

HOW DOES A WOMAN REPORTER'S BACKGROUND AFFECT SOURCES IN HER
NEWS STORIES?

By

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ABSTRACT

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As journalists begin to create stories, they need to find sources. Sources can include a variety of people. Depending on the story assigned, sources can range from officials to people on the street. When journalists decide who to talk to, they always want the best source, however, individual reporters must decide who is qualified to be the best source. My research questions asked whether race and years of experience were important in determining the choice of sources, I interviewed female television and newspaper reporters who differed in terms of race and experience. In depth interviews with these women suggests that a number of variables are important to how they chose sources. Some of the factors include socioeconomic background, years of experience in the industry and educational background. Each reporter had her own take on how comfortable she was when it came to interviewing sources. The reporters provided insight on what makes them approach sources, but many of the reasons for course choice were factors other than gender and race. In some cases gender and race did play a role because of who they felt was more approachable. The contribution of this thesis is the fact that I attempted to explore in depth how female journalists think about their own choices of sources.

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This thesis is dedicated to my mom, Dr. Millicent Borishade.
Thank you for being an example of excellence.

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INTRODUCTION

Every single day, journalists are meeting new people who may ultimately become a source in their story. As journalists begin to prepare themselves to write their stories, they have to interview their sources first. Many things can come into play when they decide who to interview. In Zeldes and Fico (2005), there was exploration of sources and reporters in the ABC, CBC and NBC network coverage of the 2000 Presidential Campaign. They found that Whites and males were overrepresented as reporters and sources on network news. Their findings also suggested that the hiring of more women and minorities would result in a more diverse reflection of society in news reports (2005). They used content analysis to help them understand how the sources were being used. They said the overrepresentation of White and male sources wasn't surprising considering the makeup of academic, corporate and consulting fields which was dominated by White men. They believed the pattern may be different for local television stations that drew sources from communities that may reflect more diversity.

In a newsroom, depending on the size of the market, there could be as few as five reporters and it may be difficult to have diversity in race and in gender in that small a group. As a minority myself, I think it is not only important to have African American reporters, but also, Asian American, Native Americans, and Hispanic Americans. However, if the newsroom is only able to hire five reporters, they can't have men and women of different races and gender. The reason for this is because even if every reporter is a different race, with a newsroom of only five reporters, having both genders would not be an option also. This can cause a problem in the coverage given in any newsroom. How reporters choose their sources can explain how sources and reporters ultimately influence society and can shape what the pattern of news in the community. There is also evidence that particular problem in a small market. As reporters get to know their sources, and get better at creating packages, they tend to move to a larger market. The

reason for this is because smaller markets are for reporters who are coming out of college. In the smaller market they are able to learn how to be a better reporter, which essentially helps them prepare for the higher markets. If they are a minority reporter, and they are replaced by someone who is not, the newsroom can begin to run into the same issues. Non-minority reporters do not cover all the issues that the news business can face. A reporter's stories are only as good as the information their source gives them. When they begin to pick their sources, they can face issues including not being able to interview who they wish. There is always the issue of who is willing to talk to them. As minorities move around the world to different newsrooms, depending on the community they are in, they may only feel comfortable talking to specific people. When stories that deal with racial issues come up, who do news directors send to the story, the minority reporter so that they can talk to the crowd, or the reporter who will talk to the police?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Study authors say the goal of hiring minorities in the newsroom dates back to the 1940s. “The premise of this emphasis on newsroom diversity is that female and minority reporters are able to provide non-White or non-male perspective in the news.” (Zeldes & Fico 2005) They believed that a more diverse newsroom could produce news with more diverse perspectives. The more diverse the newsroom is, the more diverse the newscast can be. Reporters who only ask questions of public officials can miss one side of the story. Getting the voice of the people incorporated into the study can help change the tone. When going to a rally, a reporter may only wish to speak to the organizer and miss why people truly came out to the rally. This can be an issue for reporters, however. A White reporter may be sent out to a Black Power Rally. Depending on the rally, the reporter may not wind up talking to anybody besides the police, but the police are likely not the whole story. The community wants to know what others that are like them are saying. The Zeldes & Fico study found that Whites and men were overrepresented as reporters and sources on network news. Their findings also suggested that the hiring of more women and minorities result in a more diverse reflection of society in news reports.

Tiffen, Jones, Rowe, Aalberg, Coen, Curran, Hayashi, Iyengar, Gianpietro, Papathanassopoulous, Rojas, and Soroka (2014) did a comparative study that analyzed the new media’s role in serving the functions that were associated with diversity and range of news sources. They suggest, “using multiple sources sometimes means that the media are providing checks on what is said, bringing more variety and balance to the views presented.” These checks can be done when you have minorities in the newsroom. Police officers know the media need to interview them, but those man on the street interviews may not always work out depending on the person interviewing the person for a story. In the Tiffen et al study, they seek to explain the differences between countries in the sources quoted in the news, then seek to establish whether

there are consistent differences across countries and lastly trace any patterns between different types of organizations across the world. They believe that when both sides of the story aren't being represented, the story is providing only a partial viewpoint.

Tracking gender and differences: Liebler and Smith(1997) content analyzed of 159 stories that were broadcast on ABC, CBS, CNN, and NBC stories during the first one hundred days of the Clinton Administration. In the study they looked at differences between women and men correspondents in their choice and treatment of male and female sources. In their research they found that the presence of women in network newsrooms has increased in the past five years. Some of their research questions included if female correspondents use more female sources in their stories than do male reporters, do female correspondents give more prominence to female sources in their stories than do male reporters, and are female correspondents more likely to use female sources in a professional capacity than male reporters. Their findings showed that male sources were used more often than female sources and were more likely to be shown in a capacity that was professional, regardless of the gender of the reporter. Men and women each used an average of three sources per story and for every woman who was sourced, five men appeared as sources. Their results showed that gender bias still exists and that women don't report differently than their male counterparts.

Poindexter, Smith and Heider (2003) examined race, ethnicity in news stories, story assignment and source selections. The research questions they had are as follows: what is the presence of people of color and how are they framed in local television news? Is there segregation in the assignment of news stories? What role, if any, does race play in news sources and the order in which they are used in the story? They used a content analysis on 26 different

stations in 12 cities. They then coded for variables such as year, month, city and time of day aired. They coded 596 stories, 28% of which were delivered by a reporter. Roughly 73% of reporters were White, 16% were African American and three percent were Latino. They found that Latinos, Asian Americans and Native Americans were almost invisible as an anchor, reporter or subject in the news.

“Issues of races and gender transfix American society, especially at the intersection of journalism and politics.” (Zeldes & Fico 2010) The assumptions about racism in American society have translated into efforts promoting diversity in newsrooms to improve news coverage. In particular reporter gender and race are assumed to play a part in news coverage (2010). This explains how a newsroom can work. A reporter’s gender and race can be the reason a story can sway a certain way. For example, when covering stories in an urban area, sending a reporter into the field that may relate better to those people may make for a better story because the people in the neighborhood may be more willing to talk to those who they look like they can relate to. In the content analysis of 2,075 campaign stories for this study, they found that female and non-White reporters at broadcast networks were generally more aggressive in their source use when compared to their male and White colleagues. They also found that female and non-White reporters at cable networks also tended to use and give more time to female and non-White sources. They went on to discuss how in other studies, female reporters were more likely to use female sources in their stories. They furthered discussed how an analysis done in 2000 of male and female reporters at three U.S. daily newspapers, found female reporters used a greater diversity of sources that included female individuals and minorities. This can play a role into how a story is told. Men and women can have different viewpoints on topics based on different key factors, one being socioeconomic status.

Artwick discussed how male voices tend have been widely documented over time, but found that women are outnumbering men (2014). This study focused on gender on Twitter. The researcher analyzed more than 2700 tweets from reporters at 51 US newspapers. The tweets that were analyzed showed underrepresentation of women in quotes which the researcher said indicated perpetuation of the status quo. In the research Artwick found that female reporters quoted fewer women than their counterparts in smaller news organizations (2014). I find this interesting and to contradict what I studied because some most of the women in my study tended to have more female sources because that's who they felt more comfortable talking to. If this is the case, tweets about their story would have more women sources than men sources. They found that in smaller news organizations, female reported quoted fewer women.

In their research they said, "sourcing can define news as it is not necessarily what happens, but what a sources says has happened" (Artwick 2014). This can play a role into how a story is told whether it be person on the street interviews or interviews with public officials. When trying to tell a story it may be different when a person on the street tells the story because they may have actually been there when the incident happened, while police may be getting their information as they do investigations. Women in my research never suggested that they gravitate to those who may have been in the vicinity of an incident, they strictly talked about race and gender. To their defense, I did not ask them those questions, however as a journalist that is something they should also be thinking about when doing news stories.

African American women are portrayed differently than African American men (Zaremba 2015). She says, "the studies that claim African Americans are over represented as criminals and deviants in TV news are, quite simply wrong when women are taken into account" (Zaremba 2015). It was further explained that if more research was done on African American

women the representation may be different in the news. After reading this I reflected on the interviews I did. One woman did reflect on the fact that when she interviews African American people she wants to make sure she talks to those who are articulate considering the fact that there is a stereotype with African Americans.

After reviewing my literature I formed my research questions. They are as follows:

RQ 1: In what ways does a reporter's race influence the way they cover new stories?

RQ 2: In what ways does a reporter's gender influence the way they cover news stories?

RQ 3: Do females and female minority reporters feel more comfortable interviewing female/and or minority sources?

RQ 4: Do female and/ or female minority reporters report choosing sources based on those they are most comfortable talking to?

RQ 5: Is there any effect of journalism education on how females and minority females deal with gender/race characteristics of sources?

THEORY

When thinking about theory as it relates to my research, I chose to go with the Hierarchical Model created by Pamela J. Shoemaker and Stephen D. Reese. In their book they discuss various theoretical perspectives. The first perspective is that, “content is influenced by media worker’s socialization and attitudes.” They explained this as a communicator-centered approach emphasizing the psychological factors impinging on an individual’s work whether it is professional, personal or political. For the reporters that I interviewed, the content of their stories is based on how they have adapted into their field as a reporter. For example, some of the women interviewed felt more comfortable in certain circumstances than others, which could impact their work. If they feel as though a man is easier for them to communicate with then that is based off a learned attitude, which will come off in their work because they may have more men that they have interviewed. Another example in one of the interviews I conducted, the reporter said when she interviews people of color, she wants to be sure they are seen in a particular light. She wanted to make sure her people are not seen as ghetto but yet articulate. In a way she is structuring her story around the people she interviews.

The second perspective is that content is influenced by media organizations and routines. Through this approach content comes directly from the nature of how media work is organized. With this perspective the media is influencing how they structure what is being told to the public. As a reporter, the goal is to tell a story that the people want to hear. In my interviews the reporters described how they like to be the voice for the voiceless. With them being the voice of the people, they can ultimately shape information the way the public wants to hear it. For example, if a community is doing budget cuts without any background information that could mean nothing to the public, however if you tell the people budget cuts in the community means less police officers to patrol the areas which could put people on alert when it comes to how they

go about their everyday life.

Perspective three explains that content is influenced by other social institutions and forces. This essentially means giving the public what it wants. As a reporter, the goal is to tell a story that the people want to hear. When a reporter gets a story it's not only important to get the perspective of those in the community, but also those people in a position of power. Those powerful people can help build relationships throughout the community. For example, if you interview a police officer and they continuously show their passion and care for the safety of the community, the public will learn to trust the officer.

The last perspective says content is a function of ideological positions and maintains the status quo. One example would be a reporter covering an election. As the reporter covers the election, they will take a stance and choose who they will cover more. In some cases in the newsroom viewers email or call in and say they feel as if coverage is not fair, but because this is the perspective that the news room goes by, they either do not notice that the coverage is one sided, or notice that coverage is one sided and continue to make coverage the same.

When thinking about all these perspective it also ties into the theory of framing. Dietram A. Scheufele refers to framing theory as a scattered conceptualization. It then goes on to explain that the entire study of mass communication is based on the premise that the media have significant effects (1999). Framing theory truly explains how the media can shape the way viewers think based on the way a message is presented to the viewers. Scheufele says, "According to McQuail the history of research on media effects can be divided into four stages. The first stage, from the turn of the 20th century to the late 1930s was dominated by an experience with strategic propaganda during World War I, which led to a growing fear of the influence of media messages on attitudes." Propaganda was used as a way that helped media influence people. The media can influence the way people think in many ways. For example, in a

newscast, a reporter may be trying to help people understand the opioid addiction and can give facts from the Center For Disease Control. Those facts from the CDC in a way are trying to help people understand the dangers of opioid addiction and what you can do to either stop someone with an addiction or even help out. The reporter would be framing the story based on the information that they wanted you to know and take out of it.

Another example is from a reporter trying to frame something in a consumer story about going back to school. A consumer alert can come out from consumer reports about how to save money on back to school shopping, what are some of the best stores to shop and if the best deals are in store or online. When a reporter was interviewing that source from consumer reports, they would have framed their questions in a way to persuade their audience on what to do when it comes to back to school shopping. Questions asked to the source may have been what store can you find the best deals and are their deals better online or in store.

Luuk Lagerwerf says, “one influential way that the media may shape public opinion by framing events and issues in particular way. Framing involves a communication source presenting and defining an issue.” (Lagerwerf 2005) He continues on to say framing is a process that has a few stages, frame building, frame setting and individual and societal consequences of framing. Frame building explains how the factors that influence the structural qualities of news frames. Frame setting explains the interaction between media frames and individual’s prior knowledge and predispositions. This is important to know as a reporter because when writing news stories, thinking about the audience will help move the story. For example, with the opioid addictions, it’s best to not focus on the problem itself, but more on the solution and the problem at hand. Giving a quick 15-second synopsis in an anchor lead will help the story get across the message that needs to be portrayed. Knowing that the community knows that they is an opioid problem in America can help a reporter when they ask further questions to experts.

Lagerwerf says that consequences of framing can be conceived on the individual and societal level. “An individual level consequence may be by altered attitudes about an issue based on exposures to certain frames. On a societal level, frames may contribute to shaping social level processes such as political socialization, decision-making, and collective actions. When a reporter interviews their sources they have a specific angle to the story. This angle helps them form their question. For example, if there is a new proposed bill being brought up at a city council meeting, the angle could simply be what is the new bill, why does it matter and who does it affect, or the angle could be how do the people it affects feel about the new bill, and will it impact them negatively. As the reporter decides on an angle and puts together the story, a viewer watching the news may not have known about the proposed bill and sees the bill and decides they want to go to the next city council meeting to hear more about this bill. The reporter was able to frame the way the individual thought by providing a context to the story that the viewer may not have known before hand.

METHOD

I used a qualitative research method to conduct this study. I reached out to reporters from all the United States to ask them questions about how they get their sources. Through the interviews, I was able to get a better understanding of how reporters picked sources. I chose to use open and close-ended questions to get a better understanding of what reporters had to say when being interviewed about their sources. The questions I asked are as follows (some questions were modified due to some reporters being newspaper reporters):

1. Could you tell me about how long you've been a reporter and where you've worked?
2. Could you tell me a little about why you wanted to work in TV or print and what your educational experience was?
3. How do you feel about interviewing and the aspects of it?
4. Do you feel that you identify better with sources that come from similar backgrounds as you?
5. Do you feel that you identify better with sources that are the same gender as you?
6. When doing man on the street interviews do you tend to gravitate more to people who look like you whether it is gender or race?
7. When interviewing sources do you ask harder questions for those that look like you whether it is gender or race?
8. When interviewing sources do you establish better rapport with those that look like you whether it be gender or race?
9. Describe how you pick sources when you first get a story.
10. Describe how you pick sources when you have to get man on the street interviews.
11. Describe how you pick sources when dealing with controversial topics. (ie. BLM)
12. Describe how you pick sources when you are dealing with noncontroversial topics.

13. Describe a time when you thought a story wasn't told properly because you didn't have access to the sources you wanted.

Reporters were also asked their race and gender so that they could remain anonymous. Through my research I wanted to be able to answer the following research questions:

RQ 1: In what ways does a reporter's race influence the way they cover new stories?

RQ 2: In what ways does a reporter's gender influence the way they cover news stories?

RQ 3: Do females and female minority reporters feel more comfortable interviewing female/and or minority sources?

RQ 4: Do female and/ or female minority reporters report choosing sources based on those they are most comfortable talking to?

RQ 5: Is there any effect of journalism education on how females and minority females deal with gender/race characteristics of sources?

RESEARCH PROCESS

Before beginning my research I submitted my proposal to IRB. I sent IRB my questions for the reporters, my consent form and the email sent that would be sent out to the reporters that I wanted to talk to (These can be found in Appendices 1-3). After getting approval I began my research. In the beginning I thought interviewing reporters would be simple and logical because I figured that as a reporter they would understand what it is like to be told no when working on a story assignment. However, that was not the case. I emailed reporters to schedule interview. Email is a good way to communicate with reporters, however, that is not the only way I reached out to them. In addition to email, I also used social media. I used Facebook messenger, instagram direct messaging and created a status on LinkedIn for reporters to see and comment when I could talk to them. I contacted about 40 reporters from across the United States, both male and female and only got a response from eight female reporters. One reporter was still an intern and I interviewed her just in case I did not have as many interviews as I wanted. I also received contact information from reporters who said they knew people that could help, but in the end they didn't want to be interviewed. I initially wanted to interview at least five men and five women, but instead I was only able to interview eight women and discussed seven of them in my thesis. I also wanted to interview women who worked for television instead of newspapers, but since I only had so few interviews to work with I still used their interview because their content was good for me.

ANALYSIS

As a way of introducing the results of the interviews, I summarize the main features of each person interviewed.

Reporter 1 has been in the business for one year. She is a print journalist. She graduated from Central Michigan University. She stated that she knew she wanted to work in journalism beginning in the fifth grade. When she gets a story she first goes to the archives to see who others may have interviewed then she asks colleagues who they would recommend. For her, she says she identifies better with those who are the same race because she can better relate. She gets easily intimidated by men, but women are much easier for her to talk to no matter the age. In fact when she has to do man on the street interviews, she gravitates more to women. She also feels she establishes better rapport with women, especially women with kids. She identified herself as Hispanic.

Reporter 2 has been a print news reporter for seven years and is a graduate of Michigan State University. For her, race doesn't matter because she has learned how to deal with people and spark up conversations during her years of experience. She likes the fact that she is in a position to make a difference and be a voice to the voiceless. Once she gets to know different people and establish relationships with people race and gender don't matter. She believes it's her job to find educated people about the topic and who are passionate about the topic she is interviewing about. She tends to gravitate to people who are in leadership positions, then those who are affected by the issue at hand. She said in her years of experience she has learned how to gauge if a person will be responsive, and if they are at an event they already have an opinion about the issue. If the person isn't willing to talk to her, she moves on. She identified herself as African American.

Reporter 3 identified herself as African American. She knew at the age of 15 that she wanted to be a reporter because she enjoyed talking to new people and learning things she didn't know before. She has been in the print news business for nine years. For her, race and gender don't play a role in who she interviews. She believes it only makes a difference when doing man on the street interviews because in her opinion most of the time you don't see minorities. She said she does establish better rapport with those that look like her in gender and race because she may have shared experiences with them.

Reporter 4 is a newer reporter as she has only been working for television for 11 months. She graduated from Emerson College. When she interviews people she used to be stressed, but the more she works, she has gotten used to it and tells herself not to overthink it. For her, race does not play a role in who she interviews but she does gravitate more to women. She thinks she asks harder questions to women because she can relate better to them and there is more of a comfort level so she can dive deeper in. She establishes good rapport with everyone and although she finds it easy to interview everyone, she feels as if men are harder to approach. For her it isn't about race and gender it's about who she thinks will talk to her. For her she finds that white men always talks to her and she thinks its because she is a young Caucasian woman.

Reporter 5 has been in the television news business for 12 years. She is the most experienced reporter that was interviewed. She attended Mizzou and believes it helped her a lot because they had specific classes geared toward working with people of different races. She thinks for her, interviewing is all about personality. She says she has learned how to handle herself in any situation and never thinks about race. She thinks there are different factors that come into play when interviewing people such as education or someone's socioeconomic background. She said she also doesn't think about gender much because it is her job to tell the

story as a reporter. For man on the street interviews she thinks it's easier to interview people who look approachable. She thinks for those people you sense are hesitant to talk to you it's best to start with easier questions. For her she finds that men in positions of authority blow her off more quickly especially in politics and in the south. She identified herself as Caucasian.

Reporter 6 has been a television news reporter for a year and four months and loves it. For her it's not about being on TV it's about giving a voice to the voiceless. She graduated from Central Michigan University. She says she connects with everybody she interviews and race and gender don't play a role in who she interviews. She prides herself on being able to make everybody she interviews feel comfortable and being able to connect with them on a personal level. She does find women are more approachable and tends to have better luck because women seem to be more interested in what she has to say. She says depending on who she is interviewing she ask harder questions, but she feels establishing rapport is the same. She thinks for her it's about finding somebody who connects with the viewers, not about the race or gender. She identified herself as a Caucasian.

Reporter 7 is an African American woman who has been a television news reporter for six months. She graduated from Northwestern. She knew at the age of five that she wanted to be a reporter. When she first started she used to be nervous, but now she has more confidence. She says she does have an easier time connecting with those who are African American because they know the struggle that comes with being a minority. She thinks it is easier to interview women especially at the stage she is in her life, she is learning more about women and finds herself more influenced by them. She also noticed that when she goes out and does a story African American people tend to gravitate to her more, and she makes sure the people who she interviews are articulate so that they don't get stereotyped in her story. She said she asks everyone the same

questions and finds she is able to build good rapport no matter race or gender. She said there was one time where she encountered a woman who had a racial issue, but she has not let that discourage her when doing interviews.

Reporter 8 has been in the television news business for three years. She loves feeling like she has a thousand best friends. She feels like men want to talk to her more and will give her the inside information that a woman will not. She said she usually gravitates to African American people first because she is more comfortable and she finds herself establishing better rapport with them as well because they don't usually see people like her in a position of power. She identifies herself as African American.

To summarize the results of the eight interviews, I placed their main responses in the matrix below. It shows:

TABLE 1: REPORTER RESPONSES 1

	Could you tell me about how long you've been a reporter and where you've worked.	Could you tell me about why you wanted to work in TV(print) and what your educational experience was?	How do you feel about interviewing and the aspects of it?	Do you feel that you identify more closely with sources that share your backgrounds?
Reporter 1 Hispanic (Print)	One year	She wanted to work in print since she was in 5 th grade. Central Michigan University	N/A	She feels she can relate to those who are the same race.
Reporter 2 African American (Print)	Seven years	She likes being a voice to the voiceless. Michigan State University	N/A	Race doesn't matter because she's learned to deal with people and spark up conversations.
Reporter 3 African American (Print)	Nine years	She knew at the age of 15 she wanted to be a reporter because she enjoyed talking to new people and learning things she didn't know before.	N/A	Race does not play a role in who she interviews.
Reporter 4 Caucasian (TV)	11 months	Emerson College	She used to be stressed about interviewing, but now she has gotten used to it and tells herself not to overthink.	Race does not play a role in who she interviews.
Reporter 5 Caucasian (TV)	12 Years	University Of Missouri	Depends on the story how she feels about the interview she will do.	Race doesn't play a role in her interviews. In fact, in college she took a class geared towards working with people of different races.
Reporter 6 Caucasian (TV)	1 Year 4 months	She likes being a voice to the voiceless. Central Michigan University	N/A	Race does not play a role in who she interviews.
Reporter 7 African American (TV)	6 Months	She knew at the age of five that she wanted to be a reporter. Northwestern University	When she first started she use to be nervous, now she has more confidence.	For her she has an easier time connecting with those who are African American because they know the struggle that comes with being a minority.
Reporter 8 African American (TV)	3 Years	N/A	She likes interviewing people she feels like she has a thousand best friends.	N/A

TABLE 2: REPORTER RESPONSES 2

	Do you feel that you identify better with sources that come from the same gender as you?	When doing man on the street interviews do you tend to gravitate more to people who look like you where it is gender or race?	When interviewing sources do you ask harder questions for those that look like you whether it be gender or race?	When interviewing sources do you establish better rapport with those that look like you whether it be gender or race?
Reporter 1 Hispanic	Women are easier to talk to, she gets intimidated by men.	She gravitates more to women.	N/A	N/A
Reporter 2 African American	Gender does not play a role in who she interviews.	N/A	N/A	N/A
Reporter 3 African American	Gender does not play a role in who she interviews.	She tries to find minorities to have their voices heard.	N/A	She establishes better relationships with those who look like her with gender and race because she has shared experiences.
Reporter 4 Caucasian	She does identify better with women.	She does tend to gravitate more to women.	She asks harder questions to women because she can relate better to them and there is more of a comfort level so she can dig deeper.	She establishes good rapport with everyone and although she finds it easy to interview everyone, she feels as if men are harder to approach.
Reporter 5	Gender does not play a role in who she interviews.	She finds it easiest to interview people that look approachable.	She starts with easier questions for those who seem hesitant.	
Reporter 6	Gender does not play a role in who she interviews.	She does not gravitate to anyone more but she finds that women are more approachable than men.	Depending on who she interviews the questions may be harder.	She establishes good rapport with everyone that she interviews.
Reporter 7	It is easier to interview women especially at this stage in her life because she feels she is more influenced by them.	When doing person on the street interviews African American people tend to gravitate more to her, but she only interviews those who are articulate so that they won't get stereotyped.	She says she ask the same questions to everyone no matter the race or gender.	She is able to establish good rapport with everyone no matter race or gender.
Reporter 8	N/A	She tends to gravitate more to African American people first because she is more comfortable with them.	N/A	She tends to establish better rapport with African American people because they usually don't see people in a position of power.

TABLE 3: REPORTER RESPONSES 3

	Describe how you pick sources when you first get a story.	Describe how you pick sources when you have to get man on the street interviews.	Describe how you pick sources when dealing with controversial topics and non-controversial topics.	Describe a time when you thought a story wasn't told properly because you didn't have access to the sources you wanted.
Reporter 1 Hispanic	She looks through archives to see who has been interviewed before and ask colleagues who they would recommend.	N/A	N/A	N/A
Reporter 2 African American	N/A	Tends to gravitate to people who are in leadership positions then those who are affected by the issue at hand.	N/A	N/A
Reporter 3 African American	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Reporter 4 Caucasian	N/A	It isn't about gender or race, it's about who she thinks will talk to her. However Caucasian men always talk to her. She thinks its because she is a young Caucasian woman.	N/A	N/A
Reporter 5	N/A	She gravitates to those who look more approachable.	N/A	N/A
Reporter 6	N/A	She tries to find somebody that connects more with the viewers does not matter their race or gender.	N/A	N/A
Reporter 7	N/A	She wants to make sure the voice of her people are heard so she tries to interview African American people in every story.	N/A	N/A
Reporter 8	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

**N/A in a space means that reporter did not answer the question, or it did not influence my study.

INTERPRETATIONS

After spending time interviewing these eight reporters and I began to analyze what they said, I think I was able to answer my research questions, but did not either prove or disprove my hypotheses. Research question one was, does a reporter's race/and or gender determine the way they cover news stories? I realized that depending on the person the question can be answered different ways. For example, reporter seven says she wants African American voices to be heard in an articulate manner. For her she would feel it for fitting to talk to those sources so that their voices are heard. Reporter eight also finds herself gravitating more to African Americans because she finds herself more comfortable with her and establishing better rapport. However, for reporter five, she thinks race and gender don't play a role for her, she thinks it has to do more so with the education level and socioeconomic status of the person she is interviewing.

Research question two asked, does a reporter's race/and or gender determine who they seek to talk to when they are covering a news story, which can play a role into the first question. For reporter seven she seeks out African American people so that their side of the story is told. For reporter one she gravitates more to women, because she finds men more intimidating. This can be a factor in how a story is told because if the story is about men and she doesn't interview a man or finds them intimidating that may come off in her interview. Reporter four however finds that men tend to talk to her more so if that is a trend she has noticed, she may continue to approach men before women because she has better luck with them rather than women.

Research question three says, does a reporter's race/and or gender create for a more diverse story in terms of viewpoints and diversity of sources when they interview sources, which wasn't directly answered with the answers reporters answers. However I can make inferences from the answers reporters gave. Reporter three explains she tries to get diversity when doing

man on the street interviews because you usually don't hear minorities in stories. Reporter five has the most experience out of all the reporters that were interviewed. She says she has diversity more so with people of different socioeconomic backgrounds rather than those who are a different race and gender.

Research question four says, do reporters feel more comfortable interviewing people who are the same gender, cultural background which for some of the reporters feel to be true. Reporter one stated she finds women more approachable because she is intimidated by men. Reporter three however said for her race and gender doesn't matter. She has the same level of comfort with whomever she interviews. Other reporters who said they were comfortable with interviewing anyone are reporters four, and five. These women said for them it's their job to connect with their interview subjects and make sure the story is told properly. They think that comes with the job as a journalist. Reporter two also agreed with them saying she finds herself comfortable talking to anybody because its her job as a journalist to tell the story.

In my opinion, a reporter's race and or gender can play a role in the stories covered in the newsroom based on experience level. Those reporters who had more experience have less of a bias in who they interview. For them the story will be diverse based on the topic of the story because that will determine who they interview. I do think however race and gender can determine whether or not all sides of the story are told based off experience level as one. For example, one reporter says she wants the voices of African American people to be heard so subconsciously she may not even get the opinion of a Caucasian person because she isn't as interested in what they have to say.

Again, the research questions I had are as follows:

RQ 1: In what ways does a reporter's race influence the way they cover new stories?

RQ 2: In what ways does a reporter's gender influence the way they cover news stories?

RQ 3: Do females and female minority reporters feel more comfortable interviewing female/and or minority sources?

RQ 4: Do female and/ or female minority reporters report choosing sources based on those they are most comfortable talking to?

RQ 5: Is there any effect of journalism education on how females and minority females deal with gender/race characteristics of sources?

Although I did not prove or disprove any of the research questions I think when other journalist want to do future studies, they will be able to better phrase their research questions and questionnaire so that they have a specific positive or negative correlation for their research.

CONCLUSIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

When I first decided to do this research I knew that with me being the first to do research that involves reporter interviews I would be a tester for anyone else that wanted to do research of this kind. First, I had no previous research to go off of when it came to interviewing reporters. I didn't have any idea of the issues that I would face while doing my research. Had I known that this method was not really feasible based off prior research, then I could have made a decision to do research a different way.

In doing research I've learned that reporters are actually harder to interview then some may think. They answer questions a certain way, however if you watch or read some of their stories, you tend to see trends in their stories so even though they say they don't gravitate to those who look like them in gender or race, their stories seem to prove otherwise. Reporters are also very reserved with their answers, which could have played a role into how my research questions were answered. Some reporters answered questions with more open-ended responses while other reporters answered questions with yes and no answers and then were asked to elaborate on the answer that they gave.

For me as a producer it wasn't easy establishing rapport with these reporters that I didn't know. I do not go out and interview people so trying to get them to open up to me in a short interview when they have no prior background of who I am wasn't as easy as I thought it would be. I did notice that only women got back to me which made me wonder does that have a role in my research. Women were more open to be interviewed. Men on the other hand either didn't respond to calls or emails, or agreed to do the interview then backed out which made me think about how reporter five said men who are in positions of power don't take as seriously as she would like. It was definitely a trend however in contacting reporters, some women said they

didn't have time for a phone interview but I could email them the questions. I think if I was a reporter based on my experience with this research I would find it easier to approach women because even through email and phone men did return phone calls or emails after the initial conversation.

For further research I would not suggest interviewing reporters for many reasons. Reporters are not as easy to talk to as you may think. When they don't have on their reporter hat they are regular people just as the people they interview daily. They answer questions the way anybody else would answer them even though they would want a source to elaborate. I would suggest doing a content analysis of stories done by reporters. The information will be easier to translate when it comes to answering your research questions. I formed my research questions around the interview questions that I asked reporters, however I could not control how they answered questions and if there were some questions that they didn't answer I had to continue to ask the next questions. Not one reporter answered each question, which played a role in my results. It may be better to do a case study on a specific newsroom and watch their newscast daily to see how stories are told based on the reporters in the news room and interview reporters for background information but not on the basis of them giving you all the information that you want to take from them.

I feel as though I have made a huge contribution to the field of communication because as stated before research like this has never been done before. This could be great for journalist in the future to do research similar to mine for numerous reasons. One, if the journalists give themselves a year to interview reporters they will have a better turn out. Even if they only interviewed two reporters a month, they have 24 reporters to work with and they would have a better time gathering information. Reporters can also gain insight from how other reporters answered their questions and try to reword questions, or even ask different questions so that they

have a better understanding of how the reporters think. Something that would be good for future research is to interview television and newspaper reporters and ask them questions centered around how many responses they get from the people they interview. Once the source is approached do people tend to decline interviews more often than not because they don't want to be seen. That would be a way to go beyond the surface research and keep digging deeper into the life of reporters.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1

EMAIL

Hello,

My name is Alexis Howell and I am currently a graduate student working on my thesis to finish out my program. I am also a producer at WILX News 10 and have been for one year. As a producer I get a chance to watch reporter's packages on a daily basis. Not only do I watch packages that come from my station, but I also watch other stations as well. When I watch other news channels I always notice the same thing, reporters tend to have sources that come from similar backgrounds as them. Through my research I will be able to gain more insight on why this is the case. I would be honored if you would allow me to interview you to learn more about your interview process as a reporter. If you are okay with being interviewed, please respond to this email and we can set up a time to do a phone interview or in person interview, whichever works best for you.

Best Regards,

Alexis Howell

APPENDIX 2

RESEARCH PARTICIPANT INFORMATION AND CONSENT FORM

You are being asked to participate in a research study of how reporters pick their sources when it comes to interviewing for stories. You must be at least 18 years old to participate in this research.

1. Participation in this project is completely voluntary and you may withdraw at any time you feel uncomfortable. You have the right to not answer questions.
2. If you have concerns or questions about this study, such as scientific issues, how to do any part of it, or to report an injury, please contact Alexis Howell by email (howell39@msu.edu) or by telephone at 708.595.1268.

If you have questions or concerns about your role and rights as a research participant, would like to obtain information or offer input, or would like to register a complaint about this study, you may contact, anonymously if you wish, the Michigan State University's Human Research Protection Program at 517-355-2180, Fax 517-432-4503, e-mail irb@msu.edu or regular mail at Olds Hall, 408 West Circle Dr Rm 207, East Lansing, MI 48824.

3. By saying yes, you are indicating you voluntarily agree to participate in this questionnaire.

APPENDIX 3

QUESTIONNAIRE

Hi, thank you so much for taking the time to talk with me. I am very interested in hearing first a little about your work and career as a reporter. Could you tell me how long you've been a reporter and where you've worked?

Could you tell me a little about why you wanted to work in TV and what your education experience was?

What is your take on interviewing people, and how you feel about the aspects of it?

First, do you feel that you identify better with sources that come from similar backgrounds as you?

Do you feel that you identify better with sources that are the same gender as you?

When you are doing man on the street interviews, do you feel that you tend to gravitate more to people that look like you whether it is gender or race?

When interviewing sources, do you feel you ask harder questions for those that look like you whether it is gender or race?

When interviewing sources, do you feel you establish better rapport with those that look like you whether it is gender or race?

Do you feel that you find it easier or harder to interview sources that don't look like you?

Can you please describe how you pick your sources when you first get a story.

Can you please describe how you pick your sources when you have to get man on the street interviews.

Can you please describe how you pick sources when dealing with controversial topics. (ie. Black Lives Matter, Travel Ban)

Can you please describe how you pick sources when you are dealing with noncontroversial topics.

Can you please describe a time when you thought a story wasn't told properly because you didn't have access to the sources you wanted.

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