

Abstract

All issues of India Abroad from January to June of 1983 and 1985 were perused to pick out stories pertaining to women. These women's stories were then coded in such a way as to ascertain the topics covered, the presentation of women's stories, and their overall treatment by the paper. It was found that there are very few stories on women, relative to the number of stories overall. Also, stories on women often appear as idiosyncratic events, unrelated to a larger perspective or to social causes. Women rarely speak for themselves in the stories about them; rather, bureaucratic males are usually used as sources. Women's stories are dispersed throughout the paper, but there are very few front page stories about women. In general, the tone of the stories is positive. After assessing the results, the potential for improvement is explored.

About the Author

Rashmi Luthra is a doctoral student in journalism and mass communication at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Research works include: "Gender Portrayal in Advertisements of Two Indian Magazines" and "Mass Mediated Matchmaking for Indians in the U.S." Current research interest and dissertation topic is "The Social Marketing of Contraceptives in the Third World: Transfer of a Communication and Social Influence Methodology."

Women and International Development
Michigan State University
206 International Center, East Lansing, MI 48824-1035
Ph: 517/353-5040 Fx: 517/432-4845
Email: wid@msu.edu Web: <http://www.wid.msu.edu>

Coverage of Women's Issues in the Indian Immigrant Press: A Content Analysis

by

Rashmi Luthra
School of
Journalism and
Mass
Communication
University of
Wisconsin-
Madison

**Working Paper
#138
April 1987**

Copyright 1987, MSU Board of Trustees

COVERAGE OF WOMEN'S ISSUES IN THE INDIAN IMMIGRANT PRESS
OF THE U.S.: A CONTENT ANALYSIS

This is an exploratory study of the coverage of women and their particular concerns in selected issues of India Abroad, an English-language Indian newspaper published in the United States. This newspaper was started in 1970 to cater to the large number of newly arrived Indian professionals in this country. It now claims a circulation of about thirty thousand copies (Mohapatra, 1985) and tells its readers in every issue that it is "the oldest Indian newspaper in North America and the largest outside India." These are good reasons to select this paper for analysis. Whatever it has to say about women and women's problems and achievements contributes to the mental set about gender of a substantial number of Indians in North America.

The 1980 "permanent Indian population" of the United States was estimated at between 140,000 and 160,000 (Leonhard-Spark, Saran, and Ginsberg 1980). Roughly speaking, readers of India Abroad comprise 18 to 19 percent of the Indian population in the United States. Combining this with the fact that "more than three adults read each copy of India Abroad" (India Abroad 1985) makes a compelling argument to analyze the text of this particular newspaper.

I call this study exploratory for several reasons. First, it concentrates on developing a conceptual scheme informed by feminist concerns to analyze the particular subject matter. Second, the number of issues analyzed is limited, and therefore no definitive conclusions can be made about the general coverage of women's issues in the paper. Rather, the study's conclusions apply to the papers actually analyzed, and they point toward further study of the same research problem with an extensive sample and more elaborate methodology.

The Research Questions

The work of putting together the news is influenced by several factors. Two major considerations in both the selection and presentation (shaping of the final product) of news are, on one hand, the organizational resources and needs of the news organization and, on the other, the perception of audience needs. This research paper attempts to be sensitive to possible effects of these factors on the shaping of news about women. Another major factor is the ideals of fairness, balance, and objectivity and in some cases, progressiveness, that are inculcated in journalists; and the study is alert to these influences as well (Cohen and Young 1981). The conceptual categories indirectly reflect the importance of these influences.

The first research question focuses on the selection of news items about women, and on the way this selection may be influenced by the perception of audience needs. Simply put, "Has the amount of coverage of women and women's issues changed between 1983 and 1985?" Awareness of women's needs and unique problems has been steadily gathering force since the late seventies, as evidenced by the formation of several Indian women's organizations both in

India and North America (Luthra 1984; Luthra 1985). There is reason to believe that this upward trend continues. Also, the World Decade for Women conference in Nairobi in 1986 undoubtedly created some awareness of the need to cover women's issues in the media, not only within the general population, but in particular among journalists. But there is a possible countervailing force: reader demand for novelty in the news works against continuous and sustained coverage of any particular problem; also, the gathering of news, being event-oriented, leads to spurts of coverage on particular issues whenever visible action is taken on them (street protests, for example), but results in a sudden decline in coverage whenever such events are no longer news (become "olds"). When the first influence prevails, we can expect to see an increase in news on women over the time period studied. But when the second influence prevails, we can expect a constant amount of news (no change between times). Rather than making specific hypotheses, I have examined the results to discover the influences involved.¹

Next, the paper looks at the composition of coverage on women. "What are the general types or categories into which the stories on women fall?" The answer to this question will give some indication of the extent of feminist orientation for the articles included.

Another set of questions revolves around the presentation of news about women. The first such question is, "What is the overall prominence given to news about women in the paper?" Extent of prominence is an index of the importance of a story vis a vis other stories in the paper. It gives some indication both of the paper's own priorities, and of journalists' perception of audience priorities.

The second question dealing with presentation is, "To what extent are women's voices heard in stories about them? To what extent do women speak for themselves in these stories?" Studies of newswork in the U.S. have indicated that the needs of the news organization lead journalists to use official sources for news—sources that are either in some government bureaucracy, or which in some other way formally represent a group of people (Tuchman 1978; Fishman 1980).² This study attempts to see whether the same tendency exists in the news presented in this paper, and how this relates to women's situation in general.³

The third and fourth questions address the frame within which the story is presented. These are: "What is the general tone of the articles on women?" and "Do these articles present the subject matter as an idiosyncratic event/problem or do they tie the particular event to larger social concerns?" The first of these questions seeks an indication of whether women would benefit or would be harmed by the coverage given to them; the second question seeks an indication of the extent to which the audience is enabled, even encouraged, to put the particular event into a larger context, which would in turn lead to an understanding of the causes rather than the symptoms of patriarchy.

The study also looks at the distribution of stories by country of subject—India, the U.S., or both. This is done because of the dual interests of the immigrant audience and correspondingly, the dual demands made on the

newswriters. Indian immigrants face in two directions: they keep in touch with events at home in an attempt to retain ties there and to preserve their Indian heritage and traditions, but they also need to know about fellow immigrants in the U.S., in order to adjust to life in the U.S. Culturally, these people are caught between the value systems of India and the U.S. This study explores whether the press in the U.S. is just as willing to deal with women's issues in the U.S. Indian community as with women's issues in India. Inclusion of stories about women's issues in the community in the U.S. would entail a greater degree of progressiveness and/or commitment to changing women's status for at least two reasons. First, it is politically more difficult to threaten the status quo of the readers, and this would be done more directly through stories situated within the U.S. community than through stories about India. Second, including stories that have been sent by wire services in India (as are a lot of stories about India) would only be a matter of selection, whereas doing stories on women's issues in the U.S. would require an allotment of staff time to report on and write the stories.

Last, the paper explores the potential for exploiting journalistic conventions and practices in getting the "best possible deal" for women's coverage. It does this by looking at how the different types of articles differ on their coverage of women's issues, and looks in depth at a few articles which point to the potential for more comprehensive, in-depth coverage of women and the unique aspects of their life situation.

Conceptual Scheme and Concept Definitions

A careful perusal of the available material enabled me to come up with a scheme for analyzing the material and the definitions to be used in this analysis. The first problem was being able to distinguish stories on women's issues from all others. It was decided that women's stories would be identified as follows: (1) stories that have a woman or women as the chief newsmakers and subjects, (2) stories that are mainly about women as a group and about their unique life situation or problems, and (3) stories that are general but have an explicit reference to women and have major implications for women as a group. Stories about famous women politicians and entertainers were excluded, as these types of stories did not appear to represent any degree of exclusive focus on women or any consciousness about women's situation.⁴

The stories were divided into categories in several ways. One way is termed "basic category" which refers to the role of the woman or women in the story. It shows how the woman or women are related to the event, problem, or other subject matter of the story. The pilot study yielded the following sub-categories:

Basic Category:

- Women as Victims of Society
- Individual Women as Victims (of criminal activity)

Woman/women's Accomplishments
Attempts to Change Women's Condition
Individual Woman as Criminal
General Story (with implications for women as a group)
Other

The categories are fairly self-explanatory.

Stories were also categorized according to their placement in different sections of the paper. This categorization reflects the newspaper's own division of news into conceptually distinct types. Initial perusal yielded the following sub-categories.

Placement-Section of Article:

Letter to the Editor
News Story
News Brief
Feature - general
Feature - special section
Other

These categories are also fairly self-explanatory. Some ambiguity arose when distinguishing news stories from news briefs. It was decided that news briefs are those stories that appear in a narrow column on one side of a page. There are several in the column, of about uniform size and fairly small, uniform headlines. Small news stories appearing in the main body of the page, along with other larger stories, were classified as news stories. Features appearing in special sections such as "Women" or "Life and Leisure" were distinguished from features appearing together with other news stories; this is because the special sections usually form a distinct sub-organizational structure within news organizations, and the methods and rationale governing the selection and treatment of stories in these sections is different from the dynamic governing general news stories.

The specific topic of each story was also listed in answer to an open-ended question. These topics were grouped together to make general categories after the stories had been coded. These categories appear in the results section.

Presentation:

Presentation or treatment of the articles was measured through various concepts. The first of these is prominence.

Prominence is related to the visual preeminence given to the story. In a paper, stories fight for the attention of the reader, given limited time, interest, and attention span. In this competition, several techniques are

used to enhance the attention value of particular articles. The factors chosen to measure prominence in this study are: the page on which the story is placed, and the length of the story. The length indicates the importance of the story. Space is a precious commodity in any paper of substantial circulation, and stories take up this space based on their importance as judged by the relevant editors.

Presentation was also measured through the sources that were used for the stories. This aspect indicates the extent to which women are sought out by reporters (and other newswriters) to speak on issues that affect their lives. Two aspects of sources were analyzed and divided into categories, as follows:

Source I:

- Official (Bureaucratic) Male Source
- Official Female Source
- Unofficial Male Source
- Unofficial Female Source
- No Source
- Other
- Not Appropriate

Source II:

- Woman/Women about whom story is written
- Other Source
- No Source
- Not Appropriate

Sources are considered official when they explicitly represent some organization. If no such affiliation is stated, they are considered unofficial. The "not appropriate" category for Sources I and II is used when the type of article is not expected to use sources, such as letters to the editor. For Source II, this category is also used in cases when it would have been impossible to use the women as sources, as in cases when they were murder victims. The category was also used for Source II when the story did not have women as primary subjects.

Yet another aspect of presentation is the tone of the article. An early perusal of stories yielded the following sub-categories:

Tone:

- Humorous/Flippant
- Serious (usually respectful)
- Matter-of-Fact
- Laudatory
- Other

Stories are coded as "flippant" when the comedy in the situation is brought out, mocking phrases are used, and the whole situation is made light

of. Stories are coded "matter-of-fact" when only the "facts" are given, and people from various sides are quoted, but there is no hint of the reporters' or the papers' orientation on the issue. Stories are coded as "serious" if the issue or problem is given a frame which deems it legitimate, and when sources and quotes lean heavily towards explaining the women's issue/problem in a sympathetic way. Stories are coded as "laudatory" when the phrases used are clearly admiring of the subject of the story. The lead usually plays a major role in setting the tone of a story and is therefore considered carefully in assessing story tone for this study.

The last aspect of presentation is the extent to which the isolated event or incident on which the story is based is given a larger frame by either providing background explanation or linking it to similar events. Further, it is asked whether a "social" explanation for the event or phenomenon is given in the story. In this context, social explanation is defined as explanation that locates the cause of events in system mechanisms rather than in individuals or in nature. The story was coded "not appropriate" when it would not have been possible to provide any social explanation or to link the event to a larger perspective without making a completely forced and tenuous link.

Country orientation of the story simply asks whether the main focus of the story is India, the U.S., both, or some other country.

Methods

All stories in all issues of India Abroad from January to June of 1983 and January to June of 1985 were scanned first to locate women's stories.⁵ After these were marked, they were scanned for appropriate variables and for categories within each variable. Next, the stories were coded for each variable or dimension, to place them into the correct categories. Last, stories in each category were counted to determine the distribution of stories between categories for each variable.

The analysis is descriptive, identifying frequencies and percentages. Since the whole universe of stories during the specified time period was analyzed rather than a random sample, and since the number of stories is relatively small, it was not thought appropriate to use sophisticated statistics. Rather, the counts merely indicate tendencies to be explored further.

The analysis in the Results section does not confine itself to the frequencies presented in the tables at the end of the paper. Rather, observations based on the frequencies and percentages are interlaced with observations culled from a more qualitative and holistic, but careful, perusal of the stories in aggregate and as individual pieces.

Results and Discussion

The total number of women's stories was 38 in 1983 and 39 in 1985--not an appreciable difference. It may be that whatever momentum is being gained

through consciousness-raising by women's organizations and by the World Decade conference is counterbalanced by the need for news organizations to diversify coverage over time to sustain the novelty of the stories presented. In any case, the awareness of the early eighties certainly has not waned, and the number of women's stories remains constant. Still, this is a very small number of stories, considering that any given issue of India Abroad easily carries 60 to 80 stories, counting editorials, letters, news briefs, and news stories (which were included in this analysis).

As shown in Table 1, a large percentage of stories are about women as victims, about equally divided between stories about individual women as victims and stories about groups of women (or women collectively) systematically oppressed by society.⁶ A careful perusal of the stories revealed that most stories about women as victims (collectively) of society were situated in India and most stories about individual women as victims were situated in the United States. One possible explanation follows: In the last few years, there has been a growing awareness of women's oppression in India, with women's groups and sympathetic media playing a large part in instigating this awareness. In the United States, although an awareness of patriarchy and its effects exists in the larger context, the Indian population is not yet very vocal or active politically, and the same applies in the United States for Indian women as a group. Their problems as a group have not been highlighted by collective protest, as in India, and the media's inability to spot trends in Indian women's oppression in the United States probably reflects the general limitations in the political arena.

Of the stories which are about women as victims of society, a large number focus on the specific issue of dowry deaths. The paper should be recognized for giving continuous coverage to this issue, as well as to the Shah Bano case (a case concerning the granting of alimony by the Supreme Court to a Muslim woman). Sustained coverage is essential to create awareness and gather support for particular movements. But similar coverage is necessary for problems that affect Indian women in the United States. In this category, there were also two stories about the Sikh women widowed as a result of the Delhi riots. The few others covered various topics.

About 14 percent of the stories covered attempts at change of women's condition. One of these, situated in Pakistan, was about women's protest action against fundamentalism. Two stories, situated in Britain, were about changes in immigration law that would benefit Indian women wanting to immigrate to that region. The rest were situated in India. Their headlines give some idea of their content: "Separate Women's (Prison) Cells Ordered," "Child Marriage Ban," "Court's Decision: Muslim Women Can Get Alimony," "For Nurse Protection (against sexual harassment)," "Supreme Court Declares Dowry Belongs to Wife," "Delhi Women Assail Dowry Deaths," "MPs Study Dowry Law Penalties," and "Protecting Brides." The last story is about providing protection against fraudulent marriages with Arab men. None of the "attempts at change" stories is situated in the United States. Admittedly, a very small time frame has been examined, but even then, the absence of such stories situated in the U.S. says something about both the fledgling nature of Indian women's political mobilization in the United States and the failure of the media to take an active role in creating awareness of such action.

The data in Table 2 shows that most women's stories are in the main body of the text, the news stories. Only one editorial addresses a women's issue, and even then it was on nonformal education and mentioned women's education only in this larger context. Editorials are precisely the place where women's issues can be linked to each other and to their societal causes, where stands can be taken on these issues. A paucity of women's issues in this section contributes to their invisibility.

Table 3 shows the distribution of stories by topic. The two topics getting the greatest attention are dowry, and crime-related stories, in which women are either victims or criminals. The rest of the stories are dispersed into several topics, with about 10 percent reporting on sexual harassment (including rape). It should be noted here that, of the fifteen stories on dowry, eight were letters to the editor. Also eight of the eleven letters to the editor were on dowry. It can be concluded that the letters from the readers contributed significantly to the visibility of this topic on women (vis a vis other women's topics), and also that of all women's issues, readers felt most strongly about this one. Most of the letters on dowry were provocative. They either tried to attack the root causes of the practice, confronted those who perpetuate it, or dispelled myths about the custom. Equally thought-provoking editorials on dowry and other societal problems related to women's condition would be a perfect complement to such letters.

The paucity of front page stories is a matter of some concern. (Refer to Table 4). It is true that merely placing stories about women on the front page, regardless of their treatment and tone, will not guarantee fair coverage for women, but their absence from the front page does not encourage the debate on women's issues to gain public currency. Even if a front page story on women were objectionable from the standpoint of feminist groups, they could protest the coverage by writing letters to the editor or directly contacting the editor. At least this way the questions surrounding women's status would be included in public discourse. A look at the front page stories on women is revealing. (1) "3 Held in American Woman's Death" is about the daughter of the New Delhi bureau chief of The Washington Post who was found dead in a hotel room. It is the criminal nature of the event and the status of the woman's father that makes this a front pager. (2) "Court's Decision: Muslim Women Can Get Alimony" is about the Supreme Court overriding Muslim personal law in favor of entitling a woman to receive alimony payments. The larger issues surrounding this story--such as the status of minorities and the hold of religious law in the country--provided this story the status of the front page. (3) "Bandit Queen Phoolan Devi Surrenders to Chief Minister" got high prominence because of the great play it already had in the Indian media (this is the "echo effect" that often takes place in the media), and because it is unique for a woman to attain such visibility as a big time criminal. The deviant nature of the event makes it a candidate for the front page. (4) The story "Delhi Women Assail Dowry Deaths" is an interesting case about a protest against dowry launched by the women's section of the Congress (I) Party. The official status of the women and the official mode of the protest action helps this story to attain front page status. The legal form of their protest also helps gain legitimacy (and thereby visibility). But the result of this calculated form of protest is positive. By gaining such visibility, this

story helps to bring the larger issue to light.⁷

In fairness to India Abroad, it should be stated that the selection of stories for the front page reflects certain broad editorial decisions. The front page generally focuses on a major political story in India, dealing either with national integration (and threats to the same) or with international relations. Besides the major story, an attempt is made to include one or two stories relating to Indians in the U.S., or to U.S. politics as it relates to India or Indians in the U.S.⁸ This is not to say that the editorial policy as to what makes news is a fixed entity, but that increasing coverage of women's stories on the front page, as elsewhere, may require a broad-based reevaluation of news itself. Last, it is worth mentioning the positive observation that stories on women are dispersed throughout the paper, rather than being clustered in the last few pages.

Table 5 gives the distribution of stories by their stated source. Overall, official male sources predominate. To a large degree, this reflects the actual power structure, in which men in official positions often make decisions for and speak for less powerful people, including women. But the news practice of repeatedly approaching bureaucratic sources for their interpretation of events serves to further legitimize these sources as the only credible and appropriate sources for news. Since bureaucratic power resides disproportionately with men, this practice also implies that men more often give their version of the story, even if it is about women.⁹ Table 6 supports this line of reasoning to some extent. In only 17 percent of the stories did women about whom the story was written speak on their own behalf--only in these stories were they given the opportunity to do so by the media.

As Table 7 depicts, the tone of the stories is generally favorable. Most of the stories on women are either serious and respectful of the subject, or matter-of fact. Only 14 percent are flippant in their treatment of the story matter. When a flippant tone is used, however rarely, the effect can be most damaging. Two poignant examples are given in Appendix B. The story entitled "28 Women Escapees Hunted" distorts and belittles the oppression experienced by the female inmates of a reform home, by attributing their escape to the desire for husbands. The lead of the story gives the impression that the need for husbands was the primary reason for the escape. It becomes clear by the fifth and sixth paragraphs that this was only one of their grievances. These women had been waiting for trial for up to three years. Also, guards had "sexually abused" them, which probably means they had been raped. In fact, the women were probably insisting on marriage as one of the few ways to escape an unbearable situation. Instead of focusing on the very serious complaints of the women, the story picks up the Police Superintendent's words as the most central, and highlights a particular reason for the escape, thereby trivializing the whole incident.

Another poignant example of trivializing humor is the story "Teasers Hunted on Delhi Campus." The humiliating and dehumanizing reality of daily sexual harassment of college women in Delhi, stepped up during the "holi" festival, is ridiculed here. The lead calls the men who engage in the harassment "bottom pinchers." The phraseology is attributed to Reuters and frames the entire story by its placement at the beginning of the article. The

readers are led to see the whole incident in a humorous light. Women who have experienced Delhi streets will recognize this as a distortion of reality, or as a particularly male chauvinistic version of reality, while others may be taken in by the tone of the story.

Table 8 shows that about 48 percent of the stories present the incident as an idiosyncratic case. About 18 percent of the stories indicate that the incident represents a general pattern of occurrences or a larger problem, but does not go into the societal causes of the pattern or problem. Another 18 percent of the stories do situate the incident in a larger frame, and also mention societal causes of the particular incident or kind of incident. This last category is the most helpful in terms of placing women's lives and oppression in the larger context. Stories in this category do not portray women's situation and their oppression as isolated, accidental happenings, but point to systematic mechanisms that determine women's particular situation.

From Table 9 it can be concluded that the majority of the stories on women are situated in India. This could be a reflection of three things. It could mean that Indian women simply are not as vocal, especially as collectivities, in the U.S. as they are in India. Or it could mean that the paper does not yet have enough commitment toward the improvement of women's status to allocate precious staff time to stories on women's situation. But it could also simply reflect a general trend in the paper of covering more stories on India than the U.S., regardless of whether they are women's stories. This last proposition cannot be verified here, since the ratio of Indian to U.S. stories was not calculated for the stories overall.

From this small number of stories, a few observations regarding the exploitation of opportunities for women's news can be made. There were very few women's stories that received prominence, in terms of location, length and display features (such as accompanying photographs) in the general sections of the newspaper. The few stories that did receive prominence as general news stories were integrally related to an event or issue which would normally be considered newsworthy, such as the relationship of the woman to a prominent man or to an important national question such as communalism. In other words, for women's stories to gain prominence in the general sections, they had a "news peg" of recognizable value in the terms of news conventions. The only other places where women's stories either got prominence in terms of length and display features, or in terms of providing background information and bringing up societal causes, were special sections such as "Life and Leisure," and Letters to the Editor, usually written by women.

These observations suggest a few tactics. First, sympathetic women reporters can find acceptable news pegs for women's stories, and in this way gain prominence for them, or they can bring a feminist perspective (sympathetic to women's advancement) to general news stories that have a bearing on women's condition. In both these ways, they can help to "feminize" general news stories. Second, editors and reporters working for the special sections, such as "Life and Leisure," can fight to get major events relating to women, such as women's protests, into their section, and then treat them sympathetically, with thorough backgrounding and explanation. One example of

a woman's story in the "Life and Leisure" section is given in Appendix B as presenting the potential for thorough analysis and debate. The story, "Despite the Housework Here Women Want to Remain," gets adequate space and has photographs, and allows women to speak for themselves, but it does not go far enough. By asking provocative questions about housework in relation to women's life situation, the reporter could have brought up pertinent issues related to domestic work. Another article in a "Life and Leisure" section, "Pressures in U.S. Step Up Divorce By Indian Couples" shows that the double burden of housework and an outside job can actually create enough tensions to break up relationships. By talking to a variety of women, including feminists, such questions can be explored in this section.¹⁰

Conclusions

In general, women's stories get very little visibility in India Abroad. This situation has remained the same over time. Overall there are very few such stories and they do not get much prominence even when they do appear. A large number of these stories are crime stories, and are routinely covered together with all other crime stories. As in all news reporting, events that are finite have a greater chance of being covered. Crime offers such events, as do protests. As movements have begun to recognize, they have to stage media events that can be covered, to bring attention to their unique problems. This also applies to the women's movement. In other words, the actions of the women's groups have to be shaped in such a way as to be congruent with the rhythms and needs of newswork. The other alternative is to change the conception of news itself. This is a radical conception, but not likely to be put into action in the near future.

Even when women and women's issues do make it to the news, their voices are not heard very often. Others (mostly official males) speak for them most of the time. This, together with the low visibility and appearance of such stories, contributes to what Tuchman (1978) called the "symbolic annihilation" of women in the news. Women's problems are so little seen and heard that they can be ignored.

Letters to the Editor and features are better in this respect. They place the problem in a larger perspective, provide linkages between events, allow women to speak for themselves, and allow expression of opinions. Editorials also would provide for this, but there are hardly any editorials (just one) on women in the papers analyzed. Features and editorials have the advantage of being prominent. Features in the special section (such as "Life and Leisure") have the special advantage of not necessarily having to compete with stories in the general section. If editors of these sections are progressively oriented, they can use their comparative autonomy to publish relevant articles on women's condition and women's attempts to organize and promote change.

Overall, there appears to be some recognition of the need to place incidents about women in a larger context, rather than to portray these incidents as isolated and accidental. But, given the space limitations papers are faced with, it would be too much to expect every news story to provide a sociological analysis of the incidents. But this is precisely why it is

absolutely necessary to provide such an analysis in the editorial and feature sections. Women readers can also contribute to the effort to make women's issues visible by writing thoughtful letters to the editor. Of course, selection from among the letters for publication would still remain in the hands of the newspaper staff, and here again their commitment and political consciousness, as well as editorial policy, would play a role.

The overall tone of coverage of women's stories was positive. With a more concerted effort to do stories on women, and to give necessary background with those stories, the paper can genuinely contribute to making women's particular concerns part of the public discourse.

NOTES

1. To answer this question, all stories appearing in the available issues between January to June of 1983 and January to June of 1985 were judged as to whether they were women's stories. Since the universe of stories scanned was immense, it seemed justified to make a comparison of number of women's stories over time. For all other questions, comparisons over time were also made, and these comparisons are presented in Appendix A. But it was felt appropriate in the main body of the paper to collapse the two times, since the number of women's stories at each time period was too small to make meaningful comparisons, and since the two times, 1983 and 1985, are too close together to realistically expect changes in coverage. The counts are given for the whole pool of stories taken together. These data could conceivably be used as a basis for comparison on stories published several years from now, or on those published around 1970 or earlier.

2. See especially chapter 5, "The Web of Facticity," in Gaye Tuchman's Making News: A Study in the Construction of Reality (New York: The Free Press, 1978). Tuchman shows how reporters' and editors' understandings of the world and of the news operation lead them to create gradations of sources' facticity. In this gradation, government representatives, especially elected officials, have very high legitimacy. For this reason, reporters use such sources most often, and by doing so, they further legitimize these very sources as appropriate repositories of "facts." In the Indian context, both civil servants and elected officials would qualify as highly legitimate sources, for example. Mark Fishman, in Manufacturing the News (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1980), points out that the structures of bureaucratic institutions and news organizations mesh in such a way as to make it convenient, even necessary, for reporters to use bureaucrats as sources. For example, bureaucracies are organized to produce reliable quantities of raw materials (information) every day, and this is precisely what news organizations need.

3. One poignant example of the possible detrimental effects of using bureaucratic personnel as "reliable" sources is the reportage of dowry deaths as accidents before women's organizations in India started to hold demonstrations to publicize these deaths. This resulted from the unquestioning use by reporters of police reports which listed these occurrences as accidents.

4. In retrospect, I think stories about women entertainers or politicians that were in the main body of the paper (though not in the entertainment section) could have been included in the pool of women's stories, but relegated to a separate category to express that they do not necessarily reflect a consciousness of women's issues. But at the time the conceptualization was formulated, it seemed appropriate to exclude these stories. It was particularly felt since Indira Gandhi was prime minister in 1983 and was assassinated in 1984, that including stories about her would skew the number of women's stories in favor of 1983, as opposed to 1985, thereby distorting the comparison between the years selected for study.

5. Two issues were missing from 1983, and two were missing from 1985 within this period. I excluded the corresponding issues from the two years, so four issues are missing from each year. If these four issues happened to carry an unusual amount or type of women's stories, this analysis may include some inaccuracies as a result, although, given the number of stories actually scanned, this is doubtful. The particular time periods chosen are a function of limited availability. Initially, 1983 and 1985 were compared, but since the interim is short, the two years were combined for the body of the paper, and the results from the two years are given in the Appendix. The following sections were not included in the analysis: advertisements, classified advertisements, sports section, immigration column, Shop Talk, Indians Abroad, and strictly entertainment sections.

6. In this table, as well as the following tables, the percentages do not equal exactly 100. These insignificant discrepancies are caused by rounding percentages at the category level.

7. The way in which social movements relate to the media is much more complex than it appears here. Todd Gitlin's work elucidates well the relations between movements and media. The following observation, borrowed from Gitlin, relates to the present context: although movements need popularization during their early stages, they can suffer from fragmentation with continued media exposure. Once a movement gets on the media's agenda, it may shape its own actions and politics in such a way as to get continued exposure. In doing so, two or more wings of the movement may emerge, one catering to the media but detached from its constituency, and the others more invisible but responsive to the constituencies. Over here, it is enough to say that gaining exposure through legitimate means of protest is acceptable, as long as this is related to meaningful action, and as long as the movement can get coverage on its own terms as it matures.

8. These observations about editorial decisions are made not from interviewing the editors, but by a perusal of the front page of several issues of the paper.

9. To make sure that it is not primarily stories from Indian wire services that are contributing to this finding, stories on the U.S. were coded separately. It was concluded that these lean heavily towards official male sources, just as Indian stories do. The same was done for the next source variable.

10. Gaye Tuchman, in Making News, has a very interesting chapter on coverage of the women's movement. She indicates that the women's page of the big, quality dailies constitutes a great resource for the women's movement, because the editors and reporters of this section are generally sympathetic, because this special page does not compete head-on with stories for the front page, and because this page is not constrained by deadlines and space to the same extent as the other sections of the paper (fewer stories compete for space on the women's page, and stories can be treated as "soft," and therefore do not lose their value a few days after an event). For these and other reasons, the women's page can be used to provide prominence to the women's movement.

REFERENCES

Fishman, Mark.

1980 Manufacturing the News. Austin: University of Texas Press.

Gitlin, Todd.

1977 Spotlights and Shadows: Television and the Culture of Politics.
College English Vol. 38, No.8 (April), pp.789-801.

Leonhard-Spark, Philip J., Parmatma Saran, Karen Ginsberg.

1980 The Indian Immigrant in America: A Demographic Profile. In: The New
Ethnics: Asian Indians in the United States, ed. by Parmatma Saran
and Edwin Eames. pp.136-162. New York: Praeger.

Luthra, Rashmi

1985 Interview with Rita Bhatia, Coordinator of SACC. Committee on
South Asian Women Bulletin. Vol. 3(2).

Luthra, Rashmi

1984 Class, Caste and Women's Movements in India: A Report on a Talk by
Gail Omvedt. Committee on South Asian Women Bulletin. Vol. 2(3).

Mohapatra, Manindra Kumar

1984 Concerns of Asian Indians: An Exploratory Thematic Content Analysis
of Unobtrusive Documentary Data for Asian American Research. The
1984 Summer Workshop on Asian American Research, Ann Arbor,
Michigan.

Survey Describes Average Reader of India Abroad.

1985 India Abroad, p.1, August 30.

Tuchman, Gaye

1978 Making News: A Study in the Construction of Reality. New York: The
Free Press.

Tuchman, Gaye

1978 The Newspaper as a Social Movement's Resource. In: Hearth and
Home: Images of Women in the Mass Media, ed. by Gaye Tuchman,
Arlene Kaplan Daniels, and James Benet. pp. 186-215. New York:
Oxford University Press.

Table 1

Distribution of Stories by Basic Category

Individual Woman as Victim	21	(27%)
Women as Victims of Society	15	(19%)
Individual Woman's/Women's Accomplishments	8	(10%)
Attempts at Change of Women's Condition	11	(14%)
Individual Woman as Criminal	8	(10%)
General Story	9	(12%)
Other	5	(6%)

Table 2

Distribution of Stories by Section

Letter to the Editor	11	(14%)
News Story	51	(66%)
Editorial	1	(1%)
News Brief	6	(8%)
Feature—General	5	(6%)
Feature—Special Section	3	(4%)

Table 3

Distribution of Stories by Topic

Dowry	15	(19%)
Sexual Harassment	8	(10%)
Other Crime	21	(27%)
Accomplishment/Success	6	(8%)
Women and Work	5	(6%)
Women and Immigration	4	(5%)
Other	18	(23%)

Table 4

Distribution of Stories by Location in Newspaper

Front Page	4	(5%)
Pages 2-5	15	(19%)
Pages 6-10	20	(26%)
Pages 11-15	13	(17%)
Pages 16-20	17	(22%)
Page 21+	8	(10%)

Table 5

Distribution of Stories by Source I

Official Male Source	24	(31%)
Unofficial Male Source	5	(6%)
Official Female Source	7	(9%)
Unofficial Female Source	11	(14%)
Impersonal Source	9	(12%)
No Source	9	(12%)
Not Appropriate	12	(16%)

Table 6

Distribution of Stories by Source II

Women (about whom story is written)	13	(17%)
Other Source	26	(34%)
No Source	13	(17%)
Not Appropriate	25	(32%)

Table 7

Distribution of Stories by Tone

Flippant	11	(14%)
Serious	32	(42%)
Matter-of-Fact	25	(32%)
Laudatory	5	(6%)
Other	4	(5%)

Table 8

Distribution of Stories by Perspective

Idiosyncratic Case	37	(48%)
Larger Problem, Without Explanation	14	(18%)
Larger Problem, With Explanation	14	(18%)
Not Appropriate	12	(16%)

Table 9

Distribution of Stories by Country of Orientation

India	41	(53%)
United States	24	(31%)
India and the United States	8	(10%)
Other	4	(5%)

APPENDIX A

Table 1A

Distribution of Stories by Basic Category

1983

Individual Woman as Victim	15	(39%)
Women as Victims of Society	3	(8%)
Individual Women's Accomplishments	3	(8%)
Attempts at Change of Women's Condition	6	(16%)
Individual Woman as Criminal	6	(16%)
General Story (with major implications for women as a group)	4	(10%)
Other	1	(2%)

1985

Individual Woman as Victim	6	(15%)
Women as Victims of Society	12	(31%)
Individual Women's Accomplishments	5	(12%)
Attempts at Change of Women's Condition	5	(12%)
Individual Woman as Criminal	2	(5%)
General Story (with major implications for women as a group)	5	(12%)
Other	4	(10%)

Table 2A

Distribution of Stories by Section

1983

Letter to the Editor	3	(8%)
News Story	29	(76%)
Editorial	0	--
News Brief	1	(2%)
Feature -- General	3	(7%)
Feature -- Special Section	2	(5%)

1985

Letter to the Editor	8	(20%)
News Story	22	(56%)
Editorial	1	(2%)
News Brief	5	(13%)
Feature -- General	2	(5%)
Feature -- Special Section	1	(2%)

Table 3A

Distribution of Stories by Topic

1983

Dowry	3	(8%)
Sexual Harassment/Rape	6	(15%)
Other Crime	15	(39%)
Accomplishment/Success	2	(5%)
Women and Work	2	(5%)
Women and Immigration	4	(11%)
Other	6	(15%)

1985

Dowry	12	(30%)
Sexual Harassment/Rape	2	(5%)
Other Crime	6	(15%)
Accomplishment/Success	4	(10%)
Women and Work	3	(8%)
Women and Immigration	0	—
Other	12	(31%)

Table 4A

Distribution of Stories by Location in Newspaper

1983

Front Page	2	(5%)
Pages 2-5	5	(13%)
Pages 6-10	11	(29%)
Pages 11-15	5	(13%)
Pages 16-20	10	(26%)
Page 21+	5	(13%)

1985

Front Page	2	(5%)
Pages 2-5	10	(26%)
Pages 6-10	9	(23%)
Pages 11-15	8	(20%)
Pages 16-20	7	(18%)
Page 21+	3	(7%)

Table 5A

Distribution of Stories by Source I

1983

Official Male Source	13	(34%)
Unofficial Male Source	1	(2%)
Official Female Source	2	(5%)
Unofficial Female Source	7	(18%)
Impersonal Source	8	(21%)
No Source	4	(10%)
Not Appropriate	3	(8%)

1985

Official Male Source	11	(28%)
Unofficial Male Source	4	(10%)
Official Female Source	5	(12%)
Unofficial Female Source	4	(10%)
Impersonal Source	1	(2%)
No Source	5	(12%)
Not Appropriate	9	(23%)

Table 6A

Distribution of Stories by Source II

1983

Women (about whom story is written)	7	(18%)
Other Source	15	(39%)
No Source	8	(21%)
Not Appropriate	8	(21%)

1985

Women (about whom story is written)	6	(15%)
Other Source	11	(28%)
No Source	5	(13%)
Not Appropriate	17	(43%)

Table 7A

Distribution of Stories by Tone

1983

Flippant	6	(16%)
Serious	17	(44%)
Matter-of-Fact	11	(29%)
Laudatory	2	(5%)
Other	3	(8%)

1985

Flippant	5	(13%)
Serious	15	(38%)
Matter-of-Fact	14	(36%)
Laudatory	3	(8%)
Other	1	(3%)

Table 8A

Distribution of Stories by Perspective

1983

Idiosyncratic Case	25	(65%)
Larger Problem, Without Explanation	4	(10%)
Larger Problem, With Explanation	4	(10%)
Not Appropriate	5	(13%)

1985

Idiosyncratic Case	12	(31%)
Larger Problem, Without Explanation	10	(25%)
Larger Problem, With Explanation	10	(25%)
Not Appropriate	7	(18%)

Table 9A

Distribution of Stories by Country of Orientation

1983

India	13	(34%)
U.S.	17	(44%)
India and U.S.	4	(10%)
Other	4	(10%)

1985

India	28	(71%)
U.S.	7	(17%)
India and U.S.	4	(10%)
Other	0	--

APPENDIX B

28 Women Escapees Hunted

NEW DELHI (Reuter) — Policemen searched for 28 women prisoners, including prostitutes, who beat up male guards and escaped from a reform home because they wanted husbands.

They were among 40 female prisoners, aged 15 to 35, who broke out of the home in Lucknow, the capital of Uttar Pradesh, on June 4 by overpowering five warders.

Police Superintendent Prij Lal told Reuter by telephone from Lucknow on June 7 that so far 12 prisoners had been recaptured.

Some Scale the Walls

The women rushed the guards, took their keys and then drove them off with a hail of stones. Some prisoners did not wait for the gates to be opened and scaled the walls.

'One of their grievances was that they wanted to get married,' Lal said.

The *Indian Express* said other complaints were that some of them had been waiting for trial for up to three years and that guards had sexually abused prisoners.

Nowhere to Go

'We don't regard them as dangerous criminals; they are petty thieves, prostitutes, destitutes,' Lal said.

Government social services often arrange marriages for reform home inmates, even giving the couple a small dowry to start a new life.

'It is important that we find them, they have nowhere to go, no homes,' Lal said.

The Express said trouble had been brewing in the home for weeks, and late last month a Lucknow magistrate ordered that authorities investigate the women's complaints.

Police Are Accused

JABALPUR (PTI) — Gopal Jain, a Bhopal-based photographer for *The Times of India* and Agence France Presse, a French news Agency, was allegedly assaulted by a group of policemen here on June 1.

He was reportedly trying to take photographs of policemen dispersing a mob that had set a police jeep and a tire shop on fire and was indulging in stone-throwing during a general strike.

A complaint lodged by Jain with the senior superintendent of police alleged that he had been taken by the policemen to a police inspector who abused him.

8 Killed in Road Crash

JAIPUR (PTI) — Eight people were killed and four others injured when a jeep in which they were traveling collided head on with a bus near Ganganagar in Rajasthan on June 7, according to reports received here.

Teasers Hunted On Delhi Campus

From News Dispatches

NEW DELHI — A police patrol has been stepped up near the Delhi University campus to catch what a Reuter report referred to as "bottom-pinchers," during the festival of holi, which falls on March 29 this year.

According to the report, Delhi college women as well as women's groups have protested against the use of holi festival by revelers as an excuse for "eve teasing," as Indian term for sexual harassment of women. The report added that on March 24 women members of Parliament had condemned what they called the increasing harassment of women during the festival.

Several women, said Reuter, have been molested in recent years on the campus of Delhi University during the holi celebrations. The festivity starts weeks before the actual date of the festival. This year, according to the report, heads of the university's colleges have decided to ban the festival celebrations on the college premises.

Special "women, only" buses have been introduced by the Delhi Transport Corporation to prevent eve teasing during the festival. Female bus passengers, according to the report, run the worst risk of sexual advances.

By MAYA GUPTA

Before coming to the fabled land of milk and honey, little do Indian women realize they will be spending the better part of their days scrubbing the kitchen floor or crying over onions.

"Difficult, tiring, hectic — yes, life is all that here," a Queens working woman said. Yet, given the choice, most apparently would prefer to stay on in the United States.

Aruna Mistry, a New Jersey housewife, declared: "Life is challenging here. You get used to it and like it. I wouldn't want to go back."

Different From the Old Days

Most of the women interviewed had never in their lives had to clean a bathroom or take out the garbage. Cheap labor in India insures that women from all economic strata can get some domestic help. Even the most middle-class housewife has at least one servant at her command. And most affluent housewives have had a regular army of servants — cooks, ayahs, chauffeurs, sweepers — at their beck and call. For many housewives, housework has simply meant ordering servants about or planning menus.

New Problems in a New World

Clogged sinks, dust and grime, dirty windows and ring around the collar are all new acquaintances for the fresh arrivals in the U.S. Suddenly these women are faced with being maids, cooks, chauffeurs and baby sitters and very often holding outside jobs too.

How do Indian women juggle their many jobs? How many employ household help? In the range of electronic servants, which gadgets do they find the most indispensable?

India Abroad talked with Indian women, picked from various areas of the United States and including housewives and professional women.

Few Full-Time Helpers

A very few women had live-in maids from India, but these were the exceptions. A growing number of Indian women who lived in suburban houses employed part-time domestic help, but only a very small percentage hired full-time housekeepers. Most apartment-dwellers did not have any help at all because apartments are easier to maintain than houses.

Although almost all spoke of the problems of housework, they felt it was all a matter of adjustment. Many having lived here for a

WOMEN

Despite the Housework Here Women Want to Remain



Sharma, who has just walked into her apartment, is getting ready to make the place ready for guests. While she is busy listening to messages on the answering machine, she tries to fix her vacuum cleaner.

Kusum Sharma, a New York working woman, is preparing to entertain after a busy work day. She uses many gadgets simultaneously to cope. She is seen with electric rollers in her hair while there is rice in her rice cooker, bread for putting in the toaster, meat in the pressure cooker and chutney is mixed in the blender.



long time were used to it. Sharmista Pandya, a South Jersey housewife, said: "In India we get lazy. Here we get used to doing our own work. After dinner we just get up and do the dishes. But we do miss the help."

Domestic Help Is Costly

A Glen Rock, NJ, housewife said: "With a big family and Indian cooking, cleaning has to be done all the time. Domestic help is expensive and just not practical unless it is on a daily basis."

Jyoti Marwah, a psychologist from Philadelphia, employs a housekeeper from 8 to 5. She feels household help is essential: "There is a lot of peace of mind if the food is

cooked, the house is cleaned, and the children are organized."

The professional women who did not employ some domestic help solved their problems of child care by sending their small children to private day-care centers or by employing babysitters. A New Jersey physician felt that good neighbors and a daylong nursery for her 3-year-old were a big help.

Lack of domestic help also seemed to change life styles. Visiting friends was almost always reserved for weekends. While entertaining, many women said they resorted to paper plates and cups to save washing up. Some said they precooked and froze the food

when expecting guests, or had pot-luck affairs with all the guests contributing a dish each.

Most women admitted their dependence on mechanical household aids. The washing machine, vacuum cleaner, dishwasher and blender/grinder were considered absolute necessities. Some felt, however, that with Indian cooking, dishwashers were not enough. Pots and pans had to be scrubbed.

Microwave Ovens a Big Help

Panna Mahadivia, a New York physician, said, "I use almost all the gadgets because they save time." She felt the microwave oven was ideal for warming food and baby bottles.

Bindu Patel, a keypunch operator in Manhattan, also found the microwave oven very suitable for Indian cooking. She makes such Gujarati favorites as sheera, upma, puva and sabodanna kichri in it in minutes.

"Frozen chappatis take just 25 seconds to become completely fresh in the microwave," she said. Despite the morning rush, the family could sit down to hot parathas for breakfast.

Food processors also seemed popular with time-conscious women. Bindu Patel finds hers invaluable for chopping onions and garlic for curries and for kneading chappati dough.

Preparing Food in Bulk

But many felt that it was a headache to clean the food processor afterward. One suggested that instead of chopping only one or two onions, it is a good idea to grind a large quantity, fry them and keep them in an airtight container in the refrigerator.

Purnima Parekh, a floral arranger on Long Island, has made time saving with gadgets into a fine art. Her family, she said, gets perfect Indian meals every day. She accomplishes this by making parathas, chappati dough and vegetable cutlets in bulk and freezing them. With the aid of a rice cooker and a slow-cooking crockpot, her meal of daal and rice is ready and waiting when she gets home from work, she says.

Most American women depend heavily on gadgets. Taking a page from their book, Indian women seem to be becoming more adventurous and experimental in the realm of mechanical home helpers.

"By taking advantage of gadgets, I can produce meals like my mother used to, give to my children and bring home a paycheck," a Manhattan working woman said.

WOMEN AND INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM
MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY
ISSN# 0888-5354

The WID Program at Michigan State University began its *Women in International Development Publication Series* in late 1981 in response to the need to disseminate the rapidly growing body of work that addressed the lives of women in Third World countries undergoing change. The series cross-cuts disciplines and brings together research, critical analyses and proposals for change. Its goals are: (1) to highlight women in development (WID) as an important area of research; (2) to contribute to the development of the field as a scholarly endeavor; and (3) to encourage new approaches to development policy and programming.

The *Working Papers on Women in International Development* series features journal-length articles based on original research or analytical summaries of relevant research, theoretical analyses, and evaluations of development programming and policy.

The *WID Forum* series features short reports that describe research projects and development programs, and reviews current policy issues.

EDITOR: Anne Ferguson
MANAGING EDITORIAL ASSISTANTS: Pam Galbraith
DISTRIBUTION & PRODUCTION MANAGER: Barry Crassweller

EDITORIAL BOARD: Margaret Aguwa, Family Medicine; Marilyn Aronoff, Sociology; James Bingen, Resource Development; Ada Finifter, Political Science; Linda Cooke Johnson, History; Assefa Mehretu, Geography; Anne Meyering, History; Ann Millard, Anthropology; Julia R. Miller, College of Human Ecology; Lynn Paine, Teacher Education; Paul Strassmann, Economics; David Wiley, African Studies Center; Jack Williams, Asian Studies Center; Kim A. Wilson, Institute of International Agriculture; Khalida Zaki, Department of Sociology.

NOTICE TO CONTRIBUTORS: To provide an opportunity for the work of those concerned with development issues affecting women to be critiqued and refined, all manuscripts submitted to the series are peer reviewed. The review process averages three months and accepted manuscripts are published within ten-to-twelve weeks. Authors receive ten free copies, retain copyrights to their works, and are encouraged to submit them to the journal of their choice.

Manuscripts submitted should be double-spaced, sent in duplicate, on disk or emailed (to wid@pilot.msu.edu) in WordPerfect compatible format and include the following: (1) title page bearing the name, address and institutional affiliation of the author; (2) one-paragraph abstract; (3) text; (4) notes; (5) references cited; and (6) tables and figures. The format of the article must follow the format as depicted in our "Style sheet". Submit manuscripts to Anne Ferguson, Editor, WID Publication Series, Women and International Development Program, 202 International Center, Michigan State University, East Lansing, MI 48824-1035, USA. Style sheets are available upon request.

TO ORDER PUBLICATIONS: Publications are available at a nominal cost and cost-equivalent exchange relationships are encouraged. To order publications or receive a listing of them, you may write to the WID Program, 202 International Center, Michigan State University, East Lansing, MI 48824-1035, USA or check out our Web site (<http://www.isp.msu.edu/wid/>) which also has all the ordering information and an order form. Orders can also be sent to us via email at (wid@pilot.msu.edu).