

Brian: Please read carefully. Remove % signs from figures when column is already marked "Percent"
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PRIME TIME TELEVISION: THE 1997-8 SEASON
Analysis of the content of network news and entertainment programs
A report to the Ford Foundation
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by
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Summary

What's news? Themes of crime and violence dominate the national news. About 40 percent of the news stories deal with crime, violence, or law enforcement.

Who makes news? News is made mostly by government. Elected and appointed officials make up over half of the news makers.

Who delivers the news? About eight out of ten news professionals and news sources are white males. Minorities rarely appear as news professionals (1.1 percent), or as news sources (6.0 percent) but most likely the subjects of stories, (21.1 percent).

The report

This is the report of a content analysis of prime-time major television network news and entertainment programming for the Fall 1997-98 season. To avoid repetition of news stories skewing the sample, evening news broadcasts were recorded from consecutive days on all three networks from 5 different weeks (a total of 15 days) during the sample period. The sample contained 206 news stories and 338 dramatic entertainment programs.

Content analysis is the recording and systematic, reliable, and cumulative observation and coding by trained analysts of the unambiguous and

commonly understood terms of media messages. The Cultural Indicators (CI) research project has been conducting such analysis since the 1967-68 season.

The CI recording instrument has been used in the analysis of over 3,000 programs and 40,000 characters on annual samples of dramatic programs since 1968, and on news in 1992.

What's news?

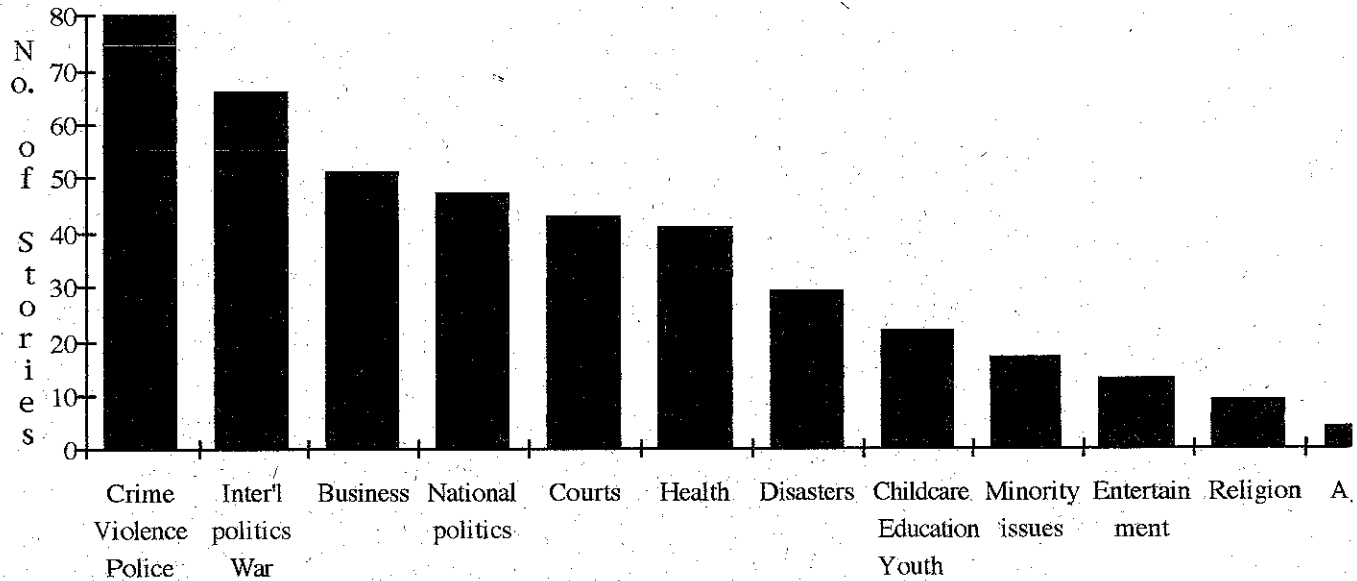
As shown in Table and Figure 1 below, stories about crime and violence

Table 1. Themes of national evening news stories.

Theme	No. of stories involved	Percent of stories
Crime Violence Police	80	38.8%
International politics, War	66	32.0%
Business	51	24.8%
National Politics	47	22.8%
Courts	43	20.9%
Health	41	19.9%
Disasters	29	14.1%
Childcare, Education	22	10.7%
Minority Issues	17	8.3%
Entertainment	13	6.3%
Religion	9	4.4%
Aging	4	1.9%
TOTAL	206	

dominate the national news. About 40 percent of the news stories analyzed deal with crime, violence, or law enforcement.

Themes of National Evening News Stories



People in the news

People in the news are (1) the professionals who anchor and/or report it; (2) sources who pass on or comment on news (including bystanders and other witnesses); and (3) the news-makers who are the subjects of the stories.

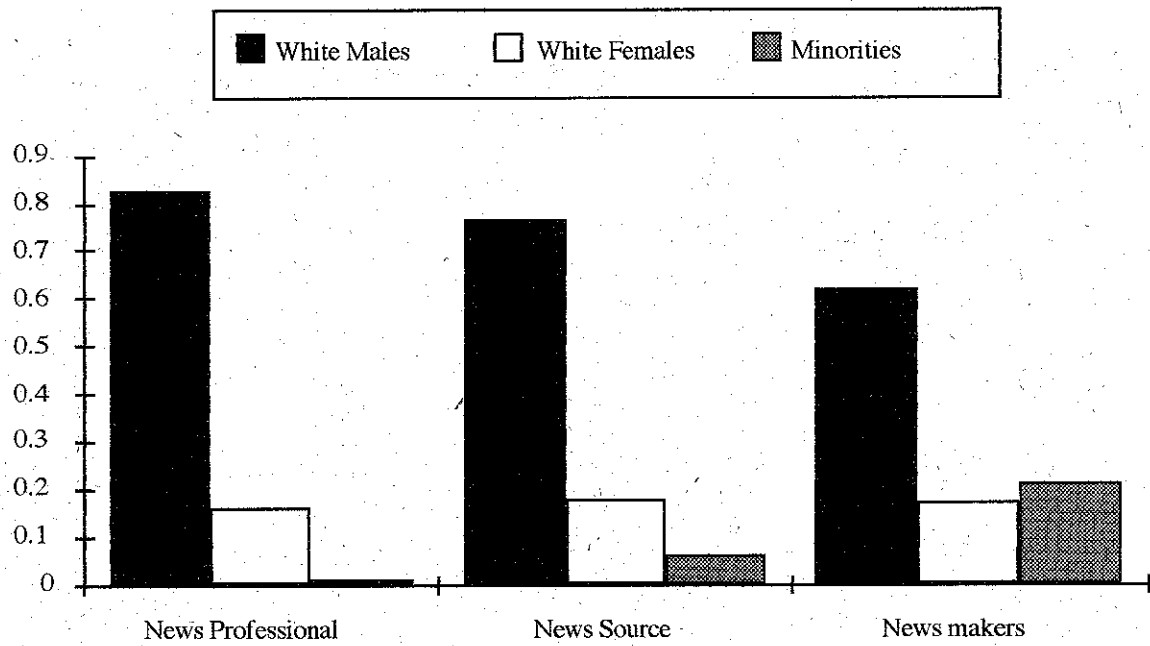
As shown in Table 2 and Figure 2 below, about eight out of ten news professionals and news sources are white males. However, only six out of ten news makers (subject of stories) are white males. In other words, minorities rarely appear as news professionals (1.1 percent), or as news sources (6.0 percent) but most likely as news makers (21.1 percent) i.e. the subjects of stories.

Table 2. Women and Minorities in the News

	News Professional (N=91)	News Source (N=205)	News Makers (N=478)
White Males	82.8%	76.5%	62.0%
White Women	16.1%	17.5%	16.9%
Minorities	1.1%	6%	21.1%
	100%	100%	100%

Table and Figure 2 represent 774 people involved in 206 news stories taped from national evening news from consecutive weekdays from 5 consecutive weeks in Fall 1997.

Figure 2. Women and Minorities in the News



Occupations in the news

As shown in Figure 3, news is made mostly by government. Elected and appointed officials make up over half of the news makers. Business, crime, and entertainment are far behind with 11, 9, and 5 percents, respectively.

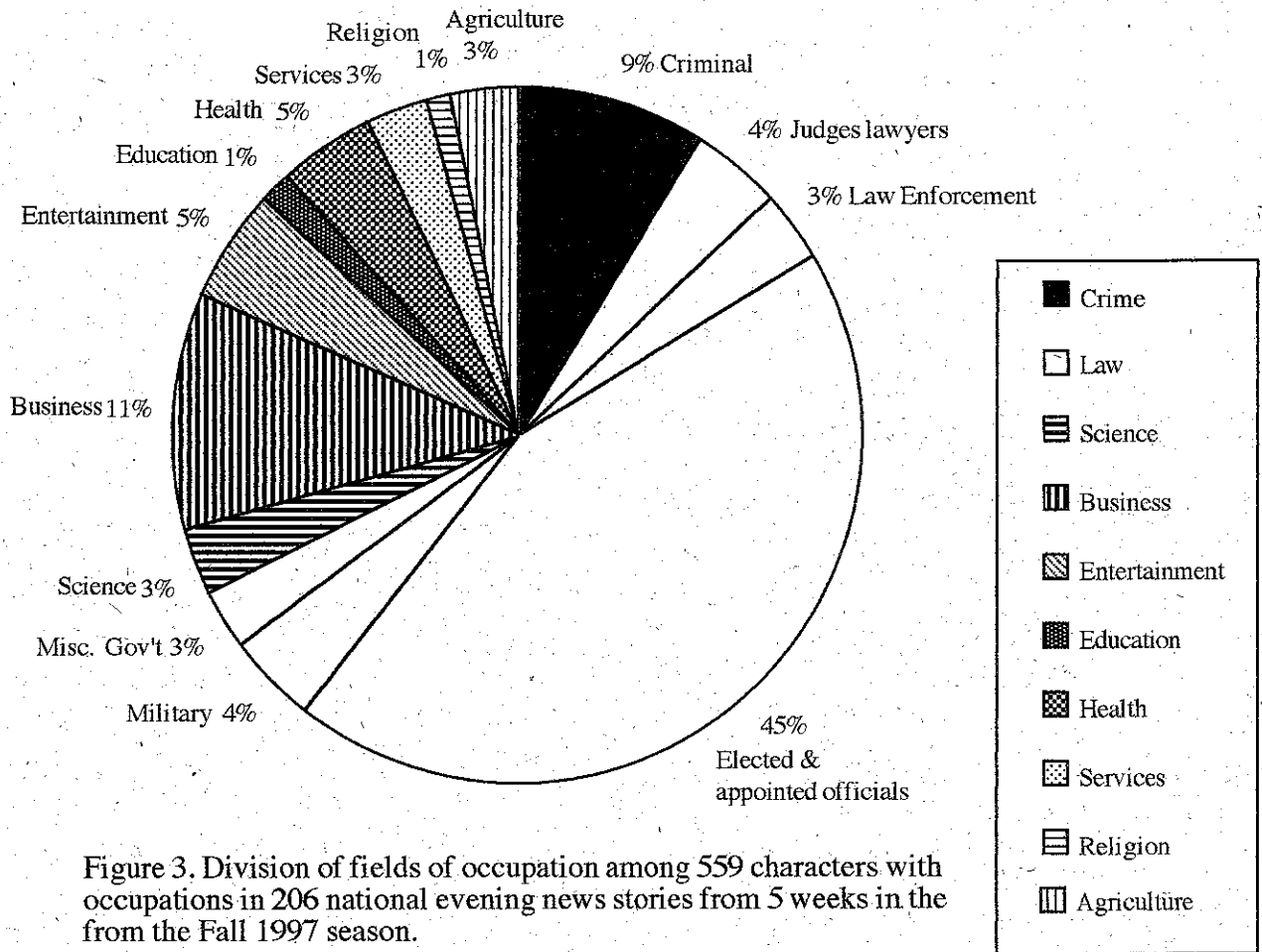


Figure 3. Division of fields of occupation among 559 characters with occupations in 206 national evening news stories from 5 weeks in the Fall 1997 season.

People in the news cited as sources, experts and witnesses regarding news events come from a more varied occupational background. In figure 4 the occupations of 157 experts and witnesses in the news are shown.

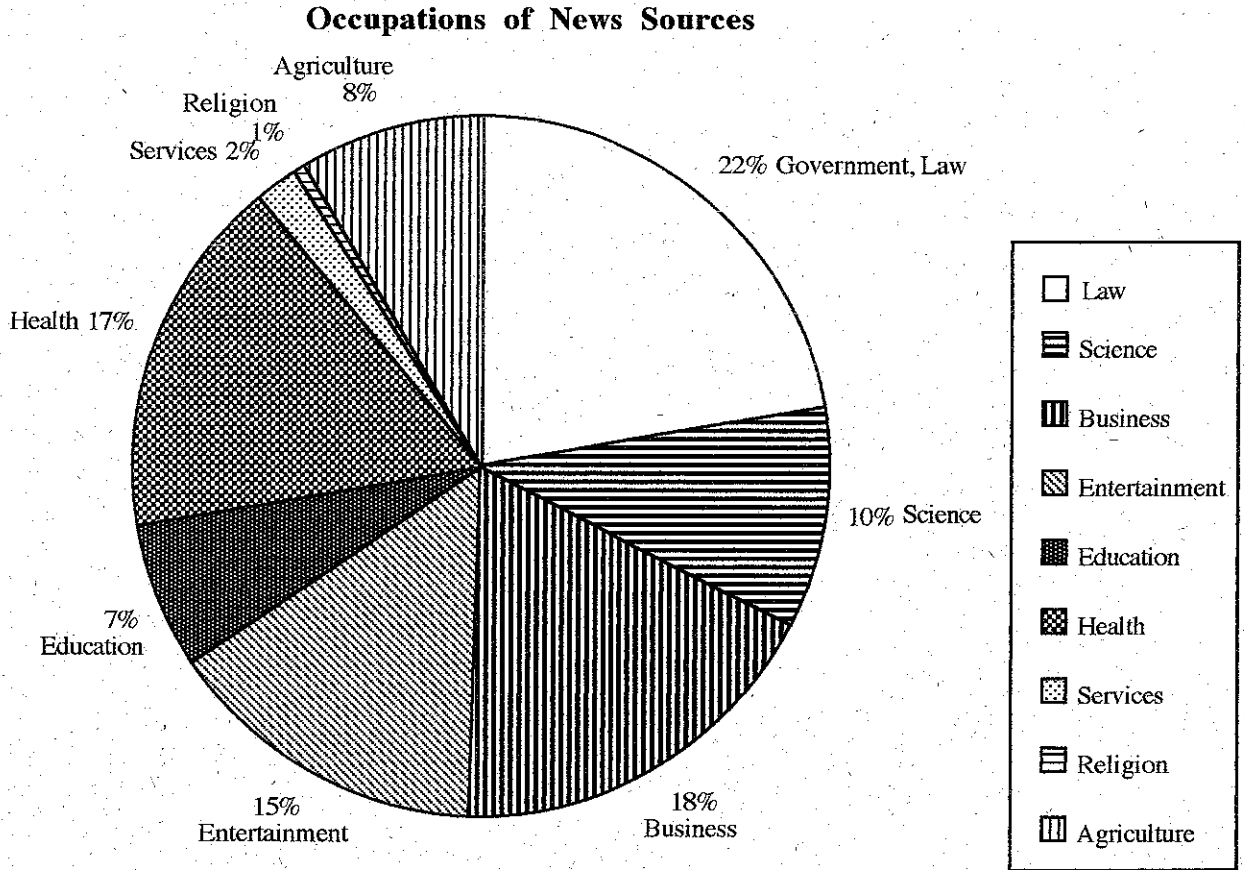


Figure 4. **Occupations of News Sources** among 141 people cited in the news as experts, observers, or witnesses in 206 national evening news stories from the Fall 1997 sample.