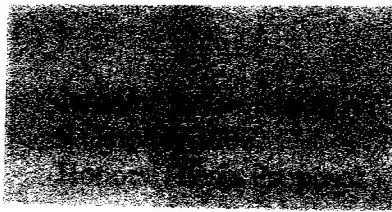


## Anchors Away: The Past, Present, and Future of Female Network News Anchors

Millions of Americans turn to television news daily to garner the latest information on current events and world affairs. Even with the advent of newer forms of technology like the internet, television broadcasts are still a primary means for newsgathering.

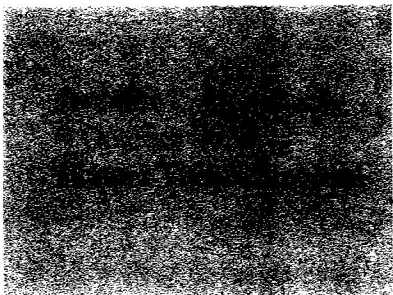
In what began as a male-dominated business more than 50 years ago, female broadcast journalists are now, in 2006, beginning their ascent to center stage. After Katie Couric's leap from morning show anchor on NBC's *Today* to the first solo female evening news anchor on *CBS Evening News*, the traditional anchor figure has been forever altered and a question has emerged – why has it taken this long?

Forty-three years after Walter Cronkite's pioneering 30-minute evening newscast, a woman has taken the helm of his former network. Cronkite spent decades serving as the face of CBS news and the voice that a nation trusted and turned to for the facts in both times of crisis and tranquility. The role of anchor was traditionally presumed to only be properly handled by a male figure with a sense of authority. As times have changed, demographics have shifted, and the composition and expectations of viewers have been altered as a result. Or have they? Will viewers respond in the same manner with the same amount of reverence to a woman delivering the news as to a man? I plan to closely analyze ratings and reports for the primary broadcast networks during a set time period to gauge and assess the veracity of whether gender makes a difference in news delivery.



The Federal Communications Commission officially added coverage of women to its equal employment opportunity rule in 1971 to encourage broadcasters to hire more women (Marlane 235). As a result, throughout the 1970s and 1980s, the number of female correspondents steadily increased to the point that in 2005, women outnumbered men 57 percent to 43 percent in local news anchor positions (McNulty). That figure is a record high according to the survey conducted by the Radio and Television News Directors Association (Farhi). Since women are of such prevalence in local markets, why is there such a disparity between their presence in the small-time to their presence at the network level? Should it not follow that if the population sees a female behind the desk of their local affiliate station, they should expect to see one reading the news at the national level? I plan to interview local female anchors to get their perspective on this issue and where they feel their place is.

By reviewing published literature and reports, conducting interviews, and analyzing programs, I hope to gain an understanding of the role of women in the newsroom, past, present and future.



## Works Cited

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