2009

An analysis of the social networks of local television reporters

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AN ANALYSIS OF THE
SOCIAL NETWORKS OF LOCAL TELEVISION REPORTERS

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

in

The Manship School of Mass Communication

by
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December 2009

Dedication

This is dedicated to my parents who instilled in me the importance of education, my husband who encouraged me, my children who motivated me and my late mother-in-law who supported me in so many ways.

Acknowledgments

My pursuit of this degree became a test of endurance. It was not my intention to exhaust the entire seven years allowed for completion of a doctoral degree, but even as the years stretched on, my Dissertation Committee continued to support and encourage me. Throughout the many starts and stops of this research project, Dr. David Kurpius, the chair of my committee, was always ready to provide guidance, advice, and encouragement. He would take time from his schedule to meet me for lunch to discuss the progress of my research. I will always be grateful to him for his commitment to my academic success.

Many thanks also to Drs. Peggy DeFleur, Andrea Miller, Kirby Goidel and Stephanie Houston Grey for their willingness to turn their attention back to my research whenever needed. I would also like to thank Dr. Lori Boyer, one of the original members of my committee, who left the university before I completed my dissertation. Her continued reassurance that completing this degree was something I could do was very important to me. I thank Dr. Felicia Song for agreeing to replace Dr. Boyer.

Thank you to the staff of the Manship School of Mass Communication, particularly Elizabeth Cadarette, Catherine Jackson, and Lyn LeJeune, who helped me register for classes each semester and ensured that my graduate paperwork was completed correctly and submitted appropriately.

To my mother, thank you for reading and re-reading this paper. Your comments and suggestions were very much appreciated. I would also like to thank my family and friends for their support and encouragement throughout this journey. Most importantly, thank you to God for giving me the strength and capacity to undertake and finish this program of study.

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Abstract

This study analyzed the personal and professional networks of four local television reporters using social network analysis methodology. Network analysis was carried out to the tertiary level allowing examination of demographic data for 773 individuals in the reporter networks. Analysis was conducted through the lens of media norms and routines and the sociological principle of homophily that states people are more likely to associate with people like themselves. Using as a guide, norms and routines and homophily literature as well as studies about the portrayal of minorities, the study examines how the social networks of reporters can determine how communities of color will be covered by the media. The findings show that minority reporters who have lived in the community for an extended period of time are more likely to have the social networks that will lead to meaningful and substantive coverage of minority communities.

Introduction

Journalists usually learn about events and issues through news sources, and most of the information that journalists subsequently gather about those events and issues comes from news sources. (Berkowitz & Beach, 1993, p. 4)

Consumers of mainstream news understand that most news stories, whether print or broadcast, will include information, ideas, and opinions gathered from news sources. Interviews, sound bites, and quotes from sources are basic elements of most news stories. While audiences are typically knowledgeable enough to recognize the ways in which reporters attribute information and opinions to sources, such as using quotation marks or superimposed graphics of names and titles, it is not clear whether they are equally knowledgeable about how certain individuals and groups become sources, or understand the implications this process has on fostering an informed citizenry. Not only is the information the public receives important, but the source of that information is also relevant to every citizen's understanding of issues that affect his or her life.

News content has received and continues to receive considerable scholarly attention, including how it is produced, what factors affect its development, and how it impacts the public. These studies have shed light on the way the media operate and the influence they wield on society. Sigal (1986) wrote:

Who makes the news affects who governs and who opposes. The press, in amplifying some voices and muting others, in distorting some messages and letting others come through loud and clear, affects the nature of opposition and hence of governance…who

makes news and therefore reaches their audiences, helps determine the direction of political life in the American republic. (p. 36-37)

A large body of research exists about news source selection, and much of it concludes that some people are more likely to be sources than others (Sigal, 1973; Molotch & Lester, 1975; Gans, 1979; Brown, Bybee, Warden, & Straughan, 1987; Berkowitz, 1987; Berkowitz & Beach, 1993; Owens, 2008). Many studies have found that official or authoritative sources outnumber non-official sources—the average citizen—in news stories (Sigal, 1973; Molotch & Lester, 1975; Gans, 1979; Berkowitz, 1987; Berkowitz & Beach, 1993).

The impact this has on news content is felt when the powerful are able to define an issue for the public at the expense of competing viewpoints. Molotch and Lester (1975) found that because business spokespersons and government officials had greater access to the media, they were able to downplay the severity of the 1969 Santa Barbara, California, oil spill. In other words, with help from the media, they were able to define the news story better than conservationists and local officials.

As disseminators of information, the media play a key role in democratic societies. If their information is biased and one-sided, the implications are worrisome as they cannot fulfill their inherent purpose of creating an informed citizenry. Brown et al. (1987) wrote of this concern in their study, "Invisible Power: Newspaper News Sources and the Limits of Diversity."

…newspapers have failed to live up to the expectations of the media in a pluralistic democracy. Front-page news stories in both the national and local press and from the wire services rely heavily on government sources who are primarily men in executive positions. Many of these sources are so veiled it is not possible to tell even that much about them. Most reporting relies on routine channels, such as press conferences and press releases. (p. 53)

The authors charged that the "press is simply not doing its job of including and identifying a variety of sources and viewpoints" (p. 53). On a large scale, this disparity jeopardizes democracy by negatively affecting citizens' ability to make truly informed decisions.

On a smaller scale, source bias can alienate and marginalize voices from minority communities. In fact, in their book *The Conversation of Journalism*, Rob Anderson, Robert Dardenne, and George M. Killenberg (1996) offered five suggestions to move journalism beyond what they termed "conduit journalism" where journalists simply relay information. The authors called for a more open or conversational journalism where journalists present information in such a way that it starts a dialogue among all members of the community. The second suggestion focused on the need for journalism to recognize the importance of multicultural dialogue in a democracy. The authors wrote, "We argue further for an openness by individual journalists and news organizations to the nuances of talk and behavior that characterize racial, ethnic, and life-style groups of a pluralistic culture…" (p. 177).

If the media is to present a complete and fair picture of news events to the public, reporters must have a broad base of news sources. Because reporters are in a unique position to inform the public about a variety of problems and issues, an examination of the types of people they include in their social circles could yield valuable information about their world view and how they present it to the public.

As McPherson, Smith-Lovin, and Cook (2001) argued in their study about the tendency of people to associate with those like themselves, the makeup of one's social network can have powerful implications on how individuals perceive the world. The propensity of people to socialize others who are similar to themselves is known as homophily, a principle that comes out of the field of sociology and specifically social network studies. As will be discussed later, race is an important indicator of the individuals with whom people are likely to form relationships.

Homophily has a major role in this study. It will provide a guide by which to assess the makeup of each reporter's social network. This examination will include determining if there are differences in the social networks based upon the race of the reporter, and what those differences mean for the news coverage each reporter is likely to provide, particularly coverage about and relevant to communities of color.

Social networks are the relationships, or ties, an individual has with others. Although social network analysis was not used in David Manning White's (1950) classic gatekeeping study, "The 'gate keeper:' A case study in the selection of news," it did examine the personal reasons given by a newspaper wire editor, Mr. Gates, for excluding potential news items from the newspaper. Personal preferences and attitudes, some scholars argue, are shaped by one's social network.

Newspapers cannot print every news item they receive, and it was Mr. Gates' job to determine which stories submitted by the three wire services his paper would print. He rejected nine-tenths of the wire copy in the week in which his decisions were tracked. His reasons for rejection fell into two categories: (1) news items that were rejected because they were not worthy to be reported, and (2) news items that were rejected because another wire service's report about the same event was used.

Mr. Gates maintained that he judged stories based on their "clarity, conciseness, and angle." Yet, his personal opinions were very much part of his news decisions as evidenced by his notations of "B.S." and "propaganda" on some of the stories he rejected. Personal preference also determined which wire service version of the same story would be chosen for the paper.

The "Mr. Gates" study provided valuable insight into the editor's role as gatekeeper at his newspaper, determining what news eventually got to the public. The study concluded that the editor's choices showed "how highly subjective, how reliant upon value-judgments based on the

gatekeeper's own set of experiences, attitudes and expectations the communication of 'news' really is" (Reese & Ballinger, 2001, p. 646).

Such censorship on the part of a news editor is not isolated and continues today. In addition to the wire editor's self-reported reasons for rejecting or accepting a news item for inclusion in the newspaper, information about his social network would have complemented and provided further explanation about his news judgment.

Social network analysis may enable researchers to scrutinize who reporters know, what relationships the reporters consider important, and provide a clearer picture of who has the ability to influence them. The analysis of reporter social networks has the potential to be a predictor of the kinds of news sources reporters will have and the kinds of news that will be reported. It could also serve as a guide to better train journalists, helping them identify where their networks are dense with similar types of sources, indicating the need for more diversity of sources.

Understanding the social networks of reporters could improve the quality of news content by providing a more comprehensive reflection of the day's events, improving the depth of information, and creating a citizenry armed with information from a diverse array of sources. This research will lay groundwork for the study of source selection through analysis of reporters' social networks.

Purpose

Since its earliest beginnings in the 1930s, social network analysis has taken many paths, but few pursuits have focused on the importance and impact of networks in the field of mass communication, particularly the business of news reporting.

The purpose of this study is to analyze the personal and professional networks of local television journalists. Analysis of these relationships as well as the individuals within each

journalist's network will reveal with whom reporters associate and potentially how those relationships influence the reporter's coverage of the news.

Race and ethnicity have historically been determinants of who gets into the news and on what terms. According to Owens (2008), mass communication scholars have uncovered a recurring theme in television news—it "depicts more positive and more frequent images of majority groups, while ignoring less powerful minority groups" (p. 357).

Heider (2000) wrote that minority communities have consistently been ignored by television journalists, not in any overt way, but through coverage that is the result of "decades of daily decisions, cultural training in White middle- and upper-class norms, and a persistent fear of threatening the status quo. In turn, the news product is one of systematic and institutionalized neglect" (p. 52).

More than 40 years ago, the Kerner Commission (1968) noted this same neglect in its report about the causes of the race riots of the 1960s. Chapter 15 of the report is devoted to the media and its failure to show the condition of Blacks in the country. The report chastised the media for irresponsible reporting practices while covering the riots—from staging violence to accepting uncritically the accounts of official sources to the media's lack of sources in the "ghetto." Beyond the coverage of the riots, the report criticized the media for their failure to report on the race relations in the country and the problems of the "ghetto," and for the lack of minorities in newsrooms. The report stated,

> The absence of Negro faces and activities from the media has an effect on white
> audiences as well as black. If what the white American reads in the newspapers or sees
> on television conditions his expectations of what is ordinary and normal in the larger
> society, he will neither understand nor accept the black American. By failing to portray

the Negro as a matter of routine and in the context of the total society, the news media

have, we believe, contributed to the black-white schism in this country. (p. 383)

The Kerner Commission's pointed criticism wasn't the first time the media had been

called to task for their performance. In 1947, the Hutchins Commission issued its report linking a

healthy democratic society to a responsible media. The report brought attention to the media's

failure to provide information, opinions, or ideas from a broad range of sources, and called upon

them to go about their work guided by the theory of social responsibility. The theory maintains

that by virtue of their position of privilege within society, the media are obligated to perform

essential functions that inform the public and safeguard individual liberties.

Both the Hutchins and Kerner commissions called upon the media to do a better job of

including more diversity in their coverage. Why this has not happened may be explained in part

by acknowledging the history of racial tension between Blacks and Whites in the U.S., from the

brutality of slavery and injustices of Jim Crow to the struggles of the Civil Rights era and the

eventual end of legalized segregation. While a thorough examination of the racial complexities

that exist in this country are too broad for the scope of this project, it is an undeniable fact that

most Blacks and Whites have distinctly different social experiences.

Consistent with previous race relations research, Trawalter and Richeson's experiment

(2008) found that Whites behaved more anxiously in their interactions with Blacks than with

other Whites. And, they were more anxious than Blacks during interracial contacts, especially

when the topic of discussion involved race. Black participants behaved less anxiously than

Whites in interracial discussions, especially when the topic of discussion was race. While the

reasons behind the limited social contact between Whites and Blacks are numerous and varied,

the stressful nature of Black-White interactions is potentially a key factor contributing to the

inclination of many people to avoid members of a different race.

The uneasiness that Whites and Blacks experience when they interact with each other is a barrier that may impede or discourage White reporters from building connections within Black communities and developing sources who could provide them with meaningful insight about issues that affect diverse populations. Social network analysis can provide useful information about how extensively reporters make inroads into minority communities and develop sources in those neighborhoods, yielding compelling results for the television news industry, minority organizations, and researchers of media and politics.

In undertaking this research, several theoretical arguments used in the fields of mass communication and sociology will be applied as the basis from which to examine reporter social networks. First, social network analysis provides the framework by which this study will be conducted. The process of determining both the individuals whom reporters consider part of their social networks and those individuals' attributes is consistent with previous studies of social networks, particularly studies of ego-centered networks, in which the focus is on the connections an individual has with others. Second, the significance of each person's attributes has particular significance when the principle of homophily is applied. Homophily is a sociological principle in which there is a tendency for people to associate with people like themselves. Through homophily, the similarity or dissimilarity of individuals within each reporter's social network can be explored.

Atop this sociological foundation, it will be necessary to acknowledge the impact that normal news production practices have on reporter networks. Mass communication literature offers several explanations as to why certain individuals enjoy more access to news reporters, including norms and routines literature that says news workers typically use the same production methods to gather and report the news, and sourcing literature that holds officials, particularly

White males, are more likely to be used as sources in news stories. Other literature asserts that the personal attributes of reporters, such as gender and race impact their news decisions.

Finally, this study will consider mass communication literature that focuses on minorities: how minorities are portrayed by the media and how minority reporters impact the field of journalism.

A combination of methodologies will be used in the present research—social network analysis and in-depth interviews. Network analysis will include gathering information about the personal and professional reporter networks through surveys designed to elicit the names of an individual's core network—those people who are more likely to provide support, whether emotional, social, financial, etc. Using the snowball sampling technique in which respondents identify subsequent respondents, it will be possible to examine the social networks of individuals within the reporters' networks.

In-depth interviews will complement the network analysis by allowing the researcher to gain insight into each reporter's personal and professional background and give them the opportunity to share, in their own words, the meaning they make of their experiences as reporters.

Together, the network analysis and interview methodologies will generate new and compelling information about the social networks of local television reporters, and provide insight into how these networks serve them and ultimately the viewing public.

Review of Literature

The origins of social network analysis are a fusion of several academic disciplines, including anthropology and sociology (Galaskiewicz & Wasserman, 1993). Social networks are the connections or ties an individual has with other people. Whether through family, club memberships, fraternities, sororities, church affiliations, work settings, community, or neighborhood groups, individuals have and develop connections with others.

The study of social networks is essentially analysis of data, either relational or positional. Relational analysis focuses on the relationships that exist between individuals or groups; positional analysis examines the positions individuals hold within the network, i.e. boss, subordinate, or coworker. This study will look at relational data. Social networks offer a picture of how people, organizations, or societies are connected.

To begin, networks consist of nodes or actors and the relationships or ties that link them together. A pair of actors is known as a dyad; three actors are a triad. Social networks can be visualized as a web-like structure with the individual at the center. Lines or paths connect actors to each other and represent relationships or ties. In an ego-centric network, or a network that is anchored around a single node, the network consists of an actor, other actors in its immediate locality or "neighborhood," and the relationships among them. Relationships often represent communication, influence, trust or friendship, but can also refer to conflict (O'Malley & Marsden, 2008).

Networks can be represented as matrices or graphs. In a matrix, the absence or presence of a tie between two nodes is represented by a "0" or a "1," respectively. Therefore, it is easy to see who has a tie to whom.

Sociograms, or graphs that illustrate the pattern of connections between nodes, are some of the earliest depictions of social networks. Graphs can show much more information about a network, including the direction of the relationship and the strength of a network tie. Directed lines (paths) have arrowheads on one or both ends and show that one or both actors report having a relationship with the actor to which the arrow is directed. This can be significant as not all ties between actors are symmetrical. Said another way, not all relationships are reciprocated. Undirected lines do not have arrowheads, and simply show that a relationship exists between two actors. Valued graphs show the intensity of a relationship by assigning a numerical value to each line. For example, on a scale of 1 to 5, a 1 indicates low intensity, meaning that an actor reports being aware of another actor, whereas 5 indicates high intensity, meaning the actor has contact with that actor on a daily basis.

Researchers also use such properties as size, density, degree, and centrality as social network descriptors. Size is one of the most basic measurements of a network, and refers to the total number of ties. Density is also a widely used measurement, and is defined as the size of the network relative to the number of possible ties. Density is an indication of the extent to which people in the network know one another. Degree measures the number of others with whom the actor has ties, and centrality is an indicator of how prominent an actor is within the network.

Researchers have also been interested in the homophilous properties of networks, or the degree to which members of a network share the same characteristics, such as age, race, gender, and level of education. This will be discussed in more detail later.

Social network analysis has been used to study how people come to know about political information in urban neighborhoods (Crenson, 1978); residential patterns in the suburbs (Hwang & Murdock 1998); interracial friendships (Joyner & Kao, 2000); the effects of gender in the workplace (Ibarra, 1992); and the discussion networks of Americans (Marsden, 1987). Network

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studies have increasingly been used in the medical field as a tool to explain a variety of health issues, such as the spread of sexually transmitted diseases through sexual partnership networks and the influence of friendship networks on dietary practices and exercise habits (O'Malley & Marsden, 2008).

Throughout the history of network analysis, several methodologies have been used, including experiments, observation, personal interviews, and surveys. Network analysis allows researchers to examine, on a small scale, an individual's circle of contacts and how those contacts serve them, and on a larger scale how organizations and societies adapt and function.

While the impact of social networks on the production of news has yet to be fully determined, Dunwoody (1978) and Crouse (1973) each studied the professional interaction of reporters assigned to write their stories away from the newsroom among reporters from other news outlets who were covering the same event or issue. Dunwoody observed the relationships science writers had with one another while covering the annual meeting of the Association for the Advancement of Science. Crouse's book, *The Boys on the Bus,* details the interactions of newsmen on the campaign trail of the 1972 presidential election. Both projects looked at how members of two small groups of reporters interacted with one another, and how they came to determine what elements of the annual meeting or campaign were newsworthy.

Their findings were similar in that, among the science writers and the reporters on the campaign trail, there was a need to develop a shared reality of events, in other words there was a need to reach consensus on events that occurred. There was also a hierarchy of sorts that existed among the reporters based upon the prestige of the news outlet—the more prestigious the news outlet, the more influence that outlet's reporter had. The need to reach consensus fostered cooperation among the reporters, instead of the typical competitiveness of journalism, ensuring no one got "scooped"—the misfortune of not having a story that all other news outlets have—or

conversely, running the risk of having information that no other news outlet has—which may lead news management to question the reliability and accuracy of the information. By paying attention to the social environment of these reporters, Dunwoody and Crouse were able to show that reporter networks helped reporters manage their daily work and determine what events or information would make its way into the news.

Later Shields and Dunwoody (1986) sought to understand how reporter social networks affect news coverage of state government by conducting an observational study of reporters in the Wisconsin statehouse pressroom. Much like the previous studies, they found that a hierarchy existed in the pressroom, but the reporters did not have as much freedom in story selection as did the science writers and campaign reporters.

> These statehouse reporters were in constant contact with editors. Although physically absent from the city room, reporters were still very much under the influence of that environment, which considerably lessened the influence of the statehouse reporter network. (pp. 47-48)

Shields and Dunwoody also found that cooperation, especially to ensure accuracy, was part of the state pressroom news practices, and was seen as "professional courtesy."

Donsbach (2004) approached the study of reporter social networks from a psychological perspective, looking at the thought processes and social conditions that influence reporter decision making. Donsbach, too, found that reporters search for a shared reality of news events because generally they want to have what other outlets have and don't want to have what other outlets don't. He wrote that reporters arrive at a shared reality through social interaction on the job, observing what other news media report, and social interaction with fellow reporters away from the job.

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These studies are valuable in that they shed more light on how reporters do their jobs given their social environments, or networks. Yet, the examination of reporter networks is limited to the professional level, and neglects the impact that personal networks—friends, family, and club members, for example, may have on news decisions and production. This study seeks to add to the existing body of literature by bringing in this important component of human interaction.

Evolution of Social Network Analysis

Prior to World War II, sociological studies seeking to analyze social structures, , and organizations were generally small in scope, focusing on the structural components of small groups such as families, communities, classrooms, and work groups (Galaskiewicz & Wasserman, 1993; Coleman, 1986). This allowed researchers to observe more easily the behaviors and relationships that group members had with one another (McPherson et al., 2001). Hare (1991) described small groups as those that "were small enough for each participant to have had at least a potential opportunity to respond directly to the comments of each other participant during the period under consideration" (p. 87). Galaskiewicz and Wasserman wrote that early sociological work on small groups was "rich in qualitative detail, attentive to relational patterns and sensitive to roles and norms" (p. 4).

The use of surveys in the social sciences gained in popularity after World War II, enabling researchers to move beyond small group studies to larger endeavors such as the study of organizations, communities, and nations. But, according to Galaskiewicz and Wasserman (1993), while the "survey method and 'canned' statistical programs" proved to be very popular among researchers, they "decontextualized the individual" and "painted a much too simplistic picture of contemporary man and the institutions in which he lived." The researchers wrote, "…these

methodologies stripped the individual of the social relationships, which were both constraints and opportunities for action—an important source of meaning" (p. 5).

Theory, too, neglected the importance of relationships, portraying the individual as "autonomous, independent, and solitary" (Galaskiewicz & Wasserman, 1993). The researchers wrote, "Individuals' relationships with others (e.g., friends, neighbors, family, workmates, superiors, subordinates, advisers, social control agents, health care providers, and acquaintances) were incidental and supposedly inconsequential" (p. 5).

Furthermore, the authors pointed to two theories that offered distinctly different explanations of how individuals behave. Both theories, Galaskiewicz and Wasserman (1993) argued, isolated the individual from his or her social environment. Rational choice theory portrays individuals as "strategic" and "self-serving," much like a reporter whose news work is designed more to please the news director, win awards, and advance professionally than to fulfill the obligations to inform and enlighten the community. Structural functionalism viewed the individual as "passive, adaptive" and "manipulated." This theory posits that it is the position of the individual that determines how he or she will act, not his or her social environment or relationships.

Today, with new technologies such as the Internet and Blackberries, the interest in social networks has reached new heights. Social networking tools like MySpace, Facebook, and Twitter have expanded the dialogue about networks beyond academic circles to the general public, and have opened up even more opportunities for advancement in social network research in both methodology and theory.

Social Circles, Connections and Contacts

Fischer's book *To Dwell Among Friends*, published in 1982, is a classic in social network literature. In it, he used survey methodology to find out about the networks of residents in 50

San Francisco Bay area communities. The purpose was to determine whether urban modern life had destroyed the traditional ideals of community where family and neighbors are valued. In pursuit of an answer, researchers had to determine if and how urban and rural settings affect the personal networks and social lives of their residents. To do this, they conducted 20-minute survey interviews with residents living in communities of varying sizes. Residents were asked to discuss their neighborhoods and share information about their relationships and the people in their lives. Analysis of the residents' personal relationships did show network and attitudinal differences, but the results did not support the notion that urban settings cause the erosion of community values. Fischer concluded that while city dwellers have different lifestyles, their quality of life was no different from people who lived in more rural areas.

By adopting sample survey methods used in the 1985 General Sociological Survey (GSS) which looked at the core discussion networks of Americans, Marsden (1987) found that Americans tend to have "small, kin-centered, relatively dense, and homogeneous" networks. The survey asked respondents to name those individuals with whom they discussed important matters, such as family, finances and health. Marsden argued that using "important matters" as a names generator identifies those individuals who have intimate and strong ties with the respondent, and therefore, are more likely to influence the respondent and determine what the respondent considers to be normal or acceptable.

Marsden (1987) found that the racial and ethnic homogeneity of the networks was significant. Of those who had discussion networks of at least two people, only eight percent named a person of a different race or ethnicity with whom they discussed important matters. In controlling for age, education, and urban versus rural residency, Marsden found that the success of "networking" depends on access to diverse others, and those best situated to network successfully are the young, middle-aged, well-educated and urban dwellers.

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As will be discussed in the methods chapter, the Fischer (1982) and Marsden (1987) studies provide the foundation for the collection of data in this study. The use of names-generating questions has proven to be a suitable way to gather information about a person's network.

Travers and Milgram (1969) chose another methodology, though. One of the most famous social network studies is their experiment that attempts to trace acquaintance chains. This was done by asking a group of randomly selected individuals in Nebraska and Boston to mail a document to an acquaintance they thought might know the intended recipient, a Boston stockbroker. It is based on Milgram's (1967) small world problem that suggests a disconnect exists between two different populations if there is not at least one link between any two individuals within those groups. Travers and Milgram refined their study to ask "given two individuals selected randomly from the population, what is the probability that the minimum number of intermediaries required to link them is 0, 1, 2, …k?" (p. 426). The researchers wrote that the term small world "'small world' suggests that social networks are in some sense tightly woven, full of unexpected strands linking individuals seemingly far removed from one another in physical or social space" (p. 426).

Of the 217 documents that were sent in to the Travers and Milgram (1969) experiment, only 64, or 29 percent, reached the intended recipient. It took an average of 5.2 "chain lengths" or acquaintances to move the document successfully from the sender to the targeted receiver. Because of geographic proximity, it took less time for the document to reach the targeted receiver if the route originated in Boston rather than in Nebraska. The document traveled through an average of 4.4 acquaintances in the Boston random group and an average 5.7 acquaintances in the Nebraska random group. A third group, comprised of Nebraska stockholders, also participated in the study and had an average chain length of 5.4 acquaintances.

The Travers and Milgram (1969) findings showed the inter-connectedness of people who are socially and geographically distant from each other. The experiment was not designed to examine existing social networks, but instead to test the probability that two people could be connected no matter their social standing or where they are located. For the present research, the Travers and Milgram results show that, when necessary, reporters may be able to tap into the chain of acquaintances of their contacts to connect to diverse others.

Mark Granovetter's (1973) influential study, "The Strength of Weak Ties," considered how social networks affect an individual's ability to find a job. In examining the social networks of jobseekers, Granovetter distinguished between the ties, or relationships, the individual had to others as either strong or weak. The strength of the tie was determined by a combination of factors including the amount of time spent with the contact, the emotional intensity of the relationship, the level of intimacy or the amount of confiding, and whether or not the contact reciprocated these things. Granovetter interviewed a random sample of "job changers" in professional, technical, and managerial fields, and asked those that found new jobs through contacts how often they saw that contact during the time the job information was passed on to them. Surprisingly, he concluded that people got better job tips from their weak ties than from their strong ties.

Granovetter (1973) found that an individual who does not communicate with a contact frequently (weak tie) is more likely to receive new and useful information from that contact than from a contact with whom he or she communicates on a regular basis (strong tie). People who are connected by strong ties are assumed to know the same people and therefore have the same information. Whereas people to whom a person is weakly tied tend to move in different circles and have access to information different from what a close circle of friends might have.

Burt (1992) used the term structural holes to describe the weak ties of which Granovetter (1973) wrote. Burt argued that an individual's network of contacts and the location of those contacts in the social structure can determine the individual's social, economic, personal, and professional opportunities. He concluded that large, diverse networks are more beneficial than small, homogeneous ones. In his study of the social networks of senior managers in a leading high-technology firm, Burt found that managers with networks rich in structural holes got promoted faster and at a younger age.

Granovetter (1973) and Burt's (1992) argument that the makeup of one's social network determines the opportunities to be realized rings true for journalists as well. As Granovetter and Burt found, it is the weak ties or structural holes—the people not within one's immediate social circle—that are able to provide new, significant, and useful information. Reporters whose social networks are filled with similar types of people lack the weak ties or structural holes that will help them provide the diversity of thought and ideas needed to practice meaningful journalism.

Birds of a Feather

Social network analysis sheds light on the sociological phenomenon of homophily, the tendency for individuals to socialize with people similar to themselves. Metaphorically, birds of a feather flock together. Similarity can be viewed as sameness of race, ethnicity, age, education, religion, occupation, gender, or ideology.

In examining social networks, the theoretical principle of homophily provides a useful guide. According to McPherson et al. (2001), homophily is the principle that a contact between similar people occurs at a higher rate than among dissimilar people. Hwang and Murdock (1998) defined homophily as the assumption that people are attracted to those like themselves and repelled by those who are racially different. Rogers and Bhowmik (1970-71) wrote that

homophily refers to the degree to which pairs of individuals who interact are similar with respect to certain attributes, such as beliefs, values, education, social status, etc.

Initial research on homophily focused on demographics (age, sex, race/ethnicity, and education) and psychological characteristics (intelligence, attitudes, and aspirations) in which researchers found strongly homophilous association patterns by race and ethnicity (McPherson et al., 2001).

Much of this research involves individuals in school and workplace settings. In studying racial homophily, most studies agree that individuals are more likely to associate with members of their own race than with members of a different race (Joyner & Kao, 2000; Shrum, Cheek, & Hunter, 1988). However, when studying children and adolescents, researchers found that the degree of racial homophily increases as an individual ages. So while there is little racial homophily as a young child, during adolescence individuals tend to associate with members of their own race more often. This pattern continues into adulthood.

Louch (2000) found that people are much more likely to report that their confidants are connected to one another if these confidants are of the same race. Similarly, in a national probability sample, only eight percent of adults with a network size of two or more mention having a person of another race with whom they "discuss important matters" (Marsden, 1987). This, he wrote, represents less than one-seventh the heterogeneity that would be observed if those individuals had chosen randomly from that population. Marsden concedes that the lack of diversity in discussion networks could be attributed to the fact that people tend to discuss important matters with their kin: spouses, parents, siblings, etc.

In more recent research, Thelwall (2009) found evidence of online homophily by ethnicity, age, and religion (as well as sexual orientation, country, and marital status) in a study of MySpace friendships. Despite the unlimited possibility for diverse online friendships,

Thelwall found that people "ghettoize themselves into predominantly similar groups" or "cocoon themselves away from the unfamiliar" leading them to "become less tolerant than others." Gibbons and Olk (2003) found that ethnicity "repeatedly, consistently, and persistently influenced development of friendship ties and social structures" more than the gender, level of education, professional background and work experience of MBA candidates (p. 349). The authors concluded that people may be more likely to choose friends based on ethnicity than any other attribute, or conversely that minorities, themselves, may assume that Caucasians would prefer friendships with persons of similar ethnicity—a "reverse homophily." McPherson et al. (2001) found that race and ethnicity represent the biggest divide in social networks not only in the United States, but to a significant extent, in other ethnically diverse societies.

Ibarra (1992) looked at gender homophily in the workplace and found that men, more so than women, tended to have homophilous ties in both their professional networks that provided advice and influence, and in their friendship networks. The friendship networks of women were homophilous, while their professional networks had more gender diversity. In other words, women tended to rely on other women for social support and friendship, and relied on men for advice and access.

In examining racial homophily, Joyner and Kao (2000) distinguished between preference and opportunity homophily. They argued that homophilous relationships should be differentiated by a person's choosing to associate with those similar to himself out of simple preference or associating with similars because there is more of an opportunity to do so. Zeng and Xie (2008) wrote that homophily and friendship studies should incorporate a framework that distinguishes friendship choices by preference for a certain person and the opportunities to interact with certain types of people.

Homophily limits an individual's social world in a way that has powerful implications for the information they receive, the attitudes they form, and the interactions they experience (McPherson et al., 2001). Some researchers contend that because of homophily, any information that flows through the network will be localized. In other words, the distance created by social characteristics translates into network distance, or the number of relationships through which a piece of information must travel to connect two individuals

Pop culture says that everyone on Earth is connected through six degrees of separation. In other words, a computer programmer in Phoenix, Arizona, is connected to a goat herder in a small Afghan village through six people—each knowing someone in another's network who then ultimately links the computer programmer and the goat herder. Given the relative ease with which people can connect to diverse others as illustrated by the six degrees theory and Travers and Milgram's small world experiment, why do people tend to limit their interactions to those who are similar to them? More specific to this study, why do journalists tend to rely on the same types of people for information, i.e. White males who hold positions of authority? As will be discussed later, much of it has to do with the need to produce news as efficiently and economically as possible. The principle of homophily also helps to explain the human tendency to connect with people who are like ourselves.

Reporters and Their Communities

Reporters hold unique positions in their communities. As members of a community, they are expected to be civically engaged; but as reporters, professional norms suggest they remain objective and detached.

Gaziano and McGrath (1987) looked at whether the credibility of a newspaper is impacted by the relationship of its reporters with the community. While the authors found that journalists were typically young, single, white males; they were able to categorize journalists

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into four groups—the two largest being younger transients and older natives. Younger transients were journalists under the age of 35 who had been living in the community for five years or less. Older natives were older than 35 and were "longtime residents" of the community.

Study results showed that younger transients were less likely to share the political ideology of the community, less likely to be involved in the community, and more likely to keep their distance from their readers. Conversely, older native reporters were more likely to share the demographics of the general public, more likely to be involved in their communities, and more likely to have contact with their readers. Gaziano and McGrath (1987) concluded that younger transients "may contribute disproportionately to newspaper credibility problems because of their greater differences from the public and their sense of distance from their communities" (p. 328).

Burgoon, Burgoon, Buller, and Atkin (1987) replicated a survey of the American Society of Newspaper Editors (ASNE) that focused on the relationship of reporters with the public and other journalists. They found that in both the ASNE study and the replication study, journalists did have a "fair" amount of contact with the public, and felt it was important to communicate with diverse groups of people and be well integrated into the community. Yet, actual community involvement was lower than the desired level of involvement.

The studies also found that some reporters were insulated, meaning that they had little contact with the public, their colleagues, or both. Young journalists, who were "insular," tended to be new to the community and had not had time to make connections with residents. The tendency for young journalists to move from job to job because of low wages also contributed to their being less integrated into the community. The authors also noted that young insular journalists who spend more time networking with newsroom colleagues may perceive there are more rewards to be gained through these connections than through connections within the community.

While the authors concluded that the overall communication practices of journalists are not cause for alarm, they did suggest that there are some working journalists whose isolation from the public is a threat to the success of the paper.

…a substantial subset of journalists working in many newsrooms across the country are insulated from their public.…The extent to which this lack of communication produces feelings of elitism and condescension toward the public may threaten the newspaper's ability to identify newsworthy developments in the community, to present accurate accounts of people and events, and to assess critically its failures and successes. (p. 275)

A number of factors have the ability to impact the level of community involvement of reporters, including age, length of time in the community, career aspirations, personal preference, and professional ideology. And, as the studies indicate, certain combinations of factors are more likely to cause some journalists to be detached from the communities in which they live and work. This aloofness can have adverse effects on the quality of their reporting and the credibility of the news organization.

How Reporters Do Their Work

While many journalists would say that they simply report the news as it happens, others argue that a number of factors shape the news content that the public reads, views, and hears every day. Reporters do not operate independently, but must do their work within the parameters of their news organization's expectations, the realities of daily newsgathering, market forces, and their own professional judgment. Donsbach (2004) and Shoemaker and Reese (1996) both acknowledge this truth.

Donsbach (2004) wrote that while news decisions are complex and ephemeral, most communication scholars agree that four main factors determine what becomes news and how it is presented: (1) news factors—the characteristics of the story that determine whether it is

newsworthy; (2) institutional objectives of the news organization that compel the reporter to pursue certain stories or write a certain way; (3) the manipulative power of news sources, such as public relations who know how to meet the information needs of reporters; (4) and the subjective beliefs of journalists—how the predisposition of reporters can affect their news decisions.

Yet, Donsbach (2004) argued that none of these factors offer a true explanation of how news decisions are made because there is no uniformity of analysis or theory among them, and the assumptions of causality lack the same depth of analysis in the news process. He concluded that the human behavior of journalists goes further to explain how news is made. By taking a psychological approach, Donsbach concluded that, first, reporters need to receive social validation that what they perceive is reality is shared by others, and second, news decisions are determined by journalists' existing knowledge and attitudes.

Shoemaker and Reese (1996) argue that the influences on media decisions can be categorized as ideological, individual, routine, extramedia, and organizational. In other words, reporters do not work in isolation. Other factors aside from their personal attitudes impact news production, including corporate policies and ownership patterns, the economy, advertisers, and ideological influences. Past media research explores these influences both in broad terms as described by Shoemaker and Reese, and in specifics, such as the impact of source selection as described by Molotch and Lester in their 1975 study about the 1969 Santa Barbara oil spill. In the oil spill study, government officials were much more successful than environmental groups at using the media to define the severity of the incident for the public.

Norms and routines literature looks at the ways in which reporters manage the glut of information from which they select their daily stories and how routine practices help reporters identify who and what is newsworthy. Research in this area is extensive and varied. Within this literature alone, scholars have explored the reliance on official sources for information (Gans,

1979; Sigal, 1973; Molotch & Lester, 1975), the beat system as a method for reporters to quickly and easily access newsworthy information (Coulson & Lacy, 2003; Fishman, 1982), objectivity as a way to claim unbiased coverage (Schudson, 2003; Bird & Dardenne, 1988; Tuchman, 1972) and the inverted pyramid—the structure of a news story that organizes information from the most to least important facts (Tuchman, 1972); episodic-oriented news narratives that focus on events rather than issues (Inyengar, 1990); professionalism which establishes the norms of conduct for journalists (Bishop, 2004; McChesney, 2004; Soloski, 1989); and the tendency for journalists to all write about the same event, also known as pack journalism (Bennet, 2001; Dunwoody, 1978; Crouse, 1973).

Existing research concludes that the routinization of news gathering helps reporters perform their jobs as efficiently and economically as possible in the face of deadline pressure. In her writings about news routines, Tuchman (1977) discussed the fact that routines are "ineluctable" and may be so ingrained that they are not easily expressed, or even realized.

Another Tuchman study (1973) discussed how news organizations use routines to process unexpected events. Putting events in specific categories like hard and soft news did not help newsmen control or routinize unexpected events. But when newsmen determined the practical tasks associated with covering the different types of news stories, they were better able to control a multitude of variables likely to arise in the course of a news day. Tuchman wrote, "News organizations can process seemingly unexpected events, including emergencies and disasters, because they typify events-as-news by the manner in which they happen and in terms of the ramifications 'this manner of happening' holds for the organization of work" (p. 129). In typifying events-as-news, Tuchman argued that the practical task of scheduling coverage of different types of events helps news organizations routinize work. In the event of "spot news," which is an unscheduled news event, she wrote that most major newspapers staff their city desks

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around the clock. The routinization of news, or the controlling of work processes, is easier when events are typified by the likelihood that they can be planned for, or scheduled.

Similarly, Bantz, McCorkle, and Baade (1980) wrote that "newswork is accomplished within steps of organizing that are designed to use nearly identical reporters and photographers to produce a uniform product within a limited period of time" (p. 282). The authors found that five factors lead to the routinization of news:

> The trends in television news—the turnover of newsworkers, the influence of consultants, the producer supervision, the increased technical sophistication, increasing organizational size, and the emergence of the news as a profit center—have contributed to local television news' development of a highly constrained, routinized approach to news. (p. 282)

Fishman (1982) argued news content is affected by news routines, specifically the beat system where reporters are assigned to cover certain locales, i.e. city hall, the school board, or issues, i.e. religion, the environment. Because beat reporters spend a great deal of time at and on these beats, officials based at or associated with those beats often have the power to determine what news is.

Livingston and Bennett (2003) found that news routines affected coverage despite their initial belief that advancements in technology would make it easier for journalists to break free from their reliance on beats and official sources to cover stories. The researchers looked at the impact of live news coverage through satellite technology on foreign affairs reporting. They found that despite opportunities to provide extensive live coverage of "event-driven" news from a variety of sites, reporters still relied on officials embedded within traditional beats.

Shoemaker, Eichholz, Kim, and Wrigley (2001) found that the routines of news work exert more control on content than reporter characteristics in their study to determine how

prominently major congressional bills were covered by U.S. newspapers between 1996 and 1998. The study supports the argument that the newsworthiness of a story is not determined by the reporter's personal beliefs or biases, but by the aggregated assessment of editors—in other words, the routines by which news personnel do their work.

Molotch and Lester (1975) argued that the media support the powerful, and newsroom routines like the reliance on official or elite sources allow that to endure as appropriate professional practice. Even so, there are studies that challenge the strength of routinization's influence, suggesting other factors are equally, if not more, powerful than news routines in shaping news content.

Eliasoph (1988) wrote that news routines do not determine coverage, "the interaction between two sets of forces" does. She found that even though mainstream news organizations and oppositional news stations like KPFA-FM in Berkeley, California, both use the same news routines—such as objectivity and event-driven reporting—their news was markedly different. Eliasoph argued that newsrooms reporters are taught, or socialized to report in a way that both pleases their managers and meets the needs of their news organization. Peiser (2000) came to similar conclusions about newsroom socialization when he wrote that newsroom socialization and organizational-level routines have a greater degree of influence on media content than reporters' personal characteristics and ideologies.

In their study of source selection by gender, Rodgers and Thorson (2003) found that gender has a significant impact. The researchers found that women are more likely to use diverse sources, and their sources were associated with non-stereotypical story topics and tones as compared to their male colleagues. However, women at large newspapers were more likely to adopt the more male-dominated styles than women at smaller papers. This, the authors

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determined, suggests that the norms and routines of an organization can have an even larger influence than individual-level factors in determining sources in certain instances.

> These findings indicate a possible conformity mechanism at work in larger more reputable newspapers where newsroom norms may dictate, perhaps implicitly, the kinds of sources and frames that reporters use. (Rodgers & Thorson, 2003, p. 669)

Zeldes and Fico (2005) found that reporters and sources in the 2000 presidential election were mostly White males, and that both male and female reporters used more male sources. In a challenge to the case for newsroom diversity, the authors posited that individual-level influences do not supersede organizational-level influences, and that women and minorities have been socialized to report the way White males prefer.

As discussed earlier, Donsbach (2004) argued that more individual-level factors are at work in news production, specifically journalists' need for social validation or peer approval as well as the need to preserve their own pre-existing ideas—both of which he described as psychological factors. Dunwoody (1978) found that news routines and peer validation impacted how science writers at an annual science meeting accomplished their jobs.

Using game theory where people's actions are motivated by their goals, Bovitz, Druckman, and Lupia (2002) found the media elites, whether individual reporters or media organizations, were severely limited in their ability to lead public opinion because of the combined impact of news production pressures and market forces. In other words, when looking at what factors influence the audience, the routines of news productions and competition for viewers have more of an impact than media elites.

In another study, Hamilton (2004) asserted that profits drive news content. He wrote that two economic concepts shape coverage: (1) the value of certain demographic segments to advertisers, and (2) the emphasis on attracting marginal rather than faithful viewers. Similarly,

McManus (1994) argued that market-driven journalism values certain viewers over others which impacts coverage. Kaniss (1991), too, noted the commercial pressures on coverage. In her book about the media's role in supporting urban development projects over suburban interests, Kaniss wrote that the media's interest in urban growth and connections to the "downtown business community" bias news coverage in support of city projects. However, Kaniss also noted the professional values of journalists also affected coverage, including their need to please editors and their tendency to place more importance on city issues: city "myopia."

An examination of mass communication's norms and routines literature illustrates the circumstances that keep reporters covering the same types of stories and interviewing the same types of people. As much of this research reveals, certain production techniques have been developed to help reporters control their work and do it as efficiently as possible. As some studies argue, reporters are socialized to adopt these practices. Given these newsroom controls, it would be worthwhile to explore the diversity of reporter networks despite the production constraints placed upon them.

Is Everyone's Voice Being Heard?

The selection of sources is only one aspect of the news production process, but it is an issue with far-reaching and substantial implications. Kurpius (2002) wrote that reporters select sources for "what they know, their position in an organization, and/or their status in society" (p. 854). Sigal (1986) determined that the interaction between journalists and news sources is an important force shaping the news. Berkowitz and Beach (1993) wrote that many studies conclude that sources shape the news more strongly than do journalists.

Sourcing is a critical part of the news production process. Reporters rely on their sources to accomplish many functions, including (1) obtaining information; (2) developing story ideas; (3) providing sound bites or quotes for news stories; (4) advising on story production and/or

possible interviews with other sources; and (5) keeping abreast of news and developments in the community or on the beat. Berkowitz and Beach (1993) wrote that journalists usually learn about events and issues through news sources, and most of the information that journalists subsequently gather about those events and issues comes from news sources.

Sources can have a real impact on the information the public sees, hears and reads, and can affect the perceived reality of a community (Kurpius, 2002). As will be discussed in more detail later, minorities, particularly Blacks, are used as sources more often in stories about crime or misfortune, whereas Whites are quoted as regular citizens and experts. In his study about the impact of local television news on Whites' attitudes about Blacks, Entman (1992) wrote that "Blacks have high visibility on local television news, but as images of threats and burdens to society" (p. 344). Therefore, he continued, studies show U.S. news portrays the failures of the Black underclass as "individual shortcomings," not necessarily societal problems.

It is a professional necessity to have an effective network of sources to ensure that the reporter knows and understands the community and, as some argue, provide a constant and reliable flow of news (Fishman, 1980). Studies show that reporters are expected to develop sources in traditional news-generating locales otherwise called beats, such as city halls, police stations, school boards, chambers of commerce (Sigal, 1973). Gans (1979) wrote that reporters also use family and friends as sources.

However, much of the research about the selection of sources in new stories concludes that certain people enjoy greater access to the media than others, such as government officials and company spokespersons. Those who have easy access to the media are in a better position to have their opinions heard and legitimized. Without access, many are silenced. Their opinions and concerns are subject to being marginalized, trivialized, or ignored.

This omission came to light in the Kerner Commission (1968) report which analyzed the civil unrest in major U.S. cities during the 1960s. The report placed partial blame for the riots on the media, asserting that they ignored the condition of Blacks in the inner city.

Sigal's (1973) study of *New York Times* and *Washington Post* front page coverage over a 20-year period (1949-1969) found that government officials accounted for more than three-quarters of all news sources. The Brown et al. (1987) content analysis of the *New York Times, Washington Post,* and four North Carolina newspapers showed that one-third of the sources in front-page stories were affiliated with the U.S. government, and more than half were associated with some governmental body. As previously stated, in Molotch and Lester's (1975) analysis of the newspaper coverage of the 1969 Santa Barbara oil spill, researchers found that business spokespersons and government officials had greater access to the media than conservationists and local officials.

Gans (1979) found that the "unknowns" who make their way into news stories are usually protesters, victims, violators of laws or mores, or participants in unusual activities. Similarly, Gitlin (1980) wrote that the only way for unofficial sources to get the attention of the media is to engage in some type of disruptive behavior. When news content is heavily laden with official government statements, comments, interviews, government statistics, and documents, the perspectives and views of other sources are slighted.

In effect, those with greater access to the media are able to define the news event for the rest of the world more so than those who have little or no access. Furthermore, official sources used by reporters tend to be White males. Roberts (1975) found that the viewpoints of Blacks were rarely expressed, because they were often seen but not heard in network news stories from 1972-1973. More recently, Owens (2008) found that Whites represented more than 75 percent of on-camera sources on network news programs in 2005; and that a majority of experts, company

spokespersons and government officials were White. Poindexter, Smith, and Heider (2003) found that Blacks were used as sources only when more than one source was used. This was true even if they were experts or company spokespersons. The study also found that Latinos, Asian Americans, and Native Americans had few or no chances to be news sources.

In looking at how *story genre* influences sourcing, Armstrong (2006) found that when men and women are in the same profession or position, men are more likely to be chosen as sources. Zoch and Van Slyke Turk (1998) found that women were quoted less frequently in articles that were prominently placed in the newspaper and the length of quotes by females were shorter than those by males. This, they argued, leads the public to believe that women do not have anything of value to add to discourse. Similarly, Brown et al. (1987) decried the fact that newspapers have not lived up to the expectations of media in a pluralistic democracy because front-page news stories in national and local newspapers as well as wire reports "rely heavily on government sources who are primarily men in executive positions" (p. 53).

A number of theories exist as to why officials dominate the news. One most often cited is that the routines of newsgathering bring reporters and sources together. The beat system, in which reporters are stationed at locales where they anticipate "news" will happen, encourages a dependence upon official sources (Gans, 1979; Sigal, 1973; Molotch & Lester, 1975). Beats provide an economical and efficient means by which reporters are virtually guaranteed a steady diet of information from those they consider reliable and credible. Furthermore, those they consider to be reliable and credible are almost always official sources. Kaniss (1991) described the relationship reporters have with their sources as symbiotic where reporters seek access to sources for information, and in turn, sources seek access to journalists to promote their interests, raise awareness, publicize their ideas or simply get publicity. This can be described as a "you-scratch-my-back-I'll-scratch-yours" relationship.

Brown et al. (1987) found that elite sources supply most of the information in both national and state newspapers and that these same sources dominate the news because they are available geographically and are suitable for the story. Berkowitz and Beach (1993) found that official sources dominate not by chance or conspiracy, but by necessity. Journalists, the authors wrote, must report on government workings and they simply use efficient strategies, like the beat system, to gather that information.

The selection of sources is also determined by how credible reporters perceive a source to be. Those in government are presumed to be in positions where they know about important matters and are deemed more credible and reliable than unofficial sources (Tuchman, 1972). Sigal (1986) wrote that reporters use an official's position in a hierarchy as a measuring stick to gauge his or her credibility—the more senior an official and the closer they are to affecting public policy, the more likely that individual will be included in a story. Powers and Fico (1994) found that reporters relied on their own personal judgments about whether a source was credible or knowledgeable. Fico (1984) found that reporters rely on sources chiefly because they are accessible and are better able to explain governmental procedures and proposals. Berkowitz and Beach (1993) found that when newspaper reporters are looking for reliable sources and are covering stories farther out than their circulation area, they tend to rely on official sources as well.

Some scholars argue that sources, particularly official sources, are more knowledgeable about news production. Berkowitz (1987) found that sources who best understand the needs of news departments stand the best chance of influencing the news agenda. Gans (1979) wrote that the affluent and powerful have an advantage in the competition for access to the media because they are able to meet the news organization's continued need for stories—many times at no cost to the journalist. This can be extended to individuals within the fields of public relations.

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Boorstin (1961) and Schudson (1978) wrote about the rise of the public relations industry and its ability to get its issues and events covered. Specifically, Boorstin discussed those events specifically organized by public relations professionals to generate news coverage, which he called "pseudo-events." In essence, public relations professionals enjoy greater media access and are more successful at getting their information and events covered because they understand and work within the news routines of journalists. The news conference, for example, is a "pseudo-event." It is an event created by public relations professionals solely to provide reporters with information in a convenient and efficient manner.

Berkowitz (1997) found that television journalists relied heavily on official sources because they depend more on routine channels of news, such as news conferences and news releases as opposed to enterprise reporting. In similar findings, Dunwoody (1978) determined that television reporters had more equipment restraints and thus were forced to rely on routine events like news conferences. The nature of television and its need for visuals may indeed be the reason that broadcast news relies so heavily on official sources. Equipment constraints, as Dunwoody found, can make it difficult for television journalists to be as mobile as newspaper reporters. However, as Livingston and Bennett (2003) found in their study gauging the effects of technology on sourcing patterns, officials still dominate in broadcast news. The authors hypothesized that technology, such as satellite transmission, would enable reporters to free themselves from using beats, bureaucratic locales and the officials who work there. They found, instead, that official sources still dominate.

Hansen (1991) wrote routine news gathering does not bode well for journalism or democracy:

Whether the medium is print or broadcast, scholars have found that daily reporting relies mainly on routine channels of information and official government sources. The

implication of these studies is that such reliance has an effect on journalist quality, and the media are not meeting their responsibilities to a pluralistic society as long as they do not include and identify a variety of sources and viewpoints. (p. 474)

In his study of four major news organizations, including CBS Evening News and NBC Nightly News, Gans (1979) found that social proximity is a factor that shapes whether sources have access to reporters.

Social proximity is, moreover, influenced by all the structural and demographic factors that shape social relationships, thereby enabling people of similar backgrounds and interests to make contact, and obstructing those who differ. After all, journalists are also members of society. Upper-middle-class sources, for example, are not likely to have difficulty reaching reporters and may even have a mutual friend; people of lower social status often do not know how to deal with professionals, and fear rejection to begin with. (p. 125)

In their study about journalists' attitudes and newspaper credibility, Gaziano and McGrath (1987) found that compared to the public, newspaper journalists tended to be younger, better educated, better off financially and "disproportionately male." They also found these reporters tended to choose friends like themselves—in high status, White-collar occupations both in and outside the media profession. Burgoon et al. (1987) found that although reporters say they value and want to interact with the public, actual contact with the public was lower than the reported desired level. Age was the most important predictor of community involvement. The majority of reporters surveyed said they had "extensive work-related and social interaction with colleagues." Interestingly, the study also found that opportunities for advancement in the news organization were tied to being well connected in the newsroom, not in the community. This

inward orientation, the authors suggested, threatens the media's ability to identify "newsworthy developments in the community" and "present accurate accounts of people and events."

The lack of diversity in source selection may best be understood by examining literature that shows how it can be avoided. Hansen (1991) found that enterprise journalism increased the diversity of sources, specifically that newspaper enterprise journalism relied less on governmental sources than "daily, front-page news coverage." Hansen defined enterprise projects as those stories in which reporters are freed from deadline pressures, and the traditional notions of newsworthiness are de-emphasized.

As discussed earlier, Gans (1979) found that in traditional journalism "unknowns," or those without governmental connections usually became news sources as protesters, victims, violators of laws or mores, or participants in unusual activities. However, Hansen found that in enterprise projects, those same types of sources were often average citizens capable of clearly expressing themselves about issues that affected their communities. The author wrote, "They were giving voice to the concerns or perspectives of those most unable to command media attention on a day-to-day basis" (p 479).

In his study on sources used in civic journalism, Kurpius (2002) found that this kind of journalism altered the routines of coverage in a positive manner. He found that groups that are disproportionately left out of news coverage do gain access and an opportunity to express their views in a television civic journalism model. However, Massey (1998) found that even though civic journalism stories used more average citizens as sources there was no discernible difference from traditional journalism with regard to how often they were used and whether they were quoted directly or paraphrased. He argued that if audiences do not notice any changes in the sourcing patterns, then civic journalism may not realize its goal of revitalizing the public's interest in public affair.

Armstrong (2002) found that the more ethnically diverse a community, the more likely women would appear in the newspaper both in frequency and placement. This suggests that a community's structure can influence a newspaper's representation of gender. In a later study, Armstrong (2004) found that the gender of the reporter impacts source selection. Women reporters were more likely to write stories showcasing women; male writers were more likely to include males in their stories.

In her study about the National Organization for Women's effort to gain media access in the 1970s, Barker-Plummer (2002) discussed the conditions under which people and organizations not normally considered newsworthy could successfully attract media coverage of their issues. Two key factors, she wrote, were (1) mobilizing the resources, i.e. money, skills, technology, labor and information; and (2) developing media strategies that fit within the routines of the media.

The issue of sourcing goes to the heart of the present study because it directly addresses whose voices and concerns are validated. It is clear that certain types of people are more likely than others to get into the media on their own terms. As Anderson et al. (1996) noted, a lack of multicultural dialogue threatens the ideals of journalism needed in a democratic, pluralistic society.

Personal Characteristics of Reporters

Kaniss (1991) wrote that the decisions of individual reporters play a key role in the selection and presentation of stories. An individual journalist's influence on news content may be determined by a number of factors including gender, ethnicity, personal background and experiences, attitudes, beliefs, opinions, and education. Still, most journalists would like to think that they approach their work from a completely objective standpoint—meaning that they can provide a balanced and fair accounting of an issue, even though they may hold a differing

opinion about it. Donsbach (2004) used a cognitive psychological and sociopsychological approach to analyze the professional behavior of journalists and found their decisions are based on peer approval and their existing predispositions.

Shoemaker and Reese (1996) found that a journalist's background and personal characteristics as well as their personal attitudes can and do affect content, but only in proportion to how much power the individual has in the media organization. In writing about local news and its bias for city-oriented news over news from the suburbs, Kaniss (1991) argued that reporters' personal views, placing more value on city issues than suburban issues, exacerbates the problem. However, as stated earlier, Shoemaker et al. (2001) found that individual characteristics did not override media routines when analyzing the effect that an individual reporter's characteristics had on how prominently major congressional bills were covered in U.S. papers between 1996 and 1998. Rodgers and Thorson (2003) and Zeldes and Fico (2005) also found that media routines overshadowed any reporter-level influences in their studies about source selection.

Reporter characteristics are most often linked to the constant criticism of the media's being too liberal. While many journalists are left-leaning on the political spectrum (compared to the general public), most scholars, including Peiser (2000) found that individual-level factors do not exert the kind of influence that conservative critics say exists. In his study about journalist agendas, Peiser argued that while there is evidence that journalists' own opinions and ideological positions are relevant to their news decisions, there are other forces at work in shaping news content, such as the effects of the beat system, deadline pressures, professionalism, objectivity, newsroom socialization, pressure from advertisers and corporate interests. Eliasoph (1988) found that reporter ideologies do affect coverage when looking at the difference in content of "deviant" newsrooms and mainstream newsrooms.

Reese and Ballinger (2001) re-examined David Manning White's study about the wire copy editor, Mr. Gates. The authors noted that White's findings not only challenged the prevailing notion of the time—that the media simply printed the available news that was out there—but they also introduced into early U.S. media research the concept of subjectivity on the part of the gatekeeper. They wrote, "The decisions of individuals, some of whom by virtue of their strategic location at key 'gates,' have the power to affect the flow of information" (p. 647).

In his discussion about forces shaping news production, Benson (2004) identified the shortcomings of existing literature, arguing that it does not fully explain the "intertwined and interrelated" elements that affect this process. He called for the re-examination of these influences, specifically the need to expand organizational influences to include a "mezzo" level of influence that takes into account the social and educational background of journalists as well as their efforts to define their professional identity.

Minorities in the Media

While minorities do not suffer total exclusion from the media, efforts to get into the media on their own terms are limited. Studies on the portrayal of minorities in the media are quite disturbing.

Owens (2008) found that Blacks and Hispanics appeared as on-camera sources significantly less than Whites, and when they were used, the stories were typically about accidents, disasters or weather-related stories. Crime was the next most common story topic for which Black sources were used; for Hispanics, it was the economy. The top two story topics for Asian Americans were health/medicine and economics/business; for Americans of Middle Eastern descent, war/terrorism, and foreign affairs. Native Americans represented the minority group that had the least amount of coverage, with only one instance in a story about the damaging effect of Washington lobbying on the Choctaw.

However, most scholarly work about the portrayal of Blacks comes to one conclusion: the majority of television news shows Blacks as criminals (Entman, 1990, 1992, 1994; Martindale 1990; Romer, Jamieson, & De Coteau 1998; Heider, 2000). Entman's work (1992) detailed the differences in coverage of Blacks and crime and argued that these differences serve to dehumanize Blacks. Black suspects, he found, were more likely to be shown in unnamed still photographs. He wrote that this is a visual representation suggesting that there are no differences among individual members of an outgroup, and that reinforces the stereotype of the dangerous Black man. White suspects were more likely to be shown in moving video, producing a more humanizing effect that showed their individuality. Blacks were more likely to be shown in prison clothing and in handcuffs than were White suspects. Differences also existed in the selection of sound bites. News stations included within their stories more sound bites from pro-defense actors for Whites; stories of Black suspects had more pro-prosecution sound bites. Furthermore, Blacks were more often framed, or described by the words of White police officers.

Gilliam and Iyengar (2000) found that local television news scripts about crime have two features—violence and race. In the study, the authors examined scripts of Los Angeles network affiliates and found that even though murder accounts for less than one percent of crime in Los Angeles County, it was the focus of 17 percent of crime stories in the sampled newscasts. The authors wrote that more balanced reporting about crime depends upon the hiring of reporters "with better knowledge of the communities they cover and by increasing ethnic diversity in the newsroom" (p. 572).

A study by Romer et al. (1998) of local news in Philadelphia found that people of color were more often portrayed as perpetrators, while Whites were more often shown as victims of minority criminals. The overrepresentation of Whites as victims contradicted findings in the criminal justice system for that year where there were four times as many non-White victims of

homicide as White victims. The authors concluded that White victimization is more newsworthy for White audiences.

In his book, *White News: Why local news programs don't cover people of color,* Heider (2000) concluded that stories about minorities are restricted to two areas—crime and festivals. Heider attributed this to the power structure of news organizations and the absence of minorities in it, ownership interests, and minorities' limited access to media organizations. Access, he wrote, is not limited to the inability of minorities to gain it, but also to their reluctance to seek it. Heider found that minority communities sometimes do not have the know-how to gain access to the media and are often hesitant to seek media coverage, given the negative slant with which they are typically covered.

In *The White Press and Black America*, Martindale's (1986) analysis of *The New York Times, Chicago Tribune, Boston Globe* and *Atlanta Constitution* from the 1950s-1980s found that there were few accounts of the everyday life of Blacks, except in the Atlanta and Chicago papers. Most coverage reflected a stereotypical treatment of Blacks—in the 50's as criminals and entertainer/athletes; 60's as protestors; and 80's as the Black political leader.

Published in 1947, the Hutchins Commission's report was instrumental in the emergence of the social responsibility theory. The report outlined five requirements needed of the press in a free, self-governing society, two of which speak directly to the focus of this research: a "truthful, comprehensive, and intelligent account of the day's events in a context which gives them meaning," and a means of projecting the opinions and attitudes of the groups in the society to one another" (pp. 20-21). In doing so, it is necessary to open up the public forum to more voices—a key principle of social responsibility theory. Yet, the report found that the media industry had failed to offer information, opinions, or ideas from a broad range of sources.

Almost 30 years later, President Johnson asked the Kerner Commission to report on the causes of the race riots of the 60's. Chapter 15 of the report is devoted to the media and its failure to show the condition of Blacks in the country. The commission wrote, "They have not communicated to the majority of their audience—which is White—a sense of the degradation, misery, and hopelessness of living in the ghetto" (p. 383).

This failure to give the public a full understanding about the conditions in which Blacks live may be caused by what Gilliam and Iyengar (2000) point out as the tendency for the media to focus on episodic news events. By emphasizing event-driven news, problems are framed in a way that the public casts blame on individuals. Providing context and offering a thematic treatment of a problem show the audience that the root of the problem may not lie with the individual, but with society. Framing issues as episodic or thematic has powerful implications on public policy that could be created to solve the problems.

The Kerner Commission called for the media to improve its reach into the minority communities by actively cultivating relationships and sources there. The commission also called upon the media to bring more minorities into the news profession in an effort to bring a broader perspective to news judgment.

Yet statistics show newsrooms are overwhelmingly staffed by Whites and only a small percentage of minorities hold positions of leadership in them. According to a survey conducted by the Radio-Television News Directors Association (RTNDA) and Hofstra University, in 2008, roughly 76.3 percent of the television news workforce is White. African-Americans comprise 10.1 percent, Hispanics, 10.3 percent; Asian Americans, 2.7 percent; and Native Americans, 0.5 percent. Whites hold 84.5 percent of the television news director positions, African Americans, 3.7 percent; Hispanics, 9.3 percent; Asian Americans, 1.7 percent; and Native Americans, 0.8 percent (Papper, 2008).

The principles of civic journalism are rooted in the ideas of social responsibility theory. Civic journalism promotes the idea of a more participatory journalism that encourages public participation in public affairs through the inclusion of more voices, and more comprehensive coverage as opposed to event-driven news. Kurpius (2002) found that this kind of civic journalism altered the routines of coverage in a positive manner. He found that groups that are disproportionately left out of news coverage do gain access and an opportunity to express their views in a television civic journalism model.

Taken together, the recommendations by both the Hutchins and Kerner commissions for improved news coverage serve as guiding principles for media organizations that want to expand both the size and diversity of their audiences.

In the mid-1970s, the theory of modern racism emerged and posited that the old-fashioned racism of the Jim Crow era was largely gone. Much of society upholds the ideal of equality for all. However, modern racism suggests that the support of equality-for-all is nothing more than lip service. Entman (1990) wrote that modern racism has three elements: (1) an anti-Black effect—the general emotional hostility toward Blacks triggered by the emphasis of Black criminals on television; (2) the resistance of political demands by Black politicians who are portrayed by television news as demanding and self-serving; and (3) the belief that racism is dead, which is reinforced by high-profile successful Blacks, such as Black entertainers, athletes and television personalities. Furthermore, there is concrete opposition to policies that promote racial equality, such as affirmative action. Tarman and Sears (2005) wrote of the same tendency, describing it as symbolic racism.

Formal Statement of Problem

Scheufele, Shanahan, and Kim (2002) found that highly diverse discussion networks were positively related to increased local political participation, issue awareness, and attitude

stability. Shields and Dunwoody (1986) argued that the social networks of reporters are important because understanding an individual's behavior is predicated upon understanding their environment. Donsbach (2004) called for more research on the social networks of journalists because of his finding that journalists tend to be friends with other journalists. Gans (1979) wrote that the social proximity of sources and reporters has a significant impact on who has access to the airwaves or news pages. He also wrote the structural and demographic factors that shape social relationships enable people of similar backgrounds and interests to make contact, and obstruct those who differ.

The influence of media content by the personal characteristics of reporters—race, gender, education, ideology—has been well-studied (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996; Eliasoph, 1988; Shoemaker et al., 2001). Yet, despite calls from some scholars for more research on the social networks of reporters (Donsbach, 2004), there are few studies that engage the subject.

The potential impact of journalists' social networks on news content did not escape Gans (1979) when he observed that social proximity has a tremendous impact upon who reporters look to for information. He wrote that class and other differences make it easier for some people to gain access to journalists while restricting others.

As a result, national journalists—but I suspect local ones as well—move within a relatively small and narrow aggregate of sources, which is dominated by the people they contact or who contact them regularly. (p. 126)

Gans' (1979) observations about reporter-source relationships corroborate what researchers in the field of sociology say about the tendency of people to associate with those like themselves and distance themselves from those who are dissimilar. Given that in the United States, the most important variable in determining the structure of social networks is race and

ethnicity, it is a worthwhile pursuit to determine how this impacts news decisions and production.

According to the 2008 RTNDA/Hofstra University's annual survey about women and minorities in the broadcast industry, 23.6 percent of the television workforce is minorities, compared to a 34.0 percent U.S. minority population. Research also shows that not only are television newsrooms overwhelmingly White, but that those who hold positions of leadership in newsrooms are predominantly White, too. These percentages are troubling in light of Gan's argument about the influence of social proximity. What effect, then, does the overwhelming majority of non-minority news workers have on the coverage of people of color? The results are disheartening, as evidenced by the extensive studies on the portrayal of minorities by the media as well as literature on news worker norms and routines, particularly research that shows the improbability of minority voices finding their way into the media on their own terms.

Granovetter (1973) wrote that high diversity implies integration into several spheres of society, which is considered advantageous for instrumental actions like gathering information. The study of social networks, or social proximity as Gans (1979) calls it, could shed light on the presence or absence of reporter contacts in minority communities.

Based upon previous research, including studies about the principle of homophily, I anticipate that the social networks of television reporters are not likely to extend too far beyond people like themselves, which is likely to generate coverage of minority communities that is oversimplified, less than comprehensive, misrepresentative, and/or stereotypical.

The fundamental question this study seeks to answer is: Are there differences in the social networks of Black and White local television reporters, and if so how does it impact the news coverage of minority communities?

Research Questions

RQ 1: Do the immediate personal networks of local television news reporters include more same-race ties to individuals than different-race ties?

RQ 2: Do the immediate professional networks of local television news reporters include more same-race ties to individuals than different-race ties?

RQ 3: Do the indirect personal networks of local television news reporters include contacts with more same-race ties to individuals than different-race ties?

RQ 4: Do the indirect professional networks of local television news reporters include contact with more same-race ties to individuals than different-race ties?

Methodology

The purpose of this study is to gain insight into the types of people who have access to local television journalists and are thereby in a position to influence the reporting of news and issues in a community. This will be achieved through the analysis of the personal and professional networks of local television journalists.

Collecting network information from reporters must be approached tactfully. Given that reporters are sensitive to insinuations of bias in their reporting or suggestions of undue influence, the design of this study allows for the collection of information without compromising reporter responses based on any notions that their professional judgment is being impugned.

Furthermore, because many contacts expect trust and discretion in exchange for information, reporters are unlikely to share willingly the contents of their address files. Therefore, confidentiality is critical and techniques for data collection must be precise enough to elicit relevant network information without raising undue concern from the reporter. This study uses a two-pronged approach to collect network and other personal information from reporters and their contacts.

Data Collection Through Surveys

Data collection in social network analysis has typically been accomplished through surveys and questionnaires (O'Malley & Marsden, 2008). This study doesn't stray from those roots, and also uses survey methodology. More specifically, this research uses a names-generating survey designed to collect network information for each respondent. The survey in this study was patterned after Fischer's (1982) names-generating survey in his classic study

about the effect of city life on the residents of 50 northern California communities through analysis of their personal relationships.

Like Fischer's (1982) study, this research asked respondents to name the individuals who provide them with some level of support, such as whose advice they seek when making an important decision or who they would ask to borrow a large sum of money. These types of questions are more likely to generate the respondent's core network—the network containing key people in a person's life who can be counted on to provide some type of support whether emotionally, physically, or financially. Core networks, according to Fischer (1982), contain "members of the respondents' networks who most affected them by shaping their attitudes and behavior and by influencing their well-being" (p. 286).

Recalling the individuals in one's social network is not an easy task. However, the use of a names-generating survey helps overcome this difficulty. By asking who they rely on for specific types of support, names-generating questions are designed to give respondents a framework within which to think about their relationships. This enables respondents to recall more accurately the individuals who are in their core networks.

Furthermore, the wording of the questions removes the possibility of misinterpretation by the respondent. Fisher (1982) intentionally avoided questions that asked respondents to name people they felt "close to." Ambiguity in the wording of questions invites misinterpretation and opens the door to concerns about the quality of data. For example, one person may interpret "close" to mean emotionally close, but another might interpret it as being in close proximity. Consequently, the researcher may base the study's results on flawed data because the participants are providing responses based on differing meanings.

In his social network study about the core discussion networks of Americans, Marsden (1987) used data from the 1985 General Social Survey (GSS), which elicited information by

asking respondents to provide the names of those with whom they "discussed important matters" within the last six months. This survey question, Marsden (1987) argued, provided more specific naming criteria for respondents than simply asking them to name all of their friends.

In addition to reducing ambiguity and the likelihood of misinterpretation, using a names-generating survey also allows for the economical collection of large amounts of data and analysis of many different variables, which was particularly important for this network study.

While surveys seem to be the method of choice in contemporary social network analysis, surveys as a methodology do have their pitfalls. Babbie (2002) wrote that surveys lend themselves to artificiality. This occurs when respondents' answers are not true reflections of them or their feelings. To illustrate, he provided the example of a person who gives conservative answers on a questionnaire, but who is not necessarily a conservative. Reporters, too, are capable of providing responses that are not truly reflective of their feelings and beliefs.

Wimmer and Dominick (2000) noted that establishing causality is another drawback of survey design. While surveys are helpful in showing a relationship between A and B, it is difficult to determine if A causes B.

Finally, Babbie (2002) wrote that "survey research can seldom deal with the context of social life. Although questionnaires can provide information in this area, "the survey researcher rarely develops a feel for the total life situation in which respondents are thinking and acting" (p. 272). In this study, however, the use of interviews works to offset this limitation.

Data Collection Through In-Depth Interviewing

In addition to collecting data through names-generating survey questions, this study also uses in-depth interviews to incorporate contextual information about each reporter's experiences as a news professional and her level of involvement within the local community. The use of interviewing as a method of research is appropriate since reporters are communicators who

express themselves through language. In noting the importance of interviews as a research method, Seidman (2006) wrote, "if the researcher's goal is to understand the meaning people make of their experience, then interviewing is a necessary and completely sufficient avenue of inquiry" (p. 11).

The in-depth interviews in this study will allow for the exploration of each reporter's personal and professional background. Seidman (2006) wrote that "at the root of in-depth interviewing is an interest in understanding the lived experience of other people and the meaning they make of that experience" (p. 9). Wimmer and Dominick (2000) wrote that while in-depth interviews tend to use smaller samples, they include elaborate data about the respondents' opinions, values, motivations, recollections, experiences and feelings.

Qualitative research has been criticized because it lacks the measurement techniques used by quantitative researchers. Quantitative research methods like surveys and experiments yield measurable data, whereas qualitative research uses methodologies that are subject to a number of interpretations. However, Seidman (2006) wrote that two persons talking and asking questions of each other is the most basic form of human inquiry. "Recounting narratives of experience has been the major way throughout recorded history that humans have made sense of their experience" (p. 8).

Protocol issues, however, can plague in-depth interviews. As Wimmer and Dominick (2000) noted, it is common for respondents to answer slightly different versions of a question. It is also very likely that a particular respondent may answer questions not asked of any other respondent. Problems with data analysis also exist. Two researchers with the same information may interpret it differently and come to two distinct conclusions. In defense of interviewing as a research method, it offers a wealth of information (Wimmer & Dominick, 2000).

Network studies that use in-depth interviews as a research method are scant. However, in his research about African-Americans from the South who migrated to Saginaw, Michigan, prior to 1960, McKether (2008) combined qualitative and quantitative methodologies when he used oral history interviews to map the social networks of this community. McKether wrote that the purpose of the study was to show how social network analysis "can contribute insight about social relationships that are often embedded in qualitative data, such as oral history (life) interviews" (p. 183-184).

The issues of reliability and validity are legitimate concerns for all research. There is no existing research from which this study could be modeled. What could be accomplished, though, was to incorporate accepted methodological approaches of previous studies that used in-depth interviews or network analysis. As previously mentioned, this study borrows from the names generating surveys used to gather data in the 1985 GSS and used by Marsden (1987), as well as in Fischer's (1982) work about northern California residents. And, as Babbie (2002) noted, surveys are reliable in that they consistently perform the same way time and again. Specific to this research, the names-generating survey questions are likely to produce the "core network" of contacts for each respondent reliably, no matter who he or she is.

With respect to interviewing as a methodology, Seidman noted that discussion between two people is the most basic form of inquiry, and interviewing as methodology allows people to "make sense" of their own experiences. Babbie argued that the concept of "'being there' is a powerful technique for gaining insight into the nature of human affairs in all their rich complexity," which increases validity (p. 305). The information obtained through interviews in this research project is valid and reliable because it is each respondent's expression of his or her own experiences and viewpoints.

The multiple methods of data collection used in this study are not only valid and reliable, but replicable. The design of the study does not limit its applicability to the one television market used in this research. A researcher could duplicate the methodology of this study in any television market, regardless of size and geographic location, and would likely arrive at similar conclusions.

Research Subjects

Network studies rely only on archival data, census data, and random sample surveys that allow researchers to build models of networks that are representative of larger populations (Joyner and Kao, 2000; Nelson, 1989; Burstein, 1976; Marsden, 1987). While this study also uses surveys, the respondents are not selected randomly. Participants were specifically chosen from a desired population, reporters actively working in a local television news station.

This project is qualitative in its orientation, meaning it uses detailed description rather than statistical analysis to understand social networks. Since generalizing to the larger population is not the intent of this project, the selective process by which the reporter participants were chosen is appropriate. Seidman wrote:

> Because hypotheses are not being tested, the issue is not whether the researcher can generalize the findings of an interview study to a broader population. Instead the researcher's task is to present the experience of the people he or she interviews in compelling enough detail and in sufficient depth that those who read the study can connect to that experience, learn how it is constituted, and deepen their understanding of the issues it reflects. (p. 51)

The purpose of this study is to analyze the social networks of local television reporters and determine what role race may play in their level of diversity. As a means to compare the types of networks that minorities and non-minorities may have, it was necessary to choose

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reporters from these two groups for the study. To keep the study manageable, the total number of reporters participating as primary subjects was limited to four. Two reporters in the study were African-American and two were White.

Furthermore, given that previous research shows that differences exist between the social circles and level of community involvement of new and experienced reporters, it was necessary to distinguish between reporters who were new to the profession and those with years of experience. Of the two reporters who represented each race, one had been employed at the news station no longer than five years, and the other was an experienced reporter. For the purposes of this study, "experienced" reporters were those who had at least 10 years of reporting experience, and "new" reporters were those with five or fewer years of experience. In other words, the study had a new Black reporter, new White reporter, experienced Black reporter and an experienced White reporter. Again, these distinctions were incorporated into the study to account for possible differences in the journalists' reporting experiences and levels of community involvement.

Question of Experience

It is understandable that the longer a reporter remains in the same market, the larger their personal and professional networks in that community will be. Gaziano and McGrath (1987) found that older native reporters were twice as likely as younger reporters to be involved in their communities. In other words, reporters who have been in the community longer are more likely to have developed deeper and stronger ties in that community. The inclusion of reporters who are relatively new to the market allows for a comparison of reporters based on their familiarity with the market. Briefly, the study's four primary subjects had the following characteristics:

Subject 1 is an African-American reporter with one year of experience at the current television station. This reporter is originally from another state, but has lived in the community for about seven years and is a general assignment reporter. The reporter's career at the current

news station began as an intern. As acknowledged by this reporter, very little time is devoted to community service.

Subject 2 is a White reporter with three years of experience at the current television station. This reporter is originally from another city within the state, but has lived in the community for more than seven years and is a general assignment reporter. The reporter's career at the station began as an intern. This reporter has won several reporting awards, including the state Associated Press 2008 Reporter of the Year award. For this reporter, the actual level of community involvement does meet the desired level.

Subject 3 is an African-American reporter with more than 15 years of experience at current television station. This reporter is a life-long resident of the community and has extensive reporting experience in radio and television broadcasting. This television journalist is currently a main anchor at the news station. This reporter is very active in the community, and serves on the boards of several civic and volunteer organizations. This reporter, also, is the recipient of a number of awards for both reporting and community service. The Associated Press and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) are among the organizations that have honored this reporter.

Subject 4 is a White reporter with more than 10 years of experience at current television station. The reporter is originally from another state, but has lived in the community for more than a decade. At the time of this study, the reporter performed anchor duties as well. The reporter is involved in a number of volunteer activities and serves on the board of several civic and volunteer organizations. The reporter has also won numerous reporting awards including a regional Edward R. Murrow Emmy award and an Associated Press award.

Gaining Access

To gain access to the station's reporters, it was necessary to seek approval from the station's news director. Initial contact with the news director was made via email, which explained the research proposal and sought approval to contact each reporter. In a subsequent telephone conversation, the news director requested a written description of the research project so approval from station management could be sought. The research description included a summarized explanation of the project along with the names of reporters who might be appropriate for the research based upon the study's criteria. The news director also inquired a about the time frame in which the reporters would be asked to participate, mentioning that it might be difficult for them to participate during ratings months. It was possible to schedule interviews with reporters so as not to interfere with their work or personal commitments.

Approval from the news station was received within one week of the request. Once approval was granted, the reporters were contacted via email to ask whether they were willing to participate. The email explained the focus of the study and the described the tasks that they would be asked to complete, participating in an in-depth interview and completing a questionnaire. They were also told that participation included providing the names and contact information for people in their network of contacts.

All participants of this study were assured that their identities and the identities of anyone they named would be kept confidential. All participants were also provided a consent form for their signature. The consent form included a summary of the research project which had been reviewed and approved by the graduate school's Institutional Review Board (IRB). Approval by the IRB indicates that the purpose and procedures of the study are not likely to harm the study's participants. All reporter consent forms were signed and returned.

Using the snowball sampling technique where one person provides the name of another, study participants, excluding reporters, were identified through the completed reporter surveys. These individuals were contacted by phone or email depending upon the contact information provided by the reporter. They were asked to participate in a study about the social networks of television reporters. Those who chose to participate were given the same summary of the research project and consent form as was given to the reporters. They were also assured that their identities and the identities of those people they named would remain confidential. All contacts who participated in the study signed and returned the consent forms.

Gathering Network Information

Exploring social networks requires knowledge about their makeup and characteristics. In other words, how big is the network and who is in it?

To get a better sense of the reporters' social circles, data collection required gathering certain information including (1) the names of individuals within the networks, (2) descriptive information about individuals within the network, and (3) the relationships the individuals share with the reporters. This study does that through the use of surveys.

For this research, two waves of interviews were conducted. In the first wave, four select journalists were interviewed to collect their biographical information and to find out their views about the news industry and their roles as journalists in the community. The reporters were then given surveys designed to generate names of people in their personal and professional networks and to collect demographic information about those people.

From these surveys, a subset of individuals named by reporters as being in their networks was identified, contacted, and asked to participate in the project. Those who chose to participate were interviewed in a second wave of interviews. These interviews enabled the researcher to

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                          Primary Interviews
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   ┌──────────────┐  ┌──────────────┐  ┌──────────────┐  ┌──────────────┐
   │ New White    │  │ Experienced  │  │ New Black    │  │ Experienced  │
   │ Reporter     │  │ White        │  │ Reporter     │  │ Black        │
   │ Interview    │  │ Reporter     │  │ Interview    │  │ Reporter     │
   │              │  │ Interview    │  │              │  │ Interview    │
   └──────────────┘  └──────────────┘  └──────────────┘  └──────────────┘
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| Professional Network Interviews N=8 | Personal Network Interviews N=9 | Professional Network Interviews N=7 | Personal Network Interviews N=6 | Professional Network Interviews N=5 | Personal Network Interviews N=7 | Professional Network Interviews N=8 | Personal Network Interviews N=8 |

Secondary Interviews

Figure 1. Primary and secondary level of interviews for reporters and a subset of their contacts.

gather information about the individuals' perceptions of the news business, their inclination to supply story ideas, and whether they had ever been interviewed for a news story. Upon completion of the interview, a survey was also given to this subset of contacts. The survey administered to the reporters' contacts was designed to collect information about their personal and professional networks, and was similar to the names-generating survey given to the reporters. This allowed the research to expand the scope of each network beyond the reporters' contacts and include the friends, family and associates of the individuals named by each reporter.

Therefore, the study not only looked at the reporters' own network of contacts, but also their contacts' networks. It explored the contacts at the tertiary level—those individuals that are connected to the reporters through another individual, and thereby share an indirect connection.

In addition to collecting the names of people within an individual's social network, it was necessary to determine the demographic information for each person. This study requested that each respondent provide the basic demographic information for each person identified as a contact, including gender, race/ethnicity, age, education level, and religion. The respondents

were also asked to report how they knew each contact, and whether the contact had ever

contacted a reporter, been contacted by a reporter, or been interviewed by a reporter.

Given the level of detail each question asked the reporters to provide about each person

named, the number of survey questions was limited to 10. In the 10-question survey given to

reporters, questions one through five were designed to generate a list of people in their

professional network by focusing on news gathering-related activities. It was assumed that the

individuals named for these questions would be people with whom the reporter would be most

likely to discuss news stories and rely on for story ideas.

Questions six through 10 were designed to generate the names of people in each

reporter's personal network. For these questions, it was necessary to determine if the reporters

had interactions with their named contacts on a professional level. So, in addition to the

demographic information, the survey asked the reporters to indicate whether they had ever

discussed a story idea with the person, or interviewed the person either on or off camera. The

reporters were also asked if the person had ever contacted them about a story idea. The purpose

of these three additional questions was to determine whether those individuals in the reporters'

personal networks had ever been used as a news source, which would corroborate Gans' (1979)

argument that reporters often rely on people who are in their social circles to identify news

stories.

The survey designed for the subset of reporter contacts was much shorter than the

reporter survey. It contained five questions to elicit the names of individuals within these

contacts' personal and professional networks. Basic demographic information was collected for

each named person. All five questions asked the respondent to provide information regarding

whether their contacts had ever interacted with a reporter either through discussion about a story

idea or through interviews, either on camera or off.

Managing Network Data and Other Problems

The reality of social network analysis is that it can easily generate a mountain of information the further out analysis is carried. Network researchers, acknowledge the importance of study manageability and limit the number of participants to ensure this. In his book, *Six Degrees of Separation: The Science of a Connected Age,* Watts (2003) said that social network data tend to deal with small groups. Despite a large response rate in his study about conflict among coworkers, Nelson (1989) limited the number of respondents for the sake of manageability.

To keep this study manageable, analysis of reporter networks was limited to four reporters, and the scope of their network was analyzed to the tertiary level—meaning that analysis extended to the reporters' contacts' contacts. Data collection involved in network analysis can be challenging for at least three reasons. People often have a hard time remembering everyone they know. Another difficulty is the reluctance of people to disclose the identities of those in their social networks; and a third challenge involves managing the amount of data generated in network analysis studies.

To make these factors less problematic, this study used techniques applied by other social network researchers, which include using names-generating questions, ensuring the confidentiality of identities, and controlling the scope of the network by limiting the number of primary participants. Even though demographic information provides interesting insight into the types of people in the reporters' social networks, this information does not necessarily prove that these contacts impact the news stories the reporters pursue or the issues they deem important enough to cover.

Therefore, it was necessary to build questions into the survey that probed what kinds of interactions these contacts may or may not have with reporters. While this information doesn't

necessarily show a connection between the tertiary-level contact and the reporter, it does provide a picture of the types of people who may influence the reporters' contacts, and thereby indirectly influence the reporter. Again, the goal is to determine who is in the reporter's social network and whether inclusion in the network enables the person to influence the reporters' news judgment. Do the individuals within the social networks of reporters have the ability to influence the information the public receives from the media?

The process of collecting data through surveys presented challenges with both reporters and their contacts. While each reporter agreed to participate in the research and readily made themselves available for interviews, returning completed questionnaires proved to be a problem for some of them. One reporter said the length of the survey and the amount of information requested made completing it in a timely manner difficult. Many contacts were also willing to participate, made themselves available for interviews, and agreed to complete the questionnaire, but collecting responses proved to be difficult in many cases.

Sometimes, persistence paid off. It took several months and repeated requests for two of the reporters to return the surveys, which in turn delayed progress of the research. After several months of trying to make contact with a third reporter through phone and email, this reporter still failed to fill out the survey completely after two separate attempts. In consideration of time, a decision was made to replace this reporter with another one who met the research criteria. Like the original reporter, the replacement reporter is an experienced White news professional. However, the replacement reporter is female; the original reporter is male.

Although past sourcing research shows that White male reporters tend to rely more on White males as sources, and females are more likely than males to use female sources, the impact of gender on social networks is not the focus of this study. The race and professional reporting experience of the reporter are the attributes relevant to this research study.

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Furthermore, studies on homophily show that race, not gender, is a more accurate predictor of what one's social network will look like. Therefore, analysis of reporter social networks that focuses on race and reporting experience are more likely to provide compelling information about their makeup, not gender. Substituting an experienced White male reporter with an experienced White female reporter is not likely to alter the results of this study. And, the argument would be the same had the reporters been Black.

Collecting survey responses from the reporters' contacts had challenges as well. Upon completion of an interview, the five-question survey was delivered via email or regular mail depending upon the preference of the respondent. Each respondent was advised that the survey could be completed in about an hour. With this in mind, respondents were initially given about a week to complete the survey before receiving a reminder call or email.

A small percentage of contacts returned their surveys without having to be reminded. Most received at least two reminders. In one case, as many as seven attempts were made to collect the questionnaire through telephone calls and emails, without success. This was an exception as this particular respondent kept assuring the researcher that completing the survey was a priority. In most cases, if no response was received after three reminders, it was assumed that the contact had opted out of completing the survey.

Many contacts who did complete and return their surveys had difficulty answering questions about their contacts' interactions with reporters. For each person named by the contact, the questionnaire asked whether the individual had ever discussed a story idea with a reporter, been interviewed by a reporter, or had a reporter call them to discuss a story idea. It also asked which reporters the individual knew. This was difficult for many contacts because they either reported that they did not know the answers to these questions or simply did not fill them out.

Admittedly, knowing whether a person has contacted or been interviewed by a reporter is not information that would be known by most people. Those who voiced their concern about these questions to the researcher were told to put "Don't Know" and continue. The instruction to enter a "Don't Know" response seemed to relieve the concern some respondents had about completing the survey. These questions may have been frustrating to some contacts because it is information that is not as readily known as standard demographic information. This may have inhibited some people from fully completing or returning the questionnaire. It should be noted that the instructions that accompanied the survey also directed respondents to answer "Don't Know," for such questions.

With regard to demographic information, respondents were more likely to enter "Don't Know" about religion, age and the educational level of their contacts. Determining gender and race/ethnicity did not pose a problem for most respondents. They were also able to provide information about how they knew their named contacts.

Some contacts opted out of the completing either the entire survey or select questions. One contact participated in the interview, but after several attempts to collect the survey wanted more information about how the survey's content would be used. When that information was provided, the contact neither returned the survey nor responded to the information. Another contact participated in the interview, but felt the survey was too difficult to complete, citing her long career in media as a reason.

Some contacts expressed concern about providing the names of people in their social networks. The question which asked contacts to list the names of their spouse or partner's friends drew a response from one contact as "n/a per husband," another contact left that question blank but completed all others. Again, these omissions may impact the completeness of the contact's social network.

Three contacts did not fill out the questionnaire completely—only completing the first question. Requests that they complete the remaining four questions drew no response from two and a response from one saying that they would look at it later. Their surveys were never received. Despite the problems discussed above, the data gathered through these surveys provides a compelling picture of what each reporter's network looks like.

The design of the survey borrows the names-generating strategy used by Fischer (1982) in his work about the social worlds of urban dwellers in northern California. The questions in his work and in this study were crafted to elicit each respondent's core network of people who are most likely to influence the attitudes, behavior and well-being of the respondent.

As in Marsden's (1987) study, this research will analyze survey results for the networks size and heterogeneity in terms of gender, age, race/ethnicity, and religion. Responses about interactions with reporters provide supplemental information through which insight about the composition of the reporters' networks can be gained.

Interviewing Reporters (Primary Level)

An in-depth interview was conducted with all four reporters selected because they fit the racial and professional experience criteria necessary for this study.

Each of these interviews lasted more than one hour but less than two. In Seidman's book about interviewing for qualitative research, he wrote that a 90-minute interview is the optimal length of time for an interview because respondents may be reluctant to agree to a two-hour interview, and a one-hour interview may cause the respondents to watch the clock, counting the minutes until the end.

The location of the interviews varied and the determining factor for the interview site was primarily convenience for the reporter. Interviews with the two less experienced reporters were conducted in a public area. Interviews with the two experienced reporters were conducted in a

home setting. Despite the different locales, it is doubtful that the public versus private setting affected data collection because the nature of the questions was not overly personal.

Each interview began with questions that focused on the personal backgrounds of each reporter, such as where they grew up, how long they had lived in the community and how long they had been reporters at the news station.

The questioning then focused on news room procedures. Reporters were asked to discuss how story ideas made it to air, whether the ideas of certain staff members carried more weight than others, and who, if anybody, reviews scripts or completed news stories.

Finally, the reporters were asked their opinions about the role of reporters in their communities and their level of community involvement. Each reporter was very accommodating and willing to share his or her experiences as a news professional.

Given the need to be mindful of the reporter's time, the depth of the interview was appropriate as it touched on three distinct areas of inquiry: biographical information, perception of news room procedures and protocols, and finally community involvement. The answers to these questions add perspective, detail, and explanation, as to why the reporters' social networks are they way they are.

The interviews were recorded, transcribed, and loaded in NVivo 8, qualitative research software that allows researchers to organize, manage and make sense of large and small volumes of data.

Identifying a Subset of Reporter Contacts (Secondary Level)

As reporters returned surveys, the names of their contacts and the demographic information was also input into NVivo 8. This information was stored in a "casebook" that allowed the contacts and their attributes to be easily viewed and grouped into categories for analysis.

In the original design of this research project, a subset of contacts was to be identified from four of the ten questions: two questions from those designed to generate professional contacts and two questions from those designed to generate personal contacts. These four questions were expected to yield the names of reporters' contacts that would be asked to participate in the research. The target was to interview 16 people from each reporter network— four people identified from each of the four selected questions. Given the need to keep the study manageable, and the descriptive rather than representative nature of the study, a larger number of respondents was not necessary.

In reality, though, some reporters did not provide a sufficient number of names for the questions from which a subset of contacts could be drawn, or the individuals listed could not be contacted or declined to participate. To resolve this problem required that names be pulled from other questions within the set of "professional questions" or "personal questions" until someone was contacted and willing to participate.

While this was unexpected, it did not prove to be an insurmountable problem, because the design of the study still allowed an appropriate number of contacts to be drawn from each of the two main networks—personal and professional. In other words, as long as the contact identified as part of the personal network was truly generated from one of the five questions designed to generate a personal contact, the data would not be compromised.

After identifying a subset of contacts, those individuals were contacted using information provided by the reporters. Some were contacted by telephone, others by email. The method of contact was determined by the information provided by the reporter. Reporters typically provided either the email address or a telephone number. Rarely were both pieces of information provided.

When contacting these individuals, it was explained that they were being contacted as part of a graduate school research project and the project was about social networks of local television reporters. They were also given a brief explanation of what social networks are and told that their names were provided by a local television reporter as someone the reporter felt was either in their personal or professional network of contacts.

The contacts were told that participation involved a short telephone interview in which they would be asked their opinions of local television news and also involved completing a five-question survey designed to generate a list of people in their personal and professional social networks. The contacts were told that anyone they named would not be contacted for the study.

It should be noted that to determine if telephone interviews would produce data markedly different than face-to-face interviews, six pilot interviews were conducted: three face-to-face interviews and three telephone interviews. Since the questions were neither overly personal nor intrusive, a discernible difference was not apparent between the results of the two types of interviews. Furthermore, all six were comparable in length. So, for the sake of time, the remainder of the contact interviews was conducted over the phone. This proved to be efficient and convenient for both researcher and respondents.

As earlier stated, each contact was assured that the research procedures had been approved by the graduate school and that the names and identities of anyone they named would remain confidential. The participants were also told that the researcher would not be contacting anybody that they named in their surveys.

Once the contact agreed to participate, they were provided the same consent form and IRB-approved summary of research as was given to reporters. The contacts provided consent by either returning the signed consent form by mail, email or fax. Instead of returning the consent form provided, many simply emailed a statement of consent.

Interviewing Reporter Contacts (Secondary Level)

The purpose of interviewing the reporters' contacts was to cross check whether they had ever been interviewed by the reporter or provided story ideas to the reporter. It was also an opportunity to find out how typical members of the news audience perceive the media as well as to determine if they realize how story ideas are developed.

Each person was asked what his or her impressions of television news were; what other sources they used for their news and information; which source they used most; which they trusted most; whether they had ever contacted a reporter about a story idea; or had ever been contacted by a reporter about a story. Each contact was also asked to share how they thought reporters came up with the story ideas they pursued.

Telephone interviews with reporter contacts ranged in length from three minutes to 10 minutes. The majority of interviews lasted less than five minutes. Given the small number of questions and the fact that most respondents had little difficulty providing answers, the length of the interviews was appropriate. Like the reporter interviews, the contact interviews were recorded, transcribed, and loaded in NVivo 8.

After completing the interview, the contacts were given the five-question, names-generating survey. Some requested that it be emailed others preferred that a hard copy be sent by mail. When completed surveys were received, the names and attributes of each person named were input into the same NVivo 8 "casebook" as the secondary level contacts.

NVivo 8

As previously discussed, the primary tool for storing, managing and analyzing data in this study was NVivo 8. This software was developed by QSR International, whose products are designed specifically for qualitative research. NVivo 8 is the latest product by QSR that helps qualitative researchers make sense of their data. From the four reporter contacts, the total

network of this study exploded to contain information about 773 people, including names, demographic and network information. The software also allowed for the storage of interview transcripts.

All interviews—both reporters and contacts were transcribed and coded in NVivo 8. The attributes or demographics of the entire social network of 773 people were also coded in NVivo. Using this software, it was possible to compare demographic attributes quickly and easily, and determine the characteristics or makeup of an individual's network. Coding interviews was also completed in NVivo. The software allowed the researcher to select, code and group related sections of text. Related comments and ideas were grouped together in "nodes." A hierarchy of nodes could then be compiled as "tree nodes" where related groupings of information were stored. This ability to manage and organize information was essential to understanding the data and determining trends or patterns. Given the amount of data generated through social network analysis, the NVivo 8 software proved to be a useful tool.

The menu-based functionality of NVivo 8 allows researchers to code data easily, helping them see patterns and make meaning out of the information. NVivo 8 is a critical tool for this research project.

Quality of Data

In any research project, a discussion about the quality of the data is important. In this study, it was evident that some reporters were wary of providing the names and contact information of people in their social networks. Two reporters acknowledged that they filtered the names of people they provided to include only those they thought would be receptive to participating in the research or who they felt would not be upset with the reporter for providing their contact information.

In effect, these selective responses generated names of people who the reporters felt would agree to being included in the study and would be willing to participate in it. The results of this filtering are indicators of each reporter's core network. By providing the names of those contacts mostly likely to be supportive of their decision, the reporters were essentially providing an accurate accounting of those people with whom they have close ties.

As previously noted, there were a significant number of "Don't Know" responses from the study's participants, particularly for questions that asked whether the named person had ever been interviewed by a reporter or had ever contacted a reporter about a story idea. This potentially creates limitations about the conclusions that can be drawn regarding contacts' influence with reporters.

Overall, though, the quality of data is sufficient for the purposes of this study which attempts to break new ground in mass communication research. While it may not be perfect, it is a start in analyzing how reporter social networks may impact news coverage, particularly whose voices are heard.

First, as previously mentioned, Fischer's (1982) strategy of extracting the core network using questions designed to elicit the names of individuals most likely to shape a person's beliefs and attitudes is used. It is plausible that individuals in the core network have both the access to and influence with reporters, and thereby are in a position to impact the types of stories and issues the journalists cover.

Second, network analysis is carried out to the tertiary level, which gives a more complete picture of the reporter's network beyond their immediate contacts.

And finally, in-depth interviewing adds contextual information that allows the participant to express himself in his own words. As Seidman (2006) wrote, "at the heart of what it means to be human is the ability of people to symbolize their experience through language" (p. 8).

Coding

NVivo 8 was used to code data in this study for the interviews and the descriptive information necessary for network analysis. The responses of all participants in their interviews were categorized into the ten main categories below.

Network data was coded into NVivo 8 with each person representing a case. Each case had a set of descriptive attributes, including basic demographic information and whether they were linked personally, professionally, or both, to the person who named them as a contact. NVivo 8 compiles a casebook of all cases within a project allowing researchers to examine data based upon the attributes of the cases.

About Reporters.

This category contained information about each reporter's first reporting job, including where it was, how long they were there, what responsibilities they had and their general experiences as a first-time reporter. It also contained information about the length of time they have been in the current market and where they were originally from.

Community Involvement.

The community involvement category distinguished between contacts and reporters. For reporters, the data focused on their relationships outside the newsroom, the benefits they perceived community participation created, and what impact they believed their involvement had in the community. The data also included a discussion of civic journalism that encourages a more participatory style of reporting, as well as station-mandated community involvement. This category also focused on the role reporters felt they and others in their profession should have in their communities, and the participation habits of new reporters in the community. In terms of contacts, attention was given to their own community activities and what roles they felt reporters should fill in the community.

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Impressions of Local News.

The coding for this category included responses given by contacts regarding their opinions in general about the quality of local television news. Some responses were limited to unfavorable comments and were coded as negative impression. Others were all favorable, and coded as positive impressions. However, some comments were coded as neutral because they either contained both positive and negative characterizations of local news or the comments were neither positive nor negative.

Perception of How Reporters Generate Story Ideas.

This category focused on the contacts' understanding of news production, specifically how they believe reporters find out about information that eventually winds up as news.

Professions of Contacts.

To distinguish between contacts that would likely have knowledge of the news industry, this category identified contacts who were employed in the fields of public relations, public information and mass communication. Contacts who were employed outside of these professions were coded as non-public relations professionals.

Place of Residence for Contacts.

Contacts were grouped into three categories: those who lived in the television market area covered by the four reporters in the study, those who lived in another city in the state of the television market area, and those who lived out of state.

Media Access.

As a means to determine what influence contacts may have on news content by virtue of their presence in reporter networks, the media access category contained two categories: (1) whether reporters contacted the contact for help on a story they were working on, and (2) whether the contact contacted the reporter about a story idea they had. "Yes" and "No" responses

were coded into each category as well as a "Not Applicable" response. Not applicable responses were coded for people who were employed at a television news station because it was assumed that, as part of their jobs, they would discuss possible story ideas with the reporters. For every "Yes" response, the profession of the contact was coded as either a non public relations professional or a public relations professional. This distinction was made because it was assumed that, as part of their jobs, public relations professionals would routinely call and be called upon by reporters for news and information.

Sources of News and Information.

This category focused on the sources, media or otherwise, where contacts get their news and information. The categories were coded as sources the contacts "trusted" the most, and those sources the contacts "used" the most.

Newsmaking Process.

The newsmaking process category included responses from reporters about newsroom protocol from the factors that determine which stories get covered to the submission process for story ideas. The data coded in this category were generated from questions to reporters about their perceptions of how the newsroom operates—whose opinions count in the newsroom, are certain types of stories more likely to be assigned to certain reporters, etc.

Networks.

Networks were coded to show which reporter or contact owned them. Each network of a contact and reporter who provided information about their network was coded as a set. Each set was named for the network owner and contained the names and demographic information for all individuals the owner named (cases). Reporter sets (networks) not only included their own contacts, but the sets of each of their contacts. This helped show the outer layer of all reporter networks (tertiary network).

Results: Descriptive Findings

As stated earlier, reporters are in a unique and privileged position to inform the public about a variety of problems and issues. Therefore, an examination of the types of people they include in their social circles is a worthy exercise as it is likely to yield valuable information about their world view and how they present it to the public.

Currently, research about reporter social networks is scant, and the studies that exist are limited to analysis of their professional networks. Dunwoody (1978) and Crouse (1973) each provided valuable insight into reporter behavior and news decisions given their social environments and networks. In addition to reporter professional networks, this research project gathers information about the personal networks as a means to determine what impact friends, family, and other people in personal social circles may have on news decisions and production.

The main question of this research asked whether there are differences in the social networks of Black and White local television reporters, and if so, how those differences impact the news coverage about minority communities. To arrive at an answer, four research questions were posed. Each focused on the racial makeup of the reporters' professional and personal networks. The results are as follows:

Total Network

One of the most noteworthy outcomes of the study is evidence of a network's ability to expand exponentially. From the starting point of four primary individuals, the total network exploded to contain almost 1,000 people.

An overall assessment of all four reporter networks and those of a subset of their contacts yielded the names and descriptive information for 773 people. As shown in Table 1, Whites

made up the largest racial group, at 71.2 percent of the network. Blacks were the next largest

group at 26.9 percent. All other races or ethnic groups represented less than one percent of the

total network.

Table 1		
Total Network by Race		
	No. of Contacts	**% of Network**
Asian	4	0.5%
Asian Indian	1	0.1%
Black	208	26.9%
Hispanic	1	0.1%
White	550	71.2%
Native American	3	0.4%
Don't Know/Unassigned	6	0.8%
Total	N=773	100.0%

Gender.

The network was roughly equal in terms of gender with slightly more women than men.

The number of women totaled 393 or 50.8 percent and men totaled 380 or 49.2 percent. This is

not unexpected since kinship ties to siblings, spouses, parents, and children create greater gender

diversity (Marsden, 1987).

Table 2		
Total Network by Gender		
	No. of Contacts	**% of Network**
Male	380	49.2%
Female	393	50.8%
Total	N=773	100.0%

Age.

All age ranges from individuals in their 20s to those in their 90s were represented in the
total network. The highest percentage included people in their 50s. This age group represented
almost a quarter of the total network.

Education and religion had the highest number of "Don't Know" responses.

Table 3		
Total Network by Age		
	No. of Contacts	% of Network
20s	90	11.6%
30s	160	20.7%
40s	160	20.7%
50s	191	24.7%
60s	81	10.5%
70s	24	3.1%
80s	3	0.4%
90s	1	0.1%
Don't Know/Unassigned	63	8.2%
Total	N=773	100.0%

Level of Education.

While there was a large number of "Don't Know" responses, almost three-quarters of the
total network included college graduates. This suggests that the social circles within which
reporters and the subset of contacts travel are likely to contain the more educated individuals in
the community.

Table 4		
Total Network by Level of Education		
	No. of Contacts	% of Network
College Graduate	558	72.2%
Some College	52	6.7%
High School Graduate	56	7.2%
Don't Know/Unassigned	106	13.7%
GED	1	0.1%
Total	N=773	100.0%

Religion.

In general, respondents tended not to know the religious denomination or affiliation of the people that they named as contacts. Almost 40 percent of the total network was included in the category "Don't Know/Unassigned/Other." In terms of religious diversity, more than a quarter of the network was identified as Catholic, with 207 responses. Baptists followed with 92 responses, or 11.9 percent of the network. Some respondents used broad categories like "Christian" or "Protestant" to describe the religion of their contacts.

Table 5		
Total Network by Religion		
	No. of Contacts	% of Network
Don't Know/Unassigned/Other	299	38.7%
Catholic	207	26.8%
Baptist	92	11.9%
Christian	67	8.7%
Protestant	28	3.6%
Nondenominational	22	2.8%
Jewish	13	1.7%
Methodist	13	1.7%
None	9	1.2%
Episcopalian	8	1.0%
Unitarian	7	0.9%
Lutheran	4	0.5%
Buddhist	1	0.1%
Mormon	1	0.1%
Muslim	1	0.1%
Presbyterian	1	0.1%
Total	N=773	100.0%

Who's in Their Circle?

When focusing only on the immediate social networks of all four reporters, the number of contacts totaled 159. These are the people the reporters specifically named as being in their social networks.

In many studies, race has been identified as the main factor that determines with whom individuals will associate. Gibbons and Olk (2003) wrote that ethnicity "repeatedly, consistently, and persistently influenced development of friendship ties and social structures" more than gender, level of education, professional background, and work experience. McPherson et al. (2001) found that race and ethnicity represent the biggest divide in social networks not only in the United States but in other ethnically diverse societies.

Despite the fact that there were an equal number of White and Black reporters, the total network had an overwhelming majority of Whites. A look at the immediate network of each reporter shows that the White reporters' networks were filled predominantly with other Whites. While the Black reporters' networks had more Black contacts, their networks were more racially balanced. The experienced and new White reporters had 90.9 percent and 86.0 percent same-race contacts in their social networks, respectively, and the experienced and new Black reporters had 57.5 percent and 53.5 percent same-race contacts, respectively.

Table 6					
Secondary Networks by Race					
Reporter	**Asian Contacts**	**Black Contacts**	**White Contacts**	**Don't Know**	**Total**
Experienced Black Reporter	--	23 (57.5%)	17 (42.5%)	--	40
Experienced White Reporter	--	2 (6.1%)	30 (90.9%)	1 (3.0%)	33
New Black Reporter	1 (2.3%)	23 (53.5%)	19 (44.2%)	--	43
New White Reporter	2 (4.7%)	4 (9.3%)	37 (86.0%)	--	43
Total	3	52	103	1	N=159

The findings here are similar to those of McPherson et al. (2001) who differentiated between preference and opportunity when studying racial homophily. Given that Whites are the majority group, they typically do have more Whites in their networks simply because there are more opportunities for them to interact with racial similars. Black and Hispanic networks have moderate levels of racial homophily because there are more opportunities for them to interact with the majority group as well.

Furthermore, the racial diversity for all four reporters did not include races or ethnicities other than Blacks, Whites and Asians at the secondary level. The social networks of both experienced reporters were limited to Black and White contacts. The new reporters had Black, White and Asian contacts, albeit the Asian contacts were few—one for the new Black reporter and two for the new White reporter.

Results also showed that all reporters had gender diversity in their social networks. Overall, more women (58.5%) were named as contacts than men (41.5%). When looking at reporter networks by age, contacts at all stages of life from the 20s to the 80s were represented, but age was also an attribute with a high number of "Don't Know" responses. When age was provided, the majority of contacts in both new reporter networks were in their 20s. Both new reporters belong to this age group. Similarly, the experienced reporters, who are in their 40s, had the most number of contacts in the 40-year-old range.

Education and religion had the highest number of "Don't Know" responses. Overall, in instances where the level of education was known, all four reporters indicated that a majority of their contacts had at least a college degree. Some 63.5 percent of contacts in all reporter networks had at least a bachelor's degree; 3.1 percent had some college education; and 1.9 percent were high school graduates.

Of the 159 contacts the reporters named, 84 had "Don't Know" listed for their religious affiliation. The generic term "Christian" was the next highest response at 25, followed by Catholic at 21, and nondenominational at 11.

Is There a Difference in the Racial Composition of Personal and Professional Networks?

Distinguishing network by type provided another way to look at the racial diversity within each reporter's total network. In the experienced Black reporter's network, there were slightly more Whites than Blacks in her professional network, but significantly more Blacks than Whites in her personal network. Within this reporter's professional network, nine were Black, and 14 were White. In her personal network, 11 contacts were Black and only two were White.

Table 7				
Secondary Networks by Network Type and Race – Experienced Black Reporter				
	Professional	**Personal**	**Both**	**Total**
Black	9 (39.1%)	11 (84.6%)	3 (75.0%)	23
White	14 (60.9%)	2 (15.4%)	1 (25.0%)	17
Total	23 (57.5%)	13 (32.5%)	4 (10.0%)	N=40
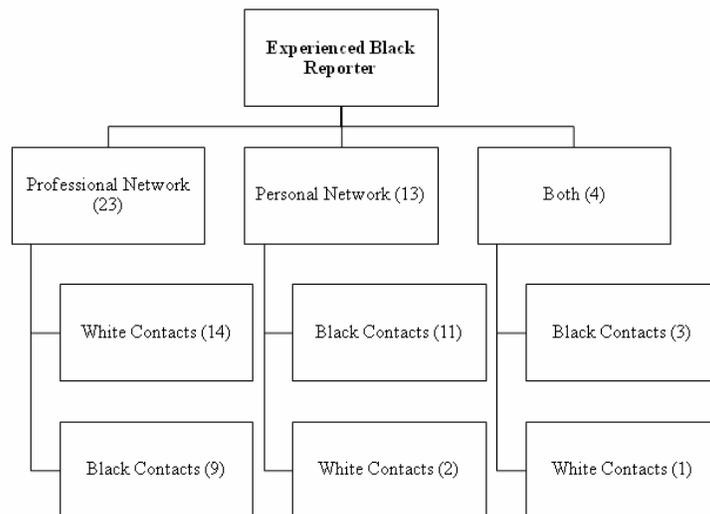
Figure 2. Secondary network of experienced Black reporter shown by network type and race.

In the new Black reporter's network, 41.9 percent were professional, 51.1 percent were personal, and seven percent were both personal and professional contacts. Within this reporter's professional network, nine contacts were Black, eight were White, and one was Asian. The new Black reporter's personal network had 12 Black contacts and 10 White contacts. Both of this reporter's personal and professional networks were nearly equal in racial balance. This differs slightly from the experienced Black reporter's personal network, which had significantly more Blacks than Whites.

Table 8				
Secondary Networks by Network Type and Race – New Black Reporter				
	Professional	**Personal**	**Both**	**Total**
Asian	1 (5.6%)	--	--	1
Black	9 (50.0%)	12 (54.5%)	2 (66.7%)	23
White	8 (44.4%)	10 (45.5%)	1 (33.3%)	19
Total	18 (41.9%)	22 (51.1%)	3 (7.0%)	N=43
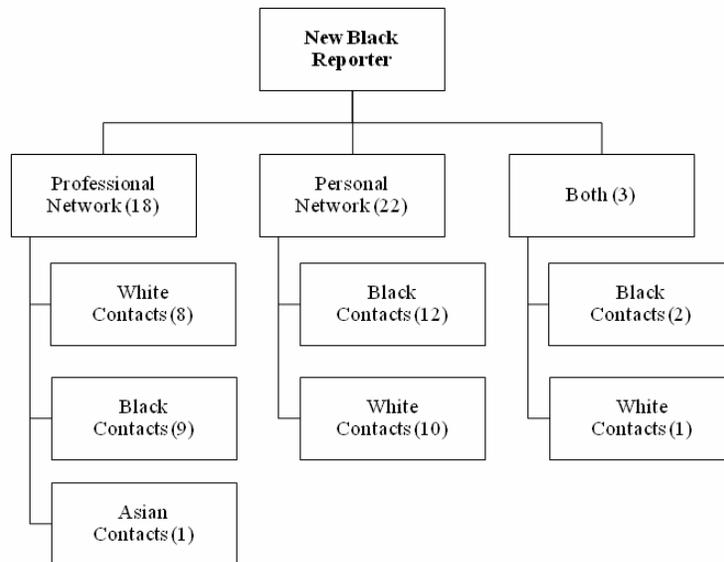
Figure 3. Secondary network of new Black reporter shown by network type and race.

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In the experienced White reporter's network, 14 contacts were in the professional network and 19 were in the personal network. Both networks were predominantly White in racial composition. Within this reporter's professional network, one was Black and 13 were White. The personal network had one Black and 18 White contacts.

	Professional	Personal	Total
Table 9			
Secondary Networks by Network Type and Race – Experienced White Reporter			
Black	1 (7.1%)	1 (5.3%)	2
White	13 (92.9)	18 (94.7%)	31
Total	14 (42.4%)	19 (57.6%)	N=33
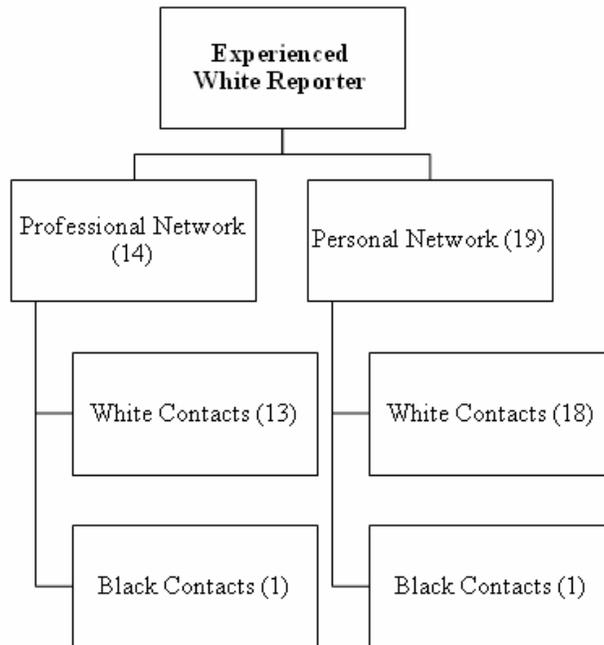
Figure 4. Secondary network of experienced White reporter shown by network type and race.

In the new White reporter's network, 19 contacts were in the professional network, 22 were in the personal network, and two were in both networks. Within this reporter's professional

network, four were Black, 14 were White, and one was Asian. In the personal network, none were Black, 21 were White, and one was Asian. There were two Whites in both personal and professional networks. The new, White reporter's networks were similar in racial composition to the experienced White reporter's networks—both were limited in racial diversity.

Table 10				
Secondary Networks by Network Type and Race – New White Reporter				
	Professional	Personal	Both	Total
Asian	1 (5.3%)	1 (4.5%)	--	2
Black	4 (21.1%)	--	--	4
White	14 (73.7%)	21 (95.5%)	2 (100%)	37
Total	19 (44.2%)	22 (51.2%)	2 (4.6%)	N=43
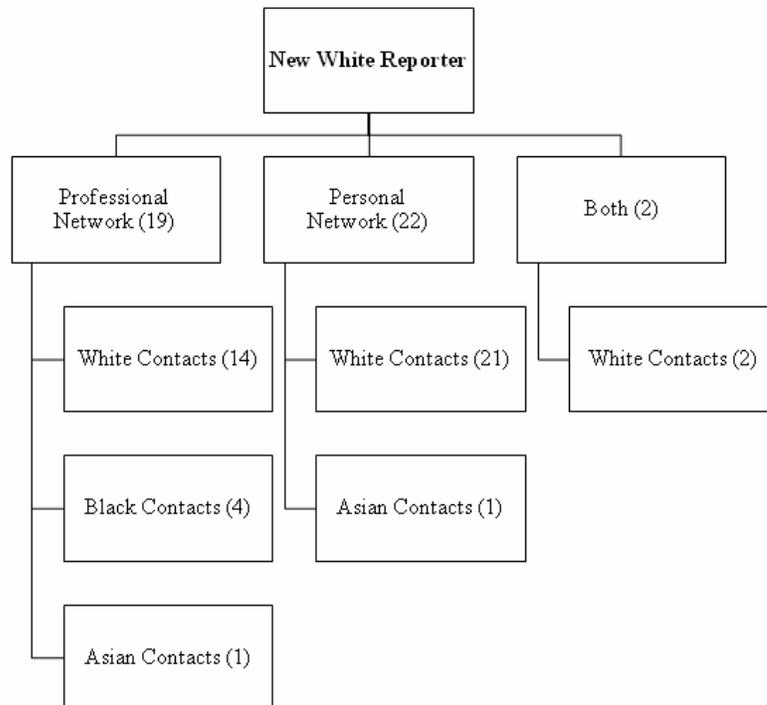
Figure 5. Secondary network of new White reporter shown by network type and race.

With the exception of one reporter, the racial makeup of the reporters' networks was similar to network racial patterns of other network studies. As Marsden (1987) pointed out, personal networks tend to have more same-race contacts because of kinship ties. Similarly, all reporter personal networks, except the new Black reporter's network had more same-race ties. With respect to professional networks, all but the new Black reporter's professional network had more White contacts. The racial composition of the professional networks is likely explained by the fact that Whites are the majority group in both the U.S. population and in this particular profession. Additionally, the vast majority of sourcing literature concludes that news professionals typically rely on official, or authoritative, sources who also tend to be White. While the new, Black reporter's networks deviated from the patterns of the other reporters, the deviation was slight. Her personal network had slightly more same-race ties, and her professional network only had one more Black contact than White contacts.

RQ 1: Do the immediate personal networks of local television news reporters include more same-race ties to individuals than different-race ties?

In response to the first research question, the immediate personal networks of all four reporters had more same-race ties than different-race ties. In fact, the personal networks of both White reporters and the experienced Black reporter had considerably more same-race ties than different-races ties. The new Black reporter's immediate personal network did have more same-race ties, but the network was much more racially balanced.

RQ 2: Do the immediate professional networks of local television news reporters include more same-race ties to individuals than different-race ties?

In the immediate professional networks of reporters, both White reporters and the new Black reporter had more same-race ties than different-race ties. The experienced Black reporter had more different-race ties than same-race ties. More specifically, White contacts were more numerous in the networks of both White reporters and the experienced Black reporter. But, while

the White reporter networks were overwhelmingly White, the experienced Black reporter's network had five more White contacts than Black. Furthermore, both Black reporter networks showed more racial balance than the networks of either White reporter.

What Kinds of People Do My Friends Know?

This study moves social network analysis beyond the people directly connected to the reporter at the secondary level. It expands the network to the tertiary level where it is possible to identify the contacts belonging to individuals in the secondary level. Essentially, it broadens each reporter's network to include those people indirectly connected to them. To expand each reporter's network, it was necessary to combine the reporter's immediate network with the networks of the subset of contacts. Expanding reporter networks allows the research to consider that information often passes through more than one person before it reaches the reporter. All four reporter networks increased exponentially in size. The experienced Black reporter's network increased from 40 people to 282 people—seven times larger than the reporter's own network. The experienced White reporter's network added 109 more contacts to
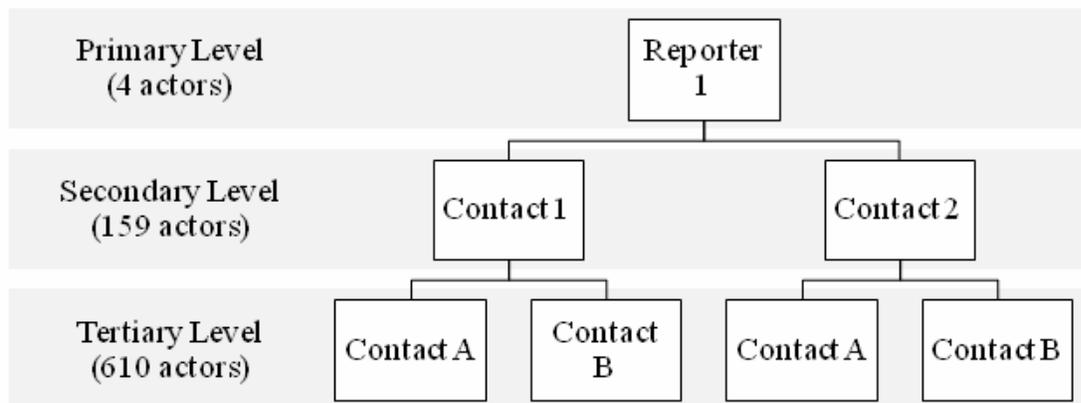
Figure 6. Structure of network showing primary, secondary, and tertiary level of individuals in study.

her network. The new Black reporter's network increased from 43 contacts to 229—more than

five times larger; and the new White reporter's network added 173 contacts, increasing from 43

to 216. On the surface, the expansion of these reporter networks presents opportunities for them

to connect with more diverse groups of people.

	Table 11				
	Tertiary Networks by Race				
	Experienced Black Reporter	New Black Reporter	Experienced White Reporter	New White Reporter	Total
Asian	1 (0.4%)	2 (0.9%)	--	2 (0.9%)	5
Asian Indian	1 (0.4%)	--	--	--	1
Black	105 (37.1%)	118 (51.5%)	6 (4.2%)	24 (11.1%)	253
Hispanic	--	1 (0.4%)	--	--	1
Native American	--	3 (1.3%)	--	--	3
White	173 (61.5%)	105 (45.9%)	134 (94.4%)	188 (87.0%)	600
Don't Know	2 (0.7%)	--	2 (1.4%)	2 (0.9%)	6
Total	282	229	142	216	N=869

But did increasing the size of the networks also increase their racial diversity? The

growth of the experienced Black reporter's network increased the racial diversity and changed

the Black-White balance of contacts. At the secondary level, the experienced Black reporter did

not have any contacts other than Blacks and Whites. By including contacts at the tertiary level,

the experienced Black reporter added an Asian and an Asian Indian to her network. The racial

dynamic of this network changed as well. Prior to adding the tertiary contacts, the experienced

Black reporter had slightly more Black contacts (57.5%) than White contacts (42.5%). After

adding the tertiary contacts, 61.5 percent were White and only 37.1 percent were Black.

The number of contacts in the experienced White reporter's network grew from 33 contacts to 142 by expanding to the tertiary level. Despite the increased size of her network, the racial diversity remained limited to Blacks and Whites. The majority of contacts were White at 94.4 percent compared to six Blacks, or 4.2 percent of the network. The race or ethnicity of two contacts was not known.

Even though the new Black reporter's network increased dramatically in size by adding tertiary level contacts, the racial balance remained relatively unchanged. The number of contacts increased from 43 contacts to 229 contacts. Blacks still made up a slight majority of the network at 51.5 percent, White contacts represented 45.9 percent of the network. However, by increasing the network, the new Black reporter added two more Asian contacts and a Hispanic contact to her network.

The new White reporter's network grew from 43 contacts to 216. No other races or ethnicities were added through expanding the network, and White contacts still represented the bulk of the network. The number of Asians within the reporter's network went from one to two. At the tertiary level, White contacts represented 87.0 percent of the network, Blacks represented 11.1 percent, and Asians represented 0.9 percent.

A Look at Reporter Professional and Personal Networks at the Tertiary Level

Again, as at the secondary level, this research took into account the two different networks at the tertiary level. The individuals at the tertiary level were categorized according to the network type of the immediate contact who named them. For example, if the immediate contact was in the personal network of the reporter, then contacts that person named would be part of the reporter's personal network, too. This was done because it is likely that information that makes its way to a reporter from an indirect contact would pass through the network type to which the immediate contact belonged.

At the tertiary level, the composition of both of the new White reporter's networks remained largely White. The reporter did add more Blacks to both of her networks—14 in the personal network and seven in the professional network.

	Both	Personal	Professional	Not Applicable/ Not Answered	Total
Table 12					
Tertiary Networks by Network Type and Race – New White Reporter					
Black	--	15 (11.5%)	8 (10.7%)	1 (20.0%)	24
White	6 (100.0%)	111 (85.4%)	67 (89.3%)	4 (80.0%)	188
Asian	--	2 (1.5%)	--	--	2
Don't Know	--	2 (1.5%)	--	--	2
Total	6	130	75	5	N=216
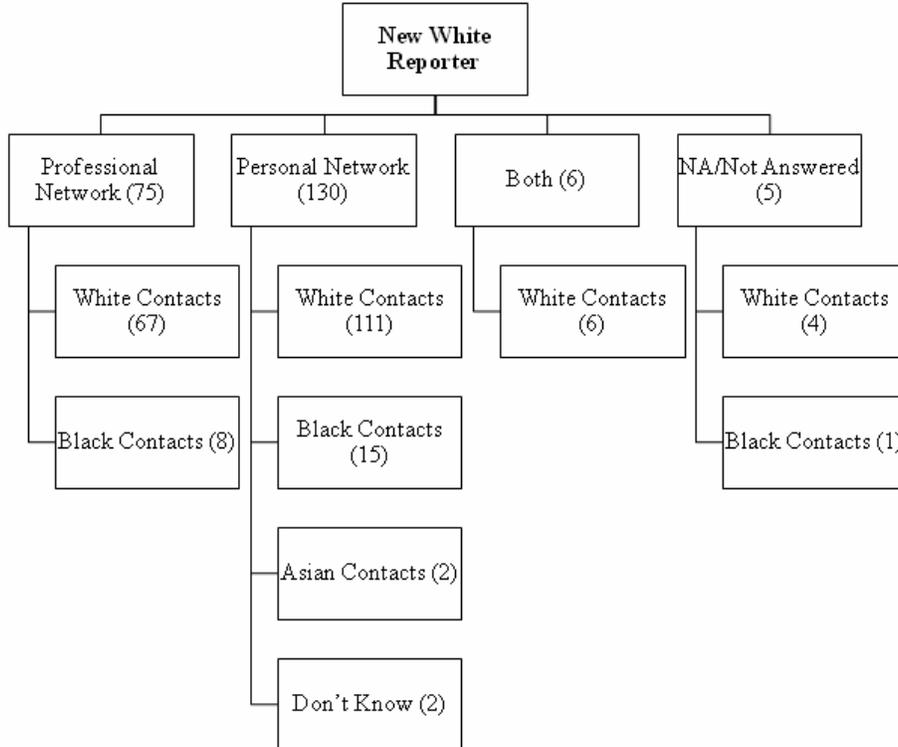
Figure 7. Tertiary network of new White reporter by network type and race.

The experienced White reporter's professional and personal networks continued to show minimal racial diversity. Even with the expansion of the network to the tertiary level, the presence of Blacks only increased by one contact in the personal and professional networks. No other race or ethnicity was added to either network.

	Both	Personal	Professional	Total
Table 13				
Tertiary Networks by Network Type and Race – Experienced White Reporter				
Black	2 (40.0%)	2 (2.4%)	2 (3.7%)	6
White	3 (60.0%)	81 (97.6%)	50 (92.6%)	134
Don't Know	--	--	2 (3.7%)	2
Total	5	83	54	N=142
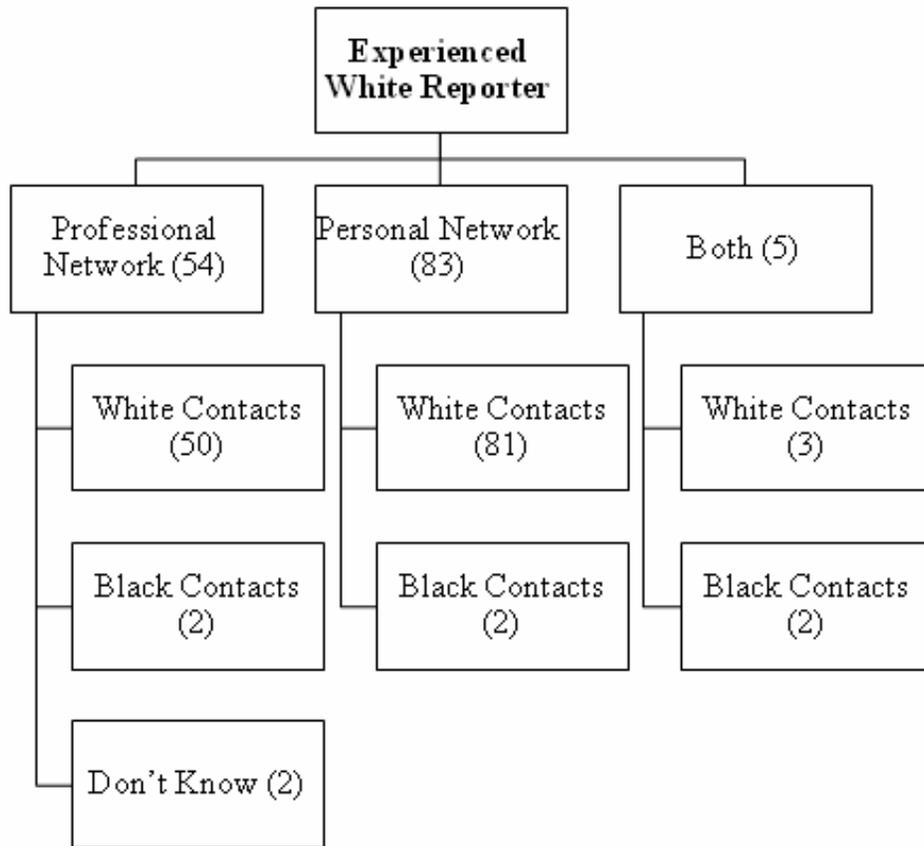
Figure 8. Tertiary network of experienced White reporter by network type and race.

	Both	**Personal**	**Professional**	**Not Applicable/ Not Answered**	**Total**
	Table 14				
	Tertiary Networks by Network Type and Race – New Black Reporter				
Asian	--	1 (0.7%)	1 (1.5%)	--	2
Black	8 (66.7%)	82 (55.0%)	27 (40.3%)	1 (100.0%)	118
White	3 (25.0%)	63 (42.3%)	39 (58.2%)	--	105
Hispanic	--	1 (0.7%)	--	--	1
Native American	1 (8.3%)	2 (1.3%)	--	--	3
Total	12	149	67	1	N=229
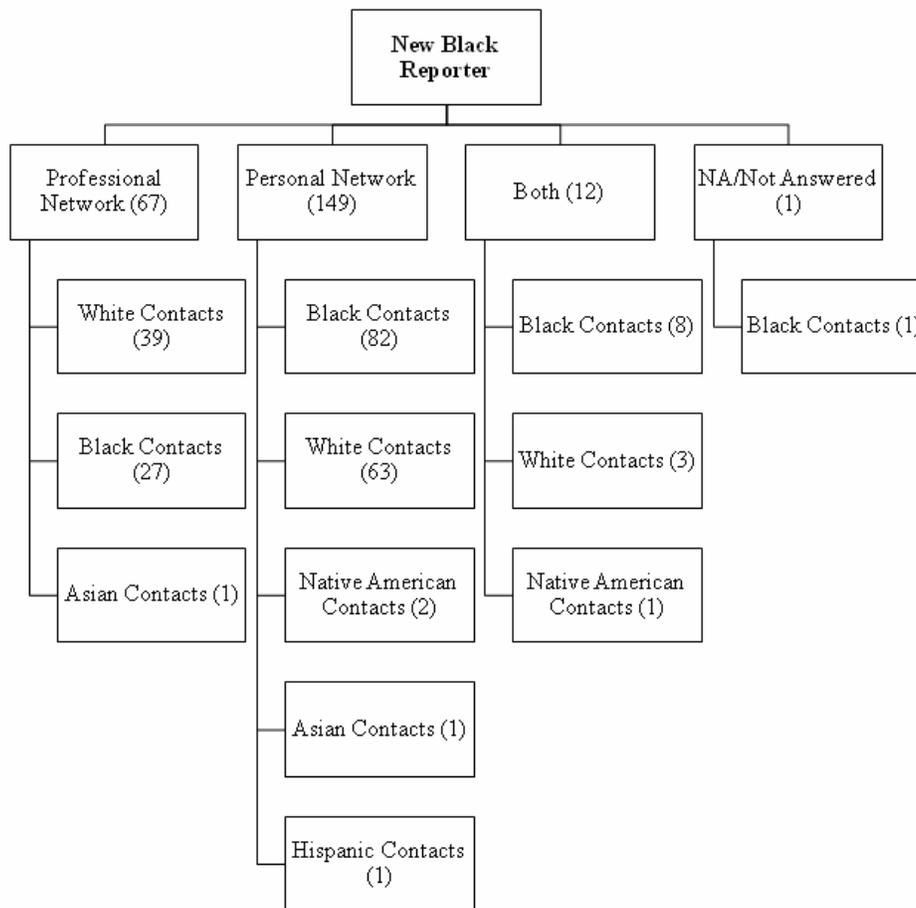
Figure 9. Tertiary network of new Black reporter by network type and race.

The new Black reporter continued to have more Blacks in her personal network, but there were more Whites in her professional network. Both networks still exhibited a pattern of racial balance. Percentage-wise, neither Blacks nor Whites were overrepresented in either network.

	Both	Personal	Professional	Not Applicable / Not Answered	Total
Table 15					
Tertiary Networks by Network Type and Race – Experienced Black Reporter					
Asian	--	1 (0.6%)	--	--	1
Asian Indian	--	--	1 (1.2%)	--	1
Black	4 (40.0%)	72 (39.8%)	27 (31.8%)	2 (33.3%)	105
Don't Know	--	2 (1.1%)	--	--	2
White	6 (60.0%)	106 (58.6%)	57 (67.1%)	4 (66.7%)	173
Total	10	181	85	6	N=282
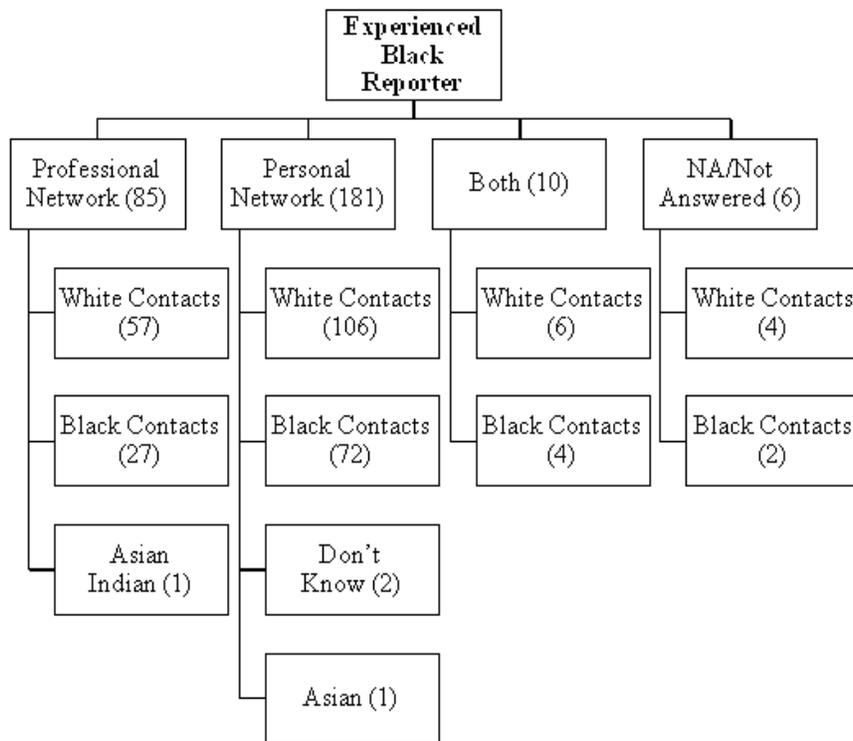
Figure 10. Tertiary network of experienced Black reporter by network type and race.

The experienced Black reporter's personal network shifted toward a more White-oriented network, despite having a majority Black personal network at the secondary level. Almost 60 percent of her personal network at the tertiary level was White. In her professional network, the Whites were still the majority. By expanding her network to the tertiary level, this reporter added more ethnicities—an Asian and an Asian Indian contact.

RQ 3: Do the indirect personal networks of local television news reporters include contacts with more same-race ties to individuals than different-race ties?

The tertiary level or indirect personal networks of the new Black reporter and both White reporters had more same-race ties than different-race ties. The experienced Black reporter had more different-race ties in her indirect personal network. With the exception of the new Black reporter, the indirect personal networks of these reporters were predominantly White.

RQ 4: Do the indirect professional networks of local television news reporters include contact with more same-race ties to individuals than different-race ties?

The makeup of the indirect professional networks (tertiary level) differed based upon the race of the reporter. Both White reporters had more same-race ties in their networks, and both Black reporters had more different-race ties in their indirect professional networks. Analysis of the tertiary-level professional networks also shows Whites to be the majority group for all four reporters.

While expanding the networks to the tertiary level provided an opportunity to see a better view of the people connected to these reporters, the overall picture that emerged shows a distinct lack of racial diversity.

Results: Reporters and Their Communities

One of the first lessons journalism students are taught is how to identify "news." Out of the infinite number of people, events, and issues that could be reported on each day, knowing which ones are considered newsworthy is a critical reporting skill. However, what often isn't taught is how to build an effective and diverse network of contacts or sources.

In speaking about their initiation into the world of news reporting, the reporters in this study said that much of what they learned about newsroom operation came from a mixture of observation, imitation, and trial and error.

The new White reporter's experience as a news intern, prior to her first professional job, laid the foundation for her understanding of news room practices and culture.

> When I interned, I learned how a typical newsroom operates….there was a reporter that really took me under his wing and would take me out. And, if I went out with him I had to do a standup. I had to do a package. And I had to do it on deadline and he really taught me how things operate. And so when I came here …. they've got reporters that have been there for a while so I look at the way they do things as well.…but also add my own thing and make sure that I'm just not a parrot. I knew the procedures, but I learned how to network from them, and what's good writing and what's not.

The new Black reporter said her education about news room practices was based on watching what other reporters did and on the mentoring relationships she developed in the newsroom.

> There are some people who are willing to take you under their wing, kind of help you out, but basically you watch what everybody does and how they do it.

Both experienced reporters said that the skills required for news reporting are learned on the job. The experienced Black reporter said that journalism school does not fully prepare new reporters for the realities of daily news gathering.

It's trial by fire, really. I mean because you get in there and you learn certain things in the classroom but the reality is what it is in the newsroom. It's so different from what you learn in class.…I don't think there was an orientation of any kind, any place I went to you just get in, you get your assignments, and then you go about getting the story done, you know. Initially I relied a lot on the assignments editor helping know who to call for contacts and you make those phone calls you go out do those stories and come back in. It was really trial by fire. 'You got a live shot.' 'What is a live shot?'

The experienced white reporters said the direction she received came from her boss.

For my first job, it was really the news director who would say you've got to go out here. Here's your deadline. Here's the equipment. So it was that leadership.

The fact that much of what young reporters learn is shaped by watching and emulating their more experienced colleagues shows that the norms and routines of news production are enduring because they are passed on to new generations of reporters. One of those enduring practices is the way some people come to be used as sources and others not.

As discussed earlier, the beat system is an efficient and economical method of gathering news because at those beats are the people reporters rely on for information. And, those people tend to be White. It's not surprising then that so many people in reporters' professional networks are also White. Yet, some reporters attempt to expand their professional networks beyond the usual types of contacts through involvement in their communities.

Community Involvement

Television news reporters are in a unique position to have significant impact in their communities. Through the news station, they have the capacity to raise the salience of some issues over others, and their news decisions can impact the way the viewing public comes to understand and feel about certain issues. Furthermore, as high-profile members of the community they are held in high regard, and are often called upon to volunteer their time to various charitable causes and organizations.

In discussions about how they viewed their roles in the community, all four reporters indicated that they felt a sense of responsibility toward the community. It was clear that each understood how important building connections in the community was to their ability to develop contacts, gather news and attract viewers. The new White reporter spoke about the need for reporters to know who their viewers are so that they might relate to them better.

> I've judged pet fashion shows in [names suburban town in market] just so I can get out there and talk to people. I'm judging the state judged chili cook off and I'm going to this gospel thing we're doing right now. And it's all worth it because they see you, they know you, they'll watch you. And not only will you get more viewers but you can better relate to them. And if I wasn't a reporter, if I was just a business person …. you should still be involved in your community no matter what you do.

The new Black reporter said that she's spent time developing connections to people living in the inner city.

> A lot of my story ideas come from those connections calling me and saying, 'Hey, this is going on right now.' So it's kind of a cycle. I think maybe I was just very passionate about it when I started reporting on some of those stories and got more connections.

Both experienced reporters saw community involvement as a way to identify possible news stories through interaction with people they might not otherwise meet. The experienced reporters discussed the value of being active in the community.

I think that not only does it give you a little bit more access, it may present an opportunity for more stories to possibly develop. I think it gives you a better perspective instead of just the day-to-day covering the news. I think if you're involved in community organizations where you can do some hands-on stuff in the community, I think it gives you a different perspective when you're reporting on things in a particular area. [experienced Black reporter]

…I think that the reporter has to be engaged and plugged in enough to recognize a good story, be able to realize its huge appeal. [experienced White reporter]

Yet, the motivation for becoming involved in community projects was not entirely self-serving. The new Black reporter spoke of her desire to do more than just deliver information.

I'm personally a more civic journalism-type person. So I think that reporters are not only kind of a voice for the community, but also be part of trying to find a solution.

In discussing roles and responsibilities of reporters in community, the experienced Black reporter noted the privileged positions news professionals hold through their work.

People trust you. You have this huge amount of authority. People trust what you say. I take what I do seriously and I hope that if I say, 'Go do this,' that people will say, 'I'm going do this because she said do it and I trust her.'

In spite of the shared belief that involvement in the community has professional and civic benefits, only the experienced reporters had extensive connections to the community through their volunteer and community service efforts. Each named at least five community, social, health, or charitable organizations they were involved in as either advisory board members or

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through volunteer work. The experienced Black reporter said that she specifically seeks opportunities to help underserved schools or neighborhoods.

> I think if I could help raise people's awareness and push them to want to take action in certain areas that I see there's a need and areas that I really care about, I would consider that as a huge accomplishment. From a medical perspective, like getting African-American women to go get screened for breast cancer.… I was involved in a campaign trying to do that. And If I could get more women to just think and say, 'Ok, I'm gonna go do it.' I think that would be good.

The experienced White reporter said setting an example through her volunteer work was the biggest impact she felt that she had in the community.

> They see me on the morning show going down to [names a local charity] and they say 'Huh, maybe I'll do some volunteer work.' So it's just kind of like what I call a sprinkling of the seeds of love around so it can motivate somebody else.

The new reporters said that their work schedules limited them from being more involved in the community.

> I work on the weekends. So the things I want to be involved in are usually on the weekends and I can't participate. I do a bible study that is not a church bible study. It's kind of a community bible study. I'd like to do more with that because I want to be more involved. [new Black reporter]

> I used to teach dancing before I did night side. I've judged dancing competitions and stuff like that every now and then. … I've done a few things with community theatre although that's at night, too. So, now I really don't do too much of that. So, there's a lot I want to do and I did more when I was working a different show. [new White reporter]

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The experienced reporters, however, attributed the low level of community involvement by new reporters to factors other than schedule.

I don't know that I hear any of them saying, 'Oh, this weekend I've got to go do this or I'm going to do that or I really want to get involved with that.' I've never had anybody ask me in that newsroom about any community groups to get involved in, never. …as far as reporters it could just be that most of them have not been here for a long time. Most of our new room is fairly young. And they're probably so focused on their careers that they don't have time for anything else. [experienced Black reporter]

The new reporters are working on their resume tapes and many of their stories are focusing on what's going to make the best news story to impress the next news director in the bigger market. If you're 25 years old making $24,000 a year, yeah you want to move up and move on. I would say, unfortunately, most of the networking is looking at getting the next job or maybe it's with getting an in with the public officials so they can get an exclusive with them. There's nothing wrong with that at all because that can work to their advantage and the stations in many respects, too. But I don't see them getting involved in the community and helping fourth graders in [names elementary school] on the [names state standardized test] just because they want to improve somebody's life. [experienced White reporter]

Despite differing levels of community involvement, all reporters believed that simply through their work, they could make an impact in the community. Sometimes a story could make a difference.

I did a story about this one kid who was autistic and the mom didn't think the school was being very fair to him and not having him in the right class and he was acting out and they were suspending him for autistic behaviors. So we did a story, the school responded,

now he's in the same school system but in a class more appropriate and he's doing great. And I really feel like we were a catalyst for them to speak out. [new White reporter]

In the case of the new Black reporter, she said that she was keenly aware that many Blacks felt a sense of pride seeing her hold a respected position within the community. She said that she has been approached by other African-Americans who talk about the fact that there are very few on-air Black news professionals.

I've had people come up to me and say 'we're so proud of you….to see more of ourselves on air.' So as far as that, I hope that's had some type of effect. [new Black reporter]

The experienced White reporter said she believes that she has developed a rapport with the audience as a morning show personality.

The biggest impact that I personally probably had on the community is the nature of the morning show, which is just to get people to smile some mornings. I'm passionate that it doesn't all have to be gloom and doom. Some of the news that we have is not happy news, and it shouldn't be all happy news, but sprinkled throughout that is some hope and companionship. There's a real camaraderie that can develop between people. I hope I make people's day a little easier to jumpstart.

While the desire to connect with their community members is shared by all reporters, the new reporters, by their own admission, have failed to devote the kind of time needed to build those connections. The experienced reporters, both of whom are long-time residents of the community, reported being active in numerous community groups and participating in many volunteer efforts and events.

All four reporters said that community involvement was important to being able to "relate" to viewers, gain new perspectives, and understand viewer concerns. If this is true, then

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only the experienced reporters have put themselves in a position to make these community connections pay off professionally. The new reporters are not as engaged in the community as the experienced reporters. Both new reporters said their schedules prevent them from becoming more involved in the community, but one experienced reporter said the nature of the business makes it difficult for young reporters to put down roots in a community. Low salaries, she said, often encourage the departure of young reporters who are looking for better paying jobs.

Through their interactions with people beyond the newsroom and the typical news beats, reporters have an opportunity to develop a professional network of ties that can include racially diverse populations. However, time on the job has a lot to do with whether those opportunities are realized. So, the places where reporters look for news and information and the types of people they rely on to get it are likely to be dictated by the norms and routines of news production.

Making Routine News

The news production process is largely hidden from the public. While many people have seen reporters and photographers gathering news out in the field, most are not privy to the decisions and procedures that occur inside the newsroom. All four reporters provided insight into this aspect of news production.

At this station, the majority of news staff report to work in the morning and attend a morning meeting. Here, reporters, photographers, the news director, assistant news director, assignment editor, and news producers gather at the assignment desk to discuss potential stories for newscasts. All departments are asked to contribute story ideas for consideration. News producers and photographers are required to submit one story idea per week and reporters are required to submit three per week. At the morning meeting, the news staff weighs the story options of the day by considering pre-scheduled events and submitted story ideas.

With a multitude of story possibilities, journalists are trained to assess news items for elements of newsworthiness. In conversations about the types of stories to pursue, in the sense that the news department considers them worthy enough to dedicate station resources (i.e. staff time, gas, mileage, etc.), the overriding factor is the number of people the issue affects.

The experienced Black reporter said stories that get pursued have to "affect a great majority of the people." The experienced White reporter agreed, saying "Community impact is huge." However, as the new White reporter suggested, sometimes there is conflict among news staff about how much a potential story impacts the public.

> The other day they had a story that one of our management people was like, 'We've got to do this. It affects my kids.' But really when you think about it, it didn't affect that many more people. So the reporter went above his head and said 'I don't think we should do the story.'

The new Black reporter conceded that while there can be disagreements between the top decision makers in the newsroom and reporters, there are many opportunities for reporters to pursue the stories they propose.

> It's day to day. Some days it's everything the managers would want. That's what you're going to do. Some days you come up with something that is a little bit more outside the box, they'll go with that. But overall it depends on what's most important to the public that day.

Community impact aside, the experienced Black reporter said that some people in the community are newsmakers by virtue of their position. She said that if the mayor says something, the station is more likely to cover and air it.

The experienced Black reporter also said that decisions about pursuing stories like crime

can often involve discussion about the value of the information to the public as well as the need to put the story in context.

> The past couple of days we've had shootings, murders in our city and we've gone back and forth: 'Should we put this in our newscast or do we not put it in our newscast?'. ... they look at it like: 'Okay there was a shooting tonight, but should we even mention it? Why do we? Do we want to do more with this story?'

However, the experienced White reporter said that pursuing news stories generally depends on their newsworthiness and their practicality.

> Stories hit the air because they're easy to do because we work in a 12- 13- 14-hour wheel cycle. We have to make that story happen that day and I say that because the reporters and everybody arrive at nine. The last newscast is over at 10:35, so there's that wheel. But, really if you look at somebody that goes in at nine and they've got to turn that story for six, then their window is less than that. And unfortunately, some really good stories don't get pursued because, you know they make a few phone calls and nobody is available. So you have to jump to the next one.

She also said that other media influence the stories chosen for inclusion in the newscast.

> …I confess that some of our stories happen because we've seen them in other media outlets. We see it on the page of the paper and that's how we find out about it. Or we get a press release on it and find it interesting and sometimes we'll hear something on the radio and go 'well this is what people are talking about.' Those are some of the factors that determine whether or not the story gets pursued?

Dynamics of the Newsroom: Influence

All four reporters acknowledged that, when it comes to news decisions, certain people in the newsroom are more influential than others. The general consensus was that anchor opinions

carry a lot of weight, but news management, i.e. the news director and assistant news director have the most influence. The experienced Black reporter said:

> I think that the anchors have a lot of input in what's on the air and obviously the news director and such. Reporters, I think it really kind of depends. I think probably [names a reporter who has worked at the station for seven years] would have a lot more influence than say [names a reporter who has been at the station for one year], and maybe it's because of experience.

The new reporters both expressed more of a that's-just-the-way-it-is attitude, rather than frustration about this aspect of newsroom protocol. The new White reporter noted:

> We have an anchor that is very strong headed and if he doesn't believe that something should be done or not, he'll straight up tell you. And, people respect his opinion. He's very outspoken, but his opinion matters more than most people. Management's opinion ends up being the ones that really matter because if they think my story isn't worth doing then we won't do it.

The new Black reporter said:

> I've been there a year. So, I think of it like I'm a year old. Obviously the opinions of people who are more experienced are going to count more which they should because they've seen what works and what doesn't. That's not to say that the newer people don't have a voice. But if it comes down to myself or someone that's been there for ten years, nine times out of ten they're going to lean toward the person whose been there ten years.
>
> Yet both new reporters expressed optimism that despite the structured level of influence

by which the news room operates, they felt that they could pursue their stories if they fought for them or presented them as worthy of inclusion. The new White reporter made this statement about proposing story ideas, "…I can fight for it and I can change their minds. I think

everybody's opinion matters, but it can be overruled." The experienced White reporter agreed with this assessment, "… if the news director is jazzed about a story, if there's somebody out there wanting a news story covered, if they can get his attention, then it's always going to be done." However, the experienced Black reporter found it troubling that the main male anchor's opinions about the worthiness of a possible story carried so much weight.

> …if he doesn't like the story or [he says] 'I don't see the point in this. Why are we doing this story?' Sometimes I notice the producers will say, 'Oh it doesn't have to be in there' or 'We can take that out. We don't need this.' He'll [the male anchor] make this comment: 'Why do I care?' I assume by 'I' he means 'why does the public care?' But, I hate how it even sounds, and so now I find myself more arguing against what he says because: just because you don't think it's a story doesn't mean that it's not a story.

The experienced Black reporter noted that all of the producers, whose responsibility it is to organize the news stories in newscasts, were young and more likely to bend to the will of the main male anchor instead of using their own news judgment.

> They're all young and they're really intimidated by him. I find that they can't even expand on why they choose some stories that they choose to put into their newscast or the way that they have them or the angles that the reporters take.

The experienced White reporter said that experience is a factor that impacts influence in the newsroom, but said that reporting style plays a part, too.

> I would say usually the people who have been there longer carry a lot more weight because they tend to know the community better. They tend to know what's going on. Some people are able to take a really nothing story and really make it shine and sing, and so everybody in the newsroom, certainly the bosses, tend to know those people.
> The power structure in the news room favors news management, and in some cases,

anchors. It is very often through these senior-level news positions that the norms and routines are

passed on to new reporters, ensuring the continuation of news practices that often favor

authoritative and official sources over the ordinary members of the community.

Results: About the Reporter Contacts

Reporters recognize that community involvement can be useful in developing connections to people with whom they might not otherwise come in contact. This involvement, they believe, helps them identify the stories and issues that will be of interest to the public and generate station loyalty among those with whom they connect. Is it working? What does the viewing public think of the news coverage in their community? Interviews with the subset of reporter contacts asked this question and also focused on their opinions of the media in general and local television news in particular.

Of the subset of 54 reporter contacts who agreed to participate in the study, most lived in the television market in which this study's reporters were employed. Two lived in another city in the state, and four lived out of state.

Table 16	
Contact - Place of Residence	
	No. of Contacts
Television Station Market Area	48
Other City in State	2
Other State	4
Total	N=54

To distinguish between those likely to have knowledge about news production practices and those who were not as likely to have this knowledge, contacts were categorized into two groups; public relations professionals (including the fields of public information, communications and journalism) and non-public relations professionals. Most of the contacts are employed in professions outside the fields of public relations.

Impression of Local News

When asked to describe their overall impression of local television news, a slight

majority responded with all positive comments. The number of contacts who provided neutral

characterizations about local news followed. Neutral comments were those that expressed both

Table 17	
Profession of Contacts	
	No. of Contacts
Public Relations Professionals; Public Information; Communications (Including Journalism)	17
Non-Public Relations Professionals	37
Total	N=54

positive and negative characterizations of local news or those that were neither positive nor

negative. Fourteen contacts had nothing but negative comments about local television news.

Table 18	
Contacts' Impressions of Local Television News	
	No. of Contacts
Negative	14
Neutral	19
Positive	21
Total	N=54

Despite reporters' efforts to understand the concerns of their community, a common

complaint about local news was that news stations fail to cover issues that affect the community.

One contact, a physician, said that local news spends too much time on stories with no value. He

characterized stories as having "no real impact on the average viewer and their everyday plight."

Another contact, a dance instructor who reported that she typically watches local news for the

weather, said local news has a lot of "filler and fluff to make people feel good about the local

situation."

Other contacts said local news puts too much emphasis on negative stories like crime. A contact who works for a community organization said:

I'm getting tired of seeing black men in handcuffs every night on the six o'clock news. There's a lot of other news that we're not hearing that we should be hearing. There's white-collar crime, for instance, that we don't hear much about. But there are other activities and other happenings going on that we should know about but we don't hear about.

A second physician also commented on the overly negative focus of local news.

I travel a lot, so when I go to other cities it seems like they have more information. A lot of our stuff is just negative crime related which I guess that is the news, but sometimes in other cities, I see more positive programming or more positive concepts on their news stations. I've got somewhat of a negative vibe from our local stations.

Of the 14 contacts that had negative comments about local news, six worked in the fields of public relations, public information or communications. Their criticism centered on the depth of reporting or the tendency to cover the "easy" story. A contact employed as a television news producer and a colleague of all four reporters said "chasing the simple story" is an all too common approach to reporting.

…things that come across the police scanner, news releases, things like that because obviously that is easier to turn on a daily basis for a TV station as opposed to what I consider the heart of journalism to be digging deep into stories, investigating things, uncovering what might be corruption, anything along those lines that fill what our role ought to be, the government watchdog. I find that that role is not filled very often. It might come up every once in a while, but it's not filled very often by TV stations in the [names local area] in my opinion. It's more 'feed the beast' is the common expression

and get the stories done for that day and all too often that just means what came up on the

police scanner, what did the arrest reports show from overnight, what other news releases

we might get from different agencies that can be turned that day.

A former television reporter in another market was very critical of local news in the market

where the four reporters worked.

I don't think it's very good here… I just think it's kind of small market here. Particularly,

the reporters are inexperienced and I feel that the anchors are very folksy and maybe all

TV news is like that now, but I just I think they take liberties with things that they say.

They're unprofessional. I think that they're lazy in really pursuing the type of

investigative stories that they could be doing and go for the lower hanging fruit. That's

not across the board, but that would be my general impression.

Those with positive impressions of local news said that it provided them with accurate

information about events in the community. For the most part their comments were brief with

little elaboration on the positive elements of local news other than it is informative. A contact

who handles public relations for a non-profit organization said, "I like it because it lets me know

what's going on in town, the bad news as well as the good news. It keeps me up to date on

current events." Another contact said, "They do report truthfully. They don't make something

out of nothing. I feel that they make me aware of what's going on."

The favorable impression some contacts had of local television news involved their

positive feelings about the news personalities. Again, reporters said they participate in

community activities for just this reason, to forge connections with the viewing public. A contact

who is a realtor said that she likes watching local people. "I feel like I know these people and

that's why I guess I watch it on a regular basis." Another contact expressed similar feelings

about local news and the personalities, "I like it. I think the stories are interesting and the personalities they have on there are good."

A boutique owner offered the following observation about local news. It seemed to capture the sentiments of many contacts who had a positive impression of local television news, but who were not knowledgeable about the best practices of the profession.

I honestly just want the information and so in general I would say that the news stations that we have here do a very good job of that. Basically I don't have a lot of complaints when it comes to what our news stations offer. But also I'm not very schooled on what they should and what they ought to be doing. So I'm just happy to turn it on and listen and garner the information that they offer.

While more contacts did have positive impressions of local television news and felt that it provided them with the information they needed, the criticisms leveled at the local media should not be ignored. Considering the neutral comments did include many unflattering opinions about local news, there was a significant amount of disappointment in the quality of coverage especially with regard to issues and events selected for coverage. Despite efforts on the part of some reporters to understand the needs and concerns of the community, interviews with contacts revealed that for some viewers, the media is still missing the mark. However, to their credit, reporters who get involved in the community and volunteer have the capacity to create meaningful connections with members of the community who may become loyal station viewers.

Media Usage and Trust

To understand the media usage of these contacts, they were asked to name the sources they use most to get their news and information. Some contacts named more than one medium, but the Internet slightly edged television as the medium used most for news and information. A contact who works for a construction company spoke about the easy access of online news.

Honestly, I may use Internet just a little bit more. I do use TV news a lot so it's almost

equal because I do a lot of work on the computer at my job and then once I get home, I do

a lot more work still on the computer.

While newspaper was the third most used news source, many contacts said that they read

online newspapers and visited television network websites, including a contact who works in the

field of public relations.

I use the Internet every day to look at the websites of the various newspapers and

magazines that I mentioned. I tend not to read a lot of blogs and stuff because a lot of

those things are so one-sided driven that I feel I need a better variety of regular news

sources to get my information.

Table 19	
News Source Used Most by Contacts	
	No. of Responses
Other	5
Internet	23
Newspaper	12
TV	22

While the Internet was the most used news source for contacts, it was not their most

trusted source of news and information. Television ranked first as the most trusted news source

followed by newspapers. Again, the connection some contacts felt they have with the news

personalities is an asset for the stations.

TV, because I know the reporters and I've come to know them personally, not on a social

basis but I have met with them and I just feel real comfortable that they're not there to

embellish anything, that we're getting the straight facts. [communications coordinator]

Some contacts chose to name more than one medium in their responses to this question. One

contact said that the visuals of television enable her to put more trust in this broadcast medium,

but quite a few contacts felt that newspapers put more time and research into news stories, which led them to put more faith in them as a news source. A few said that they are in the habit of fact checking news and information with more than one news source.

> I don't trust any of them completely and I don't trust any single source for reporting anymore. I've got to see it in multiple places and read different perspectives on it to see if it's any kind of story that I'm really interested in. [police officer]

Table 20	
News Source Trusted Most by Contacts	
	No. of Responses
Email	1
Friends	1
Internet	7
Newspaper	18
Other	6
Radio	2
TV	19

An objective of this study is to determine what kind of people are in a reporter's network of contacts and whether those people have the ability to impact what news stories are covered, given their access to reporters. To determine whether access translated into influence, contacts were asked whether a reporter had ever asked them to contribute to a story or if they had ever contacted a reporter to pitch a story idea. Given that these contacts are a subset of individuals specifically named by the reporters, these questions provide insight into their access to and influence with the media.

When asked if they had ever been contacted to assist with the production of a story, 42 of the 54 contacts responded in the affirmative. This represented 77.8 percent of the network, which suggests reporter contacts do have some impact on the news production. Of those who have been contacted to help with a story, most do not work in the fields of public relations or public

information. More than three-quarters worked in occupations outside of public relations-type fields.

Only 5.6 percent said that they had not been contacted to participate in a news story. Six contacts were either current or former news professionals, so the question was not applicable to them since, through their work, they interact with other reporters and provide input in the story telling process.

Table 21			
Media Access – Reporter Contacted Contact			
Response	Occupation	No. of Contacts	% of Network
No		3	5.6%
Not Applicable		6	11.1%
Yes	Public Relations	10	18.5%
	Non-Public Relations	32	59.3%
Didn't Answer		3	5.6%
Total		N=54	100.0%

One contact who is a self-described community activist said he gets calls from reporters all the time, "Just say if a person was to be murdered today there are like two or three reporters that would call me to see if I know the family."

Reporters often called upon their contacts to put them in touch with other people, in essence, to tap into their contact's set of contacts. The fiancé of one of the reporters said that he's helped her find people to interview.

> She'll call me if she has a story lined up and she needs maybe some people to interview
>
> and feels maybe I know someone who could be a good candidate to interview, she'll
>
> contact me.

The subset of contacts was also asked if they had ever contacted a reporter about a story idea they felt should be pursued. Just under a third said they had not, but 51.8 percent said they

had contacted a reporter about a story idea. Of those who reported that they had contacted a reporter, 64 percent worked outside the fields of public relations and public information. Again the question was deemed not applicable to current and former news professionals.

Response	Occupation	No. of Contacts	% of Network
Table 22			
Media Access – Contact Contacted Reporter			
No		17	31.5%
Not Applicable		5	9.3%
Yes	Public Relations	10	18.5%
	Non-Public Relations	18	33.3%
Didn't Answer		4	7.4%
Total		N=54	100.0%

Generally, people contacted reporters for a variety of reasons, but most often they wanted the reporter to do a story that promoted some type of community event or volunteer effort.

> Whenever a good positive event is going on I contacted [names experienced White reporter] not too long ago about what high school students were doing for a particular classmate. So when I see or hear of that going on….because there's so much violence on the news and I'm a strong advocate to publicize good news and good things that's going on and let's praise kids for what they're doing.

> Some wanted to raise awareness about an issue or topic in their line of work or something they felt strongly about. One person called a reporter about a health fair, "It was just something that I was passionate … and actually they did come out and interview." This suggests that people within a reporter's network feel comfortable sharing news tips and story ideas with the reporter. They have a level of access that the majority of others in the public do not have.

> Heider (2000) noted that minority communities are often not covered in meaningful ways by local news because the people in those communities are often reluctant to contact reporters or

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don't know how to make contact with them. Gans (1979) came to similar conclusions when he wrote:

> Powerful or skilled sources know how to make contact with reporters; but many people—perhaps most—lack this knowledge. Few even know how to contact reporters affiliated with their local news media, and the reporters serving the national news media are socially and otherwise far more distant. (p. 125)

> While new social networking technologies make it easier for more people to make

contact with reporters and news stations, reporters are more likely to perceive information from people in their social networks as more trustworthy, readily available, and therefore more useful.

Perceptions of How Reporters Generate Story Ideas

Do people within the social networks of reporter realize the influence they wield? Maybe not. When asked how they thought reporters come up with ideas for stories they pursue, the contacts offered a number of explanations. The most often cited source for ideas was the public or community connections.

> I think that is dependent upon the community they live in. That's the driving force as to what kind of stories they want to report. By saying that, they get most of their ideas from the community in which they report. [police officer]

> They're just out there and in the town and city like we are and they hear things and people contact them or they're just out socializing and getting involved in various activities and word of mouth. I find these reporters are very active in our society and I'm glad to see that so they can see what's going on. [communications director for non profit]

> The source for story ideas cited most often after public/community connections was other

media. Contacts felt that news media watch what others in the business are doing and follow suit.

> I think they probably find a lot of the national news and trends and pull from that….They

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take ideas from there and put a local spin on them and use them around here. [public

relations professional]

Families and friends were often mentioned with public and community connections as

sources for story ideas. A respondent who works for a construction company said, "I would hope

that reporters actually mix in with their own social environment, with their family, with their

friends with classmates, with their coworkers, anybody within their community." A dance

instructor made a similar comment, "I would have to say word of mouth, the community that

they're in, either people calling or their friends that they deal with on a daily basis."

Table 23	
Contacts' Perception of How Reporters Generate Story Ideas	
	No. of Responses
Public/Community Connections	20
Other Media	18
Personal Experiences/Own Interests	12
Family/Friends	9
Events/Occurrences	7
Boss	6
Sources	5
Don't Know	3
Police Scanner	2
Public Relations	1

Just as reporters say they want to build connections within the community to generate

story ideas, people in their networks believe the ideas for news stories originate with the

community.

Yet, it is questionable how often public input happens when community involvement by

reporters is limited, and many in the community criticize news coverage as lacking meaningful

information.

Discussion of Results

Every day millions of Americans turn on their local television news to find out what's happening in their communities and around the world. The information they get from television news has the potential to shape their attitudes about community matters, and issues and impact the decisions they make for themselves and their families. Given the media's ability to wield this kind of influence, an understanding of how news is produced as well as the decision making that goes into news production is in order.

Much has been written about the news routines reporters use to gather information easily and efficiently. These routines impact what types of stories are told, how they are told, and who tells them. But routines don't tell the whole story. Other factors such as corporate ownership interests, economic conditions, and advertiser influence all have the ability to define the final news product. This study focuses on the influence of yet another factor—the social networks of television reporters

Analysis of the social worlds of reporters provides a telling picture of not only who they know, but also the types of people with whom they do and do not associate. In this study, the social networks of only four reporters yielded a remarkable number of contacts. The total network of all four reporters grew to include almost 1,000 contacts. Some 773 people were part of the network, and this study allowed for the examination of their personal characteristics such as race, age, gender, and level of education.

Social network research shows that, for all people, networks are good predictors of the opportunities that will be available to them whether social, economic, personal, or professional.

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Research also tells us that diverse networks offer more advantages than homophilous ones as they are more likely to expose the network's owner to diversity of thought, ideas, and information.

McPherson et al. (2001) found that homophily limits an individual's social world in a way that has a powerful impact on the information they receive, the attitudes they form, and the interactions they experience. For the general public, the implications of a network lacking in diversity are troubling. This often breeds ignorance and intolerance, and closes the individual off from information and knowledge that could positively impact his or her life.

But the absence of diversity in reporter networks is far more worrisome. As the Hutchins Commission pointed out, the media hold a position of privilege in society and are therefore obligated to work in the best interests of all citizens—not just a few. The commission's five recommendations to the press all speak directly to the topic of this research: (1) The media should provide a truthful, comprehensive and intelligent account of the day's events in a context which gives them meaning; (2) The media should serve as a forum for the exchange of comment and criticism; (3) The media should project a representative picture of the constituent groups in the society; (4) The media should present and clarify the goals and values of the society; and (5) The media should provide full access to the day's intelligence. Each of these recommendations requires access to or a connection with diverse types of people and communities.

More than 20 years after the Hutchins Commission released its report, the Kerner Commission's charge that media failed to project a representative picture of the African-American experience showed that the earlier recommendations went largely unheeded. Yet, the Kerner Commission's own recommendation to cultivate more racially diverse newsrooms hasn't materialized either. The 2008 RTNDA/Hofstra University survey shows that television newsrooms are mostly White, and Whites hold the majority of news director positions.

The reality that newsrooms and news management do not reflect the racial diversity of society should be more reason for media to examine the social networks of those they do employ. Showing reporters where their networks are dense with similar types of people and lacking in diversity, racial or otherwise, would probably be an uncomfortable, yet eye-opening exercise. But, it could also move media closer to a higher standard of journalism in which a multiplicity of voices is included in news coverage. This study's analysis of the personal and professional networks of local television reporters provides a starting point for future network assessments in the newsroom.

Personal Networks

Research questions one and three focused on the personal networks of local television reporters. Question one asked whether the immediate personal networks of television reporters had more same-race ties than different-race ties. Question three asked whether the indirect personal networks contained more same-race ties than different-race ties.

Analysis of the reporters' immediate (or secondary level) personal networks revealed that the White reporters and the experienced Black reporter had very little racial diversity in their networks. All three reporters had a very high percentage of same-race ties in their networks. The new White reporter did not have any Black contacts in her immediate personal network and the experienced White reporter only had one. The experienced Black reporter only had two Whites in her immediate personal network. The new Black reporter had an immediate personal network that was much more racially balanced among Blacks and Whites—12 contacts were Black and 10 were White.

At the tertiary level, both White reporters still had little racial diversity in their personal networks. There were only two Blacks in the experienced White reporter's indirect personal network. The new White reporter added 15 Blacks to her circle and one other Asian contact.

While not as racially skewed as the White reporters' networks, the new Black reporter also had more same-race ties in her network. Unlike at the secondary level, the experienced Black reporter's personal network at the tertiary level had more Whites than Blacks.

The old adage "birds of a feather" tends to hold true when looking at the racial makeup of these reporters' personal networks. McPherson et al. (2001) wrote that as a majority group, Whites have more opportunity to associate with other Whites than with people of other ethnicities. The findings here show that White reporters rarely associate with people of a different race in non-work settings. Whether this is by choice or their opportunities to interact with other races are limited, the White reporters' homophilous personal networks isolate them from racially dissimilar people.

Such a statement cannot be made about the Black reporters. With the exception of the experienced Black reporter's immediate personal network, their personal networks were much more racially balanced. And, at the tertiary level, the experienced Black reporter's network had more Whites than Blacks. The discrepancy in the racial make-ups of the Black and White reporter networks may be explained by the uneasiness Whites experience in their interactions with Blacks of which Trawalter and Richeson (2008) wrote.

Logically, members of a minority group are more likely to come into contact with members of the majority group simply because there are more opportunities to do so. In the United States, Blacks and other minority ethnic groups are much more likely to interact with Whites simply because there is more of an opportunity, desired or not, to interact with the majority population in all types of settings. This frequency of contact may also lead minorities to have a higher level of comfort with Whites and increase the likelihood that they will form personal ties.

Many studies about social interactions have concluded that diverse social networks are far more advantageous than homophilous networks. Granovetter (1973) found that people not strongly connected to an individual are more likely to provide useful information to them. As stated earlier, Burt (1992) concluded that an individual's network of contacts and the location of those contacts in the social structure can determine the individual's social, economic, personal, and professional opportunities. He argued that large, diverse networks are more beneficial than small, homogeneous ones. Marsden (1987) found that access to diverse others is beneficial to an individual, particularly when networking. In light of those arguments, this study's findings suggest that the White reporters are at a disadvantage in reaping the benefits of a racially diverse network because their personal networks are predominantly filled with other Whites. Conversely, the racial diversity of the Black reporters' personal networks puts them in a better position to gain useful information from people in other races. Even though this study looked at diversity through a number of attributes, Gibbons and Olk (2003) found that ethnicity "repeatedly, consistently, and persistently influenced development of friendship ties and social structures" (p. 349) more than the gender, level of education, professional background, and work experience. The authors concluded that people may be more likely to choose friends based on ethnicity than any other attribute. So, the racial diversity of these reporters' networks has the potential to impact the formation of ties with others more than any other attribute.

Furthermore, as McPherson et al. (2001) found, homophily limits an individual's social world in a way that has powerful implications for the information they receive, the attitudes they form, and the interactions they experience. If true, reporters not only get information from their contacts, but those contacts also have the ability to shape the reporters' opinions and beliefs. This is a significant statement given that reporters make news decisions that often, in turn, determine and often define the issues for the viewing public. David Manning White (1950) documented this

when he analyzed the decisions of Mr. Gates, a newspaper wire editor, responsible for selecting

stories to publish in the paper. The Gates study highlighted the gatekeeper role of news

professionals who determine news items that make it to air or print. There is a degree of

subjectivity in the decision making of news production, and as many scholars argue, it is social

networks that shape personal preferences and attitudes. In fact, Gans (1979) argued that people

within a reporter's social circle have the ability to impact the news, and inclusion in those social

circles is more likely when the individuals have similar backgrounds.

Professional Networks

Research questions two and four focused on the professional networks of local television

reporters. Question two asked whether the immediate professional networks of television

reporters had more same-race ties than different-race ties. Question four asked whether the

indirect professional networks contained more same-race ties than different-race ties.

Much like their personal networks, the professional networks of the White reporters were

filled mostly with other Whites. This was true for their networks at both the secondary and

tertiary level. With the exception of the new Black reporter's immediate professional network,

the Black reporters had more Whites than Blacks in their professional networks. However, none

of the networks for the Black reporters was overwhelmingly filled with any one race.

At the secondary level, the professional networks of the White reporters lacked racial

diversity. The experienced White reporter had one Black contact and the new White reporter had

four Black contacts and an Asian contact. The experienced Black reporter had five more White

contacts in her network than Black contacts and new Black reporter and one more Black contact

than White contact in her professional network. She also had an Asian contact in this network.

In their indirect professional networks, all four reporters had more Whites in their

networks than any other race. Of the 130 people in the new White reporter's professional

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network at the tertiary level, 111 were white. Only two Blacks were in the professional network of the experienced White reporter's 83-person network. The experienced Black reporter's network had about a 60-40 percentage split favoring Whites. And the new Black reporter had more White contacts when her professional network was expanded.

An explanation as to why all four reporters have more White contacts in their expanded networks may again lie partly with the principle of homophily. As Marsden (1987) notes, kinship is one reason why a person's network would be racially homogeneous, but at the professional level there is more opportunity to interact with a racially diverse population. Either racial homophily is at work in the White reporter professional networks whereby Whites tend to associate with other Whites on the job, or the professional arena in which these individuals operate doesn't provide the opportunity to interact with diverse others. The RTNDA/Hofstra University (2008) study on racial diversity shows most newsrooms are overwhelmingly populated with Whites, which would explain why both White and Black reporters have more White professional contacts.

This study distinguished professional networks from personal ones in order to determine what impact newsroom personnel and other individuals, professionally connected to the reporters, may have on news decisions. The reporters' professional networks contained coworkers and others they have used as sources in the past either as a regular source of information or for a single story.

One pattern that emerged from the data is the large number of people within the reporters' social networks that have media experience either as journalists or as practitioners in the fields of public relations or public information. Of the subset of 54 contacts who participated in this research and provided information about their employment, 31 percent worked in the fields of public relations, public information, or mass communication. Existing research about

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the norms and routines of news production concludes that reporters routinely contact government officials or company spokespersons for information because of the ease with which that information can be obtained. The significant number of public relations workers in the professional networks of all four reporters provides additional evidence that, in this market, news production doesn't deviate from the findings in norms and routines literature regarding sourcing.

Beyond Differences in Sourcing

In some respects, such as newsroom operations, there were no significant differences in how the White and Black reporters viewed the news production process. All four of them described similar news processes and were in general agreement about the criteria that determine which stories are pursued and aired. In short, stories that impact the most people are the ones that get aired. Yet, aside from the racial disparities of reporter social networks and their impact to sourcing, interviews with reporters revealed differences in how race can determine the obligation a reporter feels toward helping or empowering certain communities.

The new Black reporter discussed the importance of the strong connections that she has developed in the inner city with its large minority population. The experienced Black reporter spoke about her desire to raise awareness in the Black community about the importance of breast cancer screening and the need for parents to get involved in their children's education. However, neither White reporter spoke about a need to connect with certain communities, but instead spoke about the audience as a whole. This suggests that minority reporters are aware of their ethnicity and may be more inclined to pursue stories that are meaningful to the minority audience. Whereas White reporters do not see their audience as a multicultural one and are apt to feel their news coverage is beneficial to the entire community regardless of race.

This reinforces Anderson's (1991) theory of imagined communities. He argued that national identity is generated from the collective imagination of people about their community,

not by actual face-to-face interaction among citizens. As this study shows, how reporters imagine their communities impacts news coverage. Black reporters, and other minority reporters, are more likely to imagine a multicultural community and tailor their news coverage to meet the information needs of diverse groups. This includes having networks that reflect the diversity of the community. Even though White reporters recognize that minorities make up a part of the viewing audience, I would argue that they lack an understanding of the size and relevance of communities of color. The fact that White reporter networks are overwhelmingly filled with other Whites indicates a failure by them to reach out to minorities in both the personal and professional arena.

Furthermore, the new White reporter's hometown is a major U.S. city with a racially diverse population. While she said that the diversity of her hometown was one of the qualities she liked best about the city, her own social network did not reflect that same level of diversity. This indicates that no matter how diverse a community is, there is a real probability that members of minority communities will not be part of the social worlds of the majority of reporters in this country's newsrooms.

Additionally, the new Black reporter spoke about occasions when Black viewers have told her how proud they were to see her on the news. This sense of pride is not uncommon in the Black community. Given the many negative stereotypes about Black people, they are often delighted to see another Black person succeed in a profession dominated by Whites. This would tend to create a sense of duty among Black reporters to represent their race well, and make them more resolved to provide news coverage of significance to the Black community.

Reporters and Their Communities

So if the social networks of reporters impact news decisions, what voice do the people without those ties to reporters have in the community? Each reporter acknowledged the need to

be active in the community to create those ties, develop new sources, better understand the audience, and identify possible stories.

For reporters, this makes good business sense. But the reality is that only the experienced reporters were involved in their communities. They belonged to various charitable and civic organizations that are likely to give them greater access to people outside their networks. The new White reporter has participated in some community events, but acknowledged that she has not been as involved in the community as she would like. The new Black reporter said that she would like to do more in the community but her schedule prevented her from doing so.

Burgoon et al. (1987) wrote about the insular nature of young journalists who focus more on their next job than making connections in the community. The authors concluded that the disconnection that exists between young journalists and the public produces "feelings of elitism and condescension" and threatens the paper's ability to identify meaningful community news and "present accurate accounts of people and event."

This study showed a pattern of low community involvement for new reporters and high community involvement for experienced reporters who are long-time residents of the community, which follows what Gaziano and McGrath (1987) found in their study about newspaper credibility. Young, new reporters are less likely to be involved in the community and more likely to keep their distance from readers, while older native are more likely to be involved in the community and have contact with their readers. It also confirms what both experienced reporters said about the station's new reporters—they do not and have not expressed a desire to become involved in the community. As the experienced White reporter noted, the reasons are practical enough. Starting salaries for reporters are pitifully low, and new reporters are likely to be more concerned with building resumé tapes than building connections in the community. Often, moving up means moving on, so young reporters tend not to stay in one place long

enough to develop the kinds of connections to the community that may yield the type of substantive coverage many of the contacts said that they would like to see.

With the emergence of new technologies such as Facebook and MySpace and the regularity with which people use e-mail, there is more opportunity than ever for more people to make contact easily with reporters. Reporters can also solicit information from the public through these services. However, those without access to these technologies—and there are many—are still left without a voice.

Furthermore, in Thelwall's (2009) study about MySpace friendships, he found evidence of homophily by ethnicity, age and religion as well as sexual orientation, country, and marital status. Despite the unlimited possibility for diverse online friendships, Thelwall found that people "ghettoize themselves into predominantly similar groups," which suggests there may be limitations on how much social network technologies can foster racial diversity in reporter social networks.

Gans (1979) wrote that reporters are selective in their use of sources based on their suitability for past stories, the ability to supply information consistently, trustworthiness, authoritativeness, and articulateness. Of these criteria, Gans wrote that the authoritativeness of the source is most important to journalists. Trustworthiness, too, is critical. It would seem that the unrestricted nature of the Internet would cause reporters to be wary of information they receive through that medium by unknown or unaffiliated sources.

Implications for Minority Communities

One reporter contact said that she was tired of "seeing Black men in handcuffs" on the news. This sentiment plainly captures what previous research has concluded about the portrayal of minorities on television news. Blacks are depicted as criminals. Romer et al. (1998) found that local news in Philadelphia typically portrayed people of color as perpetrators, and Whites as

victims of minority criminals. Entman (1992) noted how crime stories differed based upon the race of the suspect; Blacks were more likely than Whites to be shown handcuffed in prison clothing. In his examination of two local television newsrooms in New Mexico and Hawaii— states with a high percentage of people of color—Heider (2000) said the coverage did not reflect the racial diversity of those states. "I could have been in Toledo, Ohio or Syracuse, New York," he wrote after watching newscasts in each state. Gilliam and Iyengar (2000) noted that in Los Angeles network affiliates' coverage of crime—race is a prominent element, and news coverage of murders was disproportionate compared to actual crime statistics. The authors suggested a more ethnically diverse newsroom and better knowledge of the communities would encourage more balanced reporting.

Reports by the Hutchins and Kerner commissions and results from RTNDA's annual survey of women and minorities in the newsroom show the media's continuing struggle to provide meaningful news to a broad spectrum of Americans from a narrow perspective. More than 40 years after the Kerner Commission called upon the media to hire more minorities, the percentage of people of color in newsrooms remains low. Furthermore, it is likely that the social networks of the two White reporters in this study are similar to the networks of other White news workers. This means communities of color are still largely without a voice in the public forum.

The benefits gained by having diverse social networks described by Granovetter (1973), Burt (1992), and Marsden (1987), and McPherson et al. (2001) are absent from American television newsrooms. Diverse social networks, they each concluded, create opportunities for new and useful information and resources. Gans (1979) also wrote that the social proximity of sources and reporters has a significant impact on who has access to the airwaves and news pages. Given the fact that the White reporters' immediate network, and the networks of their contacts

were overwhelmingly White, the chances for the concerns and interests of minority communities to be heard are slim.

While the White reporters' networks were racially homogeneous, on average, the Black reporters' networks were more racially balanced. As such, the Black reporters are more likely to reap the benefit of a racially diverse network, such as more new and significant information from a variety of people. The experienced Black reporter had both the diversity of network and a high level of community involvement that would seem ideal for her to connect with people of different racial backgrounds in her own social network and within the community at large. The new Black reporter's social network is likely to yield the benefits that result from a racially diverse social circle. Her lack of community involvement, however, may be a barrier between her and the majority of viewers in this television market no matter what their race. While the Black reporters may be positioned better than their White colleagues to tap into a diversity of information, ideas, and resources, the norms and routines of news production still determine much of what is seen in the newscast.

Recommendation to the Media

News stories available to the public in this particular market are heavily influenced by what White people consider important, relevant, and newsworthy. There is limited opportunity for other ethnicities, particularly Hispanics and Asians, to contribute to the news agenda. With the exception of the celebrity or sports figure, minorities are less likely to be used as sources and more likely to be portrayed as criminals. Scholars have offered many reasons for this, from the media's focus on event-driven news to America's history of racial discrimination, hatred, and intolerance.

This research offers another explanation. The majority of contacts reporters have and choose to use in their stories do not come from communities of color. This shows that the

makeup of one's social network matters. As mentioned earlier, public relations professionals are part of these reporters' networks. For them, inclusion in the reporter networks means they are positioned better than most to access the reporter and promote their stories or causes. Furthermore, that Whites make up 71.2 percent of the total network of all four reporters is significant because Whites, more so than any other racial group, have connections with reporters that may give them a louder voice in the public forum.

By mapping the racial makeup of local television news reporter networks, it was evident that at this station and for this group of reporters, the White reporters do not have the contacts that allow them to tap into the concerns and interests of minority communities. As this study shows, reporters do rely on their social networks to help them do their work. A majority of the contacts said that they have been contacted by reporters about information for stories, and a slight majority of those same contacts said that they have contacted reporters about stories they felt needed to be covered. The reporters' reliance on those in their social networks to assist with story production, and the willingness of contacts to provide story ideas suggests that the people with these ties to journalists are in a better position to impact not only the types of stories being told in the community, but also how those stories are being told.

Based upon research cited in this study, new White reporters are least likely to have racially diverse networks because, (1) they have not been in the community long enough to become active and connected with others, and (2) because of homophilous tendencies, they are prone to associate with others like themselves. Conversely, experienced minority reporters would be most likely to have racially diverse social circles through their strong community ties and networks that have balanced minority/non-minority representation.

Heider (2000) argued that news professionals spend very little time examining how they go about their work. He wrote, "Accepted conventions and routines are difficult to break from,

having been taught in college and high school journalism programs and reinforced throughout news workers' careers" (p. 24). But, if local news stations are going to be more than just news factories and provide news and information that is meaningful and relevant to the lives of a multicultural community of viewers, they would do well to ask reporters to examine the types of people in their networks. Taking time to understand the social networks of reporters has the potential to improve the quality of news by ensuring that the sources relied upon for information are reflective of the community.

As Heider (2000) quipped, journalists do not sit around thinking about how to exclude people of color. But it seems that not much effort goes into thinking about ways to include them either. Since racial diversity in U.S. newsrooms continues to remain elusive, it is necessary for those who are employed in media organizations to take stock of their social networks, particularly with regard to their diversity. Journalism schools would do well to teach future reporters how to build effective source networks that are representative of the communities in which they report. News organizations should encourage their news staffs to assess regularly the racial makeup of their rolodexes. Despite the other forces that play upon the news production process, a reporter's own awareness about the makeup of his or her social circle may compel him or her to work toward building a network representative of all racial groups in the community.

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Appendix A: Reporter Participant Interview Protocol

Reporter-Participant Questions for In-Depth Interviews:

1. How long have you lived in this city?
2. What do you think are this city's biggest strengths? Weaknesses?
3. What part of the country do you call home?
4. If this isn't your hometown, do you have friends or family here?
5. If this isn't your hometown, how is this city different from where you consider home?
6. Where did you go to college?
7. Is this your first reporting job?
8. If not, where else have you been a reporter? How long were you there?
9. Tell me about a typical day in this newsroom for you.
10. When you first started, how did you learn about how this newsroom operates?
11. Who reviews scripts before they are taken into video production?
11. Is there any review of the finished product before it airs?
12. Who assigns reporters to a particular story?
13. Do you see any pattern as to how stories are assigned?
14. In your opinion, what determines which stories get pursued?
15. In your opinion, what determines which stories make it to air?
16. Describe the dynamics/culture of this newsroom? (i.e. Do certain people's opinions/ideas carry more weight; Are certain people more hesitant to express their views/ideas; How involved is the news director in the actual production of each news story; Do other departments within the station get involved in news meetings?)
17. Tell me about the process of writing your script?
18. Describe the process of getting your stories to air?
19. What role do you think reporters should have in their communities?
20. What effect do you think you have **personally** in this community?
21. What activities or groups are you involved in outside of this newsroom?
22. If you're not from this city, have you formed any personal friendships outside of the newsroom?

23. Is there anything else you'd like to tell me about you, your job, this newsroom, or the profession of journalism in general?
24. May need to come back and ask more questions. Is that okay?

Appendix B: Contact Participant Interview Protocol

Name:
Reporter Network:

1. What city do you live in?

2. What is your profession?

3. Do you watch local television news? What city?

4. What are your impressions of local television news?

5. Name all other sources you use to get news/information?

6. Of these, which would you say you use most?

7. Which would you say that you trust most?

8. How involved are you in your community?

9. What effect do you think you have personally in your community?

10. Have you ever contacted a reporter about a story? If yes, how often and general nature of story?

11. Has a reporter ever contacted you about a story? If yes, how often and general nature of story?

12. How do you think reporters come up with ideas for their stories?

Appendix C: Reporter Participant Questionnaire

Directions to complete questionnaire:

Please provide as many names as you can for each question. For each of the first eight people you name, provide the related information found in each column. If you do not know certain information about each individual, enter DK (Don't Know) in that cell.

NOTE: If you cannot name at least eight people, that is fine. Just provide the relevant information found in each column for those who you do name.

Below is a guide to help you fill out the questionnaire.

Name: Provide first and last name

Gender: Enter M or F, for male or female

Age: Enter exact age or a more general age range. Example: 30s, late 40s, etc.

Race/Ethnicity: Enter race (White, Black) or ethnicity, if you know it.

Education Level: Enter highest level of education attained. Example: Some high school; High school graduate; Some college; College Graduate; Advanced Degree

How do you know person: Provide short description of type of relationship you share with person. Example: Friend; Church member; Sorority sister

Religion: Provide religion of person, if you know it.

Daytime phone: Provide daytime phone number with area code.

Email address: Provide email address.

For Questions 6 - 10 there are three additional columns of information you need to complete.

Have you ever discussed a story idea with this person: Enter Y or N, for Yes or No.

Has this person ever contacted you about a story idea: Enter Y or N, for Yes or No.

Have you ever interviewed this person for a story either on- or off-camera: Enter Y or N, for Yes or No.

Name_____

QUESTION 1: Within the last two months, who have you contacted (in person, telephone, email) about a story you were working on?								
Name	Gender	Age	Race	Education Level	How do you know person?	Religion	Daytime Telephone	Email Address
1.								
2.								
3.								
4.								
5.								
6.								
7.								
8.								
9.								
10.								
11.								
12.								
13.								
14.								

QUESTION 2: Within the last two months, who has contacted you about a story idea that you pursued?

Name	Gender	Age	Race	Education Level	How do you know person?	Religion	Daytime Telephone	Email Address
1.								
2.								
3.								
4.								
5.								
6.								
7.								
8.								
9.								
10.								
11.								
12.								
13.								
14.								

QUESTION 3: Within the last two months, who has contacted you about a story idea that you didn't pursue?

Name	Gender	Age	Race	Education Level	How do you know person?	Religion	Daytime Telephone	Email Address
1.								
2.								
3.								
4.								
5.								
6.								
7.								
8.								
9.								
10.								
11.								
12.								
13.								
14.								
15.								

QUESTION 4: If the story you were working on fell through late in the day, but you still had to turn in a story, name the people you would call for another story idea?								
Name	Gender	Age	Race	Education Level	How do you know person?	Religion	Daytime Telephone	Email Address
1.								
2.								
3.								
4.								
5.								
6.								
7.								
8.								
9.								
10.								
11.								
12.								
13.								
14.								
15.								

QUESTION 5: Name the people you know through professional organizations related to journalism.

Name	Gender	Age	Race	Education Level	How do you know person?	Religion	Daytime Telephone	Email Address
1.								
2.								
3.								
4.								
5.								
6.								
7.								
8.								
9.								
10.								
11.								
12.								

Have you ever discussed a story idea with this person?
Has this person ever contacted you about story idea?
Have you ever interviewed this person for story on-camera? Off-camera?

QUESTION 6: Name the people you know through social, recreational, civic or religious groups and organizations.

Name	Gender	Age	Race	Education Level	How do you know person?	Religion	Daytime Telephone	Email Address
1.								
2.								
3.								
4.								
5.								
6.								
7.								
8.								
9.								
10.								
11.								
12.								

Have you ever discussed a story idea with this person?
Has this person ever contacted you about story idea?
Have you ever interviewed this person for story on-camera? Off-camera?

QUESTION 7: With whom have you recently engaged in social activities such as having over for dinner or going to a movie?

Name	Gender	Age	Race	Education Level	How do you know person?	Religion	Daytime Telephone	Email Address
1.								
2.								
3.								
4.								
5.								
6.								
7.								
8.								
9.								
10.								
11.								
12.								

Have you ever discussed a story idea with this person?
Has this person ever contacted you about story idea?
Have you ever interviewed this person for story on-camera? Off-camera?

QUESTION 8:   Who are the best friends of your spouse/partner?

Name	Gender	Age	Race	Education Level	How do you know person?	Religion	Daytime Telephone	Email Address
1.								
2.								
3.								
4.								
5.								
6.								
7.								
8.								
9.								
10.								
11.								
12.								

Have you ever discussed a story idea with this person?
Has this person ever contacted you about story idea?
Have you ever interviewed this person for story on-camera? Off-camera?

QUESTION 9:   Whose advice do you consider in making important decisions?

Name	Gender	Age	Race	Education Level	How do you know person?	Religion	Daytime Telephone	Email Address
1.								
2.								
3.								
4.								
5.								
6.								
7.								
8.								
9.								
10.								
11.								
12.								

Have you ever discussed a story idea with this person?
Has this person ever contacted you about story idea?
Have you ever interviewed this person for story on-camera? Off-camera?

QUESTION 10: From whom would/could you borrow a large sum of money?

Name	Gender	Age	Race	Education Level	How do you know person?	Religion	Daytime Telephone	Email Address
1.								
2.								
3.								
4.								
5.								
6.								
7.								
8.								
9.								
10.								
11.								
12.								

Have you ever discussed a story idea with this person?
Has this person ever contacted you about story idea?
Have you ever interviewed this person for story on-camera? Off-camera?

Appendix D: Contact Participant Questionnaire

Directions to complete questionnaire:

Please provide as many names as you can for each question. For each person you name, provide the related information found in each column. If you do not know certain information about each individual, enter DK (Don't Know) in that cell.

Below is a guide to help you fill out the questionnaire.

Name: First and last name

Gender: M or F (for male or female)

Age: Exact age or a general age range. Example: 30s, late 40s, etc.

Race/Ethnicity: Enter race (White, Black) or ethnicity, if you know it.

Education Level: Highest level of education attained. Example: Some high school; High school graduate; Some college; College Graduate; Advanced Degree

Religion: Religion of person, if you know it.

How do you know person: Short description of type of relationship you share with person. Example: Boss, Co-worker, Friend, Church member, neighbor

*****If this person works for a news organization, please skip the last 5 columns.*****

THE LAST FIVE COLUMNS: The questions in these columns ask if the person that you named personally knows any local television news reporters, and if he or she has ever been involved with a news story reported by a local television journalist. Please answer Yes, No or DK (Don't Know) for these questions.

Does this person personally know any local television news reporters? *(If you answer YES to this question, please answer the questions in the next four columns.)*

1. Name the reporter(s) this person knows personally. (*Provide first and last name of reporter(s)*)
2. Has this person ever discussed a story idea with reporter(s)?
3. Has this person ever contacted reporter(s) about a story idea?
4. Has this person ever been interviewed by reporter(s)?

Your Name_____

QUESTION 1: Name the people you know through your occupation whose opinions you respect.												
Name	Gender	Age	Race	Education Level	Religion	How do you know this person? (If this person works for a news organization, skip the last 5 columns.)	Does this person personally know any local television news reporters?	If yes, name the reporter(s).	Has this person ever discussed a story idea with the reporter(s)?	Has this person ever contacted the reporter(s) about a story idea?	Has this person ever been interviewed by the reporter(s)?

Name	Gender	Age	Race	Education Level	Religion	How do you know this person? (If this person works for a news organization, skip the last 5 columns.)	Does this person personally know any local television news reporters?	If yes, name the reporter(s).	Has this person ever discussed a story idea with the reporter(s)?	Has this person ever contacted the reporter(s) about a story idea?	Has this person ever been interviewed by the reporter(s)?

QUESTION 2: Name the people you know through social, recreational, civic or religious groups and organizations whose opinions you respect.

Name	Gender	Age	Race	Education Level	Religion	How do you know this person? (If this person works for a news organization, skip the last 5 columns.)	Does this person personally know any local television news reporters?	If yes, name the reporter(s).	Has this person ever discussed a story idea with the reporter(s)?	Has this person ever contacted the reporter(s) about a story idea?	Has this person ever been interviewed by the reporter(s)?

QUESTION 3: With whom have you recently engaged in social activities, such as dining, going to movies, etc.?

QUESTION 4: Who are the best friends of your spouse/partner?												
Name	Gender	Age	Race	Education Level	Religion	How do you know this person? (If this person works for a news organization, skip the last 5 columns.)	Does this person personally know any local television news reporters?	If yes, name the reporter(s).	Has this person ever discussed a story idea with the reporter(s)?	Has this person ever contacted the reporter(s) about a story idea?	Has this person ever been interviewed by the reporter(s)?

Name	Gender	Age	Race	Education Level	Religion	How do you know this person? (If this person works for a news organization, skip the last 5 columns.)	Does this person personally know any local television news reporters?	If yes, name the reporter(s).	Has this person ever discussed a story idea with the reporter(s)?	Has this person ever contacted the reporter(s) about a story idea?	Has this person ever been interviewed by the reporter(s)?
QUESTION 5: Whose advice do you consider before making important decisions?											

Vita

Lisa Robinson Honoré is the public information director for the Teachers' Retirement System of Louisiana (TRSL), where she is responsible for all external and internal communications for the agency.

Before entering the doctoral program at The Manship School of Mass Communication, she taught broadcast journalism courses at Southern University and A&M College in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, for five semesters.

She has also worked for the Louisiana Department of Labor in the public relations department, the LSU AgCenter as a communications specialist, and the Louisiana Trial Lawyers Association as a writer.

In the field of journalism, she worked as a television reporter for WBRZ-TV in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, and KALB-TV in Alexandria, Louisiana. She also interned in the political unit at ABC News in Washington, D.C.

She earned her master's degree in broadcast journalism from The Medill School of Journalism at Northwestern University and her bachelor's degree in government and computer applications at the University of Notre Dame.