

## **Southern Accent Bias in the Broadcast Industry**

This research looked at the experience of broadcast journalists who grew up in the South as it related to Southern accents. Nine journalists from a variety of backgrounds were interviewed for this qualitative study and asked about how they felt their accent had or had not affected their career success as well as how they navigated career challenges because of their accents. All participants chose to kill their Southern accents on air in order to better their chances at success as well as be better journalists for their viewers. They believed that clear communication was crucial to establishing viewer trust and breaking stereotypes. Many of the participants were told early on in their career by a mentor or a manager that their accent would affect the way people viewed them on air and so it was best to get rid of it. Additionally, many of the journalists decided to hire a voice coach to help them not only kill their accent but also to help them work on enunciation. This research is important for the journalism industry because many young journalists from the South may feel that their accent will hold them back or limit their job prospects to only the South, as many of the interviewees stated was their fear early on. These fears and limitations have the potential to make journalists doubt their abilities and lower their confidence. The results of the research are beneficial to the industry because they help point out several reasons why the interviewees believed a Southern accent is not desirable on air such as negative stereotypes associated with the accent. Additionally, the results of the research point at several ways journalists can work to minimize their accent on air, which is helpful to know for the next generation of journalists, such as hiring a voice coach, working on repetition and understanding that having a neutral accent is just part of the job. The results overall are important because it shows young journalists that they can be successful so long as they put in the work and just try to be the best journalist for their viewers as possible.