

METPRO: A CASE STUDY IN DIVERSITY  
AND NEWSPAPER ECONOMICS

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METPRO: A CASE STUDY IN DIVERSITY  
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## **Abstract**

METPRO (Minority Editorial Training Program) was an acclaimed program in the newspaper industry that trained journalists of color, beginning with reporters in 1984 and expanding to copy editors in 1989. METPRO trained 124 copy editors before that portion of the program ended in 2007. Through long interviews with 25 of the copy-editing fellows, in addition to interviews with top editors and officials at Times Mirror, this study shows what the program meant to those beginning in journalism. For many young journalists of color, it was a foot in the door to opportunities they may not have had for many years, if ever. The program not only helped those of color break into the business, but it also helped newspapers themselves, during a time when newsrooms were pushing to increase the diversity of their staffs. And because copy editors play a large role as gatekeepers in the final production of the newspaper, this research also shows how considerable a role these participants had, through personal anecdotes recalling mistakes and offensive language or art, as pertaining to issues of race, ethnicity and gender, that did not make the newspaper because these copy editors were there to stop them. While successful on many levels, financial pressures came to bear on the program. It met its demise in an era of economic trouble and retrenchment among newspapers.

## Introduction

In the past few years, as the newspaper industry has shed thousands of jobs amid buyouts and layoffs, some journalists have begun questioning newspapers' commitment to diversity efforts. In 1978, the American Society of Newspaper Editors (ASNE) set a goal for newspapers to reach racial and ethnic parity with their communities by the year 2000. Journalists of color at the time represented about 4 percent of the news staff. While progress was made, it was clear the goal wasn't going to be reached in 2000, so ASNE later revised it to the year 2025. Now, with newspapers cutting back their staffs drastically, there is little hope that this extended goal will be reached (McGill, 2000).

By April of 2009, with daily newspapers having shed 5,900 jobs in the previous year, the percentage of journalists of color stood at 13.41 percent, a decline of .11 percentage points from the year before, and at the same level as ASNE's 1998 census (ASNE, 2009). Of the 5,900 journalists who left, more than 14 percent, or 854 people, were journalists of color, ASNE reported.

The census seems to indicate that the problem for newspapers is not only in hiring new journalists of color but also in retention, a point made years earlier by the Freedom Forum in *Newsroom Diversity: Meeting the Challenge* (McGill, 2000). The report analyzed six years of the ASNE newsroom census and found that "journalists of color have left their newspaper jobs almost as fast as new

recruits have come in the door. On average, between 1994 and 1999, newsrooms hired about 550 additional journalists of color each year. Over the same period, about 400 journalists of color each year left the newspaper business. This annual net gain of 150 explains the incremental improvement of less than 1 percent reported each year in the ASNE census” (McGill, p. 3).

Since 1994, journalists of color have left the newspaper business at almost twice the rate of white journalists, the report stated. And even if newspapers were to improve retention rates, “roughly half of all journalists they hire over the next quarter century would have to be people of color if they are to meet the goal of racial parity with the general population by 2025” (McGill, p. 4).

While newspapers struggle with achieving parity, the number of people of color in the United States is outpacing the majority white population. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the number of people of color in the United States in 2006 was 34 percent (ASNE, 2008). And, according to Census figures released in August of 2008, whites will no longer be a majority of the population by 2042 – nearly a decade earlier than previous projections. By 2042, whites will be outnumbered by those of Hispanic, black, Asian, American Indian, Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander ancestry, according to the Census (Dougherty, 2008).

Given all the above, the purpose of this paper examines one diversity program that was steadily bringing in new journalists of color but which was affected by economic factors: the METPRO copy-editing program, which trained people of color to become copy-editors, from 1989 to 2007. A few years before

the program's demise, in a report titled *The Color of Leadership: How Newspapers Can Reflect the Diversity of Their Markets* (Reinhardt & Lipton, 2003), the Media Management Center at Northwestern University had listed the METPRO program among 40 "best practices" for diversity.

For purposes of this study, the terms "journalists of color" and "people of color" are used to describe those whose ethnicity is black, Hispanic, Asian, Native American, or Pacific Islanders. Many scholars (Basconi, 2006; Benson, 2005) now use this term instead of "minorities." As the United States moves toward a population in which people of color will outnumber "whites," the term "minorities" is seen as inaccurate. The term "whites" is often used as shorthand for those journalists who don't belong to the above groups (McGill), and therefore will be used as such in this study.

## Chapter 1

Although the scholarly literature on racial issues and diversity has been growing in the past two decades, there are still few substantive discussions of media and race, and even fewer of these media studies are theory-based (Lasorsa, 2002). The media itself have historically been dominated by white, middle-class interests (Hardt, 1998, Entman, 1992) and has not embraced the stories of people of color, so it is not surprising that scholars, until recently, have not examined racial and ethnicity issues in depth.

This research, therefore, hopes to add to the small but growing literature on diversity in the newsrooms and journalists of color, specifically as it pertains to newspapers. To place this research in context, this study will examine previous studies and essays on diversity in newsrooms and how communities of color have been covered by newspapers. This research is guided by the theory of social responsibility of the press, which holds that the media, while it is free from government control, nevertheless have an obligation to its readers and to society. This thesis also examines how economics influences the content of newspapers, and references the theory of gatekeeping as it ties into diversity.

### ***1.1 The idea of social responsibility***

Prior to the theory of social responsibility of the press, the media operated mostly under a libertarian theory, which emphasized the importance of an

individual's freedom of expression (Siebert, Peterson & Schramm, 1963). Under this concept, the functions of media were to inform and to entertain. Nothing in this theory established the public's right to information or required a publisher to assume moral responsibilities. That shift came in the 20<sup>th</sup> century with social responsibility theory of the press, described by Siebert et al. as:

Social responsibility theory accepts the role of the press in servicing the political system, in enlightening the public, in safeguarding the liberties of the individual; but it represents the opinion that the press has been deficient in performing those tasks. It accepts the role of the press in servicing the economic system, but it would not have this task take precedence over such other functions as promoting the democratic processes or enlightening the public (p. 74).

The notion that the press has a social responsibility became even more established with the 1947 report from the Commission on Freedom of the Press, otherwise known as the Hutchins Commission report. In the 1940s, media ownership was concentrated in a few hands. Daily newspapers were decreasing in numbers, five publishers accounted for most magazine circulation, another five companies produced almost all of the movies shown in the United States, and there were only two or three large television networks (Siebert et al.). Because of this consolidation and the declining number of newspapers, the press came under criticism for wielding enormous power and endangering the "free and open market of ideas" (Siebert et al., p. 79).

The Hutchins Commission was formed in 1942 by publisher Henry Luce and chaired by Robert Hutchins, chancellor of Chicago University. It saw media ownership as a form of public trust or stewardship and named key standards for the press to maintain: to "provide a full, truthful, comprehensive and intelligent

account of the day's events..., serve as a forum for the exchange of comment and criticism ..., give a representative picture of constituent groups in society" (McQuail, 2005, p. 171). This last requirement, Siebert et al. wrote, "would have the press accurately portray the social groups, the Chinese and the Negroes, for example, since persons tend to make decisions in terms of favorable or unfavorable images and a false picture can subvert accurate judgment" (p. 91).

## **1.2 Kerner Commission**

Social responsibility was still an emerging theory when the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders (otherwise known as the Kerner Commission), issued its 1968 report. The Kerner Commission was formed by President Lyndon B. Johnson and chaired by Illinois governor Otto Kerner Jr., following riots in several cities throughout the United States, and while it did not specifically cite a theory of social responsibility, it did very specifically address the issue of socially responsible news coverage. It reported that the nation was "moving toward two societies, one black, one white – separate and unequal" (Report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders, 1968, p. 1). It assessed media coverage of the riots and faulted the media, for sensationalizing their coverage of the riots, for failing to analyze and report adequately on racial problems in the United States, and for not hiring enough black journalists. In chastising the media, they wrote:

Our ... fundamental criticism is that the news media have failed to analyze and report adequately on racial problems in the United States and, as a related matter, to meet the Negro's legitimate expectations in journalism. By and large, news organizations have failed to communicate to both their black and white audiences a sense of the problems America

faces and the sources of potential solutions. The media report and write from the standpoint of a white man's world. The ills of the ghetto, the difficulties of life there, the Negro's burning sense of grievance, are seldom conveyed. Sights and indignities are part of the Negro's daily life, and many of them come from what he now calls the "white press" – a press that repeatedly, if unconsciously, reflects the biases, the paternalism, the indifference of white America. This may be understandable, but it is not excusable in an institution that has the mission to inform and educate the whole of our society (p. 366).

Since then, several scholars have linked the social responsibility theory of the press to coverage of racial and ethnic minorities, as well as to the hiring of journalists of color (Gross, Craft, Cameron & Antecol, 2002; Hardin & Whiteside, 2006; Rivas-Rodriguez, Subervi-Vélez, Bramlett-Solomon, & Heider, 2004.). Rivas-Rodriguez et al. cite the social responsibility theory in making the case that racial and ethnic diversity has come to play "a pivotal role in socially responsible news coverage" (p. 42). Having journalists of color is therefore vital because of the role they play in bringing diverse content into the media, they write. Pease, Smith and Subervi (2001) contend that "in a society where entire segments of the population do not see themselves adequately reflected in the news media, and so choose not to inform themselves of the events of the day, participatory democracy itself may be at risk" (p.41).

Glasser, Awad and Kim (2009) speak of journalism's "emancipatory potential," saying it resides in media's ability to offset "the unjust participatory privileges enjoyed by members of dominant social groups in stratified societies" (p. 63). However, much of mainstream journalism has stuck to the status quo, the authors say, confining their commitment to diversity "to a set of narrowly

conceived newsroom initiatives,” forfeiting any role it may play in “issues of social and political power, of social structure and economic relations” (p. 59). These narrow newsroom initiatives include employing more journalists of color, pursuing stories about marginalized groups and introducing new publications. However, these are tied to “benevolent managers” and a “favorable economic forecast,” the authors say, writing: “Journalism becomes more diverse as goodwill spreads within and across newsrooms, and when market conditions permit.”

Other scholars also say the current economic climate and the emphasis on marketing is overshadowing journalism’s social responsibility function (Gross et al., 2002; Pease, 1993; Wilson, Gutiérrez & Chao, 2003).

Most newspapers claim to hold to the idea of social responsibility. A look at the websites of several large newspapers and newspaper chains shows that they allude to this in their core values or mission statements, with phrases such as “good citizenship” (Gannett Co.), “enhance society by creating, collecting and distributing high quality news, information and entertainment” (The New York Times Co.), “serve our local communities” (Tribune Co.) and “excellent journalism” (Dow Jones & Co.). They also speak about building or championing diversity. Yet many of these core values also include a focus on financial factors: “determined to grow by managing our business resourcefully and profitably” (Newsday Media Group), “to be wise and careful stewards of our shareowners’ money” (The Washington Post Co.), and “creating long-term shareholder value through investment and constancy of purpose” (The New York Times Co.).

### ***1.3 Economics of the media***

This research will question how these financial considerations often overwhelm other considerations – including a newspaper’s responsibility to society. In political economy of culture theory, “questions such as who owns and controls the media, who makes the decisions about content, how financing impacts on the range of texts produced, and the ways in which the profit motive drives production are central to an understanding of what eventually gets produced and circulated in the media” (Dines & McMahon Humez, 2003, preface).

It is this intersection between social responsibility and pleasing the shareholders that this research hopes to examine by looking at how diversity efforts have been impacted by financial factors. METPRO (Minority Editorial Training Program) was touted as a program that was successful in training journalists of color. But the copy-editing program, which was begun by Times Mirror and then picked up by Tribune after the two companies merged, was a victim of financial considerations.

Journalism scholars have not always embraced economics in their media studies (Fengler & Russ-Mohl, 2007; Underwood, 1993). But media economics has become even more important in the last two decades as media have been bought, sold and merged in multibillion-dollar deals (Wilson, Gutiérrez & Chao, 2003). And with the massive retrenchment seen in the past few years, economics is an issue that cannot be ignored in today’s journalism research. Dines and Humez study this through political economy of culture, which maintains that “the

system of production often determines what sort of artifacts will be produced, what structural limits there will be as to what can and cannot be said and shown, and what sort of audience effects the text may generate” (p. 12). This approach also suggests that to understand any specific form of media or culture, one must understand “how it is situated in relation to the dominant social structure” (Durham & Kellner, 2001, p.9). In the United States, media is mostly profit- and market-oriented. For example, because film and television production is controlled by giant media corporations interested in profit, American television is dominated by genres such as talk and game shows, soap operas, situation comedies and action/adventure shows (Durham & Kellner).

While such concerns are greater in television and advertising, they do also impact newspapers. Instead of a class communication media, the United States has a mass communication media, one that strives to accumulate larger and larger audiences, therefore developing content that will attract many, according to Wilson, Gutiérrez and Chao. In the United States, from the beginning of press history this has meant a focus on European immigrants; people of color were treated as fringe audiences (Wilson, Gutiérrez & Chao). Ghosh (2003) writes that this focus on financial factors can result in the “erasure” of certain people from the media. She writes that the media, for example, either do not present people from India, or they put them in the background. She connects “this visual racial cleansing to the monetarist policies of U.S. capitalist economy, which has needed South Asian labor but has never been able to come to terms with the

presence of this community in the U.S. landscape” (p. 275). This presents Indians more as people needed for their labor, not their lives, Ghosh writes.

#### ***1.4 Increasing financial pressures***

The financial considerations of the media became much more significant when newspapers began to go public, and they had to become accountable to shareholders. For generations, newspapers were family-owned or privately owned, and finances were not only secret, but accounting was very informal (Meyer, 2004). In the late 1960s, newspapers started to go public. At that time, they had profit margins of 20 to 40 percent, well above the 6 or 7 percent margins common in normal retail businesses (Meyer). However, the decline of readership, paired with an economic downturn, made it difficult for newspapers to continue maintaining these profits, resulting in an “expansion of newspaper chains fixated on the bottom line, and the pressure of Wall Street brokers who have no concern for anything but the performance of newspaper stocks” (Underwood).

By 2008, the financial pressures on American newspapers meant fewer pages than three years before and shorter stories, according to a survey by the Pew Research Center (2008). There was less foreign national and science news. Staff had shrunk in most newspapers, and the remaining staff was younger, under greater pressure and had less institutional memory (Pew, 2008). Of the large dailies (those with circulations over 100,000) that were surveyed, 85 percent had cut newsrooms staff in the previous three years, the Pew Research Center reported.

Philip Meyer, in *The Vanishing Newspaper: Saving Journalism in the Information Age*, writes that newspapers have only themselves to blame for the state they are in, due to an economic model that now focuses on pleasing the stockholder. Meyer (2004) writes that:

The compatibility of profit and social virtue is not novel in capitalist theory. Such an absolutist as Milton Friedman has argued for 'justly obtained profit.' And when newspapers were mostly owned by private individuals and families, the best of them tended to treat profitability ... as incidental to the main focus of business, which was making life better for themselves, for customers, and their employees (p. 11).

But now, Meyer writes, newspapers have employed the "harvesting marketing position," which a stagnant industry does by raising prices and lowering quality, "trusting that customers will continue to be attracted by the brand name rather than the substance for which the brand once stood. Eventually, of course, they will wake up. But as the harvest metaphor implies, this is a nonrenewable, take-the-money-and-run strategy. Once harvested, the market position is gone" (p. 10).

The economic policies of newspapers also has resulted in newspaper executives chasing the suburban reader, who is mostly white, and ignoring communities of color (Wilson & Gutiérrez). Instead of trying to attract communities of color, the media see these groups as a problem, "forcing them to change their methods of doing business and making them cater to groups that tenaciously hang on to their cultural roots in a nation in which other immigrants have willingly shed theirs," Wilson and Gutiérrez write (p. 54). Instead of trying to find potential readers in inner cities that are becoming racially diverse,

newspapers instead focus on readers in suburban cities and counties, the authors write. Newspaper managers don't ascribe racial motives to this; they say they are simply targeting the affluent readers which advertisers seek.

As an example, Wilson, Gutiérrez and Chao (2003) tell the story of the *Los Angeles Times*. In 1978, publisher Otis Chandler admitted in a television interview that the paper had "a way to go" in covering the city's communities of color, but added that it would not make sense financially for them to target those communities because they did not have purchasing power and so were not responsive to "the kind of advertising we carry." The *Los Angeles Times*, he said, was "not their kind of paper; it's too big, it's too stuffy. If you will, it's too complicated" (Wilson, Gutiérrez & Chao, p. 28). A year later, in another interview with the authors, Chandler said that people of color would become readers as they became more affluent, or, as he put it, "prospects for our advertisers."

These strategies of intentionally excluding communities of color may be based on economic factors, but the authors write that they have racial overtones, since it is the low-income people in inner cities who are being unserved by the media, and many of these are people of color. Further, the *Los Angeles Times* probably missed an opportunity, as Southern California has become one of the country's most diverse regions. In the meantime, the *Times*' circulation continues its rapid decline. As Wilson, Gutiérrez and Chao write:

The lesson the Los Angeles Times and other media learned is that the development of a racially and ethnically diverse population is not a *problem* for the media but an *opportunity*. Instead of trying to bypass non-White readers and coverage, news organizations that made the greatest gains are those

that have seen the growing racial diversity as an opportunity rather than a problem (p. 29).

Other scholars have reiterated this point (Pease, 1993; Pease, 1990; Reinhardt, 2003). Pease wrote that the media are losing consumers because of poor service in a changing marketplace. This will continue, he predicted in the 1990s, because the media isn't serving the growing communities of color. It is unlikely that those consumers will remain loyal, he wrote, and unlikely that advertisers will stay with media that are unable to deliver the only growing segments of the U.S. population – African-American, Hispanic and Asians (Pease, 1990). In fact, Hispanics have taken a commanding lead as the largest group of color in the United States, and their purchasing power was expected to top \$1 trillion in 2008, outpacing African-American spending power (Reinhardt). How they see themselves reflected in newspapers will determine whether they become loyal readers, yet to serve these readers requires more journalists who know the Hispanic culture, Reinhardt writes.

Wilson, Gutiérrez and Chao write that advertisers are leaving mainstream mass media and focusing on market segmentation, where they can target specific audiences; for example, they are placing advertising in media that reach those consumers, such as ethnic newspapers. The writers argue:

The future of communication media in the new century will be determined more by content advances than by technological advances. With a myriad of choices, people will pay attention to the media that pay attention to them. Writers, editors, and producers with an ability to address the taste and preferences of people in a multicultural audience will do more to shape the future of media than those who design the technologies to transmit those messages (p. 302).

In the 1940s, the press feared government limitations on press freedom because of shortcomings in their performance (Pease, 1993). But in the 1990s, “the media’s loss of franchise in the American marketplace of ideas is market-driven and self-inflicted,” Pease writes. In addition, he maintains that the media have both an economic reason and a social responsibility to cover communities of color:

The news media — and the society they seek to serve — must come to the realization that there are compelling philosophical and pragmatic reasons to be concerned with the increasing ethnic and racial diversity of this country. How can an information medium remain a true mass medium central to the operation of a democratic society when its content is increasingly unimportant to the lives of the fastest-growing segments of the society? And once the realization of these stark facts has sunk in, the news media must act to reach and hold these growing audiences, not just for purposes of economic gain, but because communication between and among the diverse segments of an increasingly diverse society serves — as the Hutchins commissioners said — to set and clarify the goals and values of the society.

### ***1.5 The gatekeeping function***

Gatekeeping theory, as defined by Shoemaker (1996) is the process through which items pass on their way, step by step, from discovery to use. In newspapers, it is not just the reporting and writing, but the conception of stories, their shaping and their dissemination, Shoemaker writes. In this process, gatekeepers may exercise their own preferences. Further, media scholars have used gatekeeping to evaluate “whether professional norms of balance and objectivity ensure against bias and distortion by showing that the selection

process results in media content that somehow reflects reality,” Shoemaker (1991, p. 3) writes.

In deciding what stories, images, and other content to run, the media confers “public legitimacy” upon the items and brings them into a public forum to be discussed by a general audience (Schudson, 1995). The media not only report the news, but they also “amplify it” (Schudson, p. 19). In addition, Schudson points out that who writes the story is important, since journalists can bring empathy to a story. “When minorities and women and people who have known poverty or misfortune first-hand are authors of news as well as its readers, the social world represented in the news expands and changes,” he writes (p. 8).

It was this philosophy of expanding the news that the Kerner Commission had in mind when it stated the press should integrate coverage of African-Americans into every aspect of coverage, from news and society pages to the comics. But many media critics and scholars (Dates & Pease, 1997; Gist, 1990; Hacker, 1997; Quiroga, 1997; Schudson, 1995; Wilson & Gutiérrez, 1985) maintain that the mainstream media still present the news through the lens of white journalists, and people of color have not been mainstreamed into coverage. Historically, this lack of coverage has impacted race relations in the United States, sending a powerful psychological message to whites and people of color (Wilson & Gutiérrez). Because the media are supposed to reflect social reality, the lack of people of color in the news pages has signified exclusion from American society, Wilson and Gutiérrez maintain. In current times, the media still “speak for a white nation, which expects all citizens to conform to its way. Nor do

they see that much has changed since the Kerner Commission remarked, 'The media report and write from the standpoint of a white man's world,' " Hacker (p. 72) writes.

Jorge Quiroga writes about how the process affects Hispanics. Although the U.S. Census projected that Hispanics would outnumber blacks as the nation's biggest minority (this fact occurred in 2003, after Quiroga's essay was written), Quiroga says the press is mostly indifferent to Hispanics:

The problem itself can be traced to the process of reporting on Hispanics. Reporters and editors habitually seem to speak about Hispanics, not to Hispanics. Journalists are blind to the full range of diversity within this community. I call this the transparency of Hispanics before the U.S. press. It is a curious attribute of being noted, not quite completely ignored but not fully seen or counted. As such, the media influences how Hispanics view themselves as well as how Anglos perceive Hispanics (p. 92).

He goes on to write that the press portrays Hispanics as an underclass – uneducated immigrants who can't speak for themselves. And when the press does report on Hispanics, Quiroga writes, "the rift between this emerging group and mainstream society seems even greater" (p. 92).

The gatekeeping function that has kept people of color out of the news or confined them to stereotypical portrayals is not necessarily intentional, many scholars say. Instead, it is most often a result of gatekeepers, who are predominantly white, viewing events in the context of their own perceptual biases (Gist; Wilson & Gutiérrez). For much of its history, the United States was monocultural and, with the exception of African-Americans, it was racially homogeneous; therefore, negative press images of people of color stem largely

from ignorance because white journalists' views are still anchored in their own experiences (Gist).

But whether intentional or not, this can have an influence not only in what news – or *whose* news – is covered, but in how the news is framed. A study that examined how stories about racial disparity were framed in leading newspapers found that of 411 phrases that compared the risk faced by whites and blacks (for example, in a story of which racial group was less or more likely to receive a mortgage), nearly 75 percent were framed in terms of high probability of black loss, not the high probability of white success (Gandy, 1997). This, the author wrote, is evidence of “an editorial bias that, taken in the context of cultivation theory that indicates that people tend to see the world in ways that are framed in media accounts, has consequences for the cultivation of social perceptions about risks faced by blacks” (p. 43). The study also added the staff presence of journalists of color as another factor that might explain patterns in story framing and found the influence of these journalists was substantial. Further, Gandy and Li (2005) believe that these comparisons shape public view and possibly even public policy options. In another study, an analysis by Gandy and Li found that whites were often characterized as being better off than blacks. In content where both groups were presented as being burdened, whites were still shown as being less severely burdened. The articles in which these comparisons appeared did not always raise the issue of discrimination in relation to these discrepancies. While it was easier for journalists to charge financial institutions with racial bias, they did so less often when talking about the criminal justice system and even

less when it came to the health care system – leading to a blame-the-victim syndrome. “This means that well-intentioned investigative reporters seeking to raise public consciousness and concern about black victimization may ironically contribute to a mounting backlash against race-targeted public policies,” Gandy and Li (p. 82) wrote.

Another content analysis of two newsrooms that served diverse communities found that the copy frequently focused on negative or controversial images concerning people of color, portraying them in a negative context; for example, in stories about crime, drugs, gangs, poverty and broken homes (Gist). When featured in a positive light, the context was most often athletics or entertainment. However, whites were featured in more positive or neutral stories, such as weddings, home purchases, political and community activities and other mainstream activities. There was little evidence of people of color being mainstreamed into the news.

Other content analyses have replicated these findings (Martindale, 1990), including one that studied coverage of African-Americans in Boston in 1986. The mainstream media’s dominant picture of black neighborhoods was of crime- and drug-infested areas, while the black media portrayed these neighborhoods as ones that were making efforts to improve education, business, housing and community appearance (Martindale). A two-year study (Media Tenor, 2004) also found an unbalanced portrait of society, with people of color in secondary roles and whites leading most of the political and economic events. In a content analysis of 154,003 stories in national network news, *The Wall Street Journal*,

*Newsweek* and *Time Magazine*, the study found that people of color were mostly reported in negative situations involving court cases, violence, epidemics and conflicts. From 2002 to 2004, there was increasing positive coverage of Hispanics, the study found. However, many other stories related to unemployment or immigration policies, and the tone of those stories was mostly negative toward Hispanics. The coverage of other groups overall was negative, especially when it came to Arabs (stories about racism, terrorism and court cases) and Native Americans (stories about gambling businesses and court cases). When it came to blacks, the study found a more frequent focus on stories about ordinary peoples' lives, from a story of someone waiting for a transplant to a soldier coming home. But many other news stories were about the problems facing the black community, such as housing, health care and violence, and these had a negative tone. The study also found that an imbalance in covering the difficulties and problems of regular African-Americans, while occasionally highlighting an aspect of black achievement, risked making successful blacks look like uncommon exceptions.

Such practices, Gist writes, can result in "systemic" racism, in which society holds subtle negative views of people of color, and which prevents the advancement of people of color, thus preventing them from having much decision-making influence. Entman makes the same point, saying human processing information is based on stored categories called schemas, which are similar to stereotypes. For journalists and readers, these schemas, combined with existing social structures and political processes, promote stereotyping.

Journalists themselves may not support racism, but they shape reports in accordance with journalistic practices that “yield visuals and sound bites that fit audience stereotypes” (Entman, p. 345).

Copy editors are often the most critical of gatekeepers, since they are the final step in the production process. Journalists of color don’t necessarily flock to copy desks, according to ASNE’s 2009 survey. In 2008, there were 2,847 reporters of color, 1,369 supervisors of colors and 1,207 copy editors of color. American copy desks are still mostly white, according to the survey: 12.9 percent of all copy editors are of color, while 87.1 percent are white.

Few studies specifically consider copy editors of color, although at least one survey of journalists of color found that many felt there was a need for gatekeepers of color, to make sure that stereotypes, offensive language and offensive images were caught and edited out of the newspaper (Johnston & Flamiano, 2003).

### ***1.6 A look at journalists of color***

The lack of diversity in gatekeeping positions has not gone unnoticed in the industry, especially among the largest diversity organizations – the National Association of Black Journalists (NABJ), the National Association of Hispanic Journalists (NAHJ), the Asian American Journalists Association (AAJA), the Native American Journalists Association (NAJA) and Unity: Journalists of Color. The retrenchment in newspapers of the past few years has led these groups to issue warnings about the affect on diversity.

NABJ, in an open letter to the industry in July of 2008, said “diversity has too often been the first casualty in the assault on journalism.” The presidential campaign which featured Barack Obama, it said, showed even more that diversity is a “necessity for telling balanced news stories about America and for putting a fresh story perspective before the readers through the lens of minority journalists.”

A month later, NAHJ president O. Ricardo Pimentel, in a letter to industry leaders, also chastised industry leaders for the eroding numbers of Hispanics in newsrooms. “We fear that Latinos forced to join the exodus from the nation’s newsrooms will have lasting consequences on how you cover the fastest growing segment of the U.S. population,” he wrote.

The problem seems one of both hiring and retention. For parity to be achieved by the goal set by ASNE, newspapers in this country would not only have to retain all their journalists of color, but they also would need to hire an additional 625 journalists of color each year (McGill, 2000). At the time of McGill’s report, the pipeline bringing new journalists into the field didn’t produce candidates of color at the needed rate. Dedman and Doig (2005), in a Knight Foundation report, studied newspaper employment from 1990 to 2005. They found that among the 200 largest newspapers, 73 percent employed fewer non-whites, as a share of the newsroom jobs, than they did in some earlier year from 1990 to 2004. Only 27 percent of these dailies were at their peak as 2005 began. Looking at all newspapers in the survey, they found that only 18 percent were at their peak, while 44 percent had slipped. They also compared the newsroom

figures to community demographics, using audited circulation data and the 2000 U.S. Census. Only 13 percent of newspapers had reached ASNE's goal of parity between newsroom and community. In addition, there were 346 newspapers that had no people of color in their newsrooms. While these 346 newspapers were smaller ones, they had a combined weekday circulation of 3,337,478. The authors found that while the industry might be adding journalists of color, the gains had been uneven. "The share of journalism jobs held by non-whites has receded from its high-water mark in most newsrooms, large and small," Dedman and Doig noted (p. 1).

In 2009, ASNE's survey of the previous year showed the largest one-year decline of all U.S. journalists since the group began their census in 1978; 5,900 newsroom jobs were lost. Of those 5,900, 854 were journalists of color, for a decline of .11 percentage points from 2008. That brought the number of journalists of color back to the level reported in the 1998 census. The survey also found that 458 newspapers had no people of color on their full-time staff; that number, ASNE reported, has been growing since 2006 (ASNE, 2009).

Not surprisingly, the census reported that only 262 journalists of color were hired in 2008 – by far the lowest number ever reported, while 1,116 left newsrooms, giving newspapers an 84 percent retention rate (white journalists had an 86 percent retention rate). This compares to the late 1980s and early 1990s, when newspapers hired far more journalists of color than they lost. And, in the 2007 ASNE survey, the numbers were at least almost equal, 465 hired and 424 departed.

The literature would seem to indicate that journalists of color are not happy in America's newsrooms – and have not been, years before the retrenchment in newspapers. In a 2002 survey which appears in *The American Journalist in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* (2007), 23 percent of journalists of color said they expected to leave their workplace in the next five years, compared to 17 percent of white journalists. The percentage for African-American journalists only was even higher: 32 percent said they were considering leaving their workplace. The percentage of journalists of color who said they were “very satisfied” or “highly satisfied” in their jobs was also several points lower than white journalists (84.5 percent for white journalists, 77 percent for African-Americans, 78 percent for Hispanics and 80.9 percent for Asian-Americans). The study's authors (Weaver, Beam, Brownlee, Voakes, & Wilhoit, 2007) concluded:

One challenge has been a retrenchment in newspaper newsrooms. The growth of earlier days simply no longer is occurring. Another is the lack of a significant pipeline of young minority journalists coming out of journalism schools. A third is the finding that minority journalists, especially African-American journalists, voice unhappiness with opportunities for advancement and are notably more likely than others to say they intend to leave the news media in the next five years (p. 211).

Most journalists of color were not concerned with more pay or fringe benefits, but instead sought a chance to get ahead in the organization (51.8 percent), job security (64.3 percent), and a chance to help people (80.4 percent), according to Weaver, et al. This was replicated in another study that sought to learn what would make a job appealing to black and Hispanic journalists (Bramlett-Solomon, 1993). While this survey found that most black and Hispanic

journalists surveyed were either “very” or “fairly” satisfied, they also found that they were almost twice as likely as white journalists to be dissatisfied with their jobs. Among the factors judged most important to journalists of color were a chance to advance (77 percent), a chance to help people (69 percent), and job security (64 percent). Job salary was ranked in the middle (55 percent). The aspiration to move up the job ladder, the authors wrote, is probably met by frustration, since industry figures show that Hispanic and black journalists don’t move into management positions as fast as white journalists.

### ***1.7 Attitudes toward diversity***

There is also a wide gap between journalists of color and their white colleagues and managers as to perceptions about the job. For example, 84 percent of white journalists in one survey said they had a good or excellent relationship to their supervisors, but only 50 percent of black journalists described it so (Byerly & Warren, 1996). A 1993 survey of 537 NABJ members and another 100 managers, nearly all white, found that black journalists still felt there were many racial problems within newsrooms. According to the survey, 67 percent of black journalists felt newsroom managers were not committed to retaining and promoting black journalists, yet 94 percent of managers said their organization was showing a serious commitment. While 92 percent of the managers said promotion standards were the same for blacks as non-blacks, only 28 percent of NABJ members felt that way. Also, 67 percent of NABJ members said blacks spend more time in entry-level jobs, while only 12 percent of managers agreed with that view (National Association of Black Journalists,

1993). The NABJ journalists and managers also disagreed on training and mentoring, whether there were higher standards for blacks, and even the importance of social interaction. Wrote one respondent to the survey: “Being a black journalist means endless training programs, baby steps in job progression only to be confronted by low expectations by supervisors” (National Association of Black Journalists, p. 11).

In fact, a backlash has been reported among some white journalists. In a controversial article in 1995 in *The New Republic*, entitled “Race in the Newsroom: A Case Study,” anonymous white journalists at *The Washington Post* were quoted as criticizing diversity practices for bringing in reporters who lacked newspaper skills and who were “dumb as a post” (Shalit, 1995). Yet, as the article stated, in 1994, the *Post* had 38 new hires. Of those, only 10 were journalists of color.

Another 1993 article, in the *American Journalism Review*, portrayed white men as anxious over diversity practices, saying:

For the first time, a large number of white male journalists believe they have to overcome the handicaps of race and gender that have traditionally worked against women and minorities. Although they acknowledge that past injustices need to be remedied, they feel threatened, frustrated and, in many cases, angry (Shepard, 1993).

Yet a 1992 study by the Freedom Forum found that journalists of color were often better educated than their white counterparts, with proportionately more having attended graduate school (Stewart, 1997). And an ASNE survey in 1989 found that among supervisors, the number of years of experience was virtually the same for all journalists – those of color and whites (Stewart).

As for journalists of color, they report that even at the management level, many feel they have to struggle to fit in (McCormick, 2002). In a report produced by the McCormick Fellowship Initiative, and administered by the National Association of Minority Media Executives and the Media Management Center at Northwestern University, top managers of color said they felt they had to give up part of their identities; this included adjustments such as the way they spoke, the topics they discussed, the opinions they expressed, and the way they looked or dressed. According to the survey of 29 managers, more than two-thirds felt a special obligation to succeed because they believed the reputation of their race was at stake, and this caused additional stress for most of them. And although these journalists had now reached a level where they could greater influence the way that race and ethnicity were handled in their workplaces, many felt wary of bringing up the subject because they were worried about being typecast, dismissed as having a race agenda, or regarded as troublemakers. "The world of media executives of color is cluttered with compromises, contradictions, adjustments and sacrifices," the report's author, Keith Woods, wrote (p. 1).

The contradictions between what white journalists and journalists of color believed also extend from diversity efforts to downsizing. White journalists, saying they lacked "the race card," feared that employers would have money only for "special recruits" (Stewart, 1997). Journalists of color, on the other hand, felt that cutbacks would impact them more adversely, since layoffs threaten those hired last, and those are usually journalists of color. This would also mean that

fewer journalists of color would be left in the pipeline for promotion into management (Stewart).

## Chapter 2

This research explores the problem of hiring and retaining journalists of color – and of the newspaper industry’s commitment to do so – through one training program. Because there has already been several quantitative studies and because data about the number of journalists of color in newsrooms is supplied annually by the American Society of Newspapers Editors, this research is a case study exploring the successes or failure of this program, employing qualitative methods, specifically long interviews.

Because the program is no longer in existence, and because there was limited written data about the program, the research also took a historical approach that relied on long interviews with both participants and those who founded the program or were involved in some form. Those questions are in Appendices A and B. The time period studied was 1989 to 2007, the years the program ran.

### ***2.1 Research questions***

The following five research questions were explored:

**RQ1:** Was METPRO considered a successful program by those who ran the program on a daily basis and those who participated in the program?

**RQ2:** Did the participants feel that the program gave them an entry into journalism, or otherwise facilitate their careers?

**RQ3:** Did this program, one of the few to train journalists of color, help to diversify the industry?

**RQ4:** What economic factors led to its demise?

**RQ5:** What diversity lessons can be learned from this program?

## ***2.2 Theoretical lens***

Because this study is focused on journalists of color, an underrepresented group in American newsrooms, the case study was organized, as Creswell writes, “around identifying the social, political, or historical context of the problem under study” (p. 176).

Further, Creswell writes that:

...researchers increasingly use a theoretical lens or perspective in qualitative research, which provides an overall orienting lens for the study of questions of gender, class, and race (or other issues of marginalized groups). This lens becomes an advocacy perspective that shapes the types of questions asked, informs how data are collected and analyzed, and provides a call for action or change.... Racialized discourses raise important questions about the control and production of knowledge, particularly about people and communities of color (p. 62).

In addition, this research took an inductive approach. Creswell describes this as beginning with the gathering of detailed information from participants. The researcher then forms this information into categories or themes, which are in turn developed into patterns, theories or generalizations that the researcher can compare with personal experiences or existing literature on the topic.

This research identified these common threads from the participants through depth interviews, and then compared them with existing literature on journalists of color in American newsrooms. Negative or “discrepant information,”

as described by Creswell, also is presented. “Because real life is composed of different perspectives that do not always coalesce, discussing contrary information adds to the credibility of an account,” Creswell writes (p. 192).

### ***2.3 The researcher’s role***

I am a Cuban-American woman, a longtime member of the National Association of Hispanic Journalists, and a Newsday employee since 1995. Newsday ran the copy-editing portion of METPRO until it came to an end in 2007, and I worked closely with many of the participants. However, rather than view this as a weakness, I believe this is a strength which gives me additional insight into the program and an insider status that aided in gaining the trust of the participants. Since the program is no longer in operation and cannot be observed, this background was helpful in having provided some firsthand knowledge of its operations. As Creswell writes, qualitative research is an “interpretative research, with the inquirer typically involved in a sustained and intensive experience with participants” (p. 177). Mehra (2001) also writes that interactions between researcher and participants cannot be removed from the research equation, and can serve “as a means to get to a better understanding of the nature of reality as constructed by the respondents and the researcher” (p. 69), so I feel my past roles will only help in rounding out this study.

It is no longer necessary to take a disinterested, outsider position to study issues of race and racism. Since the 1960s, researchers have found that the norms of pure disinterested scientific investigation were not necessarily adequate (Bulmer & Solomos, 2004), and many researchers have now “set themselves the

goal of sympathetically understanding why blacks, as a collectivity, are located where they are today in relationship to whites – in terms of power, wealth, status and development” (p. 4).

A scholar of color also sometimes has a different perspective, or they should have, as Ladson-Billings and Donnor write:

All scholars of color must look to the epistemological underpinnings and legitimacy of their culture and cultural ways of knowing. They must face the tensions that emerge in their communities between assimilation into the U.S. mainstream and the creation of separate and distinct cultural locations. ... All scholars of color need to acknowledge the salience of popular culture in shaping our research and scholarly agendas, for it is in the popular that our theories and methodologies become living, breathing activities (p. 292).

Further, I consider myself a critical scholar, one whose work hopes to confront the injustices of a society or sphere within the society, in this case certain possible inequalities within newsrooms themselves. Kincheloe and McLaren (2005) describe such a scholar:

We are defining a criticalist as a researcher or theorist who attempts to use her or his work as a form of social or cultural criticism and who accepts certain basic assumptions: that all thought is fundamentally mediated by power relations that are social and historically constituted; that facts can never be isolated from the domain of values or removed from some form of ideological inscription; that the relationship between concept and object and between signifier and signified is never stable or fixed and is often mediated by the social relations of capitalist production and consumption; that language is central to the formation of subjectivity (conscious and unconscious awareness); that certain groups in any society and particular societies are privileged over others and, although the reasons for this privileging may vary widely, the oppression that characterizes contemporary societies is most forcefully reproduced when subordinates accept their social status as natural, necessary, or inevitable; that oppression

has many faces and that focusing on only one at the expense of others (e.g., class oppression versus racism) often elides the interconnections among them; and, finally, that mainstream research practices are generally, although most often unwittingly, implicated in the reproduction of systems of class, race, and gender oppression” (p. 304).

## ***2.4 Bounding the study***

### **Setting**

Most of the 122 surviving METPRO copy-editing participants (two are deceased) are now spread throughout the country, although some still work at *Newsday*, where the researcher also works. Three of the interviews with METPRO participants were conducted face-to-face. Those interviews were conducted outside the newsroom, so as to give participants a sense of greater freedom in speaking. The rest of the interviews were done by phone, and were taped, with the consent of the participants. Each interview took anywhere from half an hour to an hour and a half.

### **Actors**

Of the 124 people who took part in the METPRO program, the researcher interviewed 25 of them, or 20 percent of the participant population. The researcher also spoke to 10 people who were either top editors or influential in the creation and running of the METPRO program.

The former METPRO participants interviewed were from across the classes, from the very first class of 1989-1990 to the second-to-last class of 2005-2006 (the last class only had two participants). The participants, therefore, ran from those with 20 years of journalism experience to those just beginning

their careers. The participants were recruited from a list of all the METPROS given to me by former program officials; many were known to me. I found e-mail addresses for them through colleagues and other METPRO participants and also found some participants through Facebook. A couple of METPRO participants were found through a Google search.

Of the participants interviewed, nine identified themselves as Hispanic, seven as African-American, eight as Asian or South Asian and one as mixed-race (African-American and Asian). Fifteen are women and 10 are men.

The participants live throughout the country, including Los Angeles, Chicago, New York and Atlanta. Twenty of them are still in journalism; five of them have left newspapers (one shortly after he was interviewed). Several of them were considering leaving journalism, and some were even taking graduate-level classes in other fields as they headed in that direction.

### **Processes**

Using the long interview method, the interviewer sought to determine the experiences of those who participated in METPRO, both during the program and their subsequent careers. This includes the participants' perceptions of METPRO, and their thoughts as to whether it was a successful program.

Particular attention was paid to whether the participants' perceptions changed throughout the years, since the program's concept changed from what it was originally conceived to be – a program to train people of color who were not necessarily journalists. After the initial years, the program began accepting recent college graduates who had studied journalism. The program became

more of an internship-type of program rather than a program to train people of color in a new career. Also, in the final years of the program, it began to be affected by financial considerations.

### **Data Collection Strategies**

Long interviews were used to collect the data. Each interview lasted from half an hour to an hour and a half, and some follow-up interviews were conducted to clear up or expand certain points. The initial interviews consisted of the same questions, although this was an unstructured interview with open-ended questions intended to seek views and opinions from participants, who were encouraged to tell their stories fully with little prompting. The long interview, as described by McCracken (1988) is a powerful tool that allows a researcher “to step into the mind of another person, to see and experience the world as they do themselves” (p. 9).

### **Data Analysis Procedures**

Most of the interviews were tape-recorded, with the participants' permission, and then transcribed. The interviews were then sorted accordingly into themes or patterns that emerged. Although the researcher had an idea of common themes among journalists of color, an open mind was instrumental in this part of the process. As McCracken writes:

The object of analysis is to determine the categories, relationships, and assumptions that inform the respondent's view of the world in general and the topic in particular. The investigator comes to this undertaking with a sense of what the literature says ought to be there, a sense of how the topic at issue is constituted in his or her own experience, and a glancing sense of what took place in the interview itself. The investigator must be prepared to use all of this material as a

guide to what exists there, but he or she must also be prepared to ignore all of this material to see what none of it anticipates. If the full powers of discovery inherent in the qualitative interview are to be fully exploited, the investigator must be prepared to glimpse and systematically reconstruct a view of the world that bears no relation to his or her own view or the one evident in the literature. (p. 42)

### **Verification**

Creswell recommends determining the accuracy of the findings by taking the final report or specific descriptions or themes back to participants to determine the accuracy. This procedure also can involve conducting follow-up interviews with participants and “providing an opportunity for them to comment on the findings,” Creswell writes (p. 191). These are all methods the researcher employed, as well as using rich, thick description to convey the findings. Creswell writes that doing so can provide a perspective that is more “realistic and richer,” and can add to the validity of the findings. Also, by using a large group of participants, the research may arrive closer to a consensus. Potter (1996) writes that “when researchers find a common perspective expressed among many different kinds of people in a community, it lends credibility that the insight exists in the community” (p. 153).

In addition, the chairman and members of the thesis committee will be entrusted to act as examiners throughout the thesis process.

### **Reporting the findings**

This study used a descriptive, narrative form. Much of the description comes directly from the participants, so that readers will be able to fully understand the experiences of these beginning journalists and any struggles or

successes they may have faced. The researcher also offers an analysis of emerging themes. In addition, the data yielded information about the successes and failures of this program, which the researcher offers as lessons for the newspaper industry.

## Chapter 3

One of the results of the Kerner report was that a number of training programs were established for people of color. While there were a few established in the early 1960s and while they were successful in placing people of color into jobs, they usually lost their funding after a few years or didn't broaden their funding to be able to handle larger numbers (Dates & Barlow, p. 401).

### ***3.1 Other programs***

One of the first of the very successful programs was a summer training program at Columbia University – later renamed the Michelle Clark Program for Minority Journalists. It placed 70 people in print and broadcasting jobs from 1968 to 1974 (Wilson & Gutierrez, p. 165). The program had been supported financially by the Ford Foundation and run by renowned newsman Fred W. Friendly. But after it lost its funding in 1974, the university was forced to drop the program. It was revived by the University of California at Berkeley as the Institute for Journalism Education (IJE), with aid from the Gannett Foundation. In 1978, IJE also began a training program for editors of color at the University of Arizona.

According to the website of the now named Robert C. Maynard Institute for Journalism Education, the institute “has a history of training and placing more nonwhite journalists than any other single institution in the country.”

Also in the late 1970s and early 1980s, several news organizations started in-house programs, including Capital Cities Communications, Gannett

Newspapers, Knight-Ridder, and the Times Mirror Co. (Wilson & Gutierrez, p. 166).

### **3.2 METPRO – Its history and organization**

Both the *Los Angeles Times*, the flagship newspaper for Times Mirror Co., and *Newsday*, the chain's second-largest paper, had a poor history of recruiting journalists of color before METPRO came into existence (Shaw, 1990; Payne, personal communication, August 21, 2009).

A decade after the Kerner report, the *Los Angeles Times* still had a handful of blacks and Hispanics on its staff. *Los Angeles Times* senior editor Noel Greenwood admitted in an interview for his own paper that the *Times* had started serious recruitment of journalists of color “very, very late” (Shaw, 1990). In the early 1980s, it was Greenwood who decided that the paper had to develop its own pool of talent. Recruiter Bob Rawitch had gone on a recruiting trip for the paper and reported back that most successful journalists of color did not want to move out to Los Angeles and that there was a small pool of qualified journalists to begin with, according to former hiring editor Richard Kipling (personal communication, August 25, 2009). Greenwood went to Times Mirror officials, who approved a training program for reporters. That program began in 1984.

The program wasn't accepted wholeheartedly at first. Even *Times* editor William F. Thomas was skeptical of the program, feeling that the paper shouldn't be in the business of training journalists (Shaw, 1990). For the first two years, the newspaper chain would hire only one or two out of the 10-person class at the end of the year, offering to help place the other graduates at non-Times Mirror

newspapers across the country, Kipling said. When Gannett Co. called one year to say it would take all its graduates, Times Mirror changed its policy, and the program began placing all its graduates at its own newspapers (Kipling, personal communication, August 25, 2009).

Said Kipling, who became director of the program in 1991: “There was resistance early on and there was still resistance, palpable resistance, when I took it on: ‘These are not *LA Times* quality people.’ But by the mid-’90s, people would come up to me and say, ‘When do we get the METPROs, when do we get the METPROs?’ ”

In fact, that program was so successful that a few years later, Times Mirror editors began discussing expanding it into copy-editing, said Bruce Hunter, managing editor of the *Greenwich Times*, who was involved in the program’s early years.

The business used to be that the copy editor used to be part of the promotion system. You started as a reporter, the next step would be copy editor. But it all changed, people started coming out of college and people were being hired as a copy editor ... you saw the success [of the reporting program] and what newsrooms could get out of diversifying the staff in the reporting level, and the question was asked, ‘wasn’t it really needed at the copy-editing level?’ That’s an essential stage of the production process of a newspaper and you want the same amount of involvement there that you have at the reporting level (personal communication, July 24, 2009).

When it came to running the copy-editing program, three newspapers made a pitch for it: *The Hartford Courant*, *The Baltimore Sun* and *Newsday*. About eight to 10 people met at *The Hartford Courant*, including editors of those three newspapers and editors and officials from the *Los Angeles Times* and the

Times Mirror Co. Each of the three newspapers made presentations, after which a vote was held. The first round of voting resulted in a tie between *The Hartford Courant* and *Newsday*. After a break, both newspapers came back and made their pitch again. The second vote went to *Newsday* (D. Hamilton, personal communication, September 27, 2009).

The difference in *Newsday's* proposal was that it focused on a classroom component; the paper felt that each METPRO fellow should receive the same training, rather than pair up fellows with people on the copy desk who might or might not give the fellows an equal amount of training, said David Hamilton, who as assistant managing editor was in charge of the program and who had made the pitch at Hartford (personal communication, September 27, 2009). In the summer of 1989, the first copy-editing class began training at *Newsday*.

*Newsday* itself was not without problems in recruiting journalists of color. The paper employed just a couple of African-American reporters in 1969, when publisher Bill Moyers set aside six slots to hire journalists of color (Keeler, 1990). One of those was Les Payne, who later became one of the founders and fourth president of the National Association of Black Journalists. Payne immediately organized *Newsday's* Black Caucus and started pushing to recruit more journalists of color. In 1971, Payne wrote a memo noting that of 33 summer interns at *Newsday*, none was black. In the memo, he called *Newsday's* editors racist (L. Payne, personal communication, August 28, 2009). Shortly after that, Payne proposed and designed a one-year recruiting and training program for journalists of color. The program, which lasted into the late 1970s, was to

become the model for METPRO, according to Payne. Later, as an assistant managing editor at the paper, Payne had input into the METPRO program. In conversations with Hamilton, he pushed for the program *not* to bring in seasoned reporters and editors. Said Payne:

One of the things I made sure of was that they not go out and hire people who were already qualified and should be able to get jobs as reporters and therefore be subjected to 10 percent less pay and have the quote-unquote stigma of being a METPRO trainee, That they should really recruit people who would not otherwise get into journalism, as opposed to people who already had their master's degree from Columbia (personal communication, August 28, 2009).

The program did begin as a vehicle for career-changers mostly, although over the next few years it began to bring in more recent college journalism graduates. Hamilton himself agreed with Payne, telling editors from other papers that “you’ll never expand the pool unless you teach people who would not have been candidates [for hiring]” (personal communication, September 27, 2009).

In the first year, Hamilton brought in Ceasar Williams from *The Philadelphia Inquirer* to run the copy-editing program. Williams tailored the selection process, with innovative ways of testing candidates. Instead of editing news stories as a test, for example, they would edit pieces of literature that had errors inserted, said Hamilton (personal communication, September 27, 2009).

But because Williams had not previously been a *Newsday* employee, the program had “a bit of an outside quality to it” in that first year and wasn’t widely understood, said Pam Robinson, the program’s second director (personal communication, August 24, 2009). After Williams left for personal reasons,

Robinson took over the second year. As guest speakers, she brought in top journalists of color at the newspaper to share their experiences with the classes.

Charlotte Hall, now editor of *The Orlando Sentinel*, was instrumental in METPRO's beginnings at *Newsday*. The program was innovative, she said, in that it was the only one of its type to focus on copy-editing rather than reporting. It worked well as a training program because it was a specific set of skills that was very teachable in a newsroom setting, Hall said (personal communication, July 29, 2009). But even more so, Hall said:

It was a way of diversifying the gatekeepers, which is so important also to bringing up leaders for the newsroom. ... It was an acknowledgment that copy desks, more so even than reporting ranks, were very white, and it had not been a place where we'd had much success. So it was a way of jump-starting that and a way of making it become a mandate in all areas of the paper, not just reporting (personal communication, July 29, 2009).

For *Newsday*, this program was a departure. *Newsday* was a newspaper that generally hired people with at least five to six years of experience; it wasn't used to having to train people (C. Hall, personal communication). There were also some skeptics in the newsroom, but "from the start, it worked pretty well. It really did what it was supposed to do," said Bob Keane, former assistant managing editor at *Newsday* (personal communication, July 9, 2009).

While the program generally received support within the newsroom, there were always a few people "who would say, 'How come my kid brother can't get in the program?', or 'wish there was something like this when I got started.' The answer is, you probably had other help that you aren't recognizing," said Robinson (personal communication, August 24, 2009),

From the start, it was not easy to get into the program. The participants were chosen based on a rigorous interviewing and testing process. The applicants, which numbered about 200 each year, were asked to take a current-events quiz, write an essay and were interviewed over the phone. About 20 people made the cut for a daylong process that many described as “grueling.” The copy-editing finalists were flown to *Newsday*’s Long Island newsroom, where they were interviewed by representatives from each newspaper participating in the program, which could be as many as seven or eight people. They were tested for current events, knowledge of math, and language skills. They also took part in a mock newsroom, where they had to perform under pressure, according to the program’s last director, Mira Lowe (personal communication, July 31, 2009). A class of six to eight people was selected from that group.

Each year’s program ran for two years. During the first year of a class, fellows were trained at *Newsday*. They spent three weeks reporting, then eight to 10 weeks in a classroom setting, where they were taught editing and headline-writing skills. The classes also taught issues such as libel and ethics, as well as bias in articles. Robinson, the second director, would assign participants to read a book about a culture or group other than their own, saying: “I always thought it was a mistake to assume because you were a person of color that you automatically would be sensitive to or aware of another person’s issue. As long as those issues were on the table, everybody needed to look at their own and other experiences” (personal communication, August 24, 2009).

There were two missions that came out of the initial year. First, that the program itself would be diverse, with a mix of ethnicities as well as a geographical mix (M. Lowe, D. Hamilton, personal communications). Second, that the fellows would be ready to hit the ground running once they left the classroom portion and went onto *Newsday's* copy desk (P. Robinson, D. Hamilton, personal communications). Said Robinson:

I always felt very, very strongly that METPRO copy editors had to be completely prepared from their first day on the jobs after the classes ended. I thought that the very worst thing that could happen was for METPRO people to arrive seeming unprepared. And so in my classes, they worked very, very hard to be ready (personal communication, September 1, 2009).

After the classroom, participants were rotated among *Newsday's* copy desks – features, news and sports. In the second year, the participants were selected by one of the newspapers in the program to work at that newspaper; they knew coming into the program that they could be sent anywhere (M. Lowe, personal communication, July 31, 2009). If they did well, they would be hired full-time by the second newspaper after the second year. During the first year, the program paid for housing and relocation, and gave participants a small stipend; during the second year, they received an entry-level salary. Not every participant made it through the two years; some, who were not deemed to be doing well, were let go before the two years were up.

The program was one that needed the commitment not only of the Times Mirror chain, but also of the individual publishers within the chain. While Times Mirror contributed to a fund for the program, each newspaper that participated also contributed to the fund proportionately, based on the newspaper's

circulation. For example, larger newspapers such as *Los Angeles Times* and *Newsday* paid more into the fund (28.6 percent and 16 percent, respectively, in 2006) while smaller newspapers such as *The Hartford Courant* paid less (5.5 percent) (M. Lowe, personal communication, July 31, 2009).

In 1999 (the year before Tribune bought Times Mirror), the program had a high success rate. Ninety percent of those who graduated were still in the media, with more than 60 percent of those still in Times Mirror (Gold, 2000). Two other recruitment programs would be modeled on METPRO: those run by newspaper chains Hearst and Knight-Ridder, said Kipling (personal communication, August 25, 2009). METPRO, he said, “set the standard for diversity programs. It was the most acclaimed program in the industry.”

### ***3.4 The running debate***

If there was one argument that was debated during the whole of its existence, it was whether the program’s goal was to bring in people of color who already had some journalism experience or to try to find people outside journalism but who were interested in newspapers, as proposed by Payne.

Said Robinson:

This was the running debate throughout the program: [whether to bring in] the older people who had been trying to get into journalism and could not get to that next step versus young people just coming out of college but who couldn’t get themselves going. The issue comes down to: Is this a program to help people or to help newspapers? If you’re saying it’s to help us diversify our workforce, which is not a bad goal, then you take anybody regardless of their age or background, as long as you think they can succeed. If your idea is to right the wrongs of the past, then you’re more inclined to take people who have on the periphery trying to get in but who haven’t been able to. There’s an argument for both parts of that, so

my feeling was that it was good to have a class that had a mixture (personal communication, August 24, 2009).

But this sort of dual role that the program took on – to both diversify newsrooms and right the wrongs of the past – did sometimes bother participants themselves.

One participant, who had already been working at a newspaper when he was selected for the program, put it this way:

I've always been bothered by two things: by how that program was divided in terms of what it really was supposed to be, bringing in people with some seasoning and some background already and giving them a little spit and polish and getting them right where they need to be to be at *Newsday* or the *L.A. Times*. Or bring in people who really, truly had very limited backgrounds but to become a conduit to get people from various parts of life and get them into the newspaper industry. I think it did serve its purpose in that it did radically populate *Newsday's* both reporting and copy-editing ranks with minorities. When you look at people who graduated from the program, there's a lot of people who have gone through the program who have done very well for themselves. Overall, it was a good program. But speaking personally, I always felt a little bit almost ashamed of having done it. Was I selling myself short?

While the program tried to maintain a balance between the two groups, later classes were weighted more heavily toward recent graduates of journalism programs. That was not necessarily a conscious decision. "The pool of those who were career changers may have diminished," Lowe said (personal communication, July 31, 2009). "Overwhelmingly, the pool was applicants who were recent college graduates."

### ***3.5 Its impact on diversity***

At *Newsday*, the percentage of journalists of color climbed from 13 percent in 1988, the year before the program began, to 19.2 percent in 1998. Not

all of that is due to METPRO – Hamilton, who also served as *Newsday*'s main recruiter, was quoted in 1993 as saying that the paper “given an equal choice, we’ll tilt toward the minority to address ills that have built up over the course of a century” (Shepard, 1993). But METPRO was key to bringing in journalists of color, according to former *Newsday* editor Anthony Marro. Without METPRO, he said, it “certainly would have been harder” to have a diverse copy desk (personal communication, July 14, 2009). In fact, in 1995, the Long Island-based newspaper closed its New York City operation, and offered buyouts to all employees, in both newsrooms. *Newsday* even opened its doors to recruiters from other papers. “After two days, it became clear recruiters were after the minority copy editors and it became clear we were going to have the whitest copy desk outside Sweden, so I froze the METPRO copy desk,” Marro said (personal communication, July 14, 2009). That year, the entire six-person METPRO class stayed at *Newsday* at the end of their program.

Efforts such as these ensured that the newspaper remained diverse. At one point, in the 1990s, *Newsday* had one of the highest percentages of journalists of color among major newspapers in the country, Marro said (personal communication, July 14, 2009). Larger papers from the old Times Mirror chain have maintained or even increased their percentage of journalists of color in the past 10 years. At *Newsday*, 25.1 percent of those in the newsroom were people of color in 2008, up from 19.2 in the 1998 census; in the *Los Angeles Times* newsroom, 19.1 percent were people of color, about the same as the 19.3 rate in the 1998 census. One reason may be because these newspapers initially

offered voluntary buyouts, rather than layoffs, and so many older journalists, who were white, left the papers. However, the smaller newspapers have not fared as well. *The Hartford Courant*, which resorted to layoffs, dropped from 13.1 percent to 11.5 percent in the same time frame. *The Greenwich Times* had 10.3 percent rate in the 1998 census; *The (Stamford) Advocate* had 13.1 percent. The last census for which these two newspapers were counted was 2006 and they showed a combined rate of 9.3 percent.

While *Newsday* was firm about bringing diversity to its newsroom, Marro added that it wasn't an easy process:

When I was managing editor, Tony Insolia, the editor, used to say that editing a paper is like sculpting with soft clay. You get the ear, and the arm falls off. Diversity is like that. It takes constant, constant attention. METPRO helped force that process. No matter how good our intentions [regarding diversity], it needed constant attention (personal communication, July 14, 2009).

Other editors echoed Marro's sentiments. At the smaller *Greenwich Times*, which was part of the Times Mirror and then Tribune chain until 2007, METPRO was critical to bringing in journalists of color, said Hunter:

I started here in '74 and there were only two women here and one was a librarian and another was an administrative assistant, so it was all white men. There were no minorities whatsoever on our staff. We may have had one minority reporter before we got involved in METPRO. Through METPRO, not only were we getting a reporter every year, but all of a sudden we started getting applications [from journalists of color] that I never got before ... All of a sudden, people knew me and knew my paper, and referrals would come my way. One year, we had a Hispanic news editor, black photo editor, a gay city editor and two of our seven reporters were minorities. The goal for a lot of papers is to have a newsroom as diverse as the community you served, and suddenly I had a newsroom that was *more* diverse than the community I served. If *Greenwich Times* hadn't been involved in METPRO, I don't think a

lot of that would have happened (personal communication, July 24, 2009).

Now that the paper is no longer taking part in such an initiative, the paper is not nearly as diverse as it used to be, Hunter said.

Robinson said that newspapers, especially larger ones, were never good at recruiting, and METPRO brought an awareness of the need for broader diversity:

There was an arrogance that said, 'if you're good enough, you'll find your way to us.' But with METPRO, you can say there are people who need a little extra hand, there are times you might go the extra distance, instead of sitting there arrogantly waiting for people's resume to cross your desk (personal communication, August 24, 2009).

### **3.6 The demise of METPRO**

Most former *Newsday* officials trace the beginning of the end to Times Mirror Company's purchase by Tribune Company in 2000, an \$8-billion takeover that left Tribune heavily in debt. The merger put the chain in third place in terms of newspaper circulation, behind Gannett and Knight Ridder. And Tribune had big plans for the chain, with an approach that would create a network of regional media hubs in Los Angeles, Chicago and New York "that will be irresistible to national advertisers" (Shepard, 2000). Critics, though, predicted that the company's commitment to a 30 percent profit margin would hurt the quality of news. By contrast, Times Mirror had an 18 percent profit margin in 1999 (Smolkin, 2004-05).

The synergies and national plan envisioned by Tribune never took hold, in part because of bad timing and a bad newspaper economy, but also because of

misguided business assumptions and the melding of two very different cultures (Smolkin & Leone, 2006). The model also focused on New York being one of three points in the hub. However, *Newsday* is located on Long Island, not New York City, which would attract more advertisers. Also, national advertisers already had *USA Today*, *The New York Times* or *Wall Street Journal* (T. Marro, personal communication, July 14, 2009).

Tribune executives, from the beginning, had cut back on costs which they perceived as unnecessary. But even after the initial belt-tightening, the cost-cutting continued. In 2005, the chain eliminated 900 jobs, or about 4 percent of its workforce (Smolkin & Leone). And in a May 2006 stock buyback announcement, they also said they would continue making cuts – \$200 million over the next two years, \$40 million of that in newspapers. By 2006, Tribune was also cutting national and foreign bureaus, and creating one Washington bureau for all newspapers to share (Smolkin, 2004-05).

These cost-cutting measures eventually came to bear on the METPRO program. Kipling recounts there was a huge amount of concern within the *Los Angeles Times* when Tribune bought Times Mirror about whether the program would survive. Neither Tribune chief executive Dennis FitzSimmons nor editor Howard Tyner knew about the program, so Kipling flew to Chicago for a presentation. They promised their full support, “and for the next five, six years, it did go forward. But then they tried to make it more efficient by reducing its budget,” Kipling (personal communication, August 25, 2009) said, with a sarcastic note.

Walter Middlebrook, who was *Newsday's* recruiter and director of the METPRO copy-editing program at that time, also was charged with persuading Tribune Co. of the program's success:

We had an applaudable retention rate. My job was to try to sell Tribune on 'this is why you have to keep this program and keep it running the way it's been running. We can prove it has been a success. It was costly by your terms, but when you think about it long-term, costs were minimal.' They couldn't get beyond that [the costs]. Tribune was about short-term financing (personal communication, September 12, 2009).

While the Tribune chain initially expanded it to include the additional Tribune papers (there were nine people in the 2001-02 class), there was already talk of scaling back the program that first year, according to Keane. The following year, the class of 2002-03 was reduced to six people. By 2005, when Keane retired from *Newsday*, "I could already see the program was in trouble" (personal communication July 9, 2009).

In addition to Tribune's financial position, there was also a clash of cultures between the former Times Mirror newspapers and Tribune Co. (W. Middlebrook, personal communication, September 12, 2009). While the Times Mirror Co. operated as a federation of newspapers, Tribune was much more corporate-driven. "Nothing happened in Tribune that Chicago [the company's headquarters] didn't edict," Middlebrook said (personal communication). The federation of papers that was Times Mirror had come to embrace METPRO, but Tribune "never really bought into METPRO," and therefore didn't support it, Middlebrook said (personal communication).

In 2006, a committee consisting of the METPRO directors and editors from several of the papers looked at ways of reducing cost. At that time, the program cost \$650,000 to run for training 10 reporting fellows and \$475,000 for training six copy-editing fellows, according to Mira Lowe, who directed the copy-editing program at the time (personal communication, July 31, 2009). The committee was divided: eight newspapers wanted to retain a modified central program that would train fewer participants and two newspapers from the original Tribune Co. – the *Chicago Tribune* and the *South Florida Sun-Sentinel* – wanted to train their own candidates, which would cut their costs. These papers also felt they would be able to better retain journalists if the fellows knew, coming into the program, which was their destination newspaper. Said Lowe:

Tribune’s mission was basically, how can we do this for lower cost, and that meant either reducing the amount of fellows we ended up interning, or letting each newsroom decide, as opposed to it being a corporate program, how it wanted to move forward with the program. Once you let each unit decide, it diminishes the application of the program. Each paper is kind of tweaking it to its own need, which could be good, but then it’s not considered a corporate-type of program (personal communication, July 31, 2009).

It was decided that the two newspapers would do the program on their own on a trial basis. But following that decision, there was a “snowball effect,” said Lowe, with other newspapers deciding they wanted to train their own fellows, too.

Once it was not a centralized program, the program suffered. Said Lowe:

Cost became really to bear on this and newspapers were looking to downsize and reduce staff, and newspapers decided to suspend METPRO, for this year. And anytime

you get into the mode of suspending anything, it's very hard to bring it back, and so I think it became a victim of the economic times each newspaper was facing. Unfortunately, diversity usually takes a hit when it comes to money matters (personal communication, July 31, 2009).

The last copy-editing class was in 2006-07, and that consisted of two fellows, one for *Newsday* and one for the *Los Angeles Times*. The reporting program has continued individually at each newspaper, although that, too, has been dropped by most Tribune newspapers in the past year because of economic issues.

The Tribune Company, which filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy in December 2008, is now under fire from three unions at Tribune newspapers for seeking to pay from \$21 million to almost \$67 million in bonuses to more than 700 managers and other key employees (Oneal, 2009).

## Chapter 4

This research sought to find out what the METPRO program meant to participants, and how it has affected their subsequent careers. It also sought to answer whether it did indeed help their careers, as was its purpose, and whether the participants themselves felt their presence helped diversify or bring another viewpoint into newsrooms.

While the participants came from many different walks of life and had different levels of education or experience in journalism, common themes began to emerge from most of their answers, with one exception. When they were asked if they felt stigmatized or labeled by coming from a “minority program,” participants held different views.

Many of those interviewed have left the newspaper business or are considering leaving. Here, too, they also agreed: For the most part, they were looking to leave because of the uncertainty of the industry, a developing mindset that is different from the reasons given by many journalists of color in the landmark study by Weaver et al. (2007).

### ***4.1 The appeal of METPRO***

Why did participants join METPRO? While a majority of them did not have much journalism experience or may not even have studied journalism in school, many others held graduate degrees, some from prestigious journalism schools such as Columbia University in New York. A few of those interviewed were already working in the field or had job offers upon graduation, although at

smaller newspapers or in part-time jobs. A common theme began to emerge from these interviews – “a foot in the door” was a phrase that was repeated by several participants.

While they might have been able to get a job somewhere, many participants were drawn to METPRO because of its access to large newspapers such as *Newsday*, the *Los Angeles Times* and, later, the *Chicago Tribune*. As one participant said:

It was really being part of a great company. For someone just getting into journalism, just to get a foot into a company like that ... at that point, it's a no-brainer. It's ridiculous not to try, you've just skipped all the little papers that you'd have to work at in far-off places and you get a chance to work at the best papers in the United States, so you have to try for it.

Said another participant, who has since left journalism: “I think really more than anything, METPRO opened up a door for me. I could probably say the mechanics I would have picked up if I had started on a smaller newspaper on my own. METPRO sort of accelerated that process for me.”

Another participant said she had an offer from a newspaper at which she had interned, but felt METPRO was “a better opportunity. Frankly, it was with bigger papers, and more opportunities. This seemed to be a better bet.”

Said one of the earliest participants, who has since watched other classes come through his newspaper:

With METPRO, you get that huge boost at the start and in most cases you're asked to work at a pretty substantial metropolitan daily. It's not a little tiny paper in Florida or Alabama or Washington or wherever; you're starting at the big time. I'd be hard pressed to think of anyone who would think they didn't have any acceleration with METPRO. They got a foot in the door and farther along than they would have in the beginning.

Along with the chance to work at some of the biggest newspapers in the country was the idea that the program trained them to become copy editors, as well as the stability – participants generally are hired on full-time after their second year with the program.

“It was two years’ job security right there,” said one participant, “and that I would be given the space to learn to edit, in the setting of the newsroom.”

Said another: “The idea of a training component had a lot to do with it. The classroom component was very concentrated. As the years went by, I realized those were good lessons. The foundation was laid pretty well.”

Several participants said they had taken only one editing class in journalism school, and had no previous editing experience. For them, the classroom experience was key.

“It didn’t just throw you into the copy editing profession; it actually prepared you for it,” said one participant, who had joined just out of college. “I knew that I needed more experience; I needed to hone some of the skills that were necessary for copy editing.”

For another participant who left a full-time job in another field, it was not just the classes but a job at the end: “I liked that it was a recruiting program, not just a training program. I’m guaranteed a job at the end of this.”

#### ***4.2 The METPRO experience***

On one aspect all the participants interviewed agreed: that training component during the first year of the program was a solid preparation not only for the next year, but for their entire careers. But as they moved on to their

second year, usually at another newspaper, participants had mixed feelings, with some expressing very negative reactions to the newspaper to which they were sent.

Overall, the participants found the program to be very successful and most said it had a huge impact on their career, whether or not they remained in journalism. They cited the chance to work with professionals at top-notch newspapers and said they found role models they could emulate.

“When I came to *Newsday*, I was really impressed at how diverse it was, compared to other papers I had been to, experienced, and that gave me hope, too,” said one black woman. “Not only were there people like me there, but they were in positions of leadership.”

Said another participant:

The most important thing I learned was I could do it. Sounds cliché, but it wasn't really about learning grammar or *Newsday* style – it was just learning that you could be on the same track as some of the other people who had gone through METPRO and you could see them in higher positions, and it was just learning you had a chance at becoming one of those if you worked hard and loved what you did.

One woman, who had gone to Columbia University, said she found the METPRO training prepared her even better than graduate school, where reporting was the focus:

Not only because I knew definitively that I didn't want to be a reporter but because the intensive teaching that METPRO training gave me was more conducive to learning to me than the curriculum at Columbia. It was a complete success. I am who I am today because of the program. The job I do today is part of my identity, and it's because of the program.

Another Columbia graduate compared his year at Newsday to a second year in graduate school, going on to explain:

I don't say that lightly, I went to an elite program. ... From the top down, the newspaper [*Newsday*] had decided this was an important thing for the newspaper and Times Mirror. I just felt like it was a really supportive program. It prepared me for a real copy desk. I wouldn't be talking to you now if it weren't for the program. Would I have eventually gotten to the *Los Angeles Times*? I would hope so, but it probably would have taken longer and I don't think I'd be as skilled, because I was given a pretty good set of tools from *Newsday* from the get-go and a lot of hands-on instruction.

One participant, who had not studied journalism in college, said she found it more challenging than she expected, and learned more than she thought she would. "I think I got as good a foundation, as good an education as if I had done a journalism degree as an undergrad. It was a very intensive program. We definitely crammed in a lot," she said.

One participant, now a managing editor, already had a job at a small newspaper when he was accepted into METPRO. He credits it for fast-tracking his career:

What it did do, at a very tender age, was put me in one of the best newsrooms in the country, surrounded by top editors, and I learned a great deal from these people. I was always seen as someone who had potential, and I knew if I paid my dues, things would break my way. I think METPRO prepared me in that it gave me a big, big, big in. It was a big shoe in the door, and because it was METPRO a lot of people paid attention to me. They want you to succeed because it is METPRO – they have a lot invested in the program. It exposed me to a quality environment that I may not have gotten to as early in life. That helped a lot, gave me a lot of tools.

The first year at Newsday was described by many in terms of being a "safety net," since they were surrounded by teachers, mentors and others with an interest in the METPRO program.

While many also had a positive transition to a second newspaper, and were glad of having had the experience of a different paper, several participants related very negative experiences at their second newspaper.

One participant said the style of editing was different at the second newspaper, and there was no one to train them. “We were basically sort of yelled at if we got anything wrong or missed something, which was very frequent when we first got there,” the participant said.

Another participant felt she was “targeted” because she was a Latina. “I had never felt discriminated against until I got” to the second newspaper, she said. “I had a year and a half of misery.” Eventually, she left during one of the newspaper’s cutbacks.

Another woman went to a newspaper in which the women found out that the only male copy editor who had come through METPRO was making more than the female copy editors who had come through the program. “It raised a lot of questions about pay equity,” said this participant, who also eventually left the newspaper.

But for the most part, participants were positive about experiences at both newspapers, finding it was better to have worked at two places. Said one:

When you’re green at Newsday, when you go to another newspaper, you’re just seen as one of the staff. One of the advantages is that fewer people remembered your mistakes, if nothing else. You came in through the door a little more polished than you did at your first newspaper.

Said another:

It’s an amazing program; it afforded me these opportunities that I don’t think I would have had otherwise. Whether we stayed in

journalism or not, it was a catalyst for amazing career opportunities. Just being able to try that out, to really be in a newsroom, and not start as an editorial assistant, but 'here, be an editor,' that's just amazing.

### **4.3 The minority label**

If there was one negative, it was that some participants felt they were pigeonholed as coming from a "minority program," and some felt resentment from co-workers who had not come through such a program. Others, however, said they never felt any of that.

Said one participant:

There were some people who you had to prove more to them because they figured you were coming through this minority program, the only reason that you got into it was by being a minority, you didn't have to have any talent whatsoever, it was just luck you were born a minority. And they didn't understand the process you had gone through, the extensive interviewing before you were picked, the training, the evaluations.

That mindset put additional pressure on some of them, as explained by another participant:

There were definitely some people who were like that. There were some people in the newsroom who were very negative toward METPRO – the fact that we ended up at a big paper where the traditional route is working at a really small paper and then slowly moving up until you get to *Newsday*. So there was some resentment. I think anywhere you have to prove yourself, but you have to prove yourself more [in the program], because you're coming in there with no experience. It's like a two-year interview almost because you always have to be on top of the game.

Even though *Newsday* was where they were trained and where many participants felt most comfortable, some of those interviewed said it was also where they felt most scrutinized by colleagues.

“I kind of felt that in *Newsday*. At a certain point, we’re doing the same work. It’s not as if they are setting aside the METPRO file,” said one of the most recent participants.

“I actually felt that more at *Newsday*,” said one participant who went on to a smaller paper her second year. Because *Newsday* housed the program, “there was, ‘oh, from METPRO’,” she said. At the smaller paper, “it was, ‘great, another body!’ ”

Another participant became pregnant during her first year in the program, and said she encountered some additional resentment:

When I first started on the desk [after the training portion] there was this sense that we didn’t really work our way there. There was a little bit of resentment. When I had my first child, I worked through my entire time [pregnancy]. I didn’t take one sick day. But there was someone who made a comment – ‘why is she here, to have a career or a child?’

Another participant who went to a smaller newspaper her second year felt that her first year at *Newsday* wasn’t taken into account by her new colleagues:

Another thing that happened was that people didn’t seem to respect us. They felt we were the token minorities. Usually when you work at a big paper, they’re impressed. But they considered us not really having gotten our feet wet or not having the right to work there.

And yet another participant said that the word METPRO itself “just sounds like a label or race, even.” But, she added: “Now that I look back, it’s helped me far more than hurt me, even with the label. The rest is up to you. You’ll have that label, and it’s what you do with it.”

Yet other participants said they expected to be pigeonholed or were told to expect it from their colleagues, but say they were always treated as one of the staff. Said one:

If there was anything, it was personal for me to try and let people know that I really wanted to prove myself. It wasn't about you didn't take some back-door entry and got lucky. It was a really amazing opportunity and I didn't want to waste it. I remember when I went to sports [desk], they were so grateful to get a body. So anything I could contribute, they were just so thrilled.

One participant made sure to introduce himself as "the new METPRO copy editor" when he first started. Twenty years later, this editor, who is now a top supervisor at a large newspaper, still brings up the fact that he started out in METPRO whenever he receives a promotion.

It [coming through METPRO] wasn't a negative or a positive. After a while, it didn't really matter to people. I was just the new guy, and my work spoke for itself. But I've always, every time I've moved and I've had eight jobs since, I made a big deal of when I switch jobs, to say I came through METPRO. It's important for retention and promotion purposes, that some of us have kept advancing. One of my colleagues in the program asked why I did that. Well, it's out of gratitude for the program, and also to make the point that it's a training program and it works really well, and really great people go into it and come out of it, and do important things, given the chance.

One participant, who said the METPRO label carried "a lot of baggage," nevertheless feels the program did a lot of good:

I think minorities in newsrooms oftentimes, more is expected of them. If they meet the same level of standard, they can do exceptional things and it's like, well, whatever, it's like you can never do enough to impress. Whereas a white reporter who has a certain interpersonal skill with his or her bosses can do the basics and are viewed as remarkably competent and remarkably full of potential. It's moments like that, when you think about all that minorities face, how difficult it can be, and how hostile major

American newsrooms can be toward their presence, it does remind you of why a program like METPRO, even though it may have some stigma for the person involved in it, is useful and valuable. One way or the other, it gets minorities into the newsroom.

#### **4.4 Programs for journalists of color?**

Participants were asked if they felt that a program for journalists of color was still needed today. Like the participant quoted above, most felt there still is a need for this type of program, whether or not they felt stigmatized, and even if they had some negative experiences.

Even recent college graduates with a journalism degree who went through the program felt that METPRO was a great help:

I can attest to the fact that I benefited from it. At my particular HBC [historically black college] that I went to, the journalism program was okay, but it really could have been better. There may be other schools out there geared toward minorities that are lacking the way my undergrad was lacking. Having this training program really could be beneficial.

A graduate of Columbia's journalism program said it helped her, even though she had a master's degree and experience through an internship. "Kids today have five internships, clips and three years out of school before they get their first job," she said. "It opened a door for me to get a decent salary fairly soon after graduate school."

A few participants said their newsrooms wouldn't have any copy editors of color had it not been for METPRO – participants from smaller papers such as the *Allentown Morning Call* to the larger *Los Angeles Times* credited the program with populating their newsrooms with journalists of color.

“All but one of the copy editors came through METPRO,” said one participant of her time at the *Morning Call*. “It makes me wonder, if it wasn’t for METPROs, how many minorities would they have hired.”

Another participant, now at the *Los Angeles Times*, said, “If you are a minority, then I can pretty much ask, ‘Were you in the program?’, and they usually were.”

Most expressed sadness to see the program had been dismantled. Said one, “The people who ran it were really smart, and it wasn’t just a token project. It was really about giving underrepresented people the opportunity to bring another set of voices to this industry.”

Most participants are realistic, however, that the program probably isn’t going to return anytime soon. Said one early participant:

Do I feel there’s a need? Yes, but I’m a realist enough to know that we’re probably not going to see anything like that, because the industry is in such survival mode right now. Job one for the industry right now is to survive, to keep the lights on for the next six months, a year, however long.

Another participant echoed that, saying that while diversity is important, “the industry was hardly focused on it when things were going well. Now as the industry goes into self-preservation mode, I definitely don’t think it will be a priority as well.”

Said another participant:

In all these cutbacks that are occurring, it’s such a desperation to survive that people aren’t thinking about minority recruiting, they’re just happy to have five people left. They’re not thinking, well, we need two of those to be black, one of those to be Hispanic. If I were to make a guess, I would say that the interests of minority groups are not being as well protected, defended and represented in

American newspapers today than they were five years ago, before this implosion of the industry began five years ago.

Not having this program in place, that same participant said, will do damage to newsrooms down the road:

Our presence in the newsroom was really hard-fought, a lot of things had to be done to make that happen. METPRO at least gave you the assurance every year that you were to get one or two people of color; you were definitely going to have that infusion on a regular basis.

#### ***4.5 Need for copy editors of color***

Participants spoke passionately when it came to the subject of why copy editors of color are needed, as much as reporters of color.

Said one, "It's not that other people can't correct grammar and style and punctuation, you just have different life experiences. It's just like a fresh set of eyes that can look at things in a different way."

Even well-meaning reporters often get it wrong when it comes to racial and ethnic issues, some said. Said one:

We get a ton of stories where racially or culturally or ethnically, there's a lot of nuanced meanings in the way a reporter expresses himself. Sometimes you see quotes, or you see things written in a way you know are offensive to a community. Having mostly white editors, sometimes you know you have to make a really strong case because they are loath to change something. In the METPRO program, they taught us to feel free to speak up if someone is not well-educated.

Another participant spoke of being one of five journalists of color in her current newsroom. Because the newspaper is not affiliated with Tribune or Times Mirror, she feels even more alone when bringing up racial or ethnic issues:

There's a lot of people who don't know what METPRO is, they don't take racial issues or cultural issues into account when they're editing. A lot of times I'm fighting a losing battle. I'm trying to bring something up that's racially insensitive and nobody gets my point, and there's no one I can turn to, to say 'you get this, right?'

Participant after participant spoke about the need for different perspectives. "There's rarely malice behind it," said one participant about stories that might be insensitive, "but it's just a gap in the understanding of different cultures and different races, and having different mindsets, it helps."

Said another participant: "In newsrooms, demographically, not much has changed, but certainly the country has changed."

Many of the participants spoke about one of the lessons learned in METPRO – being sensitive to the voices of others. Once in newsrooms, they not only championed the viewpoint of their own race, culture or gender, but that of other minority groups. Said one participant about the lessons learned in the classroom:

I got a deeper appreciation for looking at a story as a whole and not just for its parts, not just grammar, but how does this story play? Are there any apparent biases in this story, how does this read to a person of color, how does this read to a woman?

Said another participant:

It was drilled into us what our responsibility is as the minority in the newsroom, and that was really valuable because I was the only Latina at the copy desk ... That really hit home, that this is why I'm here, and this is why we have this program.

Said one Hispanic man:

I can't tell you the number of times in my career that I've read things in stories that have jumped out at me as being offensive or inappropriate regarding not only Hispanics, but regarding practically all minority groups because I think when you are a

minority, you're very sensitive to that kind of offense, to that kind of misstep, and so you'll detect it not only in treatments of your people, but in treatments of other minority groups. And I think that really helps the copy and prevents really egregious things from happening.

#### ***4.6 The importance of their perspective***

Almost every participant interviewed had specific stories and anecdotes relating to instances when their perspective did change a story, a photo or a page layout.

One participant at a major American newspaper related his first night filling in on the foreign copy desk from another desk:

I happen to be Pakistani and my first story was about Pakistan. I caught something, it was more of a big picture thing. I had to go and discuss it with one of the other editors. It took a long time for us to hash it out and it was awkward for me because the person didn't know who I was or what I was doing there. But I remember having a lot of confidence because I felt like I knew the story. The next story I got was about Iraq and my family, myself included, used to live there. ... The whole time I was editing it, I was thinking about my parents picking up the paper tomorrow and reading this story, and I was thinking they would know even the smallest thing, if it was wrong. I was really trying to look at the story through their eyes, not mine. ... It's not even trying, you just do look at it differently. You've been living it your whole life, so you can't help but look at it differently.

A couple of months later, a spot came open on the foreign desk, and this participant was hired, based, he believes, on that one week he filled in.

Another woman, from India, said her ethnicity also came into play while editing a story. "During the London bombings, we were running stories in which people were referred to as 'Pakis.' Most people don't know it's a slur. I was even able to tell the foreign editors."

Yet another participant spoke about how the program made her sensitive to other groups, and to stereotyping. She spoke of a change she effected early on at her second newspaper:

They had Pride [Gay Pride parade] that weekend, and we had a standalone photo of festivities. The photo they had was of this guy in a leather jacket, a spiked collar, he actually had an armband that read 'slave.' And I was, like, 'do we really want to run this picture because it seems like the ultimate stereotype of a gay man.' From there, we looked at other pictures. We ended up finding a picture that was better. It [the page] was a color position. We found a photo of a person with a beautiful rainbow umbrella. It was a better picture on the whole and we sidestepped the whole issue. METPRO taught me how to look at stories better, how to serve our readers better.

Many of the participants spoke, however, of having to fight to have a change made that related to ethnicity or race. In these cases, they were not only copy editors making fixes, but strong advocates for fairness and balance when it came to race, ethnicity and gender.

Said one participant:

One story I had they were trying to describe a suspect in a robbery and the suspect was described as black, with a white T-shirt and blue jeans. So I brought the question up, what does it serve by saying black, white T-shirt and jeans, because that could be anybody. After a lot of wrangling, the description was taken out. But it was a discussion, and definitely a heated discussion. They just wanted to leave it, and not make any waves, and move on to the next story. And I felt that was something I learned in the METPRO classroom that I carried with me ... In the end, I won, but I really fought for it. To prove my point, I was trying to put them in my shoes. If that person was white, wearing white T-shirt and jeans, it could apply to any guy in his room. It could be Tom, it could be you, it could be Jack. And I think that's when it kind of dawned on them, that the description was not satisfactory. So I think most of the people writing these things are not minorities, so they are not aware of it. Having the minority background, we're bringing in the experience of the outsider.

Another participant fought over the juxtaposition of a Page One promotion and a story on a large anti-immigrant rally:

The promo for the features magazine was something about how we love our Latino food, and it had maracas and it had Mexican hats. I had to tell them even though it's a little over the top, this probably wouldn't be offensive. But when you have a story that essentially has a group of people saying, 'Mexicans, get out of our country,' and then you have a banner saying, 'But we'll keep your food,' you know that can really be offensive. People were looking at me, like, how can that be offensive? That took a lot of explaining.

Another participant spoke of a story his paper ran about minority-led businesses, and a couple that was determined to keep money in their own community. The headline on the story was "Buying black."

The few minorities in the newsroom had to be very insistent, they had to be very loud and had to speak to at least seven different people to get them to understand that this front page headline was not appropriate, and didn't capture the essence of the story and it would offend everybody – it would offend the people it concerned, it would offend the people outside the story who would think the initiative was to exclude whites. It took a really long time to get that point across. That might be a result of the fact that as the staff gets smaller, the minority voices, exponentially, are that much smaller.

Said another participant about the lessons learned from METPRO:

It taught me to focus and structure my argument carefully before I went up to an editor. Have your ethnic and cultural argument down pat – the more conviction you have, that'll help sell it, because not every editor is receptive to what you are saying, not everyone who has been doing it for 30 years wants to hear that they don't know something.

#### ***4.7 Their career paths***

Those interviewed were asked if they still saw themselves in journalism 10 years from now. Four of the participants had already left journalism – either voluntarily or through layoffs; one participant left shortly after being interviewed.

Of those still in journalism, eight said they still saw themselves in the business 10 years from now; seven said they probably would not be in journalism and five were undecided or unsure of their future in journalism.

Those who saw themselves still in journalism were almost emphatic about it. Said one:

Yup, most definitely. I'm not as negative or pessimistic as everyone else. There's gonna be a place, I don't know where or doing what, but I hope I didn't do all this for nothing. I think everything happening now, it's just a little overwhelming, and I hope there will be a backlash and people won't want to get their news in 140-character tweets, and they'll want real stories about real people. Maybe I'll have to go back and learn more about audio and video. But I don't think anything I learned at METPRO will be wasted.

Another person, in a top position at his newspaper, said he's already stepping into the future, doing more than just assigning and editing stories. He also blogs, does layout and does short segments for a local television station.

The stuff I'm doing now, this is a perfect example of how to survive in an industry today, it's all about adjusting and not saying, 'well, I'm just a line editor, that's all I do.' However it [the industry] morphs, however it changes, I'd like to stick with it, and follow it wherever it goes... There's something so special about what we do, the interaction with readers, being involved with current events, you can't replace that.

Those who hoped to stay in the business ran the age gamut, from those in the earliest classes to the next-to-last class. This also applied to those who thought they might leave, or were unsure.

Of the seven journalists who said they would probably leave newspapers, most were considering going back to school for another degree, such as education or library science. One was already in school, three courses short of getting a master's in secondary education. Almost each journalist cited the

instability of the business. This included the five other journalists who were undecided or unsure; many said they still loved the business, but weren't sure if they'd have a job in 10 years.

Said the young journalist who is studying secondary education in the hopes of making a career switch:

I kind of got paranoid seeing all these people being pushed out the door. Every year I've been in this profession, there have been buyouts, layoffs. So I know if I stick around much longer, I'll be the next one out the door. And I don't want to have to look over my shoulder for the next 10 years to see whether I'm going to be let go.

Those who were unsure reflected both a passion for journalism and a fear of the business' future – and that they may suddenly be left without a job. Said one:

Being in this business is a sacrifice, because of the hours you work. That's [leaving journalism] something I'd be considering in any circumstance, even if the industry was flourishing. Now you throw in the complete transformation of the industry that is going on right now, and I have no idea where I'll be 10 years from now. Would I like to be here? Absolutely. I enjoy it... But there are too many questions right now. We'll see what happens 10 years down the line.

#### ***4.8 Why did they leave?***

The five who left newspapers all left because of the instability of the newspaper business – three took buyouts, one lost her job amid a newsroom-wide layoff and one left this year on his own. The participant to leave most recently is studying for an MBA and working in a public relations / media job. Two others work in media jobs for colleges, where they say they still use their journalism skills. One person is working part-time as an administrative assistant

for a medical device company and another is in banking. Four of the five left in recent years, following Tribune's takeover of Times Mirror. The fifth left in 1999, when, he said, he had seen "the handwriting on the wall" as to the direction of the industry.

Those who left voluntarily all cited the uncertainty of newspapers, although some had other reasons for wanting to leave. Said one:

I wasn't looking to leave. ... Then early last summer, this opportunity came along. I didn't feel threatened, I didn't feel I would get laid off. But at the same time, I was looking at what would be left after that [rumored layoffs], and what would my job be. I loved the actual activity of my work, but office life was becoming very difficult. I ended up taking the buyout and taking the job here. But it's been a mixed bag, because I still miss it so much.

Another participant, who was laid off after six years in journalism, said the only available journalism job she's found was at a small local newspaper paying a very low salary. She decided not to pursue it:

The thing is, as a copy editor, it comes with a lot of weekends and a lot of nights. Once you get a taste of having a regular life again, it's difficult to say, 'hmmm, do I really want to go back and make that sacrifice?' It would have to be the right opportunity.

Another participant who left journalism said he "had this notion that I would be a copy editor until I retired." But as copy editors were asked to do more – layout, photo-editing and web work – he found himself unhappy with the "unspecialized and overburdened direction of the copy desk." After obtaining an MBA, he hopes to one day open his own firm.

## Chapter 5

### ***5.1 Summary and Discussion***

More than 40 years after the Kerner Commission issued its stern rebuke to the press, journalists of color are still battling to achieve parity in newsrooms and to fight bias in copy, this thesis found. More than ever, it seems an uphill challenge to these journalists, who also now fight an economic climate that does not promise to improve for newspaper companies.

This is also being done in a corporate climate where, many feel, newspapers have given up their commitment to diversity or, at the least, do not have as strong a commitment as they once did to diversify newsrooms.

A prime example of that is the abandonment of the METPRO program. This was a successful program for the Times-Mirror and Tribune companies, a program that brought in journalists of color and retained a large portion of them. The program diversified newsrooms small and large, especially helping some of the smaller newsrooms that historically had problems in their diversity efforts. But even the larger *Los Angeles Times* and *Newsday* point to METPRO as essential to diversifying their newsrooms.

In failing to continue this program, the company did not uphold the ideal of social responsibility – that newspapers should have a diverse staff not for the sake of fulfilling some quota but because a diverse staff improves coverage of the overall community and tells the stories of all its peoples.

While copy editors work behind the scenes, they are essential gatekeepers in the process of selecting which stories are presented as newsworthy, and of keeping bias and stereotypes out of the newspaper. Having people of color in this position is of great importance, as this research showed through the words of METPRO participants. Studies indicate that people of color have very little influence in determining how they are represented, and that those images put before the public are done so from an almost all-white point of view. Almost every METPRO participant had an anecdote that spoke of them stopping inaccurate or offensive material that dealt with ethnicity, race or gender from getting into the newspaper. The interviews also present a picture of journalists who are passionate about their work and about producing a newspaper that is free of biases and stereotypes. Many of them told stories about fighting to stop egregious material from getting into the newspaper, and even educating others as to why certain images or words should never be in print. Some 40 years after the Kerner Report, they are bringing a perspective that might otherwise be missing from American newspapers.

The program's graduates now work across the country – including top papers such as *The New York Times*, *Washington Post* and the *Los Angeles Times* – and even abroad. Some went on to top positions, in assistant managing editor roles or heads of assignment desks. Most of those interviewed for this study said it helped them gain a foothold in newspaper journalism and called it a positive experience overall, even those who may have had some negative experiences in the program. From the perspective of the individual participants, the program was unquestionably a success.

The importance of diverse gatekeepers is not only in retaining readers, but in reaching out to those unserved communities who don't see themselves represented in the newspaper. And not serving those readers, as some have pointed out, brings newspapers back full circle – to economics. Not serving all the readers in a community can impact readership, thus impacting a newspaper's finances. To that end, this research suggests newspapers would do well to not let diversity efforts flag.

The question arose during this study of whether diversity programs are still needed, or whether regular recruiting efforts alone are sufficient. Most – editors and fellows – felt that the extra effort is still a needed one. Some expressed the same sentiments as Les Payne, who said the disinclination to hire journalists of color is “entrenched” in newsrooms, and that “the power to make the decision is still disproportionately white. We still have to be vigilant.”

In 1985, Wilson and Gutierrez wrote that as the nation became more diverse, media would have to find new ways of dealing with its changing audience. For a few years this was the case, as media sought to become more diverse. Yet the evidence seems that much of the progress has been lost. Those in top positions in newspapers continue to be white and male, and the percentage of people of color in newspapers is now slipping – not even advancing by minuscule numbers, as before. Without diversity programs such as METPRO in place, ASNE's goal of parity continues to slip further away.

If there is a lesson to be learned from METPRO it is that diversity needs to be a company initiative. Without support from the top – both financial and moral – such efforts are doomed to fail. When Tribune, a company that lived by edicts, let individual

newspapers decide the direction of the program and failed to fund it, the program didn't stand a chance in a tough economic climate. An example of a company that values diversity is the Gannett chain, which has listed diversity as one of its core values since the 1980s. The chain not only mandates diversity for its newspapers, but assesses them annually. A Newsroom Diversity Index by Dedman and Doig (2005) found that Gannett was the leader in diversity from 1990 to 2005. The index measured parity in the communities served, with a score of 100 percent being complete parity. Gannett led with 89 percent; Tribune Co. measured 55 percent. Some at Gannett have chafed at the mandates instituted by the company, but there is no denying that they lead diversity efforts among newspapers.

METPRO was a program that sought to address many of the issues surrounding diversity. The abandonment of the program indicates that Tribune Co. also abandoned its commitment to diversity. This sets a dangerous precedent for an industry that seems to be focusing less on diversity in an era where diversity may be key to its future success. When newspapers abandon diversity efforts, they also abandon efforts to adequately cover communities of color. They are in danger, as the Kerner Commission wrote, of covering communities only from the standpoint of the "white man's world."

## ***5.2 Recommendations for further study***

When the economy suffers and newspapers start retrenching, there's another force at work among journalists – fear. Former studies looked at reasons why journalists leave newspapers, but fear was not even among the categories. Weaver et al. asked journalists of color specifically whether they would be working in journalism in five years and if not, why they wanted to leave. Those who wanted to leave cited lifestyle and

workplace issues – the long hours, working holidays and weekends and the stress of the job. Another predictor of job satisfaction, the survey found, was how well a job journalists thought their organization was doing in informing the public (pp. 206-207).

This study also asked the same question of participants. It found much had changed in just the few years since the Weaver et al. survey. While a few of the METPRO participants did cite the night and weekend hours of copy-editing, far more brought up the direction of the industry and downsizing at newspapers. Many feared that their jobs might be eliminated some day, and wanted to be ready with a “Plan B.” Others were disillusioned with the direction of their newspapers, which they felt now featured less news and were less informative about real issues. It would be interesting to study the number of journalists of color, and see whether these numbers continue to slip or whether they will stabilize or grow, once the news industry itself stabilizes or morphs into a new incarnation. How much will this fear of the unknown impact diversity efforts?

The impact of the loss of diversity programs such as METPRO is already being felt, especially in smaller newspapers, which now are not as diverse. It would also be interesting to see whether the loss of such programs will continue to impact the industry, and whether it will impact smaller newspapers more than larger ones.

There are many other issues within the area of diversity and newspapers to be explored, which this study has only touched upon. For example, have newspapers lost more of the young talent, or have they lost more of those early pioneers who were the early people of color in the newsrooms? METPRO was a program that brought in beginning journalists, so this study has not looked at managers and supervisors of

color. Another area of exploration is whether the leadership of newsrooms has changed, in terms of racial makeup, and whether that has that been disproportionate. Finally, as newspapers increase their web presence or even move toward being more web-based and less print-based, who is being hired for those web jobs – and how many of those are journalists of color?

## Appendix A

Questions asked of METPRO participants:

1. Had you studied journalism in college? If not, what did you study?
2. How did you first hear of the METPRO program?
3. Why did you enter the METPRO program?
4. Had you held any journalism jobs previously?
5. Did you hold any other jobs prior to entering the METPRO program?
6. Do you feel METPRO prepared you for a career in journalism?
7. Would you rate the program a success or failure? Why?
8. How do you feel about the way the program was structured (one year of training, then participants were selected by a Tribune company newspaper for another year of training and, eventually, were hired full-time by that paper)?
9. Are there specific lessons that you learned during the program that helped you the most?
10. On the flip side, were there lessons or advice you wish you had been taught?
11. Did you form any mentors during the program? Is there anyone you still keep in touch with? If yes, how does that person continue to help you?
12. The copy-editing portion of METPRO is no longer in existence. How do you feel about that?
13. Do you feel there is a need for journalism programs for people of color?
14. Did you ever feel pigeonholed because you came from a minority program?
15. Do you think there's a need for copy editors or editors of color in the newsroom? Why?
16. Have there been times when your perspective has helped shaped a story or page?
17. Do you see yourself in journalism 10 years from now?

**For those who have left chain or journalism:**

1. Are you still at a Times Mirror or Tribune paper? If not, what are your reasons for leaving?

2. Are you still in journalism? If no, how long did you stay in journalism? Why did you leave?

## **Appendix B**

Questions for those who ran or were involved in the program

1. What years were you involved in the program?
2. What was the purpose of the program?
3. Why was the copy-editing portion of the program created?
4. Why was it important to bring copy editors of color into the newsroom?
5. Can you talk about the structure of the program, how it worked?
6. What qualities was the program looking for in a candidate?
7. Do you feel the program was successful? Why?
8. How well did it meet its mission of diversifying newsrooms?
9. What factors brought about the demise of the program?
10. How do you feel about the program no longer being in existence?
11. Do you feel this type of program is still needed in newsrooms?

## Appendix C

Dear xxxxx,

I'm writing in hopes you can help. I've been doing a master's online through the University of Missouri and am now writing my thesis – it'll be on the copy-editing portion of the METPRO program. Overall, my thesis is on how diversity has been impacted by the retrenchment in journalism, but it focuses specifically on the METPRO copy-editing program, which was cut in part for financial reasons.

As a METPRO participant, I'd like to interview you. It shouldn't take long -- most of the interviews are taking about half an hour to 45 minutes. It doesn't matter whether or not you are still working in journalism; in fact, I want to get a good cross-section of people in different circumstances.

I'm attaching the Informed Consent Document, which I'll need you to sign and return to me if you agree to be in my study (which is confidential -- no names will be used). Also, I'm attaching a copy of my thesis proposal, which explains in further detail my study. The introduction and the research questions on page 24 have the most detail.

If you're interested, let me know when would be a good time to set up an interview.

Thanks,

Lourdes Fernandez

## **Informed Consent Document**

**Researcher's Name:** Lourdes M. Fernandez

**Researcher's Contact Information:** 252 Bayview Ave., East Patchogue, NY;  
631-277-3534 or 631-838-3922

You are being asked to participate in a research study. This research is being conducted to study the effectiveness of the METPRO copy-editing program. When you are invited to participate in research, you have the right to be informed about the study procedures so that you can decide whether you want to consent to participation. Please ask the researcher to explain any words or information you do not understand.

You have the right to know what you will be asked to do so that you can decide whether or not to be in the study. Your participation is voluntary. You do not have to be in the study if you do not want to. You may refuse to be in the study and nothing will happen. If you do not want to continue to be in the study, you may stop at any time.

### **Purpose of Research**

The purpose of this research is to examine one diversity program that was steadily bringing in new journalists of color but which was affected by economic factors: the METPRO copy-editing program, which trained people of color to become copy-editors, from 1989 to 2007.

### **How long is the study?**

Your participation in the study will take between one and two hours. It will involve at least one phone interview, and possibly one or more follow-up interviews. You will be asked to answer a series of questions about the METPRO program and your career since your participation.

### **Confidentiality**

There will be between 30 to 40 people in the study. Your identity and participation will remain confidential. Subjects will be described only in general terms, i.e.: an Asian man (race and ethnicity are being used since this study deals with journalists of color). The information will be used solely for my thesis, which will become public once it is accepted by the University of Missouri. Your name will not appear as a subject.

### **Changes in the study**

Informed consent is an ongoing process that requires communication between the researcher and participants. The participant should comprehend what they are being asked to do so that they can make an informed decision about whether they will participate in the research study. You will be informed of any new information discovered during the course of this study that might influence your health, welfare, or willingness to be in this study.

**Who do I contact if I have questions, concerns, or complaints?**

Please contact the researcher, Lourdes Fernandez, if you have questions about the research.

The Campus Institutional Review Board approved this research study. You may contact the Campus Institutional Review Board if you have questions about your rights, concerns, complaints or comments as a research participant.

You can contact the Campus Institutional Review Board directly by telephone or email to voice or solicit any concerns, questions, input or complaints about the research study.

Campus Institutional Review Board  
483 McReynolds Hall  
Columbia, MO 65211  
573-882-9585  
[umcresearchcirb@missouri.edu](mailto:umcresearchcirb@missouri.edu)

**Will I get a copy of this form?**

A copy of this Informed Consent form will be given to you before you participate in the research

**SIGNATURES**

I have read this consent form and my questions have been answered. My signature below means that I want to be in the study. I know that I can remove myself from the study at any time without any problems.

\_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
Your signature

## Appendix D

Dear Investigator:

Your human subject research project entitled METPRO: A Case Study in Diversity and Newspaper Economics was reviewed and APPROVED as "Exempt" on March 27, 2009 and will expire on March 27, 2010. Research activities approved at this level are eligible for exemption from some federal IRB requirements. Although you will not be required to submit the annual Continuing Review Report, your approval will be contingent upon your agreement to annually submit the "Annual Exempt Research Certification" form to maintain current IRB approval. You must submit the "Annual Exempt Research Certification" form by February 10, 2010 to provide enough time for review and avoid delays in the IRB process. Failure to timely submit the certification form by the deadline will result in automatic expiration of IRB approval. (See form: <http://irb.missouri.edu/eirb/>)

If you wish to revise your activities, you do not need to submit an Amendment Application. You must contact the Campus IRB office for a determination of whether the proposed changes will continue to qualify for exempt status. You will be expected to provide a brief written description of the proposed revisions and how it will impact the risks to subject participants. The Campus IRB will provide a written determination of whether the proposed revisions change from exemption to expedite or full board review status. If the activities no longer qualify for exemption, as a result of the proposed revisions, an expedited or full board IRB application must be submitted to the Campus IRB. The investigator may not proceed with the proposed revisions until IRB approval is granted.

Please be aware that all human subject research activities must receive prior approval by the IRB prior to initiation, regardless of the review level status. If you have any questions regarding the IRB process, do not hesitate to contact the Campus IRB office at (573) 882-9585.

Campus Institutional Review Board

## Appendix E

### ***METPROS – where are they now?***

This list contains the names of all the METPRO fellows, and their last known workplace:

1989-90

Lorena Blas – Copy editor, USA Today

Veronica Bucio – Assistant Outlook/op-ed editor, Houston Chronicle

Cielo Buenaventura – Metropolitan section editor, New York Times

Henry Fuhrmann – Assistant managing editor in charge of copy desks, Los Angeles Times

Preston Parkes – Hartford Courant (took buyout in 2008)

Weta Ray – Passed away in 2008. Prior to that, was Homes and Garden editor, The News & Observer in North Carolina

Judy Yao – Copy editor, Los Angeles Times

Marcelle Miranda – unknown

1990-91

Aniano Arao – Copy editor, Washington Post

Rob Douthit – Associate director of media relations, University of West Georgia

Michele Fleming – Online editor, Wall Street Journal/WSJ.com

Veronica Garcia – Editor / writer for the Los Angeles Community College District's Sustainable Building Program

Regina Holmes – Editor-in-chief, InvestigativeVoice.com website

Cindy Murphy – Assistant section editor, Atlanta Journal-Constitution

1991-92

Gina Guarjardo Davis – associate director of media relations, McDaniel College

Joanna Hernandez – copy editor, North Jersey Media Group / adjunct professor, New York University

Carol Kelly – Assistant news editor, Wall Street Journal

Caroline Lee – Copy editor, Los Angeles Times

Cliff Redding – Copy editor, Los Angeles Daily News

Shirley Hawkins – unknown

Terry Rather – unknown

Marvin Conerly – unknown

1992-93

Andrea Corner – Copy editor, Hartford Courant

Sandra Park – unknown

Rachelle Dickerson – Copy editor, The (New Jersey) Star-Ledger

Lily Li – Freelance reporter

Paula Paige – Copy editor, The Star-Ledger

Stacie Walker – Took buyout from Newsday, was deputy national editor

James Kim – unknown

1993-94

Rubaina Azhar – Assistant copy chief, Los Angeles Times

Martha Guevara – News Editor, Newsday

Saji Mathai – Copy editor, Los Angeles Times

Eli Reyes – Deputy political editor, The Washington Post

Michael Davis – unknown

Chandra Sparks Taylor – Kensington Publishing

Shaun Thomas – Copy editor, The Boston Globe

Mario Quirce, self-employed, editing consultant

1994-95

Minh-Trang Dang – Copy editor, Los Angeles Times

Eunice Park – Communication manager, Animation Mentor

Althea Taite – Wall Street Journal online

JoJo Kumankumah -- unknown

Tamika Simmons - Regulatory compliance analyst, Oxford Life Insurance Company

Vijai Nathan - left journalism, became comedian

Nilda Torres – unknown

John McKinn – unknown

1995-96

Lisa Manns - community services coordinator, Kathy J. Weinman Shelter for Abused Women & Their Children

Cynthia Ohms – Freelance writer/editor

Kris Petcharawises – Teller in the banking industry

Ron Smith – Features deputy copy chief, Milwaukee Journal Sentinel

Leema Thomas – Copy editor, Newsday

Andrew Wong – Assistant News Editor, Newsday

Myrtelina Pena-Otanez – unknown

1996-97

Adrian Brijbassi – Page editor, Toronto Star

Carmel Carrillo – Copy editor / page designer, Chicago Tribune

Michelle Maltais – Editorial broadcast manager, Los Angeles Times

Rolando Pujol – Managing editor, amNewYork

Vivian Valeta Cook – Copy editor/page designer, Star-News, Wilmington, North Carolina  
Oie Lian Yeh – Copy editor (consultant), Carney, Inc.

1997-98

Tameeka Francis – U.S. Department of Defense  
Evelyn Lau – Copy editor, Los Angeles Times  
Eric Moya – Copy editor, B2B magazine  
Warner Sabio – Copy editor, Newsday  
Brandon Lilly – unknown  
Alexis Barnes – unknown  
Camille Martinez-Crumb – unknown

1998-99

Ralph Abreu – Copy editor, The Florida Times-Union  
Leah Bennett – Copy editor, Morning Call (Allentown)  
Melissa Clay – Page designer, Chicago Tribune  
Nicole Gill – News editor, Gannett ContentOne  
Deborah Morris – Reporter, Newsday  
Andria Yu – Copy editor, Baltimore Sun  
Clarence Haynes – unknown  
Doreen Vianzon -- unknown  
Jolan Baucum – unknown

1999-2000

Ana Cantu – Op/ed editor, Austin American-Statesman  
David Graves – Creative services manager, Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International  
Meghan Irons – Reporter, Boston Globe  
Annie Kwong – Copy editor, Marriott International, Inc.  
Eugenia Lai Scanlon – Page designer, Los Angeles Daily News  
Natalie Pardo – High school teacher  
Cicely Wedgeworth – On-call front page producer, Yahoo!  
Rufus Young – Unknown

2000-01

Andre Bowser – Unknown  
Dacia Dunson – Passed away in 2006, was a copy editor at the Baltimore Sun  
Eileen Fredes – Assistant editor, Newsday  
Nicole Mills – Copy editor, Austin American-Statesman  
Camilo Smith – Librarian / Freelance writer, Los Angeles Times  
Olaolu Akande – unknown  
Josh Arinze – Research Analyst, Georgetown University

2001-02

Angela Carstarphen – Deputy managing editor, Vibe

Shameka Dudley – Copy editor, Newsday  
Sue-Lynn Erbeck – Copy editor, Chicago Tribune  
Karen Fredes, Administrative assistant, medical supply company,  
Maira Kraljevic, public relations, King's County district attorney  
Emeri O'Brien – Evening editor, MSN.com  
Dalila Paul – Business copy editor, The (New Jersey) Star-Ledger  
Valencia Prashad – Copy editor, The New York Times  
LaKenya Robinson – Copy editor, Los Angeles Times

2002-03

Leslie Karen Kinney – unknown  
Alberto Orteza – Copy editor, Newsday  
Shirley Goh – Copy editor, Boston Globe  
Ylka Reyes – Copy editor, Newsday  
Aisha Khan, Copy editor, Los Angeles Times  
Lavanya Ramanathan – Staff writer, The Washington Post

2003-04 (6)

Arifa Chaudhry, Copy editor, The Orange County Register  
Amber Noizumi – unknown  
Adeel Hassan, Copy editor, The New York Times  
YuLing Hsu – unknown  
Mayerline Michel – unknown  
Sidney Pendleton – unknown

2004-05 (6)

Jim Powell – Deputy copy chief, Jakarta Globe  
Sheryl Manalang – Copy editor, Riverside Press-Enterprise  
LaRonda Peterson – unknown  
Maryann James, Night News Editor, Baltimore Sun  
Kester Alleyne-Morris, Copy editor, Chicago Tribune  
Christopher Latham, Public relations, All Stars Project (nonprofit) and full-time  
MBA student

2005-06 (6)

Romain Williams, Copy Editor, (Virginia) Daily-Press  
Christine de la Cruz – Copy editor, Los Angeles Times  
Emily Wong – Copy editor, Chicago Tribune  
Eldes Tran -- Copy editor, Los Angeles Times  
Jennifer Martin – Copy editor, Los Angeles Times  
Ricardo Ocasio – Online producer, News12 / Cablevision

2006-07 (2)

Roxanne Jones – Copy editor, Newsday  
Joy Childs – Freelance copy editor / proofreader

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