	Whv chosen	Success	Applicability

Success: you got the information (a) wholly, (b) partly, (c) not at all

Applicability: the information was (a) well-applicable, (b) partially applicable, (c) not applicable at all

8. Was the whole of the information obtained (a) sufficient for the task or (b) insufficient for the task?

9. Estimate the time spent (a) on information seeking (b) on the whole task.

APPENDIX F

IRB APPROVAL LETTER

UNT

Research and Economic Development
THE OFFICE OF RESEARCH INTEGRITY AND COMPLIANCE

May 10, 2016

Dr. Tracy Everbach
Student Investigator: Jenny Mumah
Department of Library & Information Services
University of North Texas

Re: Human Subjects Application No. 16-213

Dear Dr. Everbach:

As permitted by federal law and regulations governing the use of human subjects in research projects (45 CFR 46), the UNT Institutional Review Board has reviewed your proposed project titled "Where are the women in the Ebola crisis? An analysis of generated reporting and the information behavior patterns of journalists covering a health outbreak." The risks inherent in this research are minimal, and the potential benefits to the subject outweigh those risks. The submitted protocol is hereby approved for the use of human subjects in this study. **Federal Policy 45 CFR 46.109(e) stipulates that IRB approval is for one year only, May 10, 2016 to May 09, 2017.**

Enclosed are the consent documents with stamped IRB approval. Please copy and **use this form only** for your study subjects.

It is your responsibility according to U.S. Department of Health and Human Services regulations to submit annual and terminal progress reports to the IRB for this project. The IRB must also review this project prior to any modifications. **If continuing review is not granted before March 10, 2017, IRB approval of this research expires on that date.**

Please contact The Office of Research Integrity and Compliance at 940-565-4643, if you wish to make changes or need additional information.

Sincerely,

Chad Trulson, Ph.D.
Professor
Chair, Institutional Review Board

CT: JM

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH TEXAS
1155 Union Circle #310979 Denton, Texas 76203-5017
940.369.4643 940.369.7486 fax www.research.unt.edu

University of North Texas Institutional Review Board

Informed Consent Notice

Before agreeing to participate in this research study, it is important that you read and understand the following explanation of the purpose, benefits and risks of the study and how it will be conducted.

Title of Study: Where are the women in the Ebola crisis? An analysis of gendered reporting and the information behavior patterns of journalists covering a health outbreak

Student Investigator: Jenny Mumah, University of North Texas (UNT) Department of Library & Information Sciences. **Supervising Investigator:** Dr. Tracy Everbach

Purpose of the Study: You are being asked to participate in a research study which involves capturing the words and thoughts of journalists who covered the Ebola outbreak in the United States and/or in Africa. The objective is to study their information behavior patterns and how this impacted their reporting of the outbreak and its victims, especially the women. Our hope is that this study will reveal media patterns that could possibly result in the publication of guidelines on how to cover victims of health disasters for communication scholars and practitioners. This study seeks to answer the following research questions:

1. How do mass media represent women in their coverage of the Ebola crisis and how did media representations of female Ebola victims differ according to geographic location?
2. How has the Ebola crisis affected the information behavior patterns of journalists and in turn influenced their reporting and choice of subjects during coverage of a health crisis?
3. What is the satisfaction level of journalists with the information they find when covering the Ebola crisis and for what purposes do they use the information they collect from these sources?

Study Procedures: You will be asked to participate in an oral interview that will take about 2 to 3 hours of your time. These interviews will be recorded and transcribed for data analysis. Participants will be contacted for at least follow-up session using the communication method most convenient for them including: email, phone calls, or text messages. The follow-up communication will be used to clarify information that was collected during the first interview. Interview transcripts will also be emailed to the participants before data analysis begins.

Foreseeable Risks: *No foreseeable risks are involved in this study.*

Benefits to the Subjects or Others: This study is not expected to be of any direct benefit to you, but we hope to learn more about how job tasks and coverage assignments influence a journalist's information behavior and reporting. The results from this study may reveal media patterns that

Office of Research Integrity & Compliance
University of North Texas
Last Updated: August 9, 2007

Page 1 of 3

APPROVED BY THE UNT IRB
FROM 5-10-16 TO 5-09-17

could possibly result in the publication of guidelines on how to cover victims of health disasters for communication scholars and practitioners.

Compensation for Participants: None

Procedures for Maintaining Confidentiality of Research Records: All information collected about the participants will be kept confidential in any publications or presentations regarding this study. Identifying information such as names and place of employment will be coded to ensure confidentiality. The participants will be referred to as "Reporter 1," "Reporter 2" and so forth depending on the order in which they were interviewed. Their place of work will also be described using general descriptions – for example, a paper like the New York Times will be described as "a large daily metropolitan newspaper in the United States."

Only the researcher and her committee chair, Dr. Tracy Everbach, will have access to the participants' information. The records, key codes, and audio recordings from the interviews will be stored in sealed file cabinet at in Dr. Tracy Everbach's office at the University of North Texas for four years following the end of the study. At this time, paper records will be shredded, and audio files will be deleted from the storage device to insure confidentiality.

Questions about the Study: If you have any questions about the study, you may contact Jenny Mumah at jenny.mumah@unt.edu / (214) 881-1593 or Tracy Everbach at Tracy.Everbach@unt.edu / (940) 565-2205 (office).

Review for the Protection of Participants: This research study has been reviewed and approved by the UNT Institutional Review Board (IRB). The UNT IRB can be contacted at (940) 565-4643 with any questions regarding the rights of research subjects.

Research Participants' Rights:

Your participation in the survey confirms that you have read all of the above and that you agree to all of the following:

- *Jenny Mumah* has explained the study to you and you have had an opportunity to contact him/her with any questions about the study. You have been informed of the possible benefits and the potential risks of the study.
- You understand that you do not have to take part in this study, and your refusal to participate or your decision to withdraw will involve no penalty or loss of rights or benefits. The study personnel may choose to stop your participation at any time.
- You understand why the study is being conducted and how it will be performed.

APPROVED BY THE UNT IRB
FROM 5-10-16 TO 5-09-17
JM

- You understand your rights as a research participant and you voluntarily consent to participate in this study.
- You understand you may print a copy of this form for your records.

APPROVED BY THE UNT IRB
FROM 5-10-16 TO 5-09-17

APPENDIX G

INTERVIEW DATES

Identity	Interview Date
Participant 1	October 13, 2016
Participant 2	October 15, 2016
Participant 3	October 18, 2016
Participant 4	October 22, 2016
Participant 5	October 28, 2016
Participant 6	October 31, 2016
Participant 7	December 5, 2016 (questionnaire)
Participant 8	January 26, 2017

SUNDAYS	MONDAYS	TUESDAYS	WEDNESDAYS	THURSDAYS	FRIDAYS	SATURDAYS
September 7, 2014	July 28, 2014	May 27, 2014	April 2, 2014	August, 2014	July 11, 2014	August 30, 2014
October 19, 2014	March 9, 2014	October 14, 2014	January 28, 2015	November 6, 2014	September 12, 2014	January 10, 2015
March 29, 2015	April 13, 2015	July 14, 2015	September 9, 2015	April 9, 2015	June 12, 2015	May 9, 2015
September 21, 2014	September 29, 2014	July 29, 2014	November 5, 2014	May 22, 2014	December 12, 2014	March 29, 2014
October 5, 2014	November 17, 2014	December 2, 2014	June 3, 2015	January 22, 2015	February 22, 2015	May 30, 2015
July 19, 2015	July 6, 2015	September 15, 2014	August 26, 2015	April 23, 2015	March 20, 2015	August 30, 2015

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