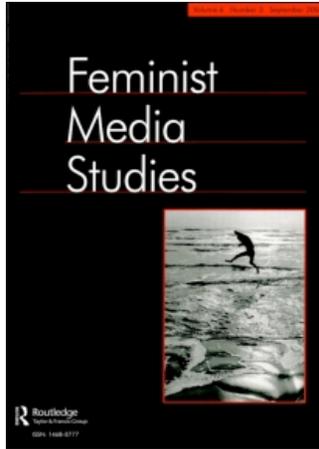


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RISKY ASSIGNMENTS

Sexing “security” in hostile environment reporting

Carrie A. Rentschler

This article analyzes the post-feminist, neo-liberal construction of “risk” and “security” in a recent set of post-9/11 training manuals for non-embedded journalists who prepare to work in what security texts call “hostile environments.” It investigates the ways these training documents translate ideas about risk and reporting, through the language of choice, into sexed and gendered prescriptive cues about securing professional comportment in the field. While the documents present the potential risks of hostile environments in terms of a kind of “sexual equity of risk,” this article argues that security training texts re-sex journalism through photographs and diagrams which put the man back into the war zone.

Perhaps my father put it best. “You’re more of a soldier than a journalist these days,” he said as he tried on my gas mask in London. (Vincent Laforet, reporter for the *New York Times*, 2003)

In 2002, Reporters without Borders, a non-profit organization headquartered in Paris, France, that documents international infractions against press freedom, published a 105-page text called *Practical Guide for Journalists*, a how-to text for journalists preparing to go to work in war zones. The guide offers a collection of documents and advice for journalists that function, on the face of things, as apparently sex and gender-neutral “self-defense” training for war reporters. Like other texts of its kind that have recently been published, *Practical Guide for Journalists* (2002) draws its interpretive framework from the linguistic coffers of risk management to provide readers advice on health and life insurance, first aid procedures, the avoidance of minefields and how to recognize different kinds of weaponry, and the means for documenting the many potential violations war correspondents can face in a war zone. In another training manual, titled *Live News: A Survival Guide for Journalists* (2003), General Secretary of the International Federation of Journalists Aidan White describes an emergent risk consciousness among reporters.

[S]afety is not just an issue when bullets start flying. It is also about creating a *culture of risk awareness* in all aspects of journalism —whether in war zones, investigative reporting or reporting events from the streets. (Preface in *Live News* 2003, no page number; emphasis mine)

There is an interesting story here to tell of the current post-feminist, neo-liberal context in which some of the dangers of journalism are being defined and managed through client relationships between the news industry and the private security industry—relationships that become especially clear when articulated through training manuals. This article tells a piece of the story by focusing on the sexed and gendered constructions of journalism and their intersection with neo-liberal, post-feminist discourses of security within training documents as they translate the dangers of hostile environments into practicable modes of risk-aware conduct. These texts do so through textual, diagrammatic, and photographic representations that connect issues of security in the hostile environments of reporting to post-feminist, neo-liberal prescriptions for “individual choice” that discursively erase social differences among reporters (and between reporters and the events and people on which they report) and place responsibility for the conditions of danger and risk onto the backs of individuals. As a result, security texts reproduce idealized images of reportorial embodiment, in which female reporters can aspire, but largely fail, to become the “masculine New Woman” (e.g. white middle-class men in women’s bodies) and where men learn to more fully embody the macho vision of so much war reporting mythology (e.g. Knightley 1975; Pedelty 1995).

Unlike combatant-centered training for military personnel, with its emphasis on learning how to fight and use weapons, security texts for reporters teach them how to see like a combatant and in some cases bear the outward insignia of soldiers, as Laforet describes above, while explicitly urging reporters not to act like or think like soldiers. Instead, these texts tell their readers to approach the hostile environments in which they may work as a risk manager might: as “calculable” terrain on which risk factors can be interpreted (Foucault 1979, 1981; see also Dean 1999). The possible dangers these texts see lay in the ways the environments of reporting on dangerous assignments create violent contingencies and uncertainties that reporters must face—defined as reporting on crime, war zones, rebel groups, the extreme Right, doing investigative reporting and covering football matches, crowds and demonstrations by Centurion Risk Assessment’s own training guide *Aide-Mémoire* (2006, p. 145). In their physical form, crowds and the presence of weapons signify key sites of interpretable risk within the environment of hostile reporting scenarios. Risk factors such as the probability of mine fields in wooded areas through which war correspondents must move or the possibility of being kidnapped off the streets of world cities are presented in these texts as endemic to the reporting *environment* rather than a particular kind of *person* who might directly threaten reporters. One of the features of security texts that betray their post-feminist framing are the ways they teach reporters to read the physical signs of risk *as if* the very definition of what constitutes “riskiness” does not also produce sexed, gendered, raced, and classed hierarchies of risk and risk-based subjectivities (see Adkins 2001; Lupton 1999).

This article analyzes three representational formations in which training documents reproduce neo-liberal and post-feminist models of reportorial conduct: 1) in their photographic depiction of active male photographers and wounded, care-giving female reporters, 2) in the portrayal of the hostile environment marked by the absence of combatants and reporters and the presence of other physical traces (e.g. weapons and snipers’ lines-of-sight) that can be read “through the eyes of a soldier,” and 3) in the explicit language of sex through which the risks of the hostile environment are defined against claims about the commercial emasculation of the news industry. Before I turn to the analysis of these three formations, I first address the linkages between post-feminism and

neo-liberalism in security discourse and its language of choice, followed by a section that describes my objects of analysis (the training texts) and the methods through which I examine them as strategic tools of neo-liberal, post-feminist modes of professional and personal conduct.

Choosing to be Secure: Putting Post-Feminist Neo-Liberalism into Practice

With its emphasis on women's ability to choose, post-feminist discourse privileges representations of women as active laboring and sexual subjects over other representations that highlight women's sexual objectification and their social positioning through forms of structural oppression and discrimination (Gill 2003). Projansky (2001, p. 67) terms "equality and choice" post-feminism that form of claims-making that "consists of narratives about feminism's 'success' in achieving gender 'equity' and having given women 'choice', particularly with regard to labor and family." While most of the critical feminist scholarship on post-feminism examines its representations in pop cultural forms (e.g. romantic film comedies, female-centered workplace situation comedies, and popular "chick lit" fiction), this article treats post-feminism as a mobile discourse of female equity and individualism that easily traffics between the realms of "the popular," policy-making and professional cultures. As this article argues, security manuals for reporters are one site in which post-feminist discourses of sex and gender equity combine with neo-liberal models of responsible subjectivity to articulate a sexed vision of "security" in reporting.

The language of choice is one of the key discursive features that link the neo-liberalism of security texts to post-feminist representations of reportorial subjectivity in the hostile environment. As feminist critics argue, political theories of neo-liberal models of self-managing, choice-making individualism overlook the gendered, sexed, and in some cases feminist dimensions of their discourses of selfhood and choice. The very language of choice, according to Probyn (1993, p. 284), "could not exist in its specific forms if feminism did not constitute part of the historical present of North American popular culture." Security training texts for journalists draw from but do not name the feminist origins of concept and language of choice in their pages, because, as McRobbie suggests, like other post-feminist revisions of feminist pasts, they actively deny their feminist inflections and critiques and the past struggles of women in the profession. Instead, female achievements—in the news world and elsewhere—appear to be the result not of feminist struggles but of "female individualism": the "invitation to young women ... that they might now consider themselves free to compete in education and in work as privileged subjects of the new meritocracy" (McRobbie 2004, p. 7). "Choice" framed in post-feminist neo-liberal terms, then, becomes the language of personal and professional autonomy and selfhood. Through it, individual's agency is talked about as a matter of deciding between options that appear unburdened by relations of oppression and domination. In the ideology of "choiceoisie," the individual "acts as their own master," and empowerment serves, not the collective, but the individual person (see Cruikshank 1996, p. 247; Probyn 1993).

Security texts are neo-liberal in their framework because of the ways they rest responsibility for the risks and dangers of the war zone with individuals, who must be trained to conduct themselves in war-like situations *as self-managing, risk-aware individuals*. As teaching texts aimed at showing individuals how to change themselves by changing their behaviors and self-perceptions, like other self-help media they represent "a cultural

manifestation of neoliberalism, a technology of citizenship" in which people learn to "evaluate and act' on themselves" by making prudent choices (Ouellette 2004, pp. 234, 242). Journalists learn that to be more "secure" and "risk aware" in the hostile environments of reporting means learning how to make better personal *choices* in their navigation of dangerous assignments and their environments. And like other kinds of prevention discourse, security training texts for reporters rest on the faith that, through safety information and new modes of bodily comportment, reporters can avoid risks in the field, including intentional targeting for violence, by changing how they act (see Hall 2004). Most of the texts in my sample, save for the Committee to Protect Journalists' *On Assignment* (2002), ignore the structural, political, and extra-legal conditions that make local reporters, immigrant reporters, and journalists who report on corruption special targets for violence (see Nerone 1994; Waisbord 2002). They choose instead to highlight the moves an ideal, self-responsible, self-reflexive individual reporter can make to embody a more secure comportment before ever entering a "hostile environment."

Furthermore, while the model of informed, self-managing subjectivity on which these texts draw makes it appear as if men and women have reached a kind of "risk equity" in reporting on hostile environments, except for two counter-examples that directly refer to sex differences in the construction of risk (which are discussed later), all of these texts represent the potentially hostile environments of reporting as sex and gender neutral, and they do so through the discourses of choice and new individualism (see McRobbie 2004, p. 11). So, while high profile female correspondents like CNN's Christiane Amanpour and NPR's Anne Garrels describe being treated as "novelties" and "oddities" in the news business, in the field their work is routinely described as "sharing in the high risks of war" with men, where risk appears as an agent of equalization among news workers (see Chambers, Steiner & Fleming 2004). Alongside the relative invisibility of the unequal distribution of risk onto local, immigrant and investigative journalists over that of foreign correspondents, the gendered, sexual, and status differences at work in the field are treated as realities that should be accounted for, but not ultimately challenged or addressed through change.

As a result, there is little space within security texts to assert that risks are not only sexed and gendered and unevenly distributed along matrices of privilege, but also that risk management strategies re-inscribe differences of privilege and norms of masculinity and femininity onto reporters' bodies. As McRobbie warns, neo-liberalism's "over-emphasis on agency and the apparent capacity to choose in a more individualized society" fails to breakdown social differences of sex, gender and other relations of power, but instead, as Adkins argues, reconfigures and rearticulates them (Adkins 2002, p. 5; McRobbie 2004, pp. 10–11). In their textual form in training documents, neo-liberal constructions of risk institutionalize models of "secure subjectivity" that further sex and otherwise differentiate the institutional culture of journalism, making the work of privilege and difference harder to see in their portrayal of war zones (see Cohn & Enloe 2003, p. 1189).¹ In this way, training texts can function like other neo-liberal representations of the "security imagination," where "neoliberalism ... has as its very basis masculinizing logics and visions" of subjectivity (Apple 2001, p. 116; see also Adkins 2002; McRobbie 2004; Walby 2002).

How to Read Training Texts

As unique artifacts of an emerging risk management framework in the journalism of war and other potential hostilities, training texts embody not only the contours of a discourse that takes shape around more concerted efforts to publicize the intimidation, harassment, and murder of reporters in the field, they also explicitly guide reporters in how they should behave. Reporters without Borders' *Practical Guide for Journalists*, the International Federation of Journalists' *Live News: A Survival Guide for Journalists*, the Committee to Protect Journalists' *On Assignment: A Guide to Reporting in Dangerous Situations* and the seminar-based manual *Aide-Mémoire* produced by Centurion Risk Assessment Services in the UK each represent the possible risks reporters face while covering war and conflict zones through the prescriptive language of risk management and the propositional format of training texts. For instance, training manuals tell journalists, "Learn the local phrases for 'Don't shoot—we're journalists'" and "Look for danger signs; Why haven't the cows been milked for days; Why aren't there any people on the street" (*Aide-Mémoire* 1006, pp. 147, 148). As the guide *On Assignment* declares,

How to assess personal risk can be the most important question facing any journalist, and what constitutes real danger at any given time is rarely clear. The decision to continue investigating a story after being intimidated is a personal one that only a journalist, perhaps along with his or her family, can make. (2002, p. 55)

A page later, the same guide suggests

Journalists should change their behavior to lower their profiles in places where they may be in danger. In other words, curb your appetite for fame . . . Do everything you can not to attract attention. Be cautious. (*On Assignment* 2002, p. 56)

Security training manuals function, then, not just as representations of reportorial danger; they are also prescriptive guides that direct behavior, which in turn inscribe additional meaning into the very practice of reporting.

As objects of study, training documents distill, or "textualize" (see Gal 2003) the discourses of risk and security through the language of choice. Through these documents, security becomes a trainable technique for defining risks and making them calculable in the field (Dean 1999). Such texts provide what Foucault calls "explicit programmes;... calculated, reasoned prescriptions in terms of which institutions are meant to be reorganized, spaces arranged, behaviors regulated" ([1980] 1991b, p. 80). Unlike more "public" forms of documentation, training texts make explicit their expectations for journalists' behavior within the confines of journalism's own interpretive communities, those backchannel communication networks among reporters and other news workers that "proliferate . . . around key events in the history of news gathering," like the high profile killings of international journalists (see Zelizer 1993, p. 219). In many of the training texts, reporters talk about their own experiences of danger in the field and the collective stakes of their jobs. Through self-representation and direct behavioral instruction, training texts constitute discourses of journalistic self-hood that represent reporters as security-aware individuals. Training manuals are both *about* journalistic selfhood and *of* it. They model the production of news on forms of securitized subjectivity that portray reporters as both targets of potential violence and masters of their own safety and lives. Safety training tells journalists

to “think about safety in the same way as they think about camera angles or how to obtain an interview” (*Live News* 2003, p. 7).

Most of the training texts examined here are available free-of-charge in PDF format on the websites of non-profit organizations for journalists, some of which are also published by these same organizations.² *Aide-Mémoire* published by Centurion Risk Assessment Services usually charges £20 for a copy of their manual when it is purchased by buyers who have not enrolled in one of their hostile environment seminars, though the author acquired a copy of the text free-of-charge. For war correspondents, most of the texts are directed at reporters who do not “embed” with US and UK military units in Iraq and Afghanistan, since most of these texts are geared toward the current context of those war zones.³ As “unilaterals,” instead of receiving military training, security texts present reporters with a private security framework for approaching the war zone as a risky space to be managed. Alongside these texts, like Centurion’s, several private security industry companies offer hostile environment workshops that put the knowledge presented in these texts into practice in role-plays and other life-like scenarios. The Committee to Protect Journalists’ *On Assignment* repeatedly urges its readers to enroll in one of the many hostile environment seminars offered by private contractor companies, including Centurion Risk Assessment Services Ltd., AKE Ltd., Chiron Resources and Pilgrims, located in the UK and Safehouse Security Training, located in California. Their seminars are taught by former US and UK intelligence and counter-intelligence specialists who served in Latin America, the former East Germany, Peru, Colombia, and Ecuador. Correspondents whose employers pay for them to participate in these seminars learn to interpret and navigate the risks of war zones through the perspectives of counter-insurgency specialists whose job it has been to de-stabilize and militarize the same international “hot zones” in which foreign correspondents and local journalists must work. Specialized hostile environment training seminars are also quite expensive. AKE Ltd. charges £1790 for a seminar, making it difficult for freelance and independent journalists who do not work for large news services, major heavy-circulation newspapers, and television news networks to attend hostile environment workshops. The uneven allocation of security training within the culture of correspondents, and especially for the local reporters on whom they depend, suggests that security consciousness is a form of propertied knowledge that only those news workers whose employers can afford it can access, in part because doing so enables their employers to better insure their lives for less money.

Security training texts and their accompanying training practices clearly respond to a genuine need that war correspondents have in the field for accurate information about security and safety. The increasing numbers of Iraqi and international journalists killed while covering the US occupation in Iraq attests to the dangers and volatility that exist in conflict zones and can be directed at journalists, many of which are made all the more dangerous when militaries (including the US) treat non-embedded and independent journalists as combatants (e.g. Ricchiardi 2006). The high cost of these seminars, however, signifies how much security operates as a form of propertied knowledge that is still tied to the class privileges of good employment (see Neocleous 2000). While I recognize the need for issues of safety and security to be demystified and more accurately portrayed for reporters in the form of training, the larger issues of why journalism *is not* safe for many reporters and photographers cannot be solved through safety seminars and the insurance mentality of risk management, where security becomes a form of pricey knowledge rather than a way of being safe in the world. Keeping these realities in mind, my analysis examines these texts

for the ways they construct risk as a calculable set of factors that cuts across reporting scenarios—beyond the war zone—and replicate the work of privilege and difference as particularly *sexual* realities in the war zone.

Picturing Sex in the War Zone

The “secured” vision of war reporting training texts represent is dramatically reproduced through photographic and textual depictions that demonstrate what tough and security-minded war journalism looks like: as it is embodied by male photojournalists who are fired upon in combat situations or acts of civil disobedience and actively dodge assault or lie seriously wounded after assault, and female correspondents who assist their injured male colleagues, type up copy at a safe distance from the fighting, or become the victims of angry mobs. Unlike press photographs, which depict bodily horrors with more regularity than any other medium, without, as Taylor (1998, p. 70) argues, “us[ing] them to suggest how people should behave,” the photographs in these training texts are directly linked to behavioral expectations for reporters. Per Barthes’ suggestion that “photography always leads the corpus back to the body,” security texts also repeatedly ground their construction of risk and risk awareness in photographs of news photographers’ sexed bodies (see Barthes 1981, p. 4). As Nunn (2004) argues in her recent analysis of a Barnardo photographic campaign against child abuse, photographs of the endangered bodies of vulnerable subjects provide the visual grounds on which calls for their protection are mobilized. As a kind of “proof” of the risks journalists can face in the field, photographs of male bodies in the midst of fighting or bloodied from assault both call for their need for protection in the field and set out the body as the site of risk’s management.

In several of the training texts, photographs of cameramen under fire or being carried off of the street after being shot provide visual evidence of the need for “masculine” journalism in hostile environments. On page 21 of *Live News*, Part Two of the text called “The Danger Zone” is introduced with a 5 1/4” × 5” photograph of a cameraman dodging a stun grenade in the streets of Ramallah while trying to cover an April 5, 2002 meeting between Yassar Arafat and US envoy Anthony Zinni (Figure 1).

The cameraman’s face grimaces through the smoky fog of the grenade as he tries to run off the street and away from the large military vehicle just behind him. Another significantly smaller photograph on page 30 reproduces a video still from a Czech television station of a German journalist lying on a road after being shot to death on June 13, 1999 just outside of the Kosovo capital of Pristina. Directly above this latter photograph in the margins of the text is a short, boxed quote from Andy Kain, an AKE Ltd. trainer, that urges readers to “see yourself through the eyes of the soldier” (*Live News* 2003, p. 30). Kain encourages his reporter clients to imagine the soldier as a “17- or 18-year-old kid who is poorly trained and frightened” whose actions “may be rational in the context of a hostile environment” (*Live News* 2003, p. 30) so that reporters might learn the necessity of steeling themselves for the violent rationalities of combat in the war zone.

In another section of the document, the targeting of local investigative journalists and the lack of prosecution of their assailants is represented through additional photographic depiction of the particular risks of the profession that extend beyond war reporting. On page 107 of *Live News*, Miro Petek, an investigative journalist for the Slovene newspaper *Vecer*, is portrayed lying on a stretcher, his face badly mangled in a beating delivered to him by hired assailants. Again, the journalist depicted is a man, as are the great



Figure 1

AP photograph by Nasser Nasser (Live News, p. 21). Permission granted to reprint by AP

majority of the manuals' photographed subjects. Photographs such as these visually place maleness in the war zone, leading Cohn and Enloe to argue that "to make sense of any militarized social system, you *always* have to ask about women" (2003, p. 1200; emphasis in original).

Only two images clearly depict women as victims of anti-press violence. In one photograph, female reporter Susana Gonzalez's face is smeared with bright red blood after a football fan hit her in the head with a rock after a 1998 World Cup match in Mexico City (see Figure 2). Unlike photos of wounded male photographers, Gonzalez appears in mid-collapse, her arms in the air, her body off-balance, falling into the embrace of two men who hurry her out of the rush of the football crowd in which she is caught. Looking at this photo from the historical perspective of women's medical representation through what Showalter terms "the female malady," Gonzalez's head injury appears in more conventionalized form as a kind of female neurasthenia (Showalter 1987). In one other photo, a female journalist with an apparent leg injury is shown being helped out of a grassy clearing in a similar fashion, her body giving way mid-fall into the arms of three men who surround her.

My argument is not that more female journalists should be depicted in states of injury, as if doing so would provide further evidence for claims to a sexual equity of risk in reporting. Instead, these photographs demonstrate that sexed codes of risk and journalistic comportment are reproduced as much through the presence of images of male photojournalists who have been shot or take action to get out of the line of fire as in the relative rarity of photographs of female reporters, on the one hand, and the neurasthenic



Figure 2

Photo AP/Jose Luis Magana (Live News, p. 70). Permission granted to reprint by AP

conventions of images of female photojournalists who put their bodies on the line. Elsewhere in these texts, women primarily appear in photographs that depict them as aids to other wounded reporters or as demonstration models for how to conduct cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR). In one, a woman lies on the ground in preparation for CPR, looking like the perfect medical patient. From the headshot, blood has visibly been smeared across her brow, but she rests calmly before someone checks her airway for obstructions (*Live News* 2003, p. 74). In another photograph, a woman models a do-it-yourself neck brace made from a folded newspaper, embodying a form of feminine first-aid ingenuity in the field (see Figure 3).

These two photographs model women as, on the one hand, the ideal, compliant medical patient, and on the other, as a scrappy battlefield nurse who can apply her womanly skills to fashion medical devices from the products of her trade. Combined, the photos sex the meaning of reporting in hostile environments, where male action and injury signify the risks of war correspondence in terms that signify the targeting of maleness, while female injury and medical aid present “secure” journalism in terms more identified with notions of female care and, in the case of the photo of Susana Gonzalez, female neurasthenia. The photographs reproduce, I argue, sexed forensic representations of reportorial risk that rely upon a heavily binary model of sex.

The sexing of “hostile environment” reporting takes on especially iconic form in the visual depiction of male photographers who dodge assault in smoke-filled environs. One photograph of a male photojournalist in the thick of a tear gas-filled anti-Fujimori run-off election demonstration in Lima, Peru appears three times in two publications, the



Figure 3

Photo credit Rob Judges (*Live News*, p. 70). Permission granted to reprint by International Federation of Journalists

Committee to Protect Journalists' *On Assignment* and the International Federation of Journalist's *Live News*. The same photograph appears on the cover of each publication. In it, a male photojournalist is shown photographing a scene filled with tear gas while wearing a gas mask on his face. The visual representation of two technologies—gas mask and camera—may say more about the securing of risky journalism than the textual content of these training documents do: that the experience of reporting in hostile environments, particularly for photojournalists, is a job marked by both the need for military hardware and security knowledge and the steely bravado of well-trained documentation practices. The gas mask and camera visually link the connection between combat and journalistic reporting, and they do so through the corps of a male correspondent.

The cover of *On Assignment* reproduces the image in cropped form in order to represent the journalist at the center of action. Smoke appears to radiate like sunbeams from the site of the tear gas cylinder explosion and the reporter's body, a likely effect of digital editing (see Figure 4). No one else appears in the image save for the photographer. In the background, a group of bystanders is visible, though in this photograph the outline of their figures appears especially blurred.

The cover photograph for *Live News* is also cropped to place the photojournalist at the center of the action, but it is reproduced in more vivid and focused detail. Bystanders visibly rush to cover their mouths and faces with handkerchiefs to protect themselves from the tear gas, while others look on with concern (see Figure 5). The photograph appears again later in *Live News* on page 45. In this particular reproduction, the image appears not to be cropped (see Figure 6).

Instead of an image of the lone photojournalist sticking to assignment in a sea of tear gas, in Figure 6 we see a journalist *and* protestors (one injured) both being subjected to police tear-gassing. Standing in the middle of a large street, many more bystanders and protestors are visible watching from the elevated steps of a nearby building. Other protestors run from the tear gas filled street. In this presentation of the photograph, the

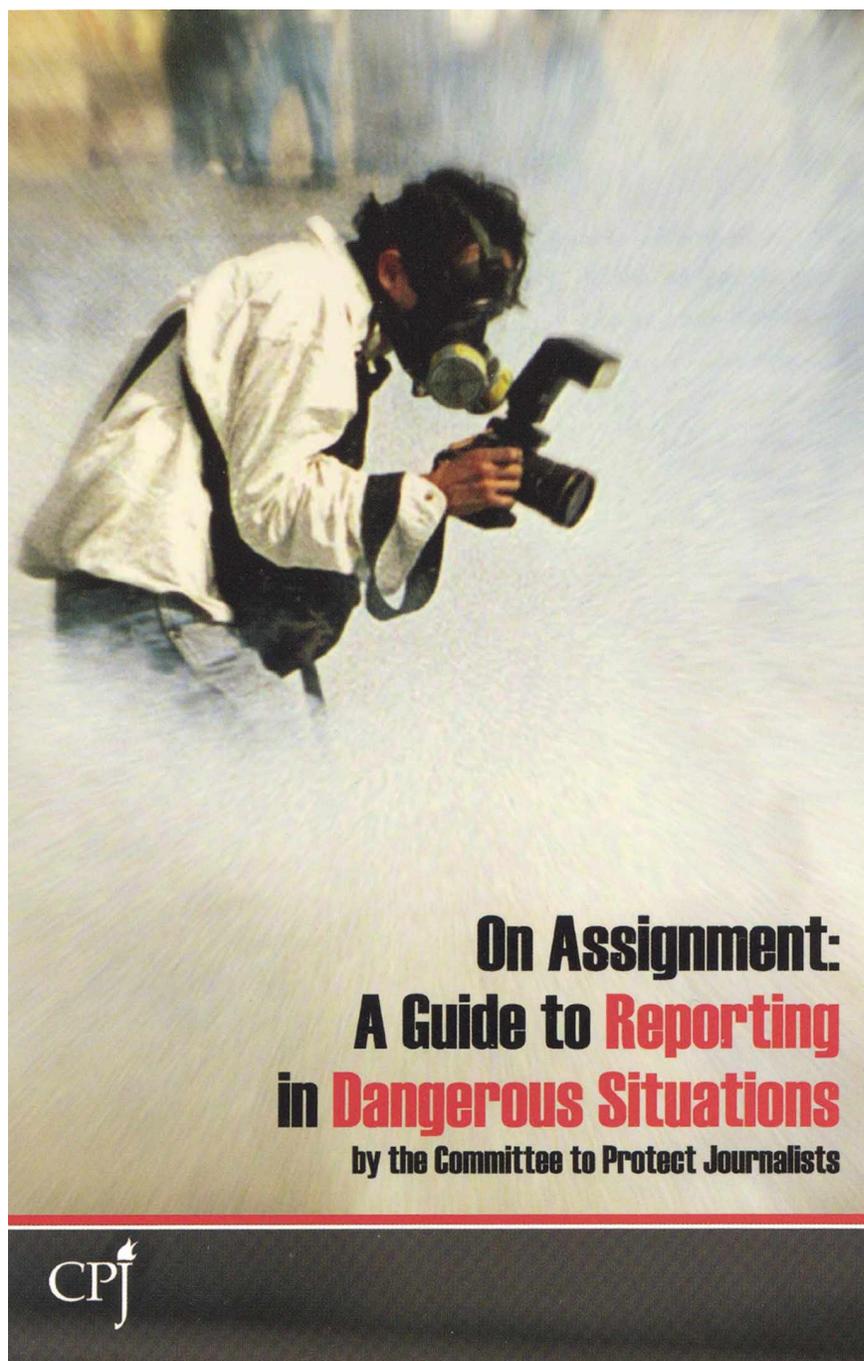


Figure 4
Photo cropped and blurred to highlight photographer. Photo credit AP/Martin Mieja.
Permission granted to reprint by AP Images

implied meaning is less about the male photojournalist under assault as it is about a shared male struggle against police and electoral power.

The images of protest above portray the experience of covering it as like that of combat, where both place journalists in risk-laden proximity to violence. They help define the risks of hostile environment reporting, then, beyond the war zone to include protests, just as the photo of Susana Gonzalez portrays football matches in terms of their potential for violence. As Hall has suggested, the photographic news value of protest lies in the ideological iconography of violence. Violence "is the most salient, 'operational,' news value in the domain of political news" and when "events are not intrinsically violent" they "can be augmented in value by the attribution of violence to them" (Hall 1973, p. 184). The connotative links these photographs draw between masculinity, bodily comportment, and the potential hostilities, or even shared struggles between journalists and protesters in civil disobedience, are stitched together in seemingly naturalized ways in training documents that work to connect masculine reportorial performance with male-identified risks in the hostile environment (see Slack 1996, p. 119 on ideological articulation). The gendering and sexing of "journalistic risk" constitutes a work of articulation, "a linkage which is not necessary, determined, absolute and essential for all time" Hall (1996, p. 141) but which when linked, in repetitive fashion in these texts, appear to function as a unity, a naturalized portrayal of reporting in the hostile environment that places physical, assertive masculinity as both the target of journalism's risks and the material condition of possibility for more secure modes of comportment on the job.



Figure 5

Photo cropped, but includes witnesses in the background behind photographer. Photo credit AP/ Martin Mieja. Permission granted to reprint by AP Images



Figure 6

Picturing the shared male struggle of journalists and protesters. Photo credit AP/Martin Mieja (Live News, p.45). Permission granted by AP Images

Without stating so explicitly, then, most of the photographs represent the risks of the profession through depictions of smoke-filled hostile environments and potentially violent actors who target male journalists for aggression. The Committee to Protect Journalists' *On Assignment*, including the cover photograph discussed above, contains six images of male journalists either in the process of photographing active war zones, being examined by soldiers, lying in pain after being physically injured or being assisted after being shot (2002, pp. 5, 9, 11, 38, 57). Combined with the few images of women correspondents in the field, the photographic portrayal of reporters in security training manuals sexes "women and men in their roles as journalists," as Rodgers (2003) argues, through discourses of security that promote self-protective response.

With their penchant for the language of choice and their neo-liberal construction of war zones, protests, and other spaces as risk-prone hostile environments, these security texts also reproduce a portrayal of reporting that further genders the already durably sexed culture of news making. As Barker-Plummer and Boaz (2005, p. 371) argue, this culture still "tends to be spoken by ... and through men more easily than women," particularly in relation to war, and despite the steady presence of women in war correspondence. Contra Cohn's ([1993] 2000, p. 363) assertion that feminist analysts should "direct attention away from gendered individuals (e.g. men and women) and toward gender discourses" in her brilliant analysis of the gendered talk of cold warriors in their training exercises and private meetings, the sexing of security manuals for reporters may suggest instead that feminists ought to look again at the ways femininity and masculinity are normatively regulated through representations of the sexed body and its physical capacities.

Centurion's *Aide-Mémoire* (2006, pp. 17–18), for instance, describes its training in terms of “personal safety,” where readers are advised to develop “constant awareness” around choices they make in the field. As the Institute for War and Peace Reporting's text *Reporting for Change* (2004, p. 243) states, “always make your own decisions by assessing what could go wrong and what you should guard against.” The training manual *On Assignment* (2002, pp. 38–40) also states directly that how correspondents choose to comport themselves has direct bearing on their safety. All of these texts present their information on safety to readers through the framework of “personal choice” and strategies of self-management, including the choice of the clothes they wear, the decision of whether or not to carry weapons, and the choice of with whom they will fraternize. All of the texts tell reporters to avoid looking like, acting like, and being photographed socializing with military personnel.

On pages 41–43 of *On Assignment* (2002), the text draws on what Probyn (1993) calls “choiceoisie” in the decision over whether to “embed” with the US military. As Probyn argues, “choiceoisie” represents the ideological bind that ties post-feminist discourse into a battle between the capacity to choose as a woman, and politics that constrain the very possibility and significance of “choice” within a range of options that may not be desirable. This is a construction of choice that appears “freed of the necessity of thinking about the political and social ramifications of the act of choosing” (Probyn 1990, p. 156). To “choose” risky assignments, as Carlson (2006, p. 104) has recently argued, “evokes narratives of volunteerism” into which the risks and dangers of war correspondence can be scripted, as if the only thing at stake is making the right choice rather than the structural play of power in the hostile environment that turns “choice” into an illusion of freedom and personal will. The choice, then, of whether to embed with the military or not, like the choice of whether to volunteer for covering war or not, should be evaluated in terms of their trade-offs, according to security texts. Reporters could get “a firsthand, front-line view of armed forces in action,” but their reporting “can become one-sided as a result of becoming too close to the soldiers” (*On Assignment* 2002, p. 43). At no point does the text address the ways embedding has become the “new core principle of ‘positive engagement’” between the media and military post-Vietnam (Brandenburg 2005, p. 228). Instead, over a scant four pages, what matters is how embedding either creates risks (e.g. being identified as a combatant) or provides relative safety for correspondents. Embedding becomes another choice reporters can make, a matter of weighing the options between the limits the military puts on access to information without it, and the access to troops it provides.

De-Sexing the Landscape of Hostile Environments?

Knowledge dispels fear. In an ever more volatile and hazardous world, the reward for accurately assessing risk is the confidence of being alert to potential danger and knowing instinctively how to deal with it. This is the difference between managing threats to safety and security and merely surviving them. Risks cannot be eliminated. They can be minimized. (Centurion Risk Assessment Services n.d).

According to the Institute for War and Peace Reporting, “the truth of the matter is that you can never remove the element of risk” from the work of journalists in war zones (*Reporting for Change* 2004, p. 241). Several of the security texts discussed here urge correspondents to *think* like soldiers—and “see yourself through the eyes of a soldier”—in

ways that draw on self-defensive forms of masculine performance (Andy Kain quoted in *Live News* 2003, p. 30). Yet, instead of offering “muscular solutions” that focus on fighting back against embodied threats, these texts promote new ways of seeing and moving through the environment in order to avoid risks that reside there (see Hope & Sparks 2000). This is a form of training that teaches reporters to see the battlefield, or protest rally, less as a peopled “defensible space” (see Newman 1972) and more as a gendered space of maneuver for minimizing risk, where the very meaning and depiction of battlefield savvy tends to presume a male body performing it.

Practical Guide and *Live News* clearly link notions of security in hostile environment reporting with knowledge of weapons, but not of their *users*. In the *Practical Guide* (2002, p. 7), reporters learn how to adopt elementary safety rules, including everything from how to cross a combat zone, knowing how to recognize mine fields and booby traps, and how to read cityscapes for possible sniper locations. One diagram portrays typical sniper locations in a cityscape devoid of any human life or vegetation. It shows the line-of-sight a sniper might have if perched atop a tall building looking down on the street. The other shows the outline of a sniper lying on a table just inside the window that has been broken for better view of the sniper’s targets on the street (see Figure 7). The window appears to float in the air, unattached to walls, the floor, and ceiling, while the sniper lies atop a table also depicted as if detached from the space in which he waits.

In this text, risk factors take visible form in abstracted diagrams that portray physical spaces in ways that can be “read” for danger but not “located” in any particular, dangerous place, or in any particular human body. Pilgrims Group, a security firm that offers specialist training in civil disturbance and war, driving, and personal safety to news agencies and other clients, describes on their website how their clients can learn to “lower their profile and use the environment to protect themselves” (*Pilgrim’s Specialist Training* n.d). The social landscape of the war zone or site of civil disobedience signifies either protection or danger. The absence of the representation of combatants in most of these texts exscript “dangerous individuals” from the portrayals of possible risks in the environment. There are no specific individuals to face (and even snipers are too distant to “read” as dangerous

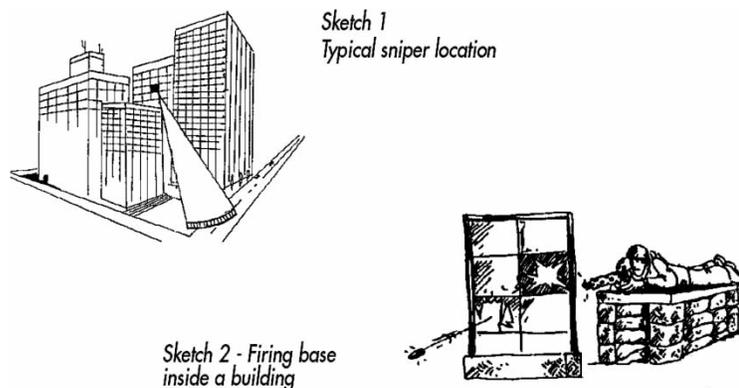


Figure 7

Sniper locations (PGJ, p. 31). Permission granted to reprint by Reporters Sans Frontières

individuals), but instead an environment that plays host to a range of risks to which journalists are subject.

Framing the dangers of the hostile environment in terms of their risk factors rather than risky individuals follows from larger neo-liberal shifts in thinking about crime, war, and economic crises. Rather than “risky subjects,” there are risky environments that can be managed by risk-aware, self-defensive individuals (see Castel 1991). Individuals learn risk-awareness through strategies that “rely on individuals’ voluntary compliance with the interests and needs” of governing bodies, such as that of the news and private security industries, whose value is determined in some measure through the currency of risk (see Lupton 1999, p. 87).

In a continuation of their partial excription of the body from their construction of reporting’s risks, *Live News*, *Practical Guide* and the Centurion *Aide-Mémoire* each discuss guns and types of ammunition, based on their sound and distance of travel and the accuracy of well-trained and poorly trained combatants. The *Practical Guide* (2002, pp. 29–30) reproduces diagrams of several different mines and their typical placement in or on the ground, so that reporters can learn to read the topography of the war zone as a private mercenary or guerrilla fighter might. In one diagram, readers learn how to identify the ignition and charge on a land mine (*Practical Guide* 2002, p. 29). Both also publish photographs and diagrams of submachine guns, anti-tank rocket launchers, anti-tank mines, pistols, gas masks, and different types of bullets to reinforce the message that knowing the differences among weapons and types of ammunition is necessary knowledge for a risk-aware reporter. In these photographs, the message of security training is to understand the conditions of the hostile environment as especially weaponized ones, where emphasis lies on the arms and the technologized landscape in which they are located rather than the armed.

In this way, the attention to weaponry and fields of vision tells reporters that they face an environment of ubiquitous, but identifiable risks, around which they can modify their own behaviors to see and move through it more knowingly, without ever portraying the reporters’ body in the process. Therefore, while the photographs discussed earlier almost fetishize the body of the reporter and its wounds, other parts of the training texts nearly ignore it, only to bring it back into dialogue as a way of talking about the specter of commercialism and press capitalism in the reporting of hostilities.

“Flaccid” Journalism is “Safe” Journalism: Bringing the Language of Sex Back In

In addition to addressing themselves to the technological and spatial conditions of generalized hostile environments, journalism texts on issues of security also address themselves in highly sexed language to the construction of another press enemy: commercialism and its apparently “emasculating” effects on the trade. As security texts suggest, news of war and other hostilities is being produced in an industrial environment rife with insecurities about the sexed and gendered meanings of journalism. In 2003, in a preface written for the Committee to Protect Journalists’ annual report *Attacks on the Press*, former anchor and managing editor of ABC News *Nightline* Ted Koppel described the current state of commercial US news in starkly sexed, phenotypic language.

One might think that freedom from physical fear would create the most robust kind of journalism; and indeed, there are still many fine examples that flourish. On the whole, however, *we American journalists are a flaccid lot*—too susceptible by far to the siren calls of circulation and advertising dollars. The U.S. system reduces the incentive for *tough reporting* on complex subjects by rewarding glittering mediocrity and bombastic banality... In the face of freedom, *we have grown lazy and timid*, while many of our colleagues who operate under totalitarian regimes continue to humble us by their example. (quoted in *Attacks on the Press 2003*, 2003, no page numbers; emphasis mine)

Koppel's description of a *flaccid* and *lazy* commercial press borrows directly from the well-worn language of news as, in its most idealized descriptions, a virile male domain, while mass culture represents an increasingly feminized one (see Allan 1999; Croteau & Hoynes 1992; Hartley 1996; Holland 1987; Huyssen 1986; Molotch 1978; Rakow & Kranich 1991; Van Zoonen 1994, 1998). In his words, what defines the commercialized US news environment is the relative safety of US journalists in an increasingly violent world and a "limp" professional ethos borne out by the relative lack of danger. Published as the front matter in a report on violence against the international press, Koppel's barely coded metaphor of a limp penis—the male organ Miller (1996) argues is routinely spoken about in ways that call out for its protection and need for cover—articulates a critique of news commercialism with that of a larger, post-feminist, neo-liberal construction of risk in some parts of journalism. Whatever problems or constraints the profession currently faces—such as increasing commercial pressures *and* more dangerous working conditions for freelancers and international journalists, in particular—are being defined in terms that re-inscribe *genital* masculinity as a corporeal norm of "quality journalism."

In a moment of rare gender reflexivity, *Live News* (2003, p. 3) interrogates the masculine bravado of war correspondence as one of the sources of danger in the war zone: "Some correspondents, photographers and camera operators in war zones embrace a macho culture and a competitive urge for danger. But good journalism is about delivering reliably, not about getting an adrenaline high." In drawing attention to the macho culture of war journalism, *Live News* critiques it, not for the ways it structurally organizes the profession and imposes a normatively sexed and gendered framework for making news and making sense of war, but for the ways it impedes the production of the war news commodity. In other words, *Live News* calls attention to the ways the informal cultures of war correspondence masculinize the competitive pressures on the news business, but its critique of the macho culture of war reporting does not offer an alternative model of gender conduct in the war zone. The point, rather, is for reporters not to let the macho culture of war reporting *get in the way* of making news of war. As a result, the brief critique *Live News* makes of the gendered competition among war correspondents tells its readers how they may better "accommodate the masculine culture of journalism" (Rhodes 2001) by revising the more blatant machismo image of war correspondence with a more post-feminist and neo-liberal one, through which the dominance of masculinity in the field becomes even more difficult to challenge.

Centurion's *Aide-Mémoire* is the only other training text of the set in my sample that addresses the work of sexual difference in the construction of risk explicitly. In a section for "women travelers," the *Aide-Mémoire* presents safety information for women that draws on the typical rape script of so much North American popular culture, where men are routinely depicted as aggressive, often weapon-wielding stranger rapists while women are cast as

largely helpless, and often passive, rape victims (see Gavey 1999; Hesford 1999; Marcus 1992; McCaughey 1997). While this script does represent a rape scenario where male strangers assault women, as Enloe (2000) argues, the ubiquity of this particular representation makes it difficult to articulate the other ways that rape works, particularly in the militarized realities of war zones. For one, it makes it more difficult to see how sexual violence and the threat of it are used against women *and* men, and how men and, less so, women can use sexual violence and intimidation as a practice of power in the war zone (see e.g. Enloe 2000). As the photographs of Lynndie England's participation in the sexualized torture of Abu Ghraib prisoners testify, women can also learn to use the tools of sexual humiliation and control to sexually dominate "enemy populations" as part of their own participation in militarism and its sexed and gendered cultures (see Enloe 2004; Mason 2005). According to other feminist scholars, it may be more productive to examine sexual assault and its threat as a practice that inscribes norms of sex and gender onto men and women through which men's maleness comes to appear naturally violent while women's femaleness is depicted and talked about as if it is naturally violable. Rather than see rape as naturalized gender scripts, critics like Marcus suggest that rape and its cultural narratives, including rape prevention discourse, *create* men as rapists and women as rape victims in ways that present sexual violence and the ways it inscribes experiences of gender and sex onto bodies as if it is an inevitable and naturally unfolding reality (see Hesford 1999; Marcus 1992).

Drawing on the typical rape script, for the *Aide-Mémoire*, women's safety can be secured through the enactment of safe choices in the field, particularly the choice to follow conventionalized safety rules that have become a common construct of rape prevention discourse (see Hall 2004; Mardrossian 2002; Rentschler 1999). Like the other security manuals with their emphasis on risk as a quality inherent to the environment of the war zone, the *Aide-Mémoire* frames the risk of rape in terms of either "good" and "bad" choices women can make. In this sense, it is "women's bodies [that] are understood as risky spaces" (Hall 2004, p. 3).

Conclusion

Save for the reference to "masculine bravado" in *Live News* and the rape prevention information set out for women travelers in *Aide-Mémoire*, security training by-and-large acts as if sex and gender matter little to the practice of journalism, despite its sexed and gendered frameworks for portraying risk and safety, and much evidence in the field to the contrary (e.g. Chambers, Steiner & Fleming 2004; Pedelty 1995; Robinson 2005). Journalism training in the US has long been concerned with the gender performance of journalists, even while the profession has denied its interest in the maintenance of traditional gender norms. Over most of the twentieth century, journalism textbooks, according to Steiner (1993, p. 311), "shifted from telling students that gender is everything (thereby nearly disqualifying women from reporting) to gender counting for nothing ... no textbook seriously consider[ed] what male-ness means for journalism practice." Robinson (2005, p. 1) has recently challenged feminists to buck the orthodoxy that says "women's minority status in the media professions results from lesser *numbers*, rather than from *systemic* biases inherent in the social reproduction of the field."

As this article has argued, security manuals for journalists are sexed and gendered texts, despite their post-feminist and neo-liberal discourses of risk to the contrary. Feminists

have long understood that “to make sense of any organization, we always must dig deep into the group’s dominant assumptions about femininity and masculinity” (Enloe 2004, p. 96). And feminists continue to remind us that war and other hostilities are *always* gendered and raced realities, as are the calls for security that seek to address them. As neo-liberal tools that re-inscribe sexual and gendered power relations onto the bodies of reporters and news photographers, this analysis warns us that discourses of security are never simply about how to be safe in an increasingly threatening world.

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NOTES

1. These texts also appear to have taken into account the fact that, since the 1970s, women constitute a steady 20 percent of the corps of war correspondents, and that women are also more likely than men to, in the language of post-feminism and neo-liberalism, “choose” to leave the profession, or seek re-assignment from the war zone, for familial reasons (see Hess 1996; see also Chambers, Steiner & Fleming 2004).
2. The Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) is a non-profit organization for journalists formed by a group of US foreign correspondents in 1981 in order to document and publicize assaults on press freedom internationally. The CPJ also lobbies for the creation and enforcement of legislation to protect press freedom rights. Reporters without Borders and the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) are two other organizations for journalists committed to the protection of press freedom worldwide that also produce security manuals for correspondents. The IFJ is the world’s largest federation of journalists. It represents approximately 500,000 members and promotes independent trade unions for journalists (see their website <http://www.ifj.org>).
3. They are “unilaterals” in US military jargon; embeds go through military-provided two-week boot camp courses in preparation for their placement in a military unit.

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