

THE RESILIENCE OF JOURNALISTS OF COLOR IN NEWSROOM MANAGEMENT

A Professional Project

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By

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DEDICATION

This project is dedicated to all the journalists who came before me that valued the voices of the historically marginalized and oppressed and worked to have their stories told. To every journalist, teacher, and reader who told me to not quit and that our work was vital to help others become better citizens of the world. To my family whose shoulders I have stood on to better reach my dreams, and whose banner I will carry with me wherever I write.

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Chapter One: Introduction

I feel like the entirety of my life and career experiences so far have prepared me for this master's project, a professional analysis examining diversity and inclusion in the news industry. This final portion was crafted while working in the mental space of Washington, D.C., a multicultural, intellectually-driven city, and a media world shaken by "fake news."

I grew up in San Antonio, Texas, where we were divided more by economic class than race given our predominately ethnic communities. In my lifetime, San Antonio has only become more Latino, its dominant racial/ethnic group, with strong visibility among the white, black, and Asian populations right behind it. Homophobia was rampant but over time has dissipated somewhat. These intersections have fascinated me to this day.

I was often surrounded by other people who looked like me, that is until I worked my way through scholarships to a college preparatory academy for high school in a richer part of town. Around then, I started attending journalism conferences and seminars beyond the Alamo City's borders. I started to notice I was often one of the only Latinos in the room. Exceedingly, I also noticed there were fewer males in my peer group, although somehow all the people running the newsrooms I saw were mostly straight white men. Then, after accepting my homosexual identity in my later college years, I also realized that while the industry was gay-friendly, this visibility manifested itself more in the lower ranks of staffing, and not in investigative, or watchdog-like reporting roles. It was at the culmination of these observations, and talking about it with peers feeling the same way, that I started to become fascinated with, perhaps some days haunted by, the dynamics of diversity in newsrooms.

The conversations we would have about race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, age, and class were as comforting as they were unsettling. I indeed had white mentors reach out to help me, while others of “my own cloth” weren’t very supportive and encouraged me to stay away from covering minority issues. On the flip side, I had some older white editors tell me point blank that I needed to stop covering marginalized communities’ problems as intensively as it doesn’t appeal to broader readership which was predominately white. I also had several mentors who were gay, Latino and from first generation college backgrounds like me who said I should be proud of where I come from, who I am and that owning that doesn’t have to compromise my work if you work hard to be fair and provide evidence-based facts.

Through Ryan Thomas’ class on mass media, the first class I started after showing up to Mizzou, he encouraged me to embrace my curiosity about diversity issues. As a person who came from a few socially disadvantaged groups, being gay, of Mexican descent, from poverty, and raised by a single mother, I felt burdened by all the suppositions people may have of me in the workplace, classroom, and general public. But I suppressed it mentally. I definitely felt like a fish out of water here in the middle of Missouri as someone who has always lived and worked in communities with more racial diversity. But Thomas encouraged me to not dismiss the importance of studying identity at such a critical time in the country at large. He reminded not to shrug off those concerns because it’s important work for the field and social justice in general. The journalism industry has hoped to achieve parity – that is, have its staff reflect the community it covers - for almost 40 years now. So now I wondered aloud with more ease: “why?”

This research idea grew in relevance within the context of the Mizzou campus protests in fall of 2015, propelled by new diversity initiatives launched even within in our own journalism school, and swelling discussions in the presidential campaign around minority groups. The literature review in Thomas' course on why the news industry has struggled to reach parity led to a content analysis on how newspapers covered the Mizzou protests for my quantitative analysis course.

While much of my time at Mizzou has focused on data, education policy, and inequity and inequality in schools to develop my own personal skills, I wanted my professional analysis to complement that work, taking on a topic away from those areas and harnessing the research techniques I had become exposed to. I decided to focus learning more about how those who came before me dealt with the same issues around diversity and how they were able to stick it out – their resiliency.

More importantly, I believe journalists subscribe to the idea of fairness and want to see the industry be a moral leader in society by not only covering inequality smartly, but also avoiding it within in our newsroom industry culture through how we hire and treat historically marginalized groups.

Some scholars argue that news managers have an inevitable market interest to achieve diversity, while others return to the mantra heard commonly in a landmark 1978 American Society of News Editors initial parity discussion that journalism has a moral obligation to become more diverse in its staffing and in its news content. Some researchers suggest that news outlets formally incorporate into their code of ethics a commitment making diversity a priority in order to do the fair and balanced job it should be equipped to do. Some media analysts also say diversity should be taught an important

tenet in journalism schools because they often educate on a constant basis what ends up being the most diverse class of journalists heading out into a world that struggles to handle racial issues well.

We often think we learn from pointing out failure as journalists, but as researchers, we often can learn from success. It's most effective to focus on journalists of color because of a strong canon of research on the topic I can build upon feasibly in the scope of this project and due to my concerns of being a male researcher "mansplaining" sexism to my colleagues if I focused solely on gender given the well documented, ongoing lack of management visibility for women. I did aim though to incorporate a degree of intersectionality as it's nearly impossible to dissect what drives discrimination aimed at a woman of color or queer person of color.

My hope is that my professional analysis can offer some lessons to journalists of all backgrounds and in all newsrooms about the value of inclusion by hearing from some of the field's most resilient voices in the journalists of color community on what they've experienced.

With the recently launched minority journalists' initiative at the journalism school this work could dovetail well with that greater effort at Mizzou to bring light to the topic as we hope to become a leader on what diversity should mean to managers. The pressure is still there for the industry that's still grappling with jobs drying up after the recession that many minority journalists who survived believe gutted inclusive staff development and hiring practices.

I also now serve on the Education Writers Association's national board and co-chairing a task force on diversity and inclusion issues in education coverage and staffing.

Thus, the research component of this project has been highly relevant for helping me shape that effort that's taking place throughout 2017. Also, being physically in D.C. has helped as EWA has held some of our task force meetings here, and provided a space where I could cite some of the illuminating academic research previously compiled to get this project approved. The conversations in those meetings, in turn, helped shaped my questions to journalists I interviewed and provided some insights toward cohesive themes while pulling together the analysis section this spring.

As someone who hopes to go into management in the industry, I want to be fair-minded around sensitive issues like race and be familiar with the research we have and what my colleagues are experiencing, so this project also will help me on a personal level when the time comes for that if I ever have the privilege in working in management.

Chapter Two: Weekly reports

Weekly Report #1- January 23, 2017

- What were the professional challenges you encountered during the week? Where did you do well? Where could you use help? Include links to your work if possible.

I started my internship at Education Week, a nonprofit weekly in Bethesda, on Wednesday and spent half of the week as only had three days essentially tied up getting paperwork done, my employee orientation, and setup at my workstation. It's been a year and a half since I was last in a full-fledged newsroom so it was somewhat of a mental shift back in the saddle. I've worked in seven professional newsrooms over the past 15 years but each one is different and it takes time to acclimate. It's quite humbling to come in with some skill set- as I have covered education most thoroughly of any beat over the years – but still not know how to use your new phone in front of everyone.

I was pleased to hear that I seem to have enough of a base skill set to be able to get working on a few projects. I spent a good time of the week and today in meetings identifying a few shorter term tasks – writing up some online pieces that are more brief – with two larger projects focusing on data and investigative skills, which are what I came back to hone at Mizzou. I will be pitching in on a months-long series of stories on equity on schools, looking specifically at how private donations factor into school policy and another on the impact of school closures.

I realized I will need to get familiar with SPSS, which is not used in most newsrooms but the only data folks in here do use as they are part of a separate research

team we collaborate with on some stories. I am being touted as a conduit of someone more comfortable with using data in reporting, but who also knows how to work with reporters and editors to explain out both sides of the working equation. This week, I will some reporting on bilingual education and aviation education.

- (Graduate students) What progress did you make on your research project?

I didn't get to make as much progress as wanted but this Wednesday or Friday, depending on a tentative assignment, will work on updating my proposal and contacting people to interview for my project.

- What did you learn from the weekly seminar?

I first learned about how great my class and professor are and excited to see what we have in store. I also learned something as basic as how to get to the Press Club on time for class, which matters a lot, and also that we have to embrace all the tumult personally and professionally that awaits us this semester. It was great to hear from Alex as well about what life has been like for him covering the White House. I am looking forward to seeing the Newseum, with some official guidance, which I was really sick when I got to go while in town a few years back.

Weekly Report #2 - January 30, 2017

- What were the professional challenges you encountered during the week? Where did you do well? Where could you use help? Include links to your work if possible.

With my first full week – albeit four days only per internship restrictions – I started learning how to balance my work better between short-term and longer term stories. This week, my schedule was impacted by nearly a collective day of meetings on various aspects to my job: from the longer term equity in schools project to employee orientation on how to use our library and a staff meeting on the use of video as we’re beefing up that department. Ed Week is such a great environment, and we even had a pie social Sunday and felt so welcome (you don’t always get that in newsrooms!)

I am now working on two short online pieces for the next week and one larger story for print edition, in addition to delving more into a data set on private contributions to schools. I am a bit bummed the data folks use SPSS and I use SQL so we are trying to figure out how to best merge our skills. My data project is second in line for more attention so in meantime shifting my focus to my shorter term pieces this week. A brief version of the upcoming story on the DACA executive order’s future did run online officially marking my first published piece: http://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/learning-the-language/2017/01/as_trump_weighs_fate_of_immigr.html?cmp=e1-enl-eu-news2

One basic challenge: getting my phone set up at work. Still settling in to do the basics.

- (Graduate students) What progress did you make on your research project?

I started updating my proposal after the committee gave me some comments, researched some more journalists to contact after connecting with Ron Kelley at Mizzou who sent me our j-school’s 2000 manual on race in newsrooms research, and began drafting those emails to request interviews for the project. My goal is to complete

proposal revisions this week and send a dozen or so interview requests by Feb 1 in the morning and give a window of a month. I had a follow-up question to my chair on the matter regarding anonymity concerns because we want to get this published perhaps in a journalism industry publication like Quill or CJR, so unsure on such a sensitive topic how candid people will be if we use their names. I reached out to two editors already and will meet with one next month in Dallas. I also attended an event hosted by Richard Prince earlier in week where he assembled journalists of color, past and present, and made some great contacts possibly for more interviews. I plan to attend NICAR in Jacksonville in early March and an EWA inclusion retreat in February at Poynter to also scout for interviewees in person.

- What did you learn from the weekly seminar?

I got sick Thursday night so missed class Friday, but did make it to my two afternoon assignments for work later that day. I also arranged for a visit to Dallas to meet with some editors as know need to start looking for work and remember Professor Cochran say to be active on that front if graduating in May. I was so looking forward to seeing the Newseum with some official guidance, as I was really sick when I first visited while in town a few years back. With an insane amount of news the first week of the Trump presidency, I got sidetracked many times on both work and school work trying to keep up so am in the loop while I work and live in DC.

Weekly Report #3 - February 6, 2017

- What were the professional challenges you encountered during the week? Where did you do well? Where could you use help? Include links to your work if possible.

Now in my second week at Ed Week, I am settling in better. This week, Barbara came to meet my editors and I got to join in a meet and greet with our publisher, who always likes to schedule them with new staffers and interns. That is not the norm at most newspapers I have worked at and it really well. During the week, I started reporting on a short story about aviation programs, prompted by one in Houston where a high school has its own hangar inside its newly renovated building, for a web-only piece coming out next week.

- (Graduate students) What progress did you make on your research project?

I have finalized my list of folks to approach. I hope to get eight folks out of 16 I'll email. I will start interviews aggressively this weekend and hope to have them done by end of the month.

- What did you learn from the weekly seminar?

I felt much better by this Friday and was able to make it to class at the Russell Senate Building to meet with the communications team of Missouri State Sen. Roy Blunt. It was interesting to hear from his chief communications point person, Brian Hart. As someone who has interviewed politicians going back to Gov. Perry in 2001 while still in high school, I have learned that it's important to build a relationship with their offices as you never know when you may have to reach out. Hart said that it's important to be direct

about what you need and if you need it on background or not, respect the rules of off the record reporting, and to follow-up for online stories as elected officials do usually want to have their say but in today's digital first media landscape, that they might not be able to get back to reporters immediately. Hart said that for reporters new to political reporting, do not be afraid of asking how things work when it comes to legislative protocol and procedures with bills being passed or killed. We also happened to bump into the Senator on his way into his office, and he said he was happy to see us all the way out from Mizzou there. It was somewhat surreal to see him on TV during the inauguration after seeing him so much in ads during the 2016 election.

Weekly Report #4 - February 13, 2017

- What were the professional challenges you encountered during the week? Where did you do well? Where could you use help? Include links to your work if possible.

This past week, I was well into the groove of reporting and writing. I pitched in to cover a story a colleague who was out sent along and that ran regarding aviation high school program:

http://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/high_school_and_beyond/2017/02/aviation_high_school_builds_its_own_hangar.html

The challenge with this job is four-fold: not being here full time is a challenge with bandwidth, our research department that does data work does not use same programs I use so a bit hard for me to get the hands-on experience I had hoped for (but still pushing to get some in), we adapt stories to a national level so hard to always do a quick

turnaround, and everyone's beats are carved out so well that hard to know what is okay to cover at times without stepping on someone's toes. Everyone is generous though but just a learning curve on that front.

But I am getting to work on my third story with a turnaround this week and then can pivot back to working on three data and document driven projects that will carry me to end of the internship, so that's good. I am on retainer for breaking news but at this point more interested in skills application on larger projects with our team. I know I will get one major byline out of it so far focusing on role of private money in schools. I have ideas for two shorter turnaround pieces but not sure if will get to them before I go.

- (Graduate students) What progress did you make on your research project?

I interviewed one editor, have four scheduled this week and another five the following week. My goal is to complete all interviews with 10-12 people by end of the month and spend March writing the final part of the master's project.

- What did you learn from the weekly seminar?

We didn't have weekly seminar this week so I took a trip to Texas to meet with editors and reporters at The Dallas Morning News as a meet and greet opportunity all Friday. I spent nearly 10 hours meeting with journalists from the ed team, the data team, and all the top editors from news to business and even Mike Wilson. I think it went well. I am slowly starting to put out feelers on jobs but trying to best focus on the internship and wrapping up my research project.

Weekly Report #5 - February 21, 2017

- What were the professional challenges you encountered during the week? Where did you do well? Where could you use help? Include links to your work if possible.

This week was a shorter one at work as I was out Tuesday afternoon and all Wednesday in St. Petersburg, Florida at the Poynter Institute for the first meeting of the Education Writers Association' Diversity and Inclusion Task Force. I am chairing the effort as part of my board duties and we've assembled a mix of journalists from all backgrounds on the committee to help guide our programming and membership outreach. We had a great discussion on how to reshape our national convention programming to integrate issues affecting historically marginalized communities we cover as our first goal. That conference will be in DC in late May. I had to take the trip without paid time off though, which is a bit challenging financially living in DC, but I care deeply about the effort.

This week, I spent wrangling some final sources on my second story closer to being published, about superintendents and trustees suing one another. I had to figure out how to broaden the story angle as well beyond the key incident that brought it to our attention in Howard County. I got to work with the research department on pulling clips which was helpful as short on time and filed a 1,000 word story.

I'm starting to chip away at more data work though and helping my colleagues understand that. Also we were off Monday with the President's Day holiday, hence why I am sending this on Tuesday.

- (Graduate students) What progress did you make on your research project?

I so far have interviewed nine editors and trying to track down three more. I have two confirmed, one with an East Asian-American woman and another Latina but looking to get a woman of color who edits at a non-profit, as well as a South Asian-American woman. My goal to wrap up interviews during first week of March when I will go to NICAR and hopefully catch one or two more people in person.

- What did you learn from the weekly seminar?

This week we went to Politico where we learned about how a startup gets going and the transitions that journalists have made in their careers to get to Politico and within Politico. It was interesting to see the workspace look sort of different from traditional newsrooms as far as meeting spaces but still lots of rows of cubicles. Funny though they have a print edition as well.

Weekly Report #6 - February 27, 2017

- What were the professional challenges you encountered during the week? Where did you do well? Where could you use help? Include links to your work if possible.

This week again was impacted by Ed Week being closed on Monday, which allowed me to made great headway on my interviews for the master's project. I got a second story published and worked on tweaking it during first part of the week:

http://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/District_Dossier/2017/02/the_likely_outcome_when_a_supe.html

I am concerned that I won't be able to get as much hands-on data work because I am working with our stellar research center but they use SPSS and seem to prefer to dole

out the data after they have analyzed it. So I do have a degree of dependency on them. I went back to school was to be able to do this work more on my own but was hoping to get more of a space to do hand-on work under the guidance of someone. This comes off a semester at IRE's data library where I got to do some data work but it was a bit challenging with no data director there and chipping away only on one set. I am worried that I am going to forget my SQL, ArcGIS and Excel skills as have more writing and traditional reporting to do here and to devote to my master's project. However, I don't want to embark on my own analysis and result in duplicative efforts. What is a bit disappointing though is that since I am in editorial, I don't get to work as hands-on alongside them. I'm still learning how to navigate all this. I love it here but this is a new era of collaboration here at Ed Week and people seem to divvy up work well. I am hoping that now I am mostly working on three data and document driven projects that I can get some time to work with the data more hand-on than during my first month.

- (Graduate students) What progress did you make on your research project?

I so far have interviewed eleven editors and have one more interview this week. That will have me at 12. I am attending NICAR this weekend but after I get back plan to start writing so can complete the work by end of March to have a draft to my committee chair.

- What did you learn from the weekly seminar?

This past week we met with Louis Jacobson, a senior correspondent at PolitiFact, a web site created by the Tampa Bay Times to rate the accuracy of claims made by officials and politicians. We learned that the work is in demand and that funny enough

both liberals and conservatives come after them, especially on the lines between their falsehood designations. They also have diversified their revenue stream with grants, subscriptions to their franchise model, and some advertising. They also do not use the word lie.

Weekly Report #7 - March 6, 2017

- What were the professional challenges you encountered during the week? Where did you do well? Where could you use help? Include links to your work if possible.

This story ran in the print edition over the weekend that is mailed out to readers: http://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/District_Dossier/2017/02/the_likely_outcome_when_a_supe.html. So now I have three published stories but been mostly focused on helping out on three projects – two of which should be published by end of the time I am there at Ed Week and one after.

This week, I finally hammered down by working with our research department folks that we should go with focusing on the State of Wisconsin when looking into disparities among neighboring school districts when it comes to private contributions. We selected it because many states are missing and the state that has the best quality data using the federal set we are is Wisconsin.

This story on private contributions is part of a packaged series we'll be rolling out over the next few months on inequity in K-12 schools. I am helping out another reporter on the impact of school closures assemble some research and as well as doing some data quality checks and open records guidance on a vouchers project.

Ed Week will likely send me to Wisconsin to do some reporting at some point in next two weeks if we can swing it, so need to plan that and worried I won't get it done in timeline editors wanted but we had a lot of challenges with the data quality and how to best agree in how to analyze it across departments.

Another note: Ed Week is also paying \$100 to send me to a training hosted by the U.S. Department of Education at a national conference here next week. I tried to coordinate a group of four of us going but the three others couldn't make it, and the irony was I was attempting to do so in order for Ed Week to keep some of that institutional knowledge after my internship ends and I leave as no job openings exist now.

And Ed Week recently just joined the Institute for Nonprofit News consortium and has been looking to harness its place in there. While at NICAR I saw that another member, ProPublica, is launching a hate crimes story project and asked for partnerships and freelancers to help out. So I contacted them as had done some research into how opaque the data is in Missouri for Professor Herzog's CAR class. KOMU ended up running a piece on the seeds of my inquiry later on as they paid for the data and I consulted on it. Just this morning, ProPublica's Documenting Hate project coordinator emailed to set up a call Wednesday to let me know about the project and see if we can get Education Week on board, so trying to help out as I can even if it doesn't result in a job but believe we are stronger together as media outlets collaborating on bigger issues.

- (Graduate students) What progress did you make on your research project?

I attended NICAR this weekend, and after a month of scheduling and conducting intensive interviews, wanted this weekend to take a break from it to gain some perspective. While at NICAR though, I attended a roundtable session on what it takes to make it as a person of color in the investigative and data journalism world, which was an “off record” session so people could be raw about what they’ve experienced. None were editors that fit our criteria for my project but the consensus of what I heard was what’s been reflected in the interviews with journalists of color in management thus far. This week, I will be meeting with the Education Writers Association board and staff on Friday to discuss the programming recommendations we made at our diversity and inclusion task force meeting at Poynter last month.

This weekend, I will be writing up my research with a goal of having a strong draft by March 23rd. That is when my Mom will visit DC for first time so want to take a break and host her. I’ll be in the middle of wrapping up my Ed Week story on private contributions as well and the three day weekend will allow me to pick back up on draft for master’s project. I have reached out in meantime to Dr. Thomas to see if we can chat on phone about my findings thus far, and if I need to do any follow-up reporting after the 12 interviews I have done, each lasting 60-90 minutes roughly.

- What did you learn from the weekly seminar?

Recently we found out that President Trump would not attend the WHCA dinner in April, which was a bit of a relief because his rhetoric and administrative policies toward journalists, Mexicans, immigrants, people of color in general, and those who identify as LGBT or queer, had raised an ethical dilemma I think for many of us. I have long dreamt of attending and am so honored to be a part of the WHCA scholarship cohort

as grew up watching nerd prom on CSPAN, seriously. But I did think it may feel odd to see journalists and be a journalist who poses for a photo with an elected official we may be covering amid such a polarized nation along political affiliation lines – especially aggravated in this year’s climate. I am most excited about going with my classmates to represent Mizzou, meet brilliant journalists and possibly see some pop culture folks in the room of interest. I think it actually may be for the better at this juncture for the association and us students with this development.

As for class, we met with Donna Leinwand Leger, breaking news editor of USA Today. Donna now works mostly from the office, she told us, but for many years she was USA Today’s reporter covering war, international disasters and crime such as the tsunami in Indonesia and earthquake in Haiti. We had plenty of questions for her but was curious to know more about her feelings as a past National Press Club president, given the historical discrimination in past toward women and how our industry has or has not changed for women. She did offer some great insights about the pros and cons though of being a woman covering disaster or in war like zones, especially encouraging us to not shy away from empathy. (She also gave us good tips for any beat such as charge your devices wherever you can and if you see a bathroom, use a bathroom when reporting in foreign places.) It’s amazing to know how people respond to government documents from the US and award clearance she said. I don’t think many people get how powerful our nation is and why we should take our foreign policy more seriously.

As for NICAR, which I funded on my own and volunteered by helping organize a panel and doing tear down Sunday of our equipment on site, it didn’t conflict with my internship or class as scheduled around that but only got essentially one day in of

sessions. At NICAR, I got to take some advanced SQL and Google Fusion Tables, and was relieved I am able to remember much of it even though haven't been able to use it much since leaving the IRE library. I also met with folks from the Houston Chronicle and Dallas Morning News. The Chronicle is hiring for an enterprise urban education reporting position and tracked down data editor Matt Dempsey who is on the projects team there, and a fellow Mizzou Tiger, and we hit it off. I had a print portfolio with me and he said after our two hour conversation the paper would have a hard time finding anyone more well-rounded and qualified than me. He said this in front of the Dallas Morning staffers who said they are going through a reorganization and not sure which positions will come up but to stay in touch if Houston or Ed Week gets serious. So exciting times but just trying to stay on the rails with everything.

This week, I also found out that the National Lesbian and Gay Journalists Association will fund sending me to their gala in New York to get my scholarship award in person. I already have the funds but since was so close in DC, they wanted me to attend. I don't know many details aside from it is on the day between my final day at Ed Week and following day taking my final class and exam with Professor Cochran. Busy but blessed times.

Weekly Report #8 - March 13, 2017

- What were the professional challenges you encountered during the week? Where did you do well? Where could you use help? Include links to your work if possible.

This week I spent most of my time working on my big story of the semester on private contributions' impact on school districts. We had already narrowed it down in a data analysis to Wisconsin so this week my job was to get into at least two of the districts who are neighbors but get very different amounts in private contributions. I was able to get one to speak but took me until Friday to set up interviews for this week at two others. I am scheduled to fly there next week so trying to get lay of the land and praying for no snow as I have to drive an hour from Milwaukee to Sheboygan to report for three days.

I also met with the publisher of Ed Week on how to grow their data journalism efforts, use their membership in the Institute for Nonprofit News, suggesting a partnership with ProPublica on its hate crimes project, and also what my research for my master's project on diversity and inclusion has yielded as they are looking to be a more representative newsroom. I also had my first job interview for a position back in Texas and starting to job hunt as money will be running short as soon as I graduate.

- (Graduate students) What progress did you make on your research project?

I so far have interviewed thirteen editors, as landed one this past weekend. I have saved a number of articles that have come out since my proposal was drafted that want to incorporate and spoke with my committee chair. Dr. Thomas, on Friday for counsel on next steps. I have been working to nail down a time with my committee chairs as well to defend in late April.

- What did you learn from the weekly seminar?

This past week we got the great opportunity to help out at the Hurley Symposium and hear from DC journalists and a panel of factcheckers with representatives from all

outlets leading the way. We learned that again “lie” is a last resort in nearly all cases to use, and that DC reporters have to remember to stay calm and collected in their approach reporting on a tumultuous first few weeks in the new Trump administration. Riley Beggin and I collaborated Thursday evening on a write-up for RJI’s website on the DC reporters panel where the conversation got heated about whether or not reporters are “whining” or being too self-righteous and may be out of touch. Four of my editors at EdWeek attended and they loved it and look forward to staying in touch with Barbara and the school for future recruits, which is great.

Weekly Report #9 - March 21, 2017

- What were the professional challenges you encountered during the week? Where did you do well? Where could you use help? Include links to your work if possible.

This week I focused on preparing for my trip to Sheboygan via Milwaukee to report on my big contribution to our inequity in schools project at Ed Week – a piece on private contributions in schools. I spent the week nailing down times to visit with three school districts, one for each day I am there. I even came in on snow Tuesday unlike most of my colleagues and put in extra hours to make sure everything is planned. It took some convincing the districts though but they seem cool with me coming now.

I also got to finally do some challenging data work with Excel, Access, Awesome Table on Google sheets for geocoding, and SQL as we are trying to clean up some voucher school data from Florida to get reporting started. I will be helping out with that in between working on my private contributions. Right after that, through the end of

April, I'll be working on another piece of the project, focused on school closures, with another reporter.

- (Graduate students) What progress did you make on your research project?

I was able to nail down a time for my committee to convene for my defense and booked a room in RJI for it. This past week I connected with all three of my committee members and will get some more insight from Mark once we can chat as he had a medical emergency Friday so we rescheduled. I am working on my outline, sifting through newer materials I have come across and starting to draft the findings and discussion section. I've set a date of April 3rd to have a draft to Professor Thomas. (Coincidentally that is same day my major draft is due on the Ed Week project too so yay Spring "Break" weekend.) I will be off this Thursday since working extra hours this week, so can work on the project then.

- What did you learn from the weekly seminar?

This past week we got some one on one time with former Clinton White House spokesman Mike McCurry, who came to the Hurley Symposium and has had a fascinating career from his early days as a spokesman getting called to testify in his boss' trial, to helping run the presidential debates, to studying theology as "penance" he joked. He spoke quite candidly about how Washington – Democrats and Republicans – are still in shock over Trump's win and what his administration's actions may mean for political discourse. He said sometimes it was better to not be in the know to protect oneself and that journalists who cover the WH and those in it should remember they have a natural

adversarial relationship. Also the mid-term was solid and reminded me of all the great speakers we have had and also how fast this semester is going by.

Weekly Report #10 - March 27, 2017

- What were the professional challenges you encountered during the week? Where did you do well? Where could you use help? Include links to your work if possible.

This week I spent late Sunday through late Wednesday traveling to and from Sheboygan, having to report there. I had several logistics to figure out but eventually got to the three school districts over three days and interviewed about a dozen people for the piece. I am mostly writing about disparities in the amount of private money that neighboring districts get and how they navigate that awkward space of having to work together on larger countywide issues but knowing they have a student population of “haves and have nots.” The higher income district folks were a bit defensive but I assured them I wanted to get past the caricatures and learn what challenges they have, which they do get less money back from the state. I got to see how all three used private money for technology, greenhouses for ag programs, and manufacturing tech education. I also met up with a local journalist I knew who showed me around so got a good sense of the city.

I also worked on some on Thursday with our data and library research folks to wrap up some loose ends so could jump into some data analysis after finishing my draft. Upon my return Monday to work, I worked into evening as had to get ducks in row on this draft due soon of my Sheboygan trip and mapping out what else I need to pull the project draft together, from the story to art and graphics.

- (Graduate students) What progress did you make on your research project?

I am already writing my analysis but realized in conversation with two of my committee members that I may be following the thesis format of a findings and discussion section instead of a magazine-style analysis as the professional project analysis mandates. So I have reached out to my committee chair for clarity but know it's Spring Break. I am working on my outline, sifted through newer materials I have come across and drafting what will be the interview findings section. I've set a date of April 3rd to have a draft to Professor Thomas (coincidentally that is same day my major draft is due on the Ed Week project too so yay Spring "Break" weekend coming up). I was asked to work Friday as we have a big event I would love to make but need the time for the project report drafting. I also am navigating a job hunt while at Ed Week, where I will meet for lunch with editors about my future Tuesday and on April 10 fly to Houston for an interview with the Houston Chronicle for an urban education reporter position. I am struggling to figure out what is fair and reasonable compensation.

- What did you learn from the weekly seminar?

Last Friday was a dream come true because I got to see and go into the Supreme Court chambers I had only seen in sketches. We learned about how the Court operates and also the limits of the public information office in saying much beyond referring reporters to the actual cases because they don't want to offer what could be seen as opinion. What was most helpful was that actually it is not that hard to get in to see a case a member of the press unless a high profile case, as they have a space for the media there. It was also interesting to hear from spokeswoman that the media core for covering the Court was wonkier and operates differently than the other ones that cover the White

House and Congress. However, now with deadlines reporters face in social media and digital age, they don't get to confer to double check interpretations of the Court's rulings. Also, seems like no cameras will be let in anytime soon.

Weekly Report #11 - April 3, 2017

- What were the professional challenges you encountered during the week? Where did you do well? Where could you use help? Include links to your work if possible.

Due to some production changes, I will get another week to work on my story about private donations in Wisconsin to public schools. On Monday, we had an all-staff meeting where editors graciously pointed out my work three times. I met with our photo staff about what art to photograph in the three districts I visited in Sheboygan, which is a little different than what I am used to as photographers usually accompany me as I report, but Ed Week sends them later. On Tuesday, I snagged an interview with the director of manufacturing of a major company based in Sheboygan about what they expect from the schools and met with the editors about staying on at Education Week. There are no open positions so they will see if anything can be worked out as they want to have a data journalist in house, but may only be contract work, which is a bit precarious as I need benefits. On Wednesday, I got to interview the Wisconsin state superintendent Tony Evers, who helped me zoom out on the story from the three districts to what was happening as a whole in the state. Education Week plans their issues ahead and likes to collaborate across departments, so we had yet another meeting where we discussed how to pull together the story, photos, and graphics using data we analyzed to determine Wisconsin. It turns out that Wisconsin saw the strongest uptick in donations from private

sources among the states we can tally, but are missing a dozen due to integrity issues. Thursday afternoon, I finally got writing, creating an outline and have to condense everything into 1,500 words or so.

Next week I have two interviews with Kohler Co officials, as need their voice given their most dominant presence, and want to circle back with the professor who studied private donations in schools at Indiana University about what I have found. I have until end of Thursday to file the story but want to get done as soon as possible as counter balancing it with finishing the master's project draft I need to get in around some time. I then need to immediately apply for more jobs and have the upcoming interview in Houston April 10. I did submit an application to try to get into ProPublica's Data Institute they are hosting with Ida B. Wells Society for Investigative Reporting this summer to learn R, coding, and scraping techniques that I didn't get around to while at Mizzou.

- (Graduate students) What progress did you make on your research project?

This week, one of my committee members, Mark Horvit, and I connected over the weekend, and he was able to send me the guidelines for the project report. I then checked with my committee chair, Ryan Thomas, who helped me clarify what format to submit my final draft in as had previously been following the thesis format. There had been some confusion from what I had heard in my project seminar class, that my analysis portion would just be slapped into a revamped version of my proposal but upon looking back at other professional projects, realized that seemed to be wrong. I also was able to check the guide Mark sent me with what the contents should be that are online:

<https://journalism.missouri.edu/programs/masters/completing-your-degree/professional-project/project-report/>. After that, I spent the weekend pulling together my weekly

reports, the clips I've had and writing a new introduction, evaluation, and the professional analysis. My goal is now to have it in by end of April 7th, just a few days behind original deadline.

- What did you learn from the weekly seminar?

It was Spring Break so we did not have a seminar.

Weekly Report #12 - April 10, 2017

- What were the professional challenges you encountered during the week? Where did you do well? Where could you use help? Include links to your work if possible.

This week, I was mostly hustling to finish my story on disparities when it comes to private money in schools in Sheboygan County at the three districts we were at. That included condensing a story down by 40% from where my first draft was. It was definitely challenging and I was struggling with making sure that I didn't cheapen pitting the rich versus poor district so focused on showing, not telling by using details that showed the disparity, such as one district using kale and risotto, and Yo-Yo Ma performing on campus while the other lower-income district used its money to have students grow lettuce that would be used in their cafeteria to save money.

V also was called into several meetings at Education Week as they found out the Houston Chronicle was going to fly me there for an in person interview after making it to third round of consideration, and told me they would offer me something. So this is a huge surprise because there were no openings and only talk of extending my internship, which economically I can not do with bills on my plate and eagerness to get back working. It is exciting and very good news but this week hope they make a more concrete

offer. This is a space, from negotiating salary to having two interested companies at once, that I haven't navigated so been seeking private counsel from trusted colleagues about what to do. I really wish we had a course on this at Mizzou!

- (Graduate students) What progress did you make on your research project?

This was a huge week, as I not only had a 2,000 word story due at work that was my major project of the semester, but also my first draft into my committee chair. Friday, I submitted it and by Sunday I had a copy back which this week I will tweak. My chair, Ryan Thomas, told me that I just need to make some tweaks and rewrite the ending and can move on.

- What did you learn from the weekly seminar?

Steve Weiswasser, Hannah Lepow and Kurt Wimmer at Covington and Burling welcomed us for great seminar about libel, leaks and the law. I had taken Brett Johnson's class on media law so this was a helpful refresher. Hannah was kind enough to stay and answer all our questions. They gave us a helpful handout and explained the differences among fair use, copyright and privacy laws in how to better do our work. We also prepared for our Sunday visit to Meet the Press, and Barbara schooled us on the evolution of the Sunday morning news shows that continue to make headlines coming into the Monday news cycle.

Weekly Report #13 - April 17, 2017

- What were the professional challenges you encountered during the week? Where did you do well? Where could you use help? Include links to your work if possible.

Spent the week editing my story – the large project on inequity among districts in the amount of private donations they get as neighbors – which proved stressful for normal reasons such as not agreeing on word choice, to the technical, as in not having the program we use to store our stories in as I am an intern so complicated the tweaking process. In the end, the piece seems to have come out well and is now off to the presses. I feel a degree of relief but don't usually until I hear back from sources and readers to make sure I didn't screw anything up. I'm a cautious optimist confident in my work but also know this one is a sensitive topic for those involved.

Monday morning I flew to Houston for a job interview and back Tuesday but got delayed at airport due to bad weather. I worked from the airport and after class Friday to make it up. On Wednesday when I got back in, Education Week made me a great offer, jumping ahead of the Chron suddenly, so now trying to sort all that out. It is encouraging but a little awkward as trying to find out what Chron will do. I am torn between the two for different reasons. By week's end, I didn't hear from Houston so a bit worried and my internship ends here Wednesday so hoping to have an answer by then. The job hunt has taken increasingly up more time in recent weeks, especially as I am in a little more debt than expected with cost of living.

- (Graduate students) What progress did you make on your research project?

I only really had time to put together my weekly reports, but this weekend will make tweaks that Dr. Thomas sent me and am cleared to send to committee. It is due to them technically a week before the defense but trying to get to them by Monday AM so have a little extra time with it. My big piece is coming out next week but securing PDFs and JPGs of the layout, as well as getting the text so they can see it.

- What did you learn from the weekly seminar?

Meet the Press taping – It was surprising to see the modest setup for the show, which still makes big headlines thanks to the Sunday news cycle. I have long had a journalist crush on Chuck Todd so to not only see him in action and get to speak briefly with him was great. The show had a stellar lineup of panelists and policymakers, which represented a wide array of views on the Syrian bombing.

NPR visit - In addition to seeing the most social media love for my MTP post, NPR was a close rival, as so many people, non-journalists included, appreciate and value their work. I had long read about Keith Woods so getting to hear about his views on diversity, and the need to also be pushing for diverse content and mentalities among those working in the field to learn those sensibilities to see how diverse their source pool is, was enlightening. I didn't get to ask a question as time was short and wanted my peers to get more time discussing it as my head is constantly in that space. This topic is on mind thanks to two projects: my master's project focusing on diversity and inclusion, as well as the Education Writers Association task force I am chairing on inclusionary practices, which is in the middle of meetings and development. I actually have a call with a consulting firm who is helping us craft some recommendations to take to our board and membership on how to get better at inclusivity. I wish we would have gotten more time with Woods as he had to go, but maybe if I get to stay, can get coffee with him. I am so glad Barbara included this as part of the class program out here because it's a changing and highly relevant issue, and Mizzou is trying to get better at creating this consciousness amongst its predominately white, middle class student body as it should in light of what blindsided leadership at the university's top leadership in 2015.

Chapter Three: Self-evaluation

I spent the spring 2017 semester working as a “contributing writer” at Editorial Projects in Education, pitching in on data-driven projects and as a general assignment reporter for *Education Week*, a K-12 publication based in the Washington D.C area. I worked 14 weeks from January 17 to April 19, 2017, at roughly 30 hours a week from Monday to Thursday.

The *Education Week* data journalism internship allowed me to report and write articles related to K-12 policy and practice for a national audience of policymakers, school leaders, educators, researchers, and others interested in education. I acted as liaison between traditional journalists in the newsroom and data analysis experts in our Education Week Research Center, to collect, analyze, and report on data for various reporting projects. Our main project focused on hidden inequities in schools, which kicked off in March.

Some relevant background: I have written about education off and on since 2001 at my first journalism job at a community newspaper in my hometown, and most recently as a full-time beat reporter for nearly five years at the *San Antonio Express-News* before resigned to attend Mizzou. *Education Week* tried to recruit me while at the *Express-News*, but for family reasons and well into the negotiation process of selecting a graduate school, I had to decline. I couldn't tell them at time, but shortly thereafter when I resigned from the *Express-News*, I reached back out and explained what had happened and that felt it would be unfair to them for me to take the job only to quit shortly thereafter to go back to school. It was great to have some history to build upon, and a good relationship where they saw I also had their best interests in mind. I felt we had

mutual respect and trust coming in for the internship, as know if I was a younger, less experienced student, I may have not received the same opportunities to travel for stories, or felt as comfortable in the working environment.

Not that I didn't encounter some challenges after arriving. I thought I was first going to report perhaps to the managing editor who I had built a relationship with, but instead was assigned to two editors on different projects. In addition to that, I was to work with the research center staff, and the library department on a few matters since they both knew I had become more familiar with the research and data analysis techniques they use that I picked up while at Mizzou and saw me as a conduit to the news editorial side. Everyone was enthusiastic, which was a plus, but at same time, was hard to know how to divide up my time fairly for everyone.

I lucked out in that my teammate in the research center who I was to work with on my biggest project – mining a federal database on private contributions to schools – was from my hometown in San Antonio, so we personally clicked. That chemistry was vital because we had to come to an agreement on sifting through dodgy data to figure out where to focus our reporting after running our analysis. *Education Week* has declared that one of its strategic goals under a new publisher in the past year is to beef up its data journalism. It is now using its research center, which previously only did a few annual reports and mostly work for outside folks who needed their services, to run their own in-house analysis. There had in the past been a wall up that in the past two years has been coming down with some tensions on how to best collaborate that sometimes I heard each side vent about.

But they were excited to see some of the experience I had gained while working at IRE and taking classes at Mizzou in mapping and computer-assisted reporting. However, after arriving, I was a bit disappointed to learn the publication relied on its research center using SPSS for its more sweeping analysis work. I had only experimented with SPSS briefly in the only class at Mizzou I got a B in, and is not what I was trained as the future of data journalism, as our school focuses on using Excel, Structured Query Language, or SQL, Python, and R. So I had to rely on getting the data from their department in Excel and then could run more detailed analyses. But they said, if I were able to stay on past the internship, they would help me learn some SPSS if needed or I would get some time to use more of my Excel and SQL skills.

Then, thankfully, one of my editors wanted to build their own in-house database on school choice without use of the research folks as they know they are overloaded and wanted faster turnaround. So I worked with a library assistant on crafting open records requests to several states and how to do data negotiation. Then, I got to start merging the data to help build it out in Excel, with some help in Access and SQL, as well as Google Fusion Tables and using add-ons with Chrome to geocode. I had to push that to the backburner though to pivot in early April to the private contributions data-driven piece.

Eventually we settled on the Sheboygan, Wis. area to do some reporting on the bigger piece on private money in schools, and the publication decided to send me there for in person interviews and to gather some color. The editors told me that they rarely ever send interns but felt I was up for the job. I had some personal anxiety about going with my school schedule and also the weather as rarely drive in snow. But I put on my big boy pants, jumped at the chance and made it work. I didn't sleep much the month of

March amid master's project and internship duties both came to a head the first week of April. I have come to realize that the hustle doesn't even let up in graduate school as I felt burnt out by my last job and now feel that again at the end of these two years. But I wanted to take advantage of all the opportunities around me that opened up when I went back to school and a great one at that.

I had to convince my editors however that we could swing getting into three neighboring school districts in Sheboygan where we saw some stark disparities when it comes to how much private money each gets to spend on their students. Some school districts that other reporters wanted to profile declined to grant access as school officials there didn't like the idea of being featured in a series on disparities. That in turn shook up my editors on meeting our deadlines and almost resulted in me having to do the story purely by phone and email, but I slowly worked the phones to convince each district one-by-one to let me in, which impressed my editors. I was sensitive to those in Sheboygan who felt that their school districts were pitted in a constant "have and have nots" comparison that bothered them. They had recently launched a countywide effort among all the school districts there because they are worried about their aging population and 3,000 unfilled jobs impacting their economy, so feel pressure to work beyond their historical differences and wanted me to be aware of that fragility. So I promised them I would be sensitive to the situation, but they on their end had to understand the data says what it says and we're just trying to explain why.

There was a second challenge, too with this project. Zooming out nationwide, the data set we got from the federal government was missing some states, so we had to sift through all that and come to the conclusion to use what we had and explain to readers

what we don't have, which took getting hold of state and federal data folks and coercing them to go on the record as federal officials increasingly want to only speak to reporters on background. It fortunately turned out Wisconsin had the best data integrity and a ton of intriguing politics around its funding in the past 10 years that has led to getting more aggressive toward raising private donations. On paper, you wouldn't see what is going on in Sheboygan as important but all the digging shows how this is playing out to where they are increasingly dependent on the private sector stepping up to help in different ways, even beyond cash. The story was published with visuals and online features and featured on education journalism sites such as The Grade as one of the best stories in April.

In addition to the large Sheboygan-focused data project on private money in schools and the vouchers database, I pitched in on writing shorter stories on topics such as immigration reform affecting students and teachers; aviation programs and their connection to incoming Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos; school board-superintendent relations; and the impact on the economy when students who are suspended drop out of school. I had written about all of these topics in the past. But what was a challenge was catching up with my colleagues who all knew their beats so well and trying to go from my reference points of being a more statewide, or local reporter in Texas to building out from these smaller incidents around the nation to greater meaning for “teachable moments” for our broader national audience. I got some experience in Los Angeles working for the Times on this technique but I was a bit rusty as didn't follow education policy as diligently as I wished I could have with the demands of my academic program and jobs during my previous three semesters at Mizzou. Thankfully, I had

enough of a foundation built while being a reporter on the beat to get some of the topical importance, and staying involved with the Education Writers Association over the years while away from full-time education reporting helped as well. For example, I had covered school board-superintendent relationships imploding, and that was nothing new. But when we got wind of a superintendent in Maryland suing their board for discrimination, I suggested that we focus on what happens when superintendents and trustees sue one another as they have to work together. In an off-the-cuff remark, I said it reminded me of “The War of the The Roses” film, in the vein of two people going through a divorce who are living together, with their children stuck in the middle. “That’s the lede!,” my editor exclaimed and the angle I pitched was narrow enough to find a few solid examples but also something we had not written about as the topic is nothing new. She said my sensibilities showed how I was able to identify a way to make this one local clash be an enlightening moment for our readership and what it means in a broader sense. Our librarians’ clip search showed in every case, once one party sues the other, it never ends well. In early May, my prediction came true as the school board reached a buyout with the superintendent we wrote about in my story earlier in the semester.

This was also the first job where I had finally shed my fear of speaking more openly with the higher-ups. I think I have avoided this for a myriad of reasons. I felt like it wasn’t my place as a lower-level employee who didn’t want to look like I was kissing up, or trouncing the authority of the editor immediately above me. I also wasn’t as confident of my skill set, but going to Mizzou and working with brilliant journalists and academics reminded me that I do have enlightening insights to share and should opine more than I do. I also think it’s the culture I come from as a dual minority: I don’t want to

come off as disagreeable, whiny, conceited, or a sycophant. My Mexican and Catholic heritage teaches me to be humble, and my passive gay male identity leads me to often behave in a more diplomatic, pleasant, and docile manner. But I realized that actually maybe they could learn a few things from me as I could from them, and spoke more directly with the publisher, even following up on a face-to-face meeting with her after she suggested it. I sat near her office and we both often worked late so we would get into conversations and it wasn't awkward. She even came to one of our pie socials a reporter held at her house and it wasn't weird. It was very different from what I experienced working at bigger corporate papers. The invitation to meet with her helped but I have only seen confident, usually straight white men, honestly exhibit that prowess and gumption so I took a cue from them. It's something I heard reiterated in the process of interviewing journalists in management who are of color, who said they learned from the dominant class how to take cues in moving up the ranks and getting to do better work. It also helped I am in a newsroom that values collaboration, and is mostly run by women, who encourage listening and teamwork more than other newsrooms I have been in – an observation also backed by research I came across while putting together this project. Also, being in an education policy nonprofit newsroom, there is an earnest nerdiness to our culture that jives well with my personality and drive. This relationship has also helped get the ball rolling on possibly extending my work as a data journalist in their newsroom, ideally heading toward a full-time position, but learning how to counterbalance that with seeking work elsewhere to negotiate the best deal to get somewhere to do the best work at a fair wage. It's all still newfound confidence just as I was worried I would have to jump ship a couple of years ago like so many before me.

Bolstering my skill set and finding new confidence in myself through my graduate school experience I think was instrumental in the negotiation process upon my graduation, as I was able to parlay my internship at *Education Week* into a full-time job starting in June. I also found renewed energy being in Washington D.C. during a new administration coming in, and one whose contentious relationship with the press has made an interesting time to follow the news and be a part of the media scene. I feel a renewed sense of purpose as our readers have told us they are depending on our work to know how to handle an intensive time of social change in our country and honored to be a journalist in this time in history. And to think, before Mizzou, I almost jumped ship.

Evaluation by Education Week managers:

From: Lesli Maxwell
Sent: Thursday, April 20, 2017 12:02 PM
To: cochranb@missouri.edu; Francisco Vara-Orta
Cc: Debbie Viadero
Subject: Education Week evaluation of Francisco Vara-Orta

Dear Barbara,

Attached is our review of Francisco Vara-Orta's internship in the Education Week newsroom. Thanks much for your great support of Francisco's work and we look forward to keeping in touch with you.

Best,
Lesli

Lesli A. Maxwell
Assistant Managing Editor
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@l_maxwell

April 20, 2017

Dear Professor Cochran,

Francisco Vara-Orta brought passion, rigor, and an enterprising work ethic to his reporting, writing and data journalism during his internship in the Education Week newsroom this spring.

In fewer than four months and working only 29 hours a week, Francisco produced ambitious, high-impact journalism that drew on his full range of skills: data gathering, cleaning, and analysis, along with phone and in-person reporting and writing of complex stories. His marquee work—featured on Page 1 of Education Week and highly visible on edweek.org and other digital platforms—was a deep dive into how private donations to public schools exacerbate existing disparities within school districts and between districts. This piece was part of a high-profile, ongoing Education Week series that is examining and exposing hidden inequities in public schools around the U.S.

To carry off this project, Francisco had to: work closely with the research center to locate the best possible database, contact other researchers to explore how his work could add to the existing knowledge base on private donations to schools, and negotiate with our research center staff on how finely to cut the data and how extensive to make the analyses.

To tell the story, Francisco combed the database for neighboring districts that vary widely in the amount of private donations they receive. He also had to negotiate with the districts for access to their schools and leaders—a delicate task given the potentially negative fallout that could come from making these kinds of social comparisons among have and have-not communities. That he managed to do this with three districts was an impressive achievement.

The resulting package of articles was strong, yet sensitive to the differing considerations and circumstances of each community. It would've been easy to stereotype these districts, but Francisco stayed attuned to the nuances in reporting the stories.

Francisco quickly demonstrated his utility in our newsroom, willingly picking up news for various blogs and swinging in on newsy stories with other beat reporters to cover a range of issues, including the impact of the Trump administration's aggressive immigration enforcement on public schools across the country.

As a newsroom that has recently committed to data journalism, Francisco's experience and knowledge of working with data has been a major asset in such a short amount of time. In addition to the equity reporting mentioned earlier, Francisco has been a key partner to an editor and reporter working on a data-reporting project related to private-school vouchers. His collaborative style is refreshing and his willingness to share and transfer his knowledge to the EdWeek newsroom will prove invaluable to our journalists. He also skillfully navigated a still-evolving partnership between EdWeek's newsroom and research center which have only recently begun closely collaborating to produce data partnerships. His work with the research center helped deepen the ties between it and the newsroom.

Of course, Francisco is a seasoned journalist, making him quite unusual for an intern. His experience as a reporter and his knowledge of K-12 education policy made his transition into our newsroom incredibly smooth. But there are areas for growth for Francisco, especially as he moves into national education reporting and data journalism.

Among them:

- Strengthening his command of how to frame and contextualize a story for a broad, national audience and make clear why what he's reporting on matters.
- Using clear, crisp, and colorful writing that both elevates and makes relevant to a reading audience what can often be complicated, dense policy. Knowing what the essential facts and details are, and leaving the rest on the cutting room floor.
- Doing all of the above in shorter, more-direct sentences.

Francisco is an already accomplished journalist who proved in his short time with Education Week that he has much more high-impact work to contribute, especially if he stays in the world of national education reporting, which we hope that he will.

Sincerely,

Lesli A. Maxwell & Debra Viadero
Assistant Managing Editors
Education Week

Chapter Four: Physical evidence

[Education Week's blogs](#) > Learning the Language

As Trump Weighs Fate of Immigrant Students, Schools Ponder Their Roles

By Corey Mitchell on January 26, 2017 6:07 PM

By Francisco Vara-Orta and Corey Mitchell

As President Donald Trump weighs the fate of undocumented youth brought to the United States as children, hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of K -12 children and the educators who serve them are bracing for upheaval.

This week, Trump has already signed executive orders that order construction of a wall on the U.S.-Mexico border, called for stripping federal funding from so-called "sanctuary cities" that shield immigrants, and announced new criteria that could make more undocumented immigrants priorities for deportation. He is also expected to sign an executive order that would suspend legal immigration from majority-Muslim nations such as Syria and Iran.

Denver schools Superintendent Tom Boasberg issued a joint statement on Thursday with officials from the Denver teachers' union, Padres & Jóvenes Unidos, a children's advocacy group, and the Colorado Education Association to denounce the moves.

"Immigrant and refugee students, families, educators, and staff are precious members of our Denver school communities and we greatly value them for the contributions they make to our schools and communities. We will do everything in our individual and collective power to protect them from deportation, criminalization, intimidation and harassment," the statement read in part.

What Will Happen to DACA?

While the orders signed this week could have widespread impact, many are waiting for word on Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals, or DACA, an Obama-administration policy that has granted temporary deportation reprieves for more than 740,000 young undocumented immigrants.

During the 2016 campaign, Trump promised to repeal that executive order as part of a widespread immigration crackdown.

Trump has said his administration will develop a plan for the young immigrants, but has yet to offer specifics. In an [interview with ABC News](#) this week, he said he will unveil his plans for the next four weeks.

Undocumented residents brought to this country as children "shouldn't be very worried. I do have a big heart," Trump said in the interview. "We're going to take care of everybody ... Where you have great people that are here that have done a good job, they should be far less worried."

Amid all the uncertainty, schools in cities like Denver and Nashville are working to reassure students that school is a safe, welcoming place.

"The United States is supposed to be a country of opportunity and we believe that immigrants bring a richness to our country that we should maximize," Nashville schools Superintendent Shawn Joseph said. "It starts with educating them."

The Nashville district is home to a large number of Islamic students, including children from Somalia, one of the majority-Muslim countries expected to be part of a Trump order suspending immigration. The district also has a large Kurdish community, many of whom come from other countries likely to be targeted in a suspension of legal immigration, including Iraq, Iran, and Syria.

Boasberg and Joseph are among more than [1,000 education leaders who have signed onto a petition requesting continued protection for "DREAMers."](#) young immigrants brought to this country as children.

"We're going to be making sure all of our kids feel safe," Joseph said. "We're going to be making sure all of our kids get the support they need."

Undocumented Students and Teachers Could Be Affected

Denver school district officials have voiced support for their undocumented students, as well as undocumented teachers, some of whom are recruited as part of a partnership with Teach for America. This week, Superintendent Tom Boasberg doubled down on reaffirming that support.

"In many cases, these teachers graduated from the best colleges and universities and have been terrific for us as are extraordinary in their qualifications and ability to connect with our students," Boasberg said. "We have been advocating very hard for ensuring these teachers are allowed to continue serving our students and would be a loss otherwise after we've invested so much in them growing up and getting educated in the United States."

Boasberg also offered similar words of support for the district's undocumented students. He declined to give numbers for how many students and teachers are under DACA, explaining they don't inquire about someone's immigration status. Third party [estimates cited by the Denver Post](#) say about 10 to 20 percent of the Denver district's enrollment are undocumented students. The district estimates about 37 percent of its overall student population are English-language learners, with the majority speaking Spanish, but many are native - born or here legally.

For now, Boasberg said the district will continue to hire undocumented teachers who are part of TFA's program.

He said local and state officials have been supportive of the district's stance, but acknowledged the rhetoric around immigration and race in the presidential campaign took a toll on the psyche of the Latino and immigrant populations in his district.

"We are a really diverse community and the attempt to divide people based on race and intolerance has been felt powerfully throughout the community," he said. "The language around saying that diversity is a weakness is just to counter to the values that we have and has had a damaging effect."

Boasberg said Colorado is a "purple" state politically—Hillary Clinton won the state's electoral votes—but he hasn't seen an uptick in opposition to the district's vocal commitment to protecting those under DACA since Trump's win.

"I think there are strong feelings on all sides of this issue, but we are trying to come together on finding a solution to ensure all members of our community feel respected," he said. "We also are being vigilant in monitoring what's next."

Boasberg had elaborated in the phone interview Wednesday that refugee students add "an extraordinary richness" to the district because of the perspective and knowledge they bring into the classroom and share with their peers, saying it would also be an "extraordinary loss" to the community if refugees are banned or their intake heavily reduced.

[Education Week's blogs](#) > High School & Beyond

An Aviation High School Lands Its Own Hangar on Campus

By Francisco Vara-Orta on February 7, 2017 5:44 PM | [No comments](#)

By guest blogger Francisco Vara-Orta



It's not completely unheard of to have aviation science programs in high schools, but they often require students to travel a nearby airport to work in a hangar. But students at Sterling Aviation High School in Houston don't have to worry anymore about stepping off campus grounds to get that kind of hands-on experience.

Last month, the Houston Independent School District unveiled Sterling Aviation High's 7,100-square-foot, two-story hangar, leaving students, instructors, and its principal Justin Fuentes feeling sky high about the future of their program.

Two small single-propeller planes can fit inside the hangar along with 17 aircraft engines that students can tinker with for hands-on learning.

The hangar is the crown jewel in the massive rebuilding of its longtime Sterling High campus, originally built in 1965, according to Houston ISD officials. The new campus is a \$72 million, 237,000-square-foot school and can accommodate up to 2,000 students, Fuentes said.

About 150 students are enrolled in the aviation school on-site, where the program also allows students to get credits toward a pilot's license. Students have to pass a written exam from the Federal Aviation Administration before being allowed to take their flight test, and can't start that process until their junior year, Fuentes explained.

Slightly more than two thirds of Sterling's campus [is classified by the state](#) as economically disadvantaged, and the school serves a predominately black and Latino student population. Sterling is also the first new comprehensive high school complex to be built (or rebuilt, for that matter) in the Houston district in roughly 16 years, Houston ISD officials stated.

Aviation programs have operated in schools over the years throughout the nation. Most do tend to partner with a nearby airport for the hands-on lab.

Such programs are marketed as a stable career avenue that should appeal to any socioeconomic bracket, from [lower-income schools](#) with higher proportions of students of color to those in more tony, white communities.

Houston ISD officials [in 2014 touted the story](#) of one student who gained his license on the way to the U.S. Naval Academy, with career aspirations of becoming a military pilot. Meanwhile, in the Seattle area, Raisbeck Aviation High School, a public, 13-year-old program, has refashioned its recruitment efforts into [a lottery system to resolve inequities](#) along gender and racial lines as the program had long been serving a mostly white male student population. Another aviation program in recent months has attracted some attention as education policymakers attempt to search for any tea leaves portending what incoming U.S. Department of Education Secretary Betsy DeVos would champion.

Her husband, Richard DeVos Jr., founded the West Michigan Aviation Academy, a charter high school, in his hometown of Grand Rapids, Mich., in 2010. West Michigan Aviation Academy enrolls just under 550 students, 38 percent of whom are considered economically disadvantaged, according to state data. Fifteen percent of students at the school are African-American, 16 percent are Latino, and 61 percent are white, which is a fairly diverse student body for a charter school, [*Education Week* recently reported.](#)

Back in Houston, Fuentes in a phone interview said his district's facility also includes an observation deck on the third floor where students can view the airport traffic control tower at Houston's William P. Hobby Airport, which is just miles away from the campus.

"It's nice because we can watch planes take off and arrive to the airport," Fuentes said. "It reminds students of the bigger picture and that the sky's the limit."



Photos courtesy Justin Fuentes/Houston ISD

Trump Orders on Immigration Rattle Some Educators

Travel ban and uncertain fate for DREAMers stoke fears

By Corey Mitchell & Francisco Vara-Orta

February 3, 2017 | Updated: February 6, 2017

President Donald Trump's sweeping order that halted residents of seven Muslim-majority countries from entering the United States sent shock waves through some of the nation's schools, leaving educators scrambling to assure frightened refugee and immigrant students that their schools should be safe places.

The effort to calm those fears comes as some educators grapple with uncertainty of their own: not knowing the next steps the White House will take on immigration and how it will affect their students. And that uncertainty had heightened even more over the weekend after a federal judge suspended Trump's order, allowing those who had been previously banned to enter. That decision was upheld by the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 9th Circuit.

"[There are] a lot of unknowns right now," said [Elizabeth Demchak](#), the principal at Claremont International High School in New York City. "Anytime you're talking about people's status in the country, there will be fear. We have to try and give [students] as much stability as possible."

Based in the South Bronx, Demchak's school is home to hundreds of Spanish-, Arabic-, and Bengali-speaking students, along with a growing population of refugees from Yemen, whose citizens are banned from U.S. entry for now under Trump's executive order. The school is part of The Internationals Network for Public Schools, a nationwide nonprofit that serves about 9,000 newly arrived immigrant students.

Those students represent a sliver of those who may be gripped by fear and uncertainty. Trump has also signed executive orders to build a wall on the U.S.-Mexico border, strip federal funding from "sanctuary cities" that shield undocumented immigrants, and establish new criteria to make more undocumented immigrants priorities for deportation.

Support for Immigration Orders

Even as many educators publicly express dismay at President Trump, a large number of Americans are supportive of the executive order restricting U.S. entry.

In a poll conducted by Reuters/Ipsos a few days after the Jan. 27 order, 49 percent of Americans said they agree with the ban; 41 percent said they oppose it. Foreign-born students represent 6 percent of the population in American schools, according to the U.S. Department of Education. Influxes of immigrant students — who may have large gaps in schooling and whose linguistic and cultural differences can present challenges for educators—have at times caused friction in communities where some parents raised concerns that new arrivals negatively impact their children's education.

The anxiety over Trump's order is particularly acute for students and educators in immigrant-rich communities like Minnesota's Somali strongholds, California's heavily Latino communities, and blooming Syrian enclaves around the country. The ban also hit home in places like Houston and Nashville, Tenn., both with a growing number of Islamic students. The districts also have large Kurdish communities, many of whom come from countries targeted in the immigration ban.

In Nashville, at least 1,000 students from affected countries are in the city's schools. While schools generally don't track the immigration status of students, they often collect data about students' country of origin and home language if it's not English.

"The United States is supposed to be a country of opportunity and we believe that immigrants bring a richness to our country that we should maximize," Nashville Superintendent [Shawn Joseph](#) said. "It starts with educating them."

The Trump administration's aggressive stance has made that job tougher, some educators say.

"It certainly does strain the ability of young people and their families to trust institutions," said [Roberto Gonzales](#), an assistant professor at the Harvard Graduate School of Education. "It behooves schools to take a much more active role in sowing these seeds of trust and really growing them."

As the daughter of Dominican immigrants, Principal [Nedda de Castro](#) relates to her students at the International School at Prospect Heights in Brooklyn. Like them, she learned English in school. She recalls school as where she explored what it means to be American.

But many of her students are constantly reminded that they're not. And some are giving up on school.

"Some of the students are assuming that they're just going to be deported anyway and starting to talk about how there's really no point in coming to school anymore," de Castro said. "It's a lot of lost potential."

Trump's order related to U.S. entry blocks citizens from Iran, Iraq, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, and Yemen from coming into the U.S. for 90 days. It bans refugees from any country for 120 days and bars refugees from Syria indefinitely.

Fate for Deferred Action

Nearly 39,000 Muslim refugees entered the United States in fiscal 2016, according to a Pew Research Center analysis of U.S. State Department data, and more than half hailed from Somalia and Syria. School districts from Southern California to Connecticut have seen a surge in Syrian enrollment in recent years. Somali refugees continue to flow to metro areas like [Minneapolis](#) and [Seattle](#), where already established communities exist.

Minneapolis has more than 4,100 Somali students; many are refugees.

The district "recognizes and shares the pain and fear many of them have felt after recent events," Minneapolis Superintendent Ed Graff wrote to *Education Week*.

Refugee students face similar obstacles common to some immigrant students new to the country—interrupted education and learning a new language, along with adjusting to stigma tied to their race, religion, and skin color, said Gonzales, the Harvard professor.

Over the weekend, a federal district court judge in Seattle temporarily halted Trump's order to stop the flow of citizens from the Muslim-majority nations. Trump took to Twitter to lambaste the ruling and the judge who issued it. "The opinion of this so-called judge, which essentially takes law enforcement away from our country, is ridiculous and will be overturned."

Initially, however, Trump's effort to reverse the ruling failed, as a federal appeals court upheld the order of U.S. District Judge James L. Robart.

While Trump's executive orders play out, many are awaiting the fate of Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals, or DACA, an Obama-administration policy that gave temporary deportation reprieves to more than 740,000 undocumented youth.

During the 2016 campaign, Trump promised to repeal DACA. He's also repeatedly said his administration will develop a plan for the young immigrants, but has yet to offer specifics. The uncertainty for DACA recipients—many of them immigrants from Mexico and Central America—is reverberating broadly in Latino communities. "The fear ... is very present, not just for those who are undocumented, but those who are Latino, as well as their teachers and loved ones who have also felt

maligned by the rhetoric used throughout the election and since Trump won," said Marisa Bono, a lawyer with the [Mexican-American Legal Defense and Educational Fund](#).

A broad array of K-12 education leaders have called on the Trump administration to continue protections for undocumented immigrant youth brought to the U.S. as children, popularly known as DREAMers.

[Richard Carranza](#), the superintendent in Houston, is one. So is Joseph, the Nashville schools chief. [Both men joined more than 1,000 other education leaders](#) in signing a petition calling for saving the DACA policy. The list of supporters also includes Teach For America, the American Federation of Teachers, and charter school organizations.

"It's important to be proactive in reassuring the community that the district is here to educate children, anyone that shows up to our doors," Carranza said.

Federal Aid at Risk?

Trump's order to punish jurisdictions that don't cooperate with immigration authorities has put a target on cities that vow to protect their undocumented residents.

[Los Angeles Unified](#) is one district anticipating potential fallout for schools that pledge to shield their students. Its school board has been outspoken about its refusal to cooperate with any immigration enforcement efforts.

Slashing federal aid could deal a blow to any district. In L.A. Unified, roughly \$700 million in federal funds flow into the district's coffers each year. Chicago and Clark County, Nev., may also be at risk for declaring their districts as "sanctuary" campuses.

Seattle's mayor allotted \$250,000 for undocumented students in the city's schools. The school board directed staff to ban immigration agents from school grounds unless they get permission from the superintendent or the district's lawyers. Even with a range of leaders pledging support for immigrant youth, it's hard to allay their fears, said Bono, the MALDEF lawyer.

"We want to hope for the best," she said, "but have to expect the worst."

This story was updated to reflect news developments.

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What Happens When Superintendents Sue Their School Boards? Usually Splitsville.

By Francisco Vara-Orta on February 22, 2017 2:32 PM



When a rocky relationship between a superintendent and school board winds up in court, it can lead to the awkwardness of divorce—like when a splitting couple continues living together with their kids in the middle of the conflict.

As the relationship breaks down, it's relatively common for superintendents to hit the escape hatches in their contracts, through resignation or retirement, or for school board trustees to get voted in or out as tensions air.

What's more uncommon though are sitting superintendents suing the school board members who can hire, and in most cases, fire them. Conversely, it's rare for a sitting trustee, or an entire board to sue a superintendent.

When it does happen, though, it usually doesn't end well, according to a review by *Education Week* of such legal cases over the last decade.

The most recent case is unfolding now in the Howard County, Md., school district, where [Superintendent Renee Foose has sued the school board](#) in a dispute that is both professional and personal.

The suit, filed in January in Howard County Circuit Court, alleges that school board trustees passed a series of resolutions that aimed to "strip the

superintendent of her lawful authority" since the newly elected board was sworn in December. The conflict has extended to Foose's personal life, as she also claims in the suit that she has faced discrimination because of her sexual orientation as an out lesbian.

Cynthia Vaillancourt, the president of the Howard County school board, said in an emailed statement that the board has turned legal matters over to its lawyers and will continue to work with Foose. But, Vaillancourt acknowledged, the suit has fostered a "challenging" working situation, and characterized Foose as trying to usurp the board's governance abilities.

Dan Domenech, the executive director of AASA, The School Superintendents Association and former superintendent of the Fairfax County district in Virginia, said that generally it's a bad idea for superintendents to go public with concerns about the board, which employs them.

"When that happens relations are undoubtedly at the point where the superintendent will be making an exit soon," said Domenech, who was not commenting on any specific case.

For now though, Foose and Howard County's trustees have to constantly come back to the table to work—an indefinite situation thanks to the superintendent's contract and stipulations rarely seen in state educational law but [enshrined in Maryland](#).

Foose is in the first year of a new four-year contract, after already serving in the post for the last four years when she had a majority of support on the school board. Foose said in an interview she has no plans of backing down now from her position.

In Maryland, contracts for superintendents must be four years long at a time, according to Bill Reinhard, a spokesman for the state's department of education. Many states allow trustees to simply tack on another year or two if they are satisfied with the superintendent.

While most states give local school boards authority to fire superintendents, Maryland law mandates that only the state superintendent can terminate them.

The law gives the state chief five grounds for doing so: immorality, misconduct in office, insubordination, incompetency, and/or willful neglect of duty. Maryland law does allow for boards to negotiate separation agreements.

Reinhard said it's unclear when the law went into effect for the state with 24 school systems. News reports cite the law's differing origins as far as back as 1937, but it didn't get much attention until 2002 during a contentious superintendent-school board rift in Prince George's County. At the time, The Washington Post [reported](#) that the law took most school leaders in Maryland by surprise.

Even if a state allows their school boards more liberty to get rid of a superintendent, involving the courts can certainly protract the separation process. *Education Week* found a handful of such cases in recent years as reported by local media. Among them:

- In 2013, in Ohio, Randy Stepp, the superintendent of the Medina City school district, sued the school board for allegedly defaming him. Trustees then moved to fire Stepp, which prompted the then-suspended superintendent to file a second suit to halt his firing. Stepp eventually submitted his resignation nearly a year later in the aftermath of a state auditor's report that found he had misspent school funds, the [Cleveland Plain Dealer reported](#).
- In South Carolina in 2014, Vashti Washington, the superintendent of the Jasper County school district, sued school board member Randy Horton for defamation. While the court battle largely played out in the press, Washington and Horton had to work together for nearly a year and a half until the suit settled and the superintendent [resigned](#).

School leadership experts say discord between superintendents and boards can easily [hijack](#) the district's political climate, and that can have a [chilling effect on progress](#) as employees feel pressure to possibly choose sides.

In the absence of "marriage counseling," Domenech of AASA quipped, there are intermediaries that either board trustees or superintendents can turn to for help mediating disputes, such as attorneys, search consultants, and school board and superintendent associations.

One such group, the National School Boards Association, offers a [guidebook](#) for trustees to help navigate the process of building and maintaining relationships with schools' chiefs.

Tom Gentzel, the executive director and CEO of the National School Boards Association, said trustees must carefully weigh their First Amendment rights and speaking out on behalf of their communities against how they speak of the superintendent, especially in public. Board members should always confer with their district's legal counsel while in sensitive conflicts with the superintendent in order to best safeguard their behavior from putting the school system at risk of further litigation, he said.

That's not to say that trustees and superintendents who are always in perfect harmony is ideal either, Gentzel said. The healthiest board-superintendent relationships are those in which people can respectfully disagree and debate important issues. What's vital when there is disagreement, he said, is for trustees and superintendents to monitor how serious a rift really is before widening it to an unbridgeable gulf.

"You're not dysfunctional if you disagree. You're dysfunctional if you can't make a decision," Gentzel said. "Disagreement can be healthy if it's done in the right environment."

Library Intern Briana Brockett-Richmond contributed to this story.

Image by Getty

Undocumented Teachers Shielded by DACA in Legal and Emotional Limbo

Undocumented educators on edge as Trump policies evolve

By [Corey Mitchell](#)

February 17, 2017 | Updated: February 21, 2017

Jose Gonzalez's parents brought him to the United States from Mexico just before his second birthday.

In the 23 years since, he graduated high school with honors, earned an Ivy League degree, and received recognition from the Obama White House for his work teaching students in immigrant-filled Los Angeles charter schools.

Now, Gonzalez faces a potentially cruel twist of fate: he could go from being lauded by the White House to being a target for deportation as part of President Donald Trump's widespread immigration crackdown.

Before joining Teach For America in 2014, he graduated from the University of Pennsylvania's Wharton School of Business, Trump's alma mater.

"Honestly, it kind of makes having been honored by the White House a bit of a joke. It feels like a slap in the face," said Gonzalez, a 6th grade math teacher at Community Charter Middle School in Los Angeles.

Gonzalez is among the more than 700,000 undocumented immigrants awaiting word on the fate of Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals, or DACA, an Obama-administration policy that grants temporary deportation reprieves and work permits to people brought to the United States illegally as children.

During the 2016 campaign, Trump promised to repeal the executive order the day he took office. Since the election, he's been less clear on what his intentions are. Four weeks in, he has yet to take action on DACA. In a marathon news conference on Thursday, he promised to address the issue "with heart."

"DACA is a very, very difficult subject for me," Trump said. "It's one of the most difficult subjects I have because you have these incredible kids."

Trump's words would seem to offer some hope to Gonzalez, but he doesn't see it that way.

A set of sweeping immigration enforcement orders issued Tuesday by the Department of Homeland Security does not affect deferred action or its recipients. Until the Trump administration announces its plan for the young immigrants, Gonzalez and other undocumented teachers across the country remain in limbo. They fear that, with the stroke of a pen, the president could immediately revoke

their status or sunset the program by preventing current deferred action recipients from renewing their protections.

And recent immigration enforcement actions have only amplified their uncertainty. In a series of raids conducted this month, U.S. immigration authorities arrested hundreds of undocumented immigrants in at least a half-dozen states, including California, marking the first large-scale enforcement of President Trump's Jan. 25 order to crack down on undocumented immigration. As part of the sweeps, agents detained and threatened to deport a 23-year-old Seattle man who received deferred action protection. Authorities alleged he has ties to gangs, a charge his lawyers deny.

"Suddenly, everything is uncertain again, so the constant stress...you can't even describe it," said Alexis Montes Torres, a Teach For America corps member in the Houston metropolitan area. "It's very bizarre to think that I could be going back to a country that I don't really know, and I don't really understand."

Fear and Caution

Gonzalez and Torres are among 100 undocumented Teach For America members who are teaching nearly 6,000 students across 11 states. Amid the uncertainty, TFA is offering free legal assistance to its members and its 46 alums who are also DACA protected.

TFA has already accepted close to 40 undocumented corps members for next school year. But if DACA is repealed without a replacement, the organization will have to put off assigning them to work in a school. Corps members need valid work permits and the ability to work at least two full school years, spokeswoman Kathryn Phillips said.

The organization began hiring the so-called DACA-mented teachers in 2013 in a nod to the shifting demographics in the nation's K-12 classrooms.

"Having a teacher who is able to identify and share the same background and the same immigrant experience as our students was very important," said Viridiana Carrizales, the director of DACA corps member support.

Gonzalez was honored by the White House Initiative on Educational Excellence for Hispanics in August 2016. The Obama White House honored another California educator, Jaime Ballesteros, as a Champion of Change in 2015 for his work as a high school chemistry teacher in Watts. He was among nine undocumented educators recognized for their efforts to ensure that all students, regardless of their immigration status, have access to education.

"When I went into the classroom, it was actually the first time that I told my story," said Ballesteros, also a Teach For America corps member. "I told my story to make my students feel less alone. Not necessarily to make myself a role model, but to let them know that I'm there and I know their struggles and I'm here with them."

Now a middle school teacher at KIPP Academy of Innovation in East Los Angeles, Ballesteros came to the United States from the Philippines as an 11-year-old when his father found work in the New York metropolitan area. When the recession hit, Ballesteros' father lost his job and work visa, leaving the family in the U.S. without legal status.

Like many of his students, Ballesteros has lived in a near-constant state of fear since the election.

"I was really devastated for quite a while. I felt helpless," Ballesteros said. "When I wake up every morning at 4 or 5 o'clock in the morning to go to work and serve our communities, I do that with joy. But I also do that knowing that I'm doing it in a country that doesn't necessarily want me here."

While Gonzalez and his colleagues benefit from DACA, they have mixed feelings about the message it sends, faulting their parents for crossing borders with their children and painting a "dichotomy of this model immigrant versus this criminal immigrant and this deserving versus undeserving," he said.

"It's about families, it's about what's doing right for human beings is what it boils down to," Gonzalez said. "I don't think I am any more deserving than my parents because I have an Ivy League degree."

Educators Stand Up

As the Trump administration ramps up enforcement actions, immigration advocates with ties to K-12 education are pushing back.

American Federation of Teachers President Randi Weingarten has called on the nation's big-city mayors to shield immigrant students and their families.

Teach For America CEO Elisa Villanueva Beard, former education secretary John King Jr., and Weingarten are among 2,000-plus education leaders, including superintendents of some of the nation's largest school districts, who have signed on to a petition requesting continued protection for young immigrants brought to the U.S. as children, popularly known as DREAMers.



Alexis Montes Torres, a Houston teacher, is among the more than 700,000 undocumented immigrants currently shielded from deportation and eligible to work legally under the deferred action policy.

—Michael Stravato for Education Week

Noting the bonds that immigrant educators can form with students, the petition urged that “teachers who were brought here as children must be able to continue to strengthen our schools and our nation.” Many of the leaders are calling on Congress to pass the BRIDGE Act, a bipartisan bill that would temporarily extend protections for deferred action recipients.

Former U.S. Secretary of Homeland Security Janet Napolitano has also spoken out in support of undocumented students. As a cabinet member under President Barack Obama, she helped develop DACA, but also led a department that deported record numbers of immigrants from the country.

Now, as the president of the 10-campus University of California system, she is advocating not just for those who received deferred action, but all undocumented students.

“We see the worth and the merit of these young people and to subject them to deportation after what they’ve achieved goes against our principles,” Napolitano said during a recent forum hosted by the Washington-based Migration Policy Institute.

Since Trump’s election, University of California officials have said they would refuse to assist federal immigration agents or turn over confidential student records without court orders.

Dozens of school districts around the country have also publicly pledged to provide similar protections for immigrant students and staff.

On Thursday, immigrants and their supporters across the country stayed home from work and school—known as “a day without immigrants”—in protest of Trump’s policies.

Political Divide

Gonzalez and Torres visited Mexico, their native country, for job -related training in summer 2016 under “advanced parole,” a visa-like document that allows DACA recipients to travel outside the United States.

While Gonzalez relished the opportunity to finally meet relatives he only knew through phone calls and photographs, it was a jarring experience for Torres.

“It was crazy because I hadn’t been there since I was four, and yeah, it just doesn’t feel like home because it isn’t,” said Torres, a middle school social studies and history teacher in the Spring Branch school district in Houston. “I can’t help but feel like I’m as American as, I guess the cliché, apple pie.”

Most of the nation’s 11 million unauthorized immigrants live in just 20 major metropolitan areas, [according to Pew Research Center estimates](#) based on federal data.

Los Angeles and Houston—the cities where Ballasteros, Gonzalez, and Torres teach—rank second and third, trailing only New York City. Their classrooms are filled with the children of immigrants or students who are immigrants themselves.

“This issue ... doesn’t escape them. Even I remember, as a child, being very acutely aware of my parents’ immigration status, what was happening, what they were fearing,” Torres said. “I don’t really have a choice but to talk about it because I know that my students fear this.”

Not all schools welcome the conversations though.

In the Austin, Texas, public schools, the district has warned teachers not to talk about the recent immigration raids that rounded up dozens of undocumented residents. Frustrated students there have staged walk-out protests in response.

The action in Austin underscores the deep political divisions around immigration.

While California lawmakers and officials have pledged to challenge President Trump on immigration issues at every turn, Texas’ attorney general filed a brief of support with a federal appeals court in support of the president’s now -halted immigration order that mandated a travel ban for refugees and residents of seven majority-Muslim countries.

Wary of the political climate there, superintendents in the Lone Star State have signaled their support for immigrant students and teachers, but have stopped short of vowing to protect them.

That reluctance won’t stop Torres and other educators from fighting.

“We’re going to hold the president and his administration accountable because if he really wants to make America great, then he’s going to have to really take a

deep, hard look at American history and remember the Irish immigrants that came here, the German immigrants, the Polish, and now the Hispanics and how we have contributed to this country and this economy," Torres said.

Contributing Writer Francisco Vara-Orta contributed to this report.

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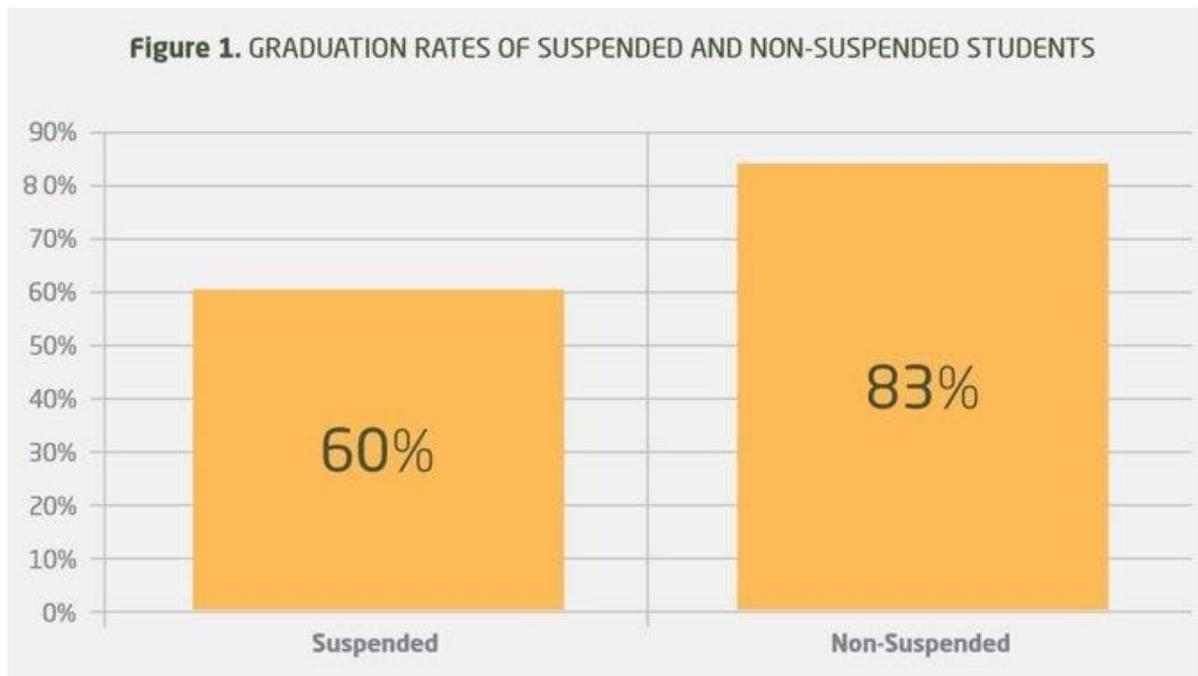
Suspending Students Costs Billions in Economic Losses, New Study Finds

By Francisco Vara-Orta on March 8, 2017 6:33 AM | [7 Comments](#)

A growing cadre of public policy researchers and lawmakers agree that school discipline rates remain high for black and Hispanic students, and those with disabilities, but a new study from the University of California takes it a step further by connecting suspension rates to major economic impacts.

Researchers found that suspensions lead to lower graduation rates, which in turn leads to lower tax revenue and higher taxpayer costs for criminal justice and social services. The researchers followed a single cohort of California 10th grade students through high school for three years and found that those who were suspended had only a 60 percent graduation rate—compared to an 83 percent graduation rate for students who were not suspended.

The result: An economic loss of \$2.7 billion over the lifetime of that single cohort of dropouts who left school because they were suspended, researchers found.



The Hidden Costs of California's Harsh Discipline: And the Localized Economic Benefits From Suspending Fewer High School Students

The study—"[The Hidden Cost of California's Harsh School Discipline: And the Localized Economic Benefits From Suspending Fewer High School Students](#)"—calculates the financial consequences of suspending students in each California school district with more than 100 students, and for the state as a whole. The study was done by Russell W. Rumberger, the director of the California Dropout Research Project at the University of California, Santa Barbara, and Daniel J. Losen, the director of the Center for Civil Rights Remedies at the University of California, Los Angeles.

Here's the breakdown of Rumberger and Losen's \$2.7 billion finding:

- \$809 million in direct costs to taxpayers for dropouts' use of the criminal justice system and paying fewer taxes
- \$1.9 billion in social costs, such as decreased productivity in the workforce and higher health care expenses

In the cohort of 10th graders they analyzed and after controlling for other predictors of dropping out, the researchers found that 4,621 students dropped out of school because they were suspended. Just one of those non-graduates generates \$579,820 in economic losses over their lifetime, Rumberger and Losen found. In California's largest district—Los Angeles Unified—they estimated economic losses due to suspensions to be nearly \$150 million.

"It's tragic, it's bad economics, and it's entirely avoidable," Rumberger said in a press release accompanying the study's release.

Much of the school discipline debate—ignited by a 2011 study in Texas that found students who are black, Latino, have special needs, and/or identify as LGBT are suspended at disproportionately high rates—still centers around race, which figured into the UC study on California students. For example, 29.2 percent of black students in the 10th grade cohort were suspended, more than twice the statewide average of 14.9 percent.

The UC researchers used California Department of Education data from the 2011-12 school year, constructing a three-year longitudinal file that took out students who left the school systems for valid reasons such as death or transferring to private school.

Researchers acknowledge there were some limitations and stress the report is not a "cost-benefit" analysis in the tradeoffs of suspending or not suspending students, but overall their analysis should dispel "the common misconception that suspensions are 'cost-free' responses to misbehavior."

The research was funded through a grant from The California Endowment, with assistance from Clive Belfield and Atlantic Philanthropies. The data set for each California school district with over 100 students, and a state aggregate, can be downloaded [here](#).

Rumberger and Losen noted that California's suspension rates overall have declined in the past three years. Losen praised the state for designating school discipline as one of the key accountability factors it will use to meet federal requirements under the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) and bolstering its commitment to evidence-based alternatives to suspensions, such as restorative justice and Positive Behavioral Intervention and Supports, or PBIS.

Still, the researchers said suspensions are still overused in California and that district leaders and educators must do more to further reduce them, especially for special education students, blacks, and Hispanics.

"It is imperative to address," Rumberger said.

Photo: Screenshot of UC study chart

Private contributions reinforce inequities

The main story (1 of 2) – April 19, 2017 edition

By Francisco Vara-Orta

Sheboygan County, Wis.

When it comes to how much private money flows in to help their students, the Kohler, Sheboygan Area, and Sheboygan Falls school districts may seem a world apart. In reality, they're neighbors.

Private donations can come through parent-teacher organizations, school district foundations, booster clubs, and private companies. Though they account for a fraction of districts' budgets, the extra dollars can reinforce existing inequities between districts just one street over from one another, suggests a nationwide Education Week Research Center analysis of the latest federal financial data available. (See story, Page 11.)

Sheboygan Falls, Kohler, and Sheboygan Area sit side by side on the east side of Sheboygan County—about an hour north of Milwaukee near Lake Michigan. Within the county, the Kohler district garnered the most in private contributions in 2014: \$863 per pupil. Sheboygan Falls, meanwhile, brought in \$27 per pupil, and Sheboygan Area, \$62 a student.

Since 2006, when the federal government began asking districts to report private contributions in an annual survey, Kohler's inflation-adjusted, per-pupil dollar amount soared from \$131 to \$863.

The uptick isn't by accident, said Kohler Superintendent Quynh Trueblood.

"We like to say we are proudly a public school system, but just with some private school touches," Trueblood said during a tour of her campus. "Our community has high expectations of us, and we strive to meet that level of quality, so we have to seek out that extra support."

Districts often loathe being pitted against one another and must counterbalance the realities of competing for money and students while working together on larger regional or state initiatives.

"There can be animosity in the community over the haves and the have-nots," said Sheboygan Falls Superintendent Jean Born, who's lived and worked in the area for nearly three decades. "But Kohler has their own set of challenges, too, and we've worked hard over the years to unite as we're now facing greater concerns."

Kohler is home to a five-star resort and golf course, and annual average household income is about \$20,000 to \$32,000 higher than that of its district neighbors. It relies much less on state aid than it does on local revenue

because it is a property-wealthy district, and no students qualify for the federal free and reduced-price lunch program.

In contrast, 43 percent of Sheboygan Area's students qualify for the subsidized lunches. For Sheboygan Falls, the rate is 32 percent.

The concerns that Born alludes to—less state funding and a push from local companies to improve students' skills to fill a shortage of 3,000 area workers — provoked the districts to more aggressively seek private funding in the past decade.

Wisconsin as a whole seems to be following a similar path. The Education Week Research Center found that statewide, private donations to districts have more than doubled, rising from an average of \$32 per student in 2006 to \$77 per student by 2014.

"These districts are using money for what public funding used to cover, so we have to remember that," said state schools Superintendent Tony Evers. "Moving forward, as the private money increases in our schools, we also should be vigilant about understanding what strings may be attached."

How the Money's Used

In Kohler, private contributions are heavily driven through parent fundraising. The district has put the money toward technology, such as tablets to help elementary students learn coding, electronic chalkboards in every classroom from prekindergarten through high school, and state-of-the-art lab equipment for science and engineering courses.

Sheboygan Area and Sheboygan Falls have leaned more on area manufacturers for their donations—both financial and in kind—in redesigning classrooms and acquiring new equipment for their technical education programs.

The county is home to the corporate headquarters for several U.S. household names: from Kohler and Bemis, which, respectively, manufacture toilets and their accompanying seats, to Johnsonville Sausage and Sargento Foods. The latter helps export the state's most famous product: cheese.

In actual dollars, Kohler reported \$636,286 in private contributions in 2014, compared with the \$641,725 Sheboygan Area brought in, and the \$47,857 Sheboygan Falls had.

From 2008 to 2014, Kohler's local revenues have meant that its overall funding was \$240 to \$1,694 more per pupil than that of its two neighbors. But more recently, all three districts reported nearly the same revenue overall, around \$13,800 per pupil. That figure, however, can mask disparities in private donations, which districts can more easily spend as they wish.

Kohler is the smallest of the districts, about 5 square miles in size with around 740 students. Sheboygan Falls, on one side, has nearly 1,800 students, and Sheboygan Area, on the other, serves almost 10,300—14 times as many as Kohler.

Kohler educators and parents contend, though, that their size can also be a challenge because they can't access as many resources as larger, even lower-income districts do. They rely on their neighbors to share facilities, and staff members wear multiple hats. Even Trueblood served as both high school principal and superintendent in her first two years with the district. Unlike its neighbors, the Kohler school system is housed within one building that's arguably as unassuming as any traditional middle school campus.

Still, the self-acknowledged private school touches are there, too. The cafeteria menu features monthly specials highlighting kale and fenugreek, with a fruit and vegetable bar and a risotto spread on Fridays prepared by the campus chef. Kohler's campus also houses a community performing-arts center—Kohler Memorial Theatre—where musical performances by Yo-Yo Ma and Itzhak Perlman have been financed with help from local patrons.

In one night at its Fall Follies event, the Kohler School Foundation, a nonprofit begun by area parents, can raise tens of thousands of dollars. One year, a disc jockey from New York who has spun parties for actress Jennifer Aniston and rapper Ludacris flew in to play the event, according to the group's website.

Attendees bid on "reverse auction" items, where they commit on the spot to pay for an item on the district's wish list. At the 2015 event, for example, foundation supporters raised more than \$30,000 for new lab equipment for hands-on science experiments.

Academically, Kohler currently scores the highest of the three on the state's report card. Its grade is 92 out of 100, compared with 73 for Sheboygan Falls and 66 for Sheboygan Area.

The area's disparities are more economic than racial, as eight of the nine county districts are roughly 90 percent white. The exception is Sheboygan Area, which is 60 percent white.

Although Sheboygan Area has long pushed to get more students to attend a four-year college or university, historically only half its students have planned to, said Superintendent Joseph Sheehan.

So in 2014, the district joined with private industry to launch the Red Raider Manufacturing capital campaign to raise \$5 million for new technical education centers at both high schools. The centers opened this school year, their walls emblazoned with logos of the more than a dozen businesses that stepped up with \$4.1 million when a federal grant fell through.

One donor was the Kohler Co., whose imprint runs deep throughout the county. Students working in the technical centers also can work as paid apprentices at the Kohler factory and potentially get hired full time after graduation. Kohler also will subsidize their higher education at nearby Lakeshore Technical College.

A recent graduate's starting salary can be around \$52,000 annually, said John Widstrand, manager of maintenance and facilities at the Kohler Co. He helps run the apprenticeship programs, which now have roughly 230 students.

"We tend to hear a lot of negativity about manufacturing, as far as outsourcing and automation, so some parents will ask, is there really a career there that pays well and is stable for their children?" Widstrand said. "So there is a lot of work we've also had to do on the private-sector side to meet up to our side of the partnerships."

Sheboygan Falls, with neither the property wealth nor the infrastructure of its neighbors, has taken a grassroots approach to fundraising that harnesses students' entrepreneurial prowess. For its new tech center at Sheboygan Falls High School, the district acquired a 33-ton plastic-injection molding machine, also known as a 3D printer, through a partnership with Bemis, the plastics manufacturer headquartered there. Students design and make school spirit items from plastic that are sold to raise money.

Tipping its hat to the community's historical links to agriculture, Sheboygan Falls also has used private funds to build "hoop houses," or greenhouses, on campus. Students grow fruits and vegetables, which they use in their cafeteria and sell at farmer's markets, using business plans they've developed, said Born, the district's superintendent.

Differences Aside

For all their differences, the districts last year made a public statement of unity by joining the Sheboygan County Economic Development Corp.'s "Someplace Better" campaign, which hopes to attract new residents. It's a symbol of how Sheboygan school leaders have navigated the dynamics of being colleagues, uniting to push back on public education funding cuts or draw more students to the county, while also being competitors.

The districts must vie for both private donors and students because Wisconsin is an open-enrollment state that allows families to enroll their children in schools outside their home district.

In 2006, the state legislature lifted the cap on the open-enrollment program, which led to double-digit growth for Kohler. Meanwhile, Sheboygan Falls saw enrollment drop by roughly 100 students during the same period. Born

attributed some of the decline to manufacturing job losses and the recent recession.

Then in 2011, Gov. Scott Walker, a Republican, led the charge to pass Act 10, which slashed \$792 million in aid to schools, according to PolitiFact. That came after his predecessor, Gov. Jim Doyle, a Democrat, and lawmakers cut \$284 million in school district aid the previous budget year.

Walker now wants to boost state aid to schools by \$509 million, trickling down to a \$200-per-pupil increase for the 2017-18 school year and a \$204 increase in 2018-19.

Sheboygan County school leaders aren't holding their breath for more state aid, hence the pressure to ramp up private donations.

Kohler's PTO president, Jennifer Kading, said there is more of an ability to donate time or money in Kohler since parents don't pay tuition to send their children to private schools. She's noted that many of her active co-fundraisers come from dual-income households and work in corporations there. No private or charter schools operate in the district.

"We want to help support and protect public education," said Kading, who has three children in Kohler schools. "Yes, we are fortunate with our financial situation, for sure. But it's a great place to put your resources, as any parent would likely want to do."

Research analyst Alex Harwin and research intern Jack Williams contributed to this article.

The sidebar (2 of 2) – Data is hazy on seeing bigger private money in schools picture

Trying to measure the influence of private contributions on schools is still a hazy task given a lack of data, and in turn, a lack of research.

Wisconsin was among the best at reporting how many private dollars each of its school districts received, according to an Education Week Research Center analysis of federal data adjusted for inflation and regional variation. The data show that donations jumped statewide from \$28 million to \$67 million from 2006 to 2014, the most recent year available.

However, 10 states could not be included in that analysis—either because they did not report the information or the data weren't complete. Those states include three of the nation's most populous: California, New York, and Texas. As a result, 1 in 3 students could not be accounted for in the federal data set used for the Education Week Research Center analysis of school finance.

Both the U.S. Census Bureau and the U.S. Department of Education's National Center for Education Statistics collect and clean up the data, reported as part of the bureau's Annual Survey of School System Finances.

Stephen Cornman, an NCES project director, explained that all states turn in the survey as it can help to qualify them for other types of federal aid, but the form is not mandated by law nor must states fill out every line item.

Before 2006, districts could report private money in a miscellaneous category on the survey, and some states still do. Since the information is only reported as a final dollar amount, it's hard to untangle how much of it is private donations, as that figure is blended with other revenue. Cornman said the agency is aware of the quality issues and will work with states "to seek possible improvement" on reporting that item.

While this analysis focused on federal survey data, researchers at both Indiana University and the Center for American Progress have looked instead at the tax filings of school foundations and parent-teacher organizations. They found that school districts where people are wealthier tend to get more in private donations, reinforcing the divide with their property-poor peers.

—*Francisco Vara-Orta, Alex Harwin, & Jack Williams*

HIDDEN INEQUITIES An *Education Week* Analysis

Can Private Funds Deepen Disparities?

Donations Vary Widely in Three Neighboring Wisconsin Districts

By Francisco Vara-Orta
Sheboygan County, Wis.

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As her son Christian, a 6th grader, ponders his next chess move, Mary Muñoz holds his brother Nathan at an after-school chess club in Albuquerque, N.M. Muñoz is part of a program that helps low-income parents learn to network and support their children in school.

Untangling Parents' Roles in Shaping Academic Gaps

By Sarah D. Sparks
& Alex Harwin
Albuquerque, N.M.

Five years ago, Mary Muñoz thought she knew what it meant to be involved in her son's education.

She brought Christian, then in 1st grade, to school every morning, made sure he did homework every afternoon, and read with him every night. Muñoz went to parent-teacher conferences, but didn't

get involved in parent-teacher organizations or school committees.

"I had no time. I was just working, working, working all the time," she said. "When I wasn't, I was home with my family... [That] was my networking."

Muñoz is like a lot of parents, particularly those living in poverty. Contrary to some common stereotypes, parents of all income levels have high expectations for their children, and low-income parents may even dedicate more time than wealthier ones to helping children with

homework, according to federal data. Many school outreach efforts to low-income parents center on just that kind of home-focused involvement.

But analyses by the Education Week Research Center and others show that middle-class parents often engage in more social involvement at school—participating in school committees, parent groups, and volunteering in class, for example—experiences that can link them to more opportunities and resources for their children.

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In Minn. and U.S., Teacher-Led Schools Take Root

By Madeline Will
Lakeville, Minn.

At Impact Academy one of a growing number of teacher-powered schools across the country teachers' fingerprints are all over the purple walls, even though they can't really be seen. That's because the school's layout, its

mission, the style of learning—everything is decided by the teachers themselves.

For longtime teacher Julene Orton, the fingerprint analogy may even be literal. With family members, she tore down a classroom wall to make way for a different kind of learning environment. In 2011, Orton had been part of a small group of teachers with a vision

for the school, then known as Orchard Lake Elementary II called for more personalized learning, fewer top-down mandates, more teacher collaboration, and fewer silos.

Breaking away from the 11,000-student Lakeville district, about 30 minutes outside Minneapolis, and becoming a charter elementary school felt like their only option. But the district superintendent asked the teachers to stay, and in 2013, the school board voted unanimously to let the teachers open a student-centered pilot program at Orchard Lake.

This school year, that program has been expanded to all 428 students at the school, which was renamed to reflect the change. Now, Impact Academy at Orchard Lake is officially considered a teacher-powered school, meaning its 34 teachers have the autonomy to make decisions about a variety of areas, including curriculum, assessments, and the physical learning environment—including whether to create open

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Tessa Horstmann, a tutor at Impact Academy at Orchard Lake, helps Ashton Ruiz learn to identify letters. The Lakeville, Minn., public school is among an estimated 115 teacher-powered schools that are operating in 18 states.

PHOTO: JENNIFER GARDNER/EDU

Tricky ESSA Data Lift: What's Spent Per School

Cost Figures Can Prove Elusive

By Daarel Burnette II

States and school districts are girding for a little-known but tricky piece of the Every Student Succeeds Act: the requirement that states report per-pupil spending for all their schools, a level of detail unknown even to many district superintendents.

Without specific federal guidance so far, state finance officials must untangle the myriad—and sometimes obscure—costs behind school operations to come up with a single figure for each of the nation's 99,000 public schools.

Do transportation and school lunch count as a district's administrative costs, for example, or are they school costs? How do you split the expense of a bus that stops at several schools?

"It's a big shift in how we've traditionally seen

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Donations Vary For Three Wis. School Districts

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

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How the Money's Used

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Sheboygan Area School District



FROM TOP: Technical education instructor John Luckem leads a class in the newly built machine shop at Sheboygan North High School in Sheboygan, Wis.

In nearby Sheboygan Falls, 11th grader Dylan Thiel waters plants in one of the newly constructed "hoop houses," or greenhouses, at Sheboygan Falls High School.

Collin Fessler, center, adjusts a microscope in his 10th grade science class at Kohler High School in the neighboring district of Kohler.

elementary students learn coding, electronic chalkboards in every classroom from prekindergarten through high school, and state-of-the-art lab equipment for science and engineering courses.

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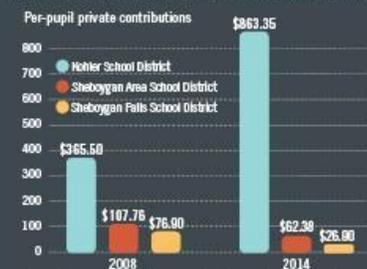
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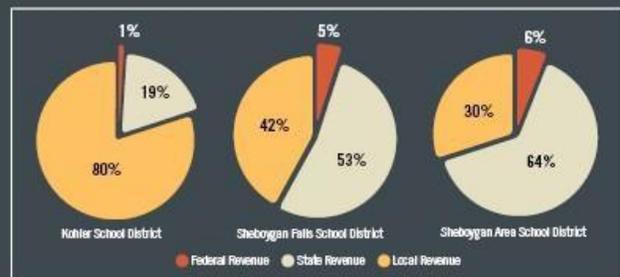
How do district revenue sources differ?

In 2008, the Kohler school district in Wisconsin received \$366 in private contributions per pupil, significantly more than the two districts that border it, Sheboygan Falls and Sheboygan Area. By 2014, the gap in private funding had widened. Local revenue, including private contributions, makes up the vast majority of Kohler's funds, nearly 80 percent. In comparison, the two Sheboygan districts each get less than half of their funds from local revenue.



Note: Percentages may not add up to 100 due to rounding. Data have been adjusted for inflation and regional cost differences.

SOURCE: Education Week Research Center analysis of America's Community Survey, 2017.



Sheboygan Falls School District



Kohler School District



Data Lacking On Private Funds

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—FRANKS/WARA-ORFA, ALEX HARWIN & JACK WILLIAMS

How many private dollars per student?

Between 2006 and 2014, private contributions to Wisconsin public schools rose substantially from \$32 to \$77 per pupil. By contrast, the national average held relatively steady during that period, increasing slightly from \$26 to \$35.

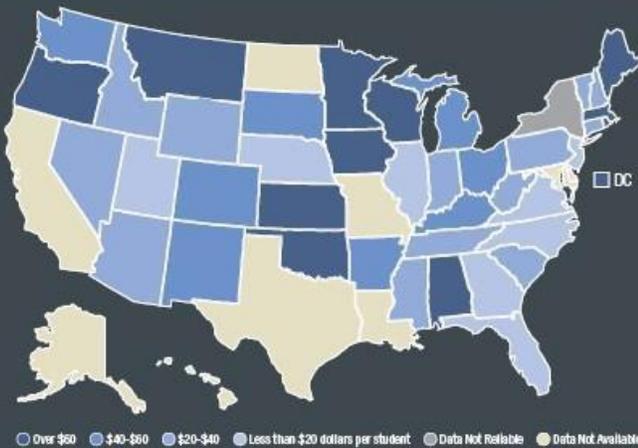


Note: All per-pupil spending figures have been adjusted for inflation and regional cost differences. Data from the following states could not be included in the national longitudinal analysis due to consecutive years of missing or unreliable data: Alaska, Calif., Del., Hawaii, Ill., La., Md., Mo., N.D., N.Y., Texas, and Wyo.

SOURCE: Education Week Research Center analysis of NCEES F-33, 2017

How do private contributions vary across states?

An analysis of federal data reveals state-by-state variation in private contributions to public schools. On a per-pupil basis, the lowest level is found in New Jersey, where each student received less than a dollar of funding from private contributions in 2014. By contrast, the highest level, more than \$300 per pupil, is reported in the District of Columbia.



Note: Data have been adjusted for inflation and regional cost differences.

SOURCE: Education Week Research Center analysis of data from NCEES F-33, 2017

About this series

Educators and the public are aware that achievement gaps often separate students of color from their higher-achieving white peers and leave low-income students lagging behind their better-off peers. Less obvious are the mechanisms and circumstances that contribute to those academic differences.

This article is the second of a series intended to shed light on the "hidden inequities" that keep education from reaching the goal of leveling the playing field for all students. Each installment is being produced by *Education Week* staff writers working in collaboration with the Education Week Research Center. Future installments will examine:

- District-to-district disparities in disciplinary practices used with special education students (May);
- School closings and high student-mobility rates, their impact on educational quality, and their disparate effects on different school communities (June).

Outside Donors Can Alter Funding Mix

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 30

hands-on science experiments.

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Differences Aside

For all their differences, the districts last year made a public statement of unity by joining the Sheboygan County Economic Development Corp.'s "Someplace Better" campaign, which hopes to attract new residents. It's a symbol of how Sheboygan school leaders have navigated the dynamics of being colleagues, uniting to push back on public education funding cuts or draw more students to the county, while also being competitors.

The districts must vie for both private donors and students because Wisconsin is an open-enrollment

state that allows families to enroll their children in schools outside their home district.

In 2006, the state legislature lifted the cap on the open-enrollment program, which led to double-digit growth for Kohler. Meanwhile, Sheboygan Falls saw enrollment drop by roughly 100 students during the same period. Born attributed some of the decline to manufacturing job losses and the recent recession.

Then in 2011, Gov. Scott Walker, a Republican, led the charge to pass Act 10, which slashed \$792 million in aid to schools, according to *PolitiFact*. That came after his predecessor, Gov. Jim Doyle, a Democrat, and lawmakers cut \$284 million in school district aid the previous budget year.

Walker now wants to boost state aid to schools by \$509 million, trickling down to a \$200-per-pupil increase for the 2017-18 school year and a \$204 increase in 2018-19.

Sheboygan County school leaders aren't holding their breath for more state aid, hence the pressure to ramp up private donations.

Kohler's PTO president, Jennifer Kading, said there is more of an ability to donate time or money in Kohler since parents don't pay tuition to send their children to private schools. She's noted that many of her active co-fundraisers come from dual-income households and work in corporations there. No private or charter schools operate in the district.

"We want to help support and protect public education," said Kading, who has three children in Kohler schools. "Yes, we are fortunate with our financial situation, for sure. But it's a great place to put your resources, as any parent would likely want to do."

Research analyst Alex Harvin and research intern Jack Williams contributed to this article.

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Chapter Five: Analysis

Overview

In the past ten years, journalists of color who work in newsroom management have noticed a push and pull effect when it comes to diversity and inclusion in newsrooms: the recession gutted momentum for the movement, only to see it ricochet as a focus again amid widespread criticism that the industry was ill-equipped to cover a wave of “identity politics” conversations sweeping the nation. A major challenge moving forward that’s become more pronounced in the interim: how to fairly define diversity and inclusion in the sense of who should be a priority to focus on and how do you best include those who are intersectional – meaning they come from one of more historically marginalized groups, such as people of color who are also women or identify as queer. Amid these trends, journalists of color who have made it into newsroom management must develop their own customized sense of resiliency and hone it as new challenges arise. This analysis aims to explore their psyche and the tactics they employ to stay in journalism.

Environment is key to building resilience, according to a series of interviews with over a dozen journalists who are now in management. When newsroom managers express that diversity is important, journalists of color are made to feel important and their voices are more valued in the work environment when it comes to decisions on content and staffing. In turn, journalists of color operating in that culture are more likely to stick around. When diversity was not a priority, however, they felt like neither were they as employees, nor were the stories they felt went under-covered on historically marginalized communities. And if those stories did get told, it wasn’t always done as well.

The journalism industry has hoped to achieve parity - that is, have its staff reflect the communities it covers - for almost 40 years now. In 1968, a scathing federal government report by the Kerner Commission found in the immediate aftermath of the civil rights movement and related riots that the media was woefully unprepared to write about race (Mellinger, 2008). The industry nearly took a decade to get its house in order to formally address those concerns but in 1978, the American Society of News Editors, a membership organization for managers in newsrooms and journalism programs in higher education, set a goal to have their newsrooms' racial and ethnic staffing profile match that of the nation's population by the year 2000. That has been postponed until 2025, in part because of the recession. It remains to be seen if it is even feasible given today's disparity along racial and ethnic lines when it comes to staffing toward parity (Bodinger-de Uriarte & Valgeirsson, 2015).

"I haven't heard that word [parity] in years," said Maria Carrillo, a senior editor at the *Houston Chronicle* and Cuban-American woman with 32 years of professional journalism experience. "We don't talk about it anymore, which is sad."

Younger journalists of color interviewed said they can't recall ever hearing the word "parity." Others, such as *Minneapolis Star-Tribune's* Maria Reeve, a black woman who oversees the publication's largest department as an assistant managing editor for news, said she doesn't "think about it anymore." She instead opts for a more realistic approach, fostering a more inclusive culture in hiring and content of their diverse community in the Twin Cities, rather than obsess with meeting any sort of percentage barometer. Her publication is ahead of the industry, with roughly 24 percent coming from

racial and ethnic minority backgrounds in the newsroom, but is still not near what would be considered parity, she noted.

ASNE reported in 2015 that of 32,900 employees considered newspaper journalists, about 4,200, or about 13 percent, are racial minorities. Meanwhile, people of color now represent nearly 40 percent of the nation's population, with demographers predicting that the U.S. will be majority-minority for the first time by the mid-2040s, according to U.S. Census Bureau data (Sanburn, 2015).

Meredith Clark, an assistant professor at the Mayborn School of Journalism at the University of North Texas and a monthly columnist for Poynter, recently noted in her column that the self-reported data on newsroom diversity from ASNE comes from less than half of the more than 1,700 news organizations the organization counted last year, so it's unclear what the actual number is, and noted the data almost didn't come out after some news outlets requested their information not be released because their numbers were so low. The broadcast news industry is somewhat closer to parity as minorities make up about 22 percent of the local television news workforce, according to a 2015 study by the Radio Television Digital News Association. This analysis is focused on traditional newspaper legacy media.

Journalists interviewed for this analysis said the numbers speak for themselves in assessing inequality in newsrooms, and several said it will continue to haunt the integrity of the industry until more aggressively addressed. In her column, Clark noted the arguable hypocrisy of journalism publications calling out other fields on a lack of diversity – as in Hollywood, technology, the corporate executive class, and politics – when the media industry's numbers are just as dismal, or even worse.

Themes explored among lines of journalists of color resiliency

Journalists interviewed cited the economic recession of 2008 as a major blow to the momentum seen in the previous decade when it came to diversity in newsrooms, as interviewees said they saw the industry go into survival mode, shedding jobs and nixing funding allocated to recruitment of diverse candidates.

However, of late, journalists also said in interviews that they have seen somewhat of a renewed focus by news outlets and in journalism industry thinkpieces on diversity. These thinkpieces note the reawakening to the “identity politics” in the past five years that has gripped the nation – from the pockets of the more conservative side of the dominant white class to those from historically marginalized groups. Both spectrums have passionately expressed frustration in how they feel the mainstream media stereotypes them and say the media is trapped in a politically left-leaning, white, upper middle-class bubble that limits its ability to better represent the nuances of evolving identities in its storytelling.

The definition of diversity is also changing, and carries a stigma that the word “inclusion” seems to help soften. These changes pose a unique challenge to those journalists of color who experience intersectionality.

When it comes to crafting their resiliency, tactics journalists spoke of that consistently arose in interviews included: the role of mentorship as key to survival, reinventing one’s skill set consistently through going back to college or getting training in the latest digital tools, and taking cues from their traditionally straight, white male co-workers climbing the ranks on how to advocate for themselves as they have had no role models that resemble their identity.

At the same time, journalists of color in management must mentally balance when to advocate for better, more sensitive and inclusive coverage of minority groups that they may be more aware of than their white peers, or even come from, without becoming a broken record, or being accused of bias. Learning when and how to speak up is a skill honed over time, they said.

Interviews were conducted with 13 working journalists who all were in management or had worked since the 2008 recession in a management role where they had a voice in content and hiring decisions. The journalists ranged in professional careers of eight years to almost 40 years in the news industry. All wrote for independent news outlets that were predominately “legacy” media companies. The interviewees were raised throughout the country (including states such as California, Colorado, Florida, Minnesota, New York, Ohio, Tennessee, Texas and the District of Columbia) and worked in all quadrants of the nation. Six were women and seven were men. Six were Latino, four were black and three were Asian, both of far East and South Asian descent. Two identified as gay. The interviewees reflected the diversity composition and proportionality somewhat of the three largest minority groups in the United States that media is responsible for covering most often. All agreed to go mostly on record throughout the entire interview, usually only refraining from directly naming colleagues who may have insulted them or who they didn’t want to out in a situation they saw. Interviews lasted roughly one hour to 90 minutes over roughly a month in February and March 2017.

A challenging beginning

Andy Alford has worked for newspapers for 20 years, half of which as an editor at the *Austin-American Statesman*. Alford, a black woman who grew up in Dallas, echoed what several interviewees articulated that early on in their careers especially they felt that their minority background wasn't always a plus. She explained that she found out at one of her first jobs she was paid \$6,000 dollars less for the same work and with the same experience, despite having more skills in data reporting than her white and male peers. She said during the interview process at another publication that one editor, who was of color but not black, informed her that someone who was white said she couldn't "hack it." Others who interviewed her whom he spoke with though disagreed. So he offered to mentor her to help prove that editor wrong. Two decades later, she's climbed the ranks and was one of the first reporters to champion computer-assisted reporting techniques in a newsroom lauded for being among the most adept in going digital first.

"People tend to underestimate you," Alford said of how her racial background may at times have been a setback in some manager's eyes. "It's a positive though suddenly when they are looking for a diverse voice in the room though."

Interviewees who started their careers in the 1980s and 1990s all spoke of how at the time in the news industry, there had been a large emphasis on diversity in newsrooms, specifically with the ASNE effort to push for parity. It made for a challenging time, because with the added encouragement, came the skepticism that perhaps the reason they were hired was mainly because of their minority background.

Emilio Garcia-Ruiz, a Hispanic managing editor of *Washington Post's* digital news division, has worked in newspaper journalism in California, Minnesota and

Washington D.C. for roughly 35 years. He explained that while perhaps he may have gotten a first or second look by employers because of his last name or heritage, which is Spanish, that the special treatment ended right there. He recalls at his first job he had to pass a copy-editing test and meet all the qualifications his peers did to get hired.

He said that overall, people tend to act somewhat professionally in newsrooms around discussions of race, so it's hard for journalists of color to know how others may view how they got into the room, noting that on occasion he has been told he was hired only because he was Hispanic by co-workers, usually "under the influence of alcohol."

"I think for me, it made me want to work harder," Garcia-Ruiz said. "I don't spend a lot of time dwelling on those thoughts, as to survive, you have to think positively."

Trying to be themselves

Journalists also develop a sense of resilience in realizing that once they are in the newsroom, and particularly in meetings where content is decided, that they have a responsibility, from the news outlet's integrity to interview subjects to readers, to not just speak up on boosting coverage on underrepresented communities, but how to handle language and visuals used in publication when they do cover minority groups.

Mizell Stewart III, vice president of news operations, USA Today Network, and ASNE's president, has worked in the news industry for over 30 years for publications large and small in the Midwest and East Coast. He recalled an incident in one newsroom in the Midwest where he had to push back on editors describing an altercation in a black part of town as a "riot," arguing that it was not accurate and a historically charged term that should be used with caution.

This sensibility was echoed by Steve Padilla, an assistant national editor for the *Los Angeles Times*, who is of Mexican-American identity and with 35 years under his belt in the news business. Padilla said journalists of color in management often have to learn that in educating their colleagues on cultural issues, which in some cases may tie to back their own personal identity and experience, that they shouldn't be misinterpreted by their peers that they are advocating on their heritage group's behalf if it's going to make the story more factual.

"It's not like you are trying to protect some subgroup in society from being offended, it's a matter of accuracy, and a responsibility to bring up especially if you and your publication should know better," Padilla said. "Gatekeepers often are thought of in helping decide what gets published, but also should be focused on what doesn't make it in."

Journalists of color in management interviewed said that getting their peers who are not of color to see the value in working to learn more about the minority communities they cover doesn't incite the same type of discomfort and tension as do programs designed to hire more minorities and a consciousness in the need to promote them.

"One of the downsides with anything that gives off any semblance of an affirmative action-like initiative is people questioning why you are there, or even for those hired under that diversity banner, feeling that way," said Andrea Chang, an assistant business editor at the *Los Angeles Times*.

Chang, in her early 30s and an Asian-American woman of Chinese descent, sometimes is mistaken for having been recruited through a minority training program

called METPRO, when she was an intern who came in through the traditional summer program route.

All the journalists interviewed said they didn't feel that they had to deny, or even thought they could downplay, their racial and ethnic identity in order to do their job.

Some quipped that because of the way they look, there's no way to escape it anyway: "I've been black my whole life and you can tell," Stewart said.

Still, that's not to say they weren't conscious of how they could be perceived, as wanting to avoid stereotypes that mainstream America may have of their minority backgrounds.

For example, Stewart eschewed wearing jeans in one office that was trying to adopt a more "hip" culture, because he was raised to think as a minority that he has to always dress professionally to be taken seriously. He felt as someone who was commonly the first and/or only black man in the room while climbing the ranks that he always needed to look the part.

For those whose identity includes more than one historically marginalized group, it can take some time to open up personally and build better relationships with colleagues and the community because of concerns of how they will be perceived. It can feel like a bit of a guessing game which identity of theirs may cause more friction or dismissal by those who they cover, or struggle to win the respect of some in the office.

Take, for example, Chalkbeat Colorado bureau chief Nic Garcia, and USA TODAY NETWORK-Tennessee Opinion & Engagement Editor David Plazas, who are both Latino and gay. The two are roughly a decade apart, as Garcia, of Mexican-American descent, is 31, and Plazas, also a U.S. native but of Cuban and Colombian

heritage, is 40. Both expressed feeling more reservations around how their sexual orientation seems to have caused more of an issue for them than their ethnic identity.

Garcia first worked at a LGBT publication in Colorado. He said that if he hadn't been out he might not have gotten that job and thus started his career in journalism so for him being out initially felt like a plus. He moved up to an editor position there before shifting to a non-LGBT outlet, Chalkbeat, where he now steers education coverage. However, he was tasked with covering the Legislature for the gay publication and in order to be taken more seriously, decided to forgo voting to prove he didn't have a stake in the outcome.

“When I was the gay reporter covering gay issues for a gay publication, I didn't want for the work to be discounted, and people assumed I would have some implicit bias, so it was a sort of symbolic gesture I made to sources that I would not vote in order to persuade them that I am unbiased or detached,” Garcia explained.

After joining Chalkbeat, Garcia felt a different “othering,” this time more inside the newsroom. He felt his story ideas and sourcing sensibilities as a gay Latino from a western state were quite different from the coastal, predominately straight, white, Jewish women that shaped the editorial spirit of the publication, and felt compelled to express that openly to his managers and colleagues, which took some aback. In the end though, he said there is a culture of striving for better inclusion, thus he feels that he can push back when he feels the need – citing a spirited discussion with higher-ups about broadening the definition of what “underserved” means in schools based on his multicultural prism to not limit just to poor, black and brown children in larger urban metros.

Plazas said he always felt like his Latino identity wasn't as much of a lightning rod, and often says his lighter-skinned appearance may have safeguarded him to a degree from some of that ire, in or outside the newsroom. He, like Garcia, also has no foreign accent as are English-dominant in their work and daily communication. Indeed, colorism, where darker skin is viewed as less favorable, and ethnic accents often can draw more negative attention, some interviewees said.

But as Plazas was working in a more conservative part of Florida in the early 2000s during which gay marriage ban legislation and “family values” were sweeping the nation, he didn't want his sexuality to distract from his work. He already knew that his proud Latino identity could irk some watching him, as some of his colleagues expressed feeling uncomfortable, or “left out,” around the Spanish-language speakers that worked at the paper's niche Latino publication, so he wasn't sure how his bosses would react. Thus, he stayed relatively closeted. However, as acceptance grew stronger of openly gay people in the U.S. and he entered in a relationship with the man who would become his husband, Plazas became more public about his sexual orientation. After moving to Tennessee a few years ago, he resolved to be unapologetically out, living in Nashville which can be as progressive in some parts as it is conservative in others.

Role models and mentorship

Chang, of the LA Times, said that one of her mentors, an Asian male, told her and another female colleague that they should “walk with purpose” around the office. She also had to learn when to be assertive and vocal about her ideas as mainstream society has been conditioned to regard Asian women as being submissive and quietly industrious. In Chang's case, having women and Asian colleagues, male and female, such as business

editor Kimi Yoshino, who came before her in management laid somewhat of a template she could borrow from in learning how to counterbalance her natural personality traits of being collegial, with the assertive qualities she knew she would need to harness to move up into management.

“Mentorship comes every day in little ways,” Chang said. “Kimi never said, ‘can I be your mentor?’ I think a lot of it came from observing how she leads and consulting with her when I was facing a challenge or her pulling me aside quickly to share some feedback.”

Indeed, all 13 journalists cited mentorship – or simply having someone senior to go to inside the newsroom, or outside somewhere in the field – as a key staple of their resiliency in the journalism world.

Diana Fuentes, a deputy metro editor at the *San Antonio Express-News*, said that because of those conditions, it was mostly straight white men who spotted her potential and recruited her for management positions, becoming an editor roughly a decade into her career and working her way to be a publisher of the Del Rio newspaper. It’s rare to see a woman in such a role, much less one who is also of color. She recalled though on occasion, she would summon her inspiration from the example of a female colleague senior to her when she started working in Laredo, Carmina Danini. Fuentes recalled Danini was told that she could only write for the social section as that was the area of the newspaper women were relegated to, but she broke that mold, at the time only with a high school degree as women were not encouraged or supported in pursuing higher education.

“I figured if she could put up with that hell, I could do it too,” Fuentes said. “I knew she had it harder than I did so I kept that perspective on bad days.”

Often though, older journalists interviewed said at the time that they were coming up in the field that they didn’t have one singular mentor, or role model whom they could identify with. They said that was in large part because the field was so overwhelmingly white, and minority journalism organizations were still in their infancy.

“There still aren’t many of us when you look up in the newsroom from your desk at these legacy outlets you see that looks like you,” Padilla said. “So, there’s no one there but in the mirror.”

Indeed, associations for journalists of color, formed to represent black, Latino, Asian, and American Indian journalists, were cited often by those interviewed in their 30s and 40s as instrumental in helping them connect with employers looking for qualified people of color and scholarships as they were often the first generation to attend college. The associations also were vital in building a support system of peers as they were among the first major waves of minorities in newsrooms.

A downturn and learning to stay relevant

When it comes to diversity programs being successful in sustaining a more inclusive environment, all journalists cited various events in the mid to late 2000s that essentially gutted what progress may have been made on the hiring front. ASNE numbers show a drop from 7,400 in 2007 to 4,200 in 2015 in number of newsroom employees who are of color.

In the end, their resilience was tested yet again because they were often the last ones standing who were of color and left to wonder at times why. Journalists interviewed

who survived that period of nearly 10 years of cuts expressed sometimes grappling with “survivor’s guilt,” or “imposter syndrome” in why they were kept on or didn’t leave.

Garcia-Ruiz said that of all the challenges that minorities have faced in newsroom inclusion, the industry contracting as a whole likely hurt the most. Those who are most recently hired under union contracts are the first let go. Although exceedingly minorities were entering newsrooms in greater numbers they start to generally see higher rates of college education and population saturation, there weren’t jobs for them and the jobs available may have been too unstable or underpaid the workers with more college debt on their back than past generations.

“Some of my friends of color just felt undervalued and underpaid and left,” Fuentes said. “There wasn’t much mobility for them in the newsroom for years, and especially for some of the younger ones who had more college debt and also felt the stakes were high being the first in their families to go to college but chose a lower paying field like journalism, they didn’t think it was worth sticking around.”

Recruitment certainly took a hit as news companies scaled back. Papers were closing or in a hiring freeze so didn’t need to send recruiters to minority journalism conventions. That in turn impacted sponsorships of their conferences, which also downsized their offerings.

Then came the break-up of UNITY, which was formed in the mid-1990s to better foster diversity in the newsroom industry, and create a space at a joint conference every four years during the presidential election cycle where recruiters could come find a concentrated group of talent and presidential candidates speak to some of the most influential journalists of color in the U.S.

UNITY: Journalists of Color consisted of the National Association of Black Journalists, Asian American Journalists Association, the National Association of Hispanic Journalists and the Native American Journalists Association. In 2011, NABJ left, followed by 2013 by NAHJ, citing that they were unhappy with two aspects of the coalition: the way the profits were redistributed back to the member organizations, and the coalition welcoming the National Lesbian and Gay Journalists Association to the coalition in 2011. The group changed its tagline from “Journalists of Color” to “Journalists for Diversity” and some felt the inclusion of NLGJA took away from UNITY being about journalists of color because NLGJA was mostly white. This fracture touches on the challenges of intersectionality some journalists interviewed had mentioned when it came to creating a more inclusive industry environment as LGBT people of color felt torn about who to side with in the rifts.

So amid these job and diversity hiring program cuts and divisions among journalism associations in the industry, the picture for keeping inclusionary practices a priority became bleak as many moved into survival mode.

It’s something that Neil Foote felt quite personally. Foote reported for major daily newspapers such as the *Miami Herald* and *Washington Post*, worked on both the editorial and business side of journalism at various publications, and now teaches in the Dallas area at the University of North Texas’ prestigious Mayborn School of Journalism. A black man from Brooklyn with 36 years of journalism experience, he served as chairman of the now-defunct National Association for Multicultural Media Executives, which for over a decade aimed to help shore up more diversity in newsroom management and took its helm just as the recession hit.

“I was told by sponsors and members that ‘we know diversity is a big issue but right now I am trying to decide whether to layoff x number of people or buy memberships to this organization and underwrite travel to our meetings, so support dried up,” Foote said. “During those years, diversity got pushed to the back. It wasn’t always at the front either, but at least it had become an integral part of the conversation.”

In order to stay relevant and keep growing, interviewees worked on broadening their skill sets, learning new social media, or data mining techniques, or going back to school to learn more about the business. Getting another degree in a specialized area was a tactic both Foote and Plazas used. Plazas earned a master’s in business while working on his next career transition that primed him for a top editor position in Tennessee.

“My outlook was helped by going to business school, as I came to a point that I realized I had the freedom to leave, and they have freedom to get rid of me,” Plazas said. “So I weirdly found a tremendous sense of bliss, and wasn’t going to enter a newsroom fearful again.”

Foote echoed the importance of pushing your own development to stay relevant and move up in rank, as mentorship can only go so far.

After expressing his desire to work his way into management, but not receiving much concrete guidance on how to get there and being passed over for development and promotions, Foote return to school to get a master’s in business administration. He then was passed over again after gaining what skills he saw he had to move up through earning the degree, and was told not to take it personal as he was liked. Eventually as his family grew and his income didn’t, he felt forced to move on, getting hired quickly thereafter at a black-owned media company. There, he found validation as he was

immediately hired as chief operating officer and could finally spread his wings as he felt ready for a stronger leadership role.

“You have to take ownership, and realize even if you are qualified, it still may be a challenge to get the chance to grow,” Foote said. “You have to believe in yourself when it feels like those you are somewhat dependent on for growth opportunities don’t.”

Taking cues from the boy’s club

For those still climbing the ranks, and in beat areas or roles where white men still dominate or did well, some continue to take cues from them in order to breakthrough to sit with most elite in the field.

“You may finally work your way into that room, but then you may not get invited to sit with anyone,” said Jyoti Thottam, a South Asian woman with 25 years of journalism experience, including as a senior editor for *Time* and Al Jazeera America.

Thottam was one of the few women in her peer group to be a foreign correspondent, let alone also being one who is of color, male or female. She said while her male colleagues were friendly, she recalls being “othered” and excluded on occasion. She noted one example when she was asked by other male correspondents if her husband would like to join them for their monthly poker night – an invitation that wasn’t extended to her.

“It can very much still be a boy’s club and human nature shows we tend to hire those that look and remind ourselves of who we are as that’s more comfortable,” Thottam said. “So you have to constantly be the most prepared in the arena when going up for a job when you don’t look like the decision-makers.”

Stewart said he's trained himself and his mentees, of color or not, to keep in mind that journalism is an uncomfortable field to work at in times, and those of color can seize great opportunities to grow by getting outside of their home communities, where they may expand their worldview and perhaps enlighten those around them who don't know someone of their background.

"It makes you more marketable when you can show you can do great journalism anywhere and in places where maybe you would be considered an outsider," Stewart said.

And as time goes on, journalists of color in management start to see how these differences between white and non-white culture can play out among who they now manage or recruit. Chang recalled being surprised at how the white men she managed tended to forward any praise readers or sources in stories sent their way, which she said is different from how she was raised as a both a woman and Asian because she had been conditioned to feel that behavior would be interpreted as bragging or unsavory.

Tom Huang, who manages enterprise reporting and recruiting for *The Dallas Morning News*, is of Asian descent as well. He echoed struggling with being a better advocate for himself or his ideas, even today after decades in the field. He explains that he was raised to be more introspective and agreeable as an Asian man. So he has long hoped that his work would speak for itself, something Chang also mentioned, but has come to realize that journalists of color often can get a rude awakening that hope usually only goes so far.

"I've learned you have to advocate for yourself from their example, and editors can't read minds so you learn to speak up about what you want and what you bring to the

table, as that's what usually happens with who gets attention and eventually moved up," Chang said.

Through his involvement in various mentoring programs and scouting new talent, which newspapers have returned to in the past couple of years more aggressively, Huang said interacting and shaping the pipeline of talent helps educate him on how to stay relevant.

"I realized that with so much changing in the industry, you can learn a lot from mentoring and helping cultivate younger talent, as they can expose you to new ways of doing the work," Huang said.

Plazas and Padilla said that ultimately though, if a journalist keeps working on their skill sets and reinventing how they do their work, it makes them more immune to being cut, as the industry is notorious for also shedding those at the top who become "too expensive."

"You just have to keep working at being the best," Padilla said. Or as the motto goes for The Ida B. Wells Society for Investigative Reporting organization recently formed to diversify the most elite ranks of journalism: "Be Twice As Good."

Defining a changing inclusive mindset

Journalists generally agreed that they have some cautious optimism about a renewed discussion on the best ways newsrooms could best tackle improving diversity in newsrooms. Several noted that the past five years have created a better sense of urgency to do so, stemming from a few developments in 2012. Then, the black community protested how Trayvon Martin's killing was covered in the media, President Barack Obama was reelected amid a GOP-sanctioned report that said the Republican Party

should reach out better to minorities to stay relevant. That conversation took another turn, interviewees said, when President Donald Trump was elected amid belief that the predominately white mainstream media didn't take him seriously even though minority groups did because of his rhetoric early on against Mexicans and other minorities that they knew to be harmful. Conversely, those who supported Trump in the media and at the ballot box felt animosity about how they believed the media has typecast them or ignored them in coverage.

Journalists interviewed largely agreed that moving forward that race and ethnicity cannot be diminished within the push for diversity as it undergirds so much of America's historical discrimination. They are concerned that the broadening of the "diversity and inclusion" definition may divert the need to address the ramifications of United States' centuries-old albatross of racism that's haunted the nation's soul, and is something journalism isn't immune to.

But as the nation has become more multicultural in discussions about gender, nationality, ableism, sexual orientation, gender identity, family wealth, and political partisanship, newsroom managers will be pressed to include those aspects if trying to reflect the United States today in their newsrooms and coverage decisions. It's something millennials, the media's future consumers, demand be taken into better account as well.

"I think it comes down to simply looking around the newsrooms and across your content and asking regularly, who are we missing? Do we have a sense of being inclusive?" Chang said, also a millennial and from the nation's fastest growing minority group as an Asian-American.

Indeed, “diversity” has developed a stigma for some, both for those who are white and others who are of color, that it’s a stand-in for affirmative action. However, “inclusion” is something everyone can more easily claim, as long as they can demonstrate some sort of exclusionary practice, or underrepresentation in coverage or staffing composition. It’s been added to several efforts in recent years, in journalism and other industries, but editors agree it still remains a prickly subject on how broad to define diversity.

For example, as with the breakup of UNITY somewhat tied to welcoming the LGBT journalists group into the fold, the factionalism can hurt those who are intersectional. Those who are of color and also queer may feel like they had to choose a side. It can also divert the efforts toward a more inclusive society into an uncomfortable competition of who’s suffered the most in world history. The reality is that journalists say the definition is fluid and somewhat dependent on the context of the newsroom environment and who they cover, so it can defeat the spirit of inclusivity to just focus efforts on one subgroup. Moving forward, not striving for a more inclusive environment may alienate younger, more progressive minded folks from wanting to pursue newsroom leadership ranks as they feel those divisive attitudes are a turn-off and outdated.

“When we divide like that, even if there are good reasons, the fallout hurts us more as a whole in this mission for better inclusivity in the long run of an already precarious outlook,” Thottam said.

For editors like Carrillo, Reeve, and Thottam, while they have held on in part because they know as women of color they have earned a seat at the table, they often wonder about who will be there to join or succeed them someday. They think the industry

keeps kicking the can down the road, be it blaming the disproportionately low numbers of journalists of color in their newsroom on a recession or qualified worker shortage.

“The pipeline excuse is weak, just go to any journalism school, or program teaching media and you’ll see many women and minorities,” Carrillo said. “We have to take responsibility as an industry and I’ve seen people who run newsrooms know how to solve problems and get things done, so you just have to do it if it’s important to you.”

For decades now, the news industry has acknowledged it makes good economic sense to have a more diverse staff as they inherently have more access and familiarity to places under-covered due to language and cultural barriers, Reeve said.

Chang said often younger reporters don’t want to get pigeonholed as the reporters who only do stories tied somewhat to their identity, but after establishing oneself, says she has seen colleagues better embrace those stories. She and others noted that even younger generations who are reclaiming their heritage as a proud part of their identity at their career onset are eager to take on the stories, as feel they it’s a way to champion marginalized communities, and in the market, those stories are in demand and relevant to today’s “identity politics” editors and readers want.

“You have to have stories reflect the community and if the community is changing, you have to prepare for that,” Reeve said. “If you are not doing that, no one is going to buy you, and you’ll be left in the dust as other outlets come to take that audience, so you do have to be deliberate.”

But editors who are involved in recruiting are already seeing the fruits of their labor thanks to a reawakening on the importance of a more inclusive staff. Huang said at *the Dallas Morning News* they have hired about 40 people in the last 18 months, moving

their diversity from a low of about 17 percent to 23 percent, adding, “we still have to do better to reflect the diversity of our community, but some progress has been made.”

Dallas used to be 86 percent white 50 years ago, but now half of its population is comprised of minority groups, according to U.S. Census Bureau data. However, ASNE data for how many minorities the *Dallas Morning News* newsroom employees for 2016 makes it look like it’s actually still stuck in a time warp five decades ago as 82 percent of its staff is white. The Latino population alone in Dallas has grown in that time frame from 8 percent to 43 percent. The percentage of Latinos the DMN employs today: 8 percent.

At the Star Tribune, Reeve said that in the past six months they recently hired a Latino reporter and a Muslim reporter whom she helped recruit and mentors. Acknowledging the changing demographics with growing Mexican and Somali populations, newsroom managers agreed in the past few years that they needed more folks who could speak the languages and had familiarity with the culture as they noticed a coverage gap, Reeve said. And recently the leadership saw this strategy pay off.

After President Trump’s issued various executive orders that sent shockwaves through immigrant Latino and Muslim populations in the Twin Cities coverage area this January, Reeve recalled the pride she said she felt when she saw a triple byline with white, Latino, and Muslim reporters on their story about the issue. She said the trio was able to cobble together a more inclusive story thanks to the diversity of skills and experience all three brought to the table.

“At least we are not embarrassed because we have people in our organization whose different backgrounds can help inform our work,” Reeve said. “I was so, so happy to see that.”

Championing those beliefs provides some motivation to stick it out, editors said, even if it seems exhausting at times to cyclically have these conversations. Journalists mentioned programs such as Fault Lines by the Maynard Institute, which aims to foster a more inclusive newsroom environment, that have helped some of their newsrooms. Stewart, the ASNE president, is helping champion the society’s own Emerging Leaders Institute, previously known as the Minority Leadership Institute, which ASNE started in 2012 with the goal of training minority journalists to become leaders in their organizations and in the industry. In just five years since its inception, ASNE has trained more than 150 news leaders.

Stewart said he sometimes struggles with recommending students and newbies follow in his footsteps because the same path he took doesn’t really exist with how the news industry has changed, particularly in the newspaper business. In the past 15 years alone, he’s survived through six corporate newsroom mergers.

“I don’t think that my career trajectory can be replicated again today where you can stick around a place for a longer amount of time, so younger journalists from minority backgrounds have to be inherently more resilient as the market has become more volatile.”

But for all the talk of why they have stuck in journalism for decades, or see themselves doing so until retirement day, journalists of color in management boiled it

down to something universal in their field: a love of the craft and devotion to remembering that they won't be deterred.

“I think people who gravitate to journalism are adept at overcoming adversity as part of our DNA in doing our work, so it becomes easy to forget that,” Stewart said. “One thing that has contributed to my longevity is just being willing to face adversity. Most people of color had to deal with adversity just in the process of growing up, and so if I look at the long arc of my life, I think I have overcome a hell of a lot more in my life than office politics. So that perspective helps.”

Journalists of color interviewed say that there's really no excuse for newsrooms to not be diverse, and if managers can't find the talent, then they need to be at least working on assessing how they are consciously covering all the voices in their community. The debate on how to go about creating a more inclusive newsroom culture can be fractious and emotionally charged at times on what's fair to which group inside and outside the newsroom, but the mainstream news industry is increasingly in peril as demographics shift and purple America diminishes, so niche and partisan media chip away at their audiences.

Newsroom leadership, still white men from U.S. society's most predominately powerful class, must make a concentrated effort on representing the views in their communities. The goal should be, journalists interviewed said, to foster a greater consciousness in their coverage of inequality in every community for the nation to better confront the historical ills that continue to haunt us, with people of color most often bearing the brunt. Bringing more journalists of color into the management ranks can put the greater newsroom at an advantage, as these journalists have often navigated the

intersections of striving to the traditional professional standards of the industry, and experiencing more familiarity with problems facing people from their historically marginalized identities. Internally, they also can serve as role models for future generations of journalists, a guidepost that pathways do exist to overcoming barriers we've allowed as a field to hinder our own growth in better covering an increasingly nuanced, and divided country.

Appendix: Original Proposal

Introduction

I feel like the entirety of my life and career experiences so far have prepared me for this master's project, a professional analysis into diversity and inclusion in the news industry. I grew up in a city where I saw diversity often organically blend, with the exception of segregation defined by economic brackets, as San Antonio is a majority-minority town now dominated by Latinos with white, black, and Asian people also quite visible. I was often surrounded by other brown people - until I worked my way through scholarships to a college preparatory academy for high school in a richer, white part of town, and started attending journalism conferences and seminars beyond the Alamo City's borders. I started to notice I was often one of the only Latinos in the room. Exceedingly, I also noticed there were fewer males in my peer group, although men still dominated at the top rungs of newsroom management. Then, after accepting my homosexual identity in my later college years, I noticed how the industry was gay-friendly but visibility came more in the lower ranks of staffing. It was at the culmination of these observations, and talking about it with peers feeling the same way, that I started to become fascinated with all the dynamics of diversity in newsrooms. The conversations we would have about race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, age, and class were as comforting as they were unsettling. I indeed had white mentors reach out to help me, while others of "my own cloth" weren't very supportive and encouraged me to stay away from covering minority issues. On the flip side, I had some older white editors tell me point blank that I needed to stop covering marginalized communities' problems as intensively as it doesn't appeal to broader readership which was predominately white. I

also had several mentors who were gay, Latino and from first generation college backgrounds like me who said I should be proud of where I come from, who I am and that owning that doesn't have to compromise my work if you work hard to be fair. This push and pull I've felt over the past 15 years working in professional newsrooms has always tugged at my soul. I started out at an English-Spanish bilingual community paper writing features and Latin music as a 17-year-old still in high school, followed by covering breaking news online before a layoff at the Los Angeles Times at age 24, and finding solace in business reporting covering trade and trucking in Los Angeles and retail and real estate in Austin during the recession. Most recently, I found great motivation to remain in journalism because of my job in my hometown covering education for the daily newspaper I grew up idolizing. I could write any story off that beat from a bright to an investigative or data-driven in-depth story for Sunday's page one.

I had reached a point, though, where I felt I needed a full scale tune-up and knew I would want to teach down the line, so a master's degree would be in order. I wanted to become better at understanding data, verifying legitimacy of published research being pitched to reporters, knowing how to best dig to get documents to unearth societal wrongs, how policy is shaped and passed, and how our field can adapt to serving a nation whose demographics and ideologies are shifting more rapidly than we feel prepared to handle while under financial woes in the news industry. It was a tall order.

I didn't want to leave the field and found Mizzou's journalism program to be flexible enough to let me focus on a few key areas where I needed to grow or get better experience. I wanted to confront my lack of comfortability with numbers that's common in old-school journalistic culture, so I familiarized myself with data analysis programs

such as Excel, SQL, and GIS mapping programs because my beat had so much data coming at me I felt powerless to analyze. Thus, while at Mizzou, I took classes in mapping and computer-assisted reporting with David Herzog. Although I broke a number of exclusives on my beat using documents as an education reporter in San Antonio, I was not seen as investigative reporter material by my last newsroom managers and knew getting on a projects team seemed impossible there, so I wanted to gain that skill set. I was lucky to get to work from last August through the end of this year at Investigative Reporters and Editors. I worked in the resource center and data library, helping get familiar with all the tools and techniques that investigative journalists use in their work by conducting research for them and conversing with many of them about how they go about reporting.

Related coursework in Mark Horvit's investigative journalism class and Brett Johnson's media law class really helped me get familiar with open records laws and legal and ethical boundaries when doing more intensive investigative work. Through Ryan Thomas' class on mass media, he encouraged me to embrace my curiosity about diversity issues. As a person who came from a few socially disadvantaged groups, being gay, of Mexican descent, from poverty, and raised by a single mother, I felt burdened by all the suppositions people may have of me in the workplace, classroom, and general public. But Thomas encouraged me to not dismiss the importance of studying identity at such a critical time in the country at large, and not to shrug off those concerns because it's important work for the field and social justice in general. I started to wonder why the industry has failed to reach parity. This effort grew in relevancy within the context of the Mizzou campus protests last fall, propelled by new diversity initiatives launched even

within in our own journalism school, and swelling discussions in the presidential campaign around minority groups. The literature review in Thomas' course on why the news industry has struggled to reach parity led to a content analysis on how newspapers covered the Mizzou protests for my quantitative analysis course. I got to work on refining my writing in Jacqui Banaszynski's class on narrative journalism and applied that to three projects, one on America's first gay mayor in Bunceton in rural Missouri, a writer's question and answer with the Pulitzer Prize winning Eli Saslow of the Washington Post for Neiman Storyboard, and another four-part package on migrant families working and living along the Missouri River that was published in November by the Midwest Center for Investigative Reporting. These stories got me out of my education reporter box and challenged me to write more powerfully. But keeping up with improving my writing to be effective is important because you need those skills to make the data and documents come to life that move readers. A deeply human touch often makes a good story great. Finally, this semester I got to take two public policy courses: one on discrimination in the United States and another on education. The role that inequity and inequality plays in greater society was a common theme in all of these courses.

My hope personally, career-wise, is still somewhat what it was as a kid. I want to be an editor of a publication that is strongly connected to its community, and teach journalism on the side, occasionally helping write about best practices in books or op-eds. More immediately, I want to be an in-depth reporter covering policy implementation. I have found a kinship covering education, sitting on the board of the Education Writers Association while working on my master's degree. I think a lot of our social problems intersect with the nation's educational system and has a strong role in making or breaking

the individual in their ability to be a good citizen. There is a lot of beauty and ugliness in the education industry worth writing about.

I want to help preserve the power of our field as long as I can stay in the industry. As it changes, we have to reinvent and expand our skill sets as well as journalists. I'm only 32, so I have a long way to go I hope. In 15 years I have already seen many changes with social media, the Internet and demographics creating new consumer demands and responsibilities to cover reshaping communities. I noticed this particularly taking root in the school system. To master coverage though, it takes cultural sensitivity and knowledge. We see a lot of junk science out there so having connections to media and policy professors will help me become a better journalist as now I have contacts here at Mizzou to run information by on occasion. I've developed a fascination with policy as I prefer to cover its proposal and implementation (over covering the personalities in politics we tend to fixate on). But in retrospect, I have largely focused on its effects rather than approaching reporting more preemptively by digging into what past research tells us what experts have already found. Through my policy courses here at Mizzou though, I can now better understand how challenging it is for policymakers to write laws that are fair and may yield unintended harmful consequences, as well as how the process is shaped behind closed doors.

So while my professional skills component will focus on data, education policy, and inequity and inequality in schools, I wanted my professional analysis to complement that work and the research exposure I have gained. More importantly, I believe journalists subscribe to the idea of fairness and want to see the industry be a moral leader in society by not only covering inequality smartly, but also not practicing it within in our

newsroom industry culture through how we hire and treat historically marginalized groups. My hope is that my professional analysis can offer some lessons to journalists of all backgrounds and in all newsrooms about the value of inclusion by hearing from some of the field's most resilient voices from minority backgrounds on what they've experienced.

Professional skills component

I will be working as a “contributing writer” at Editorial Projects in Education, pitching in on data-driven projects and as a general assignment reporter for Education Week and edweek.org based in the Washington D.C area. The Education Week Data Journalism Internship will allow me to report and write articles related to K-12 policy and practice for a national audience of policymakers, school leaders, educators, researchers, and others interested in education. I am going to be put on a team with reporters and editors, and colleagues from the Education Week Research Center, to collect, analyze, and report on data for various reporting projects, including an initiative around race and equity in schooling they are undertaking in the spring. I have written about education off and on since 2001 when I was at a community newspaper and covered it as a full-time beat for nearly five years while at the San Antonio Express-News. Education Week tried to recruit me while at the Express-News, but for family reasons and well into the negotiation process of selecting a graduate school, told them it would be unfair for me to take the job only to quit shortly thereafter to go back to school. I also served two years on a journalists’ advisory committee guiding programming and membership parameters for the Education Writers Association, which is also based in D.C. I now serve on the EWA’s national board and will be heading a task force in spring on diversity and inclusion issues in education coverage and staffing. Thus, the research component of this project has been highly relevant for helping me shape that effort and will continue to do so as I conduct my research this semester. Also being physically in D.C. where we will have some of our meetings will be very helpful. I also have won the White House Correspondents Association scholarship since I am covering policy shaped in D.C. and

will hopefully get to attend at the end of the semester the annual dinner known to many as “nerd prom” allowing for some brief exposure to some of the town’s policy heavyweights.

I will be working 14 weeks from January 17 to April 21, 2017, at roughly 30 hours a week from Monday to Thursday. I will report to Kathleen Manzo for now, who is the managing editor. I also will be attending a D.C. program seminar class with Barbara Cochran on Fridays. I will lean on her as the D.C. program director, Mark Horvit, my former boss at IRE and program advisor, and Ryan Thomas, the chair of my committee who is helping me with the professional analysis component for guidance during my fourth semester. All three comprise my master’s project committee. I will have published articles to meet the requirement for “abundant physical evidence.”

The analysis component

The journalism industry has hoped to achieve parity – that is have its staff reflect the community it covers - for almost 40 years now after a scathing federal government report by the Kerner Commission found the media woefully unprepared to write about race in the aftermath of the civil rights movement (Mellinger, 2008). A 2015 report by the American Society of News Editors found that of 32,900 employees considered journalists, about 4,200, or 12.76 percent, are racial minorities (Doctor, 2015). That’s down from the year before, and overall, the percentage of minority journalists has hovered between 12 and 14 percent for more than a decade (Bodinger-de Uriarte & Valgeirsson, 2015). Meanwhile, minorities represent nearly 40 percent of the nation’s population, with demographers predicting that the U.S. will be majority-minority for the first time by the mid-2040s, according to U.S. Census Bureau data (Sanburn, 2015).

Women have made strong in-roads but not into top management, nor is there much data on queer journalists because that data is not tallied for various reasons. Some scholars argue that news managers have an inevitable market interest to achieve diversity, while others return to the mantra heard commonly in the landmark 1978 ASNE discussion that the media has a moral obligation to become more diverse in its staffing and in its news content. Some researchers suggest that news outlets formally incorporate into their code of ethics a commitment making diversity a priority in order to do the fair and balanced job it should be equipped to do. Some media analysts also say diversity should be taught an important tenet in journalism schools because they often educate on a constant basis what ends up being the most diverse class of journalists heading out into a world that struggles to handle racial issues well.

We often think we learn from pointing out failure as journalists, but as researchers, we often can learn from success. Therefore, I'll first review research explaining how diversity is handled in media professional practice to set the stage for why I would like to interview about ten print/online journalists in management about their resiliency and what best practices those in management and those looking to work their way into management can glean from their experiences in cultivating talent from historically marginalized groups. It's most effective to focus on journalists of color because of a strong canon of research on the topic I can build upon feasibly in the scope of this project. I would like to incorporate a degree of intersectionality as I would plan to explore to a lesser extent how to navigate those ropes as a woman or queer person of color, which are also underrepresented groups in newsrooms.

With the recently launched minority journalists initiative at the journalism school this work could dovetail well with that greater effort at Mizzou to bring light to the topic as we hope to become a leader on what diversity should mean to managers, especially in a still recovering industry from the recession and technological upheaval that is believed by many minorities who survived to have diminished inclusive staff development and hiring practices. This project could be helpful to anyone who wants to better navigate handling issues regarding minorities when it comes to coverage, and building relationships with the communities they cover and among their peers who come from different walks of life. It may help reshape or challenge their worldview and implicit biases. As someone who hopes to demonstrate management leadership in the industry, I want to be fair-minded around sensitive issues like race and be familiar with the research we have and what my colleagues are experiencing, so this project also will help me on a personal level as well.

Research question(s):

For journalists of color who have made it into management, what support systems played a determining factor in shaping how they got there? And how much resiliency do they feel the need to possess for staying power within the newsroom power structure?

How do journalists of color in newsroom management use their voice to shape content and hiring pertaining to historically marginalized groups, particularly when it involves their own racial or ethnic identity, and not just become *that* voice?

How might journalists of color in newsroom management grapple with both serving consumer demands and fulfilling any calling to highlight historically marginalized voices in their coverage area, particularly when tied to their own racial or ethnic identity?

Theoretical framework

As the push for diversity took off in the 1970s, so did the rise of studying the media through the theoretical lens of political economy (Wasko, 2014). Wasko explains that political economy theory is, at its most broad, defined as studying the interactions within a capitalist society between those who do and don't have power, usually driven by economic pressures. Political economy theory has roots in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries through those who first helped shape it, such as Karl Marx, Frederick Engels, Adam Smith, and David Ricardo (Wasko, 2014). Others define political economy as "the study of the social relations, particularly the power relations, which mutually constitute the production, distribution, and consumption of resources" (Weinhold, 2008, p. 447).

In the late 1950s and early 1960s as mass media became a field of study, researchers started wondering about the impacts media companies were having on their workers, and the greater society who consumed and relied upon that system for information (Wasko, 2014). Political economy, as adapted to media studies, is "fundamentally interested in studying communication and media as commodities produced by capitalist industries" (p. 260). Scholars used the theory to help assess ultimately who had a seat at the table in how media outlets ran their businesses.

A core goal of media scholars using the political economy lens is to address a greater concern about the "inequitable distribution of power and a critique of the structures and institutions that maintain them" (Siegelbaum & Thomas, 2015, p. 4). That would include how labor relations in the newsroom shape journalistic practices, newsroom culture, and the nature and content of news and entertainment. (McChesney, 2012).

Thus, political economy theory could apply as a lens to concerns that diversity and inclusion efforts in newsrooms have taken a back seat to other problems such as the recent recession and advent of technology upending their traditional production processes (Turner, 2014). If resources are scarce and if power is unequally distributed in a society or institution, then the use of political economy can help explain how resources are allocated (Mansell, 2004). For example, Turner writes that minority journalists and some academic researchers are trying to figure out how the Internet, which allows anyone the *power* to publish information online, has only increased financial pressures on media companies as people shift away from traditional media, and that might affect how news outlets prioritize stories and if they may hire people from underrepresented communities who may have a better connection to those markets (Turner, 2014).

Regarding content, as far back as 1967, some media research found that journalists were under economic pressures to write only about the readers who paid for their news, with the result that covering their communities equitably would have to be somewhat sacrificed. At the time, the top domestic news story in the nation was desegregation, but some journalists felt pressure to downplay the topic because of concerns it may turn off readers, who were mostly richer, white people in the suburbs and had fled inner-city integration between whites and blacks (Gerber, 1967). One reporter explained in the study that often news outlets played down “pictures of colored children” and favored coverage of more exclusive residential areas which “demand and get publicity” over the less vocal inner-city consumers (p. 222).

This type of media behavior caught the scorn of the Kerner Commission and provoked the Association of News Editors, ASNE, to set a goal of parity to have a

proportionate number of journalists from racial and ethnic minorities to match that of the nation's population by the year 2000. That has been postponed until 2025, in part because of the recession (Bodinger-de Uriarte & Valgeirsson, 2015).

One of the few, in-depth examinations that touched on the intersection of how journalists of color in management handle content and hiring pertaining to their own race was a study by University of Missouri-Columbia professor, Stephanie Craft, in which she interviewed by phone a total of 211 radio managers, including those of color who owned 91 radio stations. Craft found that journalists of color in radio management ultimately choose content based on market pressures and not because they are trying to push for more coverage of minorities, including of their own racial or ethnic background. If the vast majority of their listeners are of color and want to hear more about issues that interest their demographic, then that's an added benefit of serving the community and feeling connected to their own heritage, but keeping the radio station profitable is the most important goal (Craft, 2003). Weinhold (2008) explains, within the lens of political economy, that pressures on journalists to shape stories that meet advertisers' and owners' desires are nothing new, and journalists' professional code of autonomy and objectivity was designed to prevent or at least minimize these pressures.

However, regarding hiring, Craft did find in her study that there is a greater likelihood of minority media owners to hire proportionately more minority staff than majority owners. The idea of hiring people of color can increase anxiety for both the dominant newsroom race and those brought in, as the minorities hired feel a burden to always be the one to speak up on race issues pertaining to their own background, which

can breed personal insecurity and resentment among colleagues that they are essentially only there because of their race (Phillips 1991).

Much media research regarding treatment of minorities focuses more on what journalists publish instead of how their newsroom managers arrive at those decisions, which is what establishes a relevancy for using political economy as a theoretical framework for this project. This professional analysis would assess how minority journalists use their voices internally to assert their own power in their greater media organization's structure, whether it be on content, hiring, or both.

While it would be ideal to expand out to more marginalized groups where there is little research, such as with LGBT journalists, due to the expected bandwidth of time for this project, there is better research around race than other minority groups to build upon, although most don't explicitly apply the lens of political economy, with the most notable exception of a book on women's struggles in the media industry (Bell, 2005). Bell's book invoked political economy theory to examine how the media, particularly magazines, treat Hispanic women, stating they turn Latinas "into commodities to be sold to advertisers," which is a common practice in the market-driven media that leads to "the disenfranchisement of not only Latinas, but all marginalized peoples" (p. 177).

Political economy theory provides a prism into how journalists of color in management look at their own power and looking for common threads of resiliency in shaping the greater ways their media outlets operate. An examination through the conduit of journalists of color with staying power, as exemplified by their management status, could help shed light on current newsroom behavior – from handling culturally sensitive content to inclusive hiring. It could unveil how newsroom politics or top-down corporate

mandates contribute to possible structural inequities for journalists of color and advice on how to address cultural tensions within newsrooms regarding content and hiring when it comes to race and ethnicity, which could build empathy and unity in the greater setting of enduring economic challenges for the news industry.

Literature review

How we got here

To add context to how journalists of color may use their voice, first understanding how minority voices were first brought into the newsroom, in both coverage and hiring, can help frame the conversation. An examination of research on newsroom diversity showed studies on the topic proliferated in the 1990s as there had been a decade or two of ongoing programs on diversity, and more people of color, women, and other marginalized populations gained more education and started to assert more social power. Most of the research regarding diversity in journalism revolves around black journalists and black culture, although researchers later expanded their quest for information beyond that group (Adams & Cleary, 2006).

Gerbner (1967) found that journalists felt pressure to cover inner cities less often because their subscriber base was mostly white people who they feared alienating by running too much coverage of black schools and integration issues during desegregation in the 1960s. Media researchers commonly allude to an awakening during the civil rights movement that the media had after the Kerner Commission, formed under the direction of President Lyndon B. Johnson, slammed the press for its slanted coverage of minorities and lack within their newsrooms of hiring minorities along with it (Mellinger, 2008). Ankney and Procopio (2003) said initially the newspaper industry – which arguably was at the time the largest medium among the TV/radio/print traditional media spectrum at

the time – “reacted unfavorably” and “ignored the recommendations” as editors felt it was the federal government “meddling into their hiring practices” (Demo, as cited in Ankney & Procopio, p. 160). But after a 10-year delay, the American Society of Newspaper Editors, or ASNE, called on daily newspapers to achieve parity by the year 2000, which aims to have its news organization staffing demographically mirror the community they are covering (Ankney & Procopio, 2003). When the ASNE set this goal, the authors wrote, only 4 percent of newsrooms were minorities, compared to 17 percent of the population. But even in 2003, the two wrote that the 2025 goal to reach parity is “as far away as ever.” (p. 160)

In a review of research through the past four decades, ASNE emerges as the constant voice of where the industry stands and should be on diversity in newsrooms when it comes to staffing. It conducts an annual survey on newsroom employment. But ASNE has had its own tortured history with the topic up until that iconic 1978 pronouncement to make diversity an industry priority. Gwyneth Mellinger, a white journalism professor who has written extensively about diversity in newsrooms, documented the ASNE’s membership resistance rooted in actions such as allowing “outspoken racists” to speak at its annual conventions following the U.S. Supreme Court decision in 1954 to desegregate schools. ASNE defended the decision because granting “white supremacists an audience was mandated by the First Amendment (even though the convention was not a public forum) and that including such views maintained the organization’s political neutrality and journalistic objectivity (even though proponents of integration were not given time on the program as well.)” (Mellinger, 2008, p. 99). The organization, founded in 1922, did not admit its first non-white member until the 1960s

and didn't see a woman or black person elected president until 1987 and 1993, respectively (Mellinger, 2008).

But in 1978, after a study found that only 1,700 of the industry's 43,000 newsroom employees were minority, several black journalists aligned with progressive white editors from the South to lobby the ASNE to address the issue (Mellinger, 2008). This "compromise" is harkened as the first true moment of progress for the "formal desegregation" of daily newspaper newsrooms and set a precedent for race relations in newsrooms that has since "acted as the conscience of the newspaper industry" (Mellinger, 2008, p. 118)

In 1982, the ASNE's minorities committee revisited the issue and this time allowed editors to be anonymously interviewed on why some were slow to hire minorities. The percentage of minorities in newsrooms had only increased from 4 to 5.5 percent in five years (Mellinger, 2008). The committee's report, based on 382 responses from editors, found blatant "prejudice" as a huge obstacle, something also described bluntly as "racism" in other research (Becker, et al., 1999 as cited in Akney & Procopio, p. 161). Editors said they didn't feel they should be forced to embark on "social engineering," sarcastically joked that would it mean "busing" journalists, and that there were no benefits because "we circulate among an almost entirely white, Protestant population whose intolerance of minorities is legendary" and "white residents would in general resent black staffers" (Mellinger, 2008, p. 111). Mellinger wrote that survey respondents added hiring more non-white journalists would diminish the paper's quality as they felt journalists of color had "inferior writing skills" (p. 111). When it was time for the ASNE minorities committee to present the report, "a lot of editors got up and walked

out of the room,” its chair Albert Fitzpatrick, a managing editor of the Akron Beacon Journal, told Mellinger (2008, p. 111).

The graphic nature of the internal attitudes exposed in the news industry provoked its managers to implement more diversity programs – a national phenomenon at the time as well – and minority staffing increased over time to nearly 12 percent in 1998 (Mellinger, 2008). However by then, minority populations soared to a collective 28 percent. ASNE decided that year to move its parity goal from 2000 to 2025, and even then “several ASNE presidents conceded in interviews [2025] is not a realistic target but an aspiration” (Mellinger, 2008, p. 116).

Defining diversity

A recurring challenge in research on diversity in newsrooms that arises is the lack of a uniform industry definition of what is diversity (Turner, 2014). Parity is often defined to mean the staff makeup somewhat mirrors the racial makeup of the community’s population the journalists cover (Mellinger, 2008). This understandably could create some reasonable challenges for industry leaders to find the best way to assure the newsroom strives for fair and equal representation of different types of people in the office. Turner (2014) found that overall minority journalists believed that diversity is “a low-priority” after the 2008 recession. The 17 journalists that Turner interviewed saw diversity beyond how it is traditionally defined along lines of race and gender, which older news industry research has also adhered to:

“The term today, however, is more inclusive and encompasses ethnicity, sexual orientation, marital status, disability, religious and political preferences, age, education, socioeconomic status, and more. Each of the minority journalists

included most of these categories when asked how they defined diversity.”

(Turner, 2014, p. 25)

However, journalists tend to define diversity as chiefly concerned with race and ethnicity, only rivaled by class and age, which Turner found dovetails with most research so far.

Another challenge in defining diversity is how minority groups can spar over how its ideological parameters should be shaped when it comes to marginalized identities.

Turner (2014), for example, cited a conflict between black and queer journalists. When the National Gay and Lesbian Journalists Association was admitted into the UNITY

Journalists of Color coalition in 2012, the National Association of Black Journalists left UNITY in part, some said, because the coalition no longer reflected its core mission in

helping support “journalists of color” since the group voted to drop the name to let the LGBT group in (Reed, 2012). UNITY was founded in 1994 as a joint group for U.S.

Latino, black, American Indian and Asian journalism associations which held a conference every four years during presidential elections to try to draw the frontrunners from both major political parties to speak to them. Reed said some black journalists who were pro-LGBT “smeared” NABJ because they said the decision was rooted in homophobia and the reason given publicly around financial reasons was a cover (p. 55).

At the convention, gay black journalists felt torn over the matter as they understood that some people thought the white-dominant LGBT group did have other societal advantages being white and didn’t feel represented in NLGJA, but they also understood the plight of being marginalized within the black community for identifying as a member of the LGBT community (Turner, 2014). Ultimately, UNITY weakened after NABJ left as its largest member. Reed, a straight, black civil rights scholar, defended NABJ’s departure by

saying although he doesn't mean to "belittle" or "marginalize" pushing back on other forms of discrimination, that changing UNITY undermines his belief and that of others that "racial and ethnic bias has proven to be the most persistent, most divisive, most intractable of social inequities" (p.55).

One interesting advantage that could make it somewhat easier to sharpen a definition of diversity arises when studying the issue in the United States compared to Europe. While the Swedes are often praised for their progressive and more socialistic policy and outlook, a study offered a relatively pessimistic view of how the news industry has treated those who are non-white and immigrant in their nation's newsrooms (Hultén, 2009). Journalists who immigrated to Sweden to work but did not know Swedish perfectly and were from a non-white background experienced embarrassment, harassment from the community and were made to feel incapable of doing the job because of their accent (Hultén, 2009). Another European study examining if a government promise to implement diversity initiatives worked inside the newsroom found that while the native Flemish staffers support diversity in theory, they remain skeptical it is fair and worth the effort (Bulck & Broos, 2011). Bulck and Broos (2011) also found that this climate also leads to some staffers who were immigrants feeling demoralized as they think they have only been hired because they are of ethnic backgrounds. Ultimately, both European studies on diversity in newsrooms blamed management for a lack of minorities among their ranks and in general when it comes to hiring (Bulck & Broos, 2011; Hultén, 2009).

Results so far

As stated before, news industry champions of diversity contend that a more diverse staff will lead to better coverage, so a brief examination of studies how

newsrooms cover affirmative action and missing children of different races may offer some cursory insight. Some white reporters privately express to researchers that they feel diversity efforts in newsrooms are essentially affirmative action (Phillips, 1991), and two studies have been done on how newsrooms covered it: one in its news pages, and another in how its editorial board took a stance on the topic.

Ankney and Procopio (2003) studied how newsrooms with higher numbers of minorities covered affirmative action and found that profit-oriented companies with fewer minority staffers covered affirmative action more often, while newsrooms that fared better with minority staffing levels covered the issue less often. It is unclear what role minorities had in coverage of the policy and if they shied away from it as to not be pigeonholed (Ankney & Procopio, 2003). Also regarding affirmative action coverage, Richardson and Lancendorfer (2004) found that while the field of editorial writing was overwhelmingly populated by white, middle-aged, well-educated, married males, that doesn't determine what stance the paper would take on affirmative action, as it varied among liberal or conservative, or Democrat or Republican, lines. Overall, there wasn't a strong determination that having a more diverse staff sharply results in its editorial staff writing more pro-affirmative action, but there does appear to be a correlation in its favor where both the community and staff is higher in diversity, perhaps, because those editorial board members interact more with the minority inside or outside the office (Richardson & Lancendorfer, 2004).

Researchers said a lack of minority staff and profit-driven market pressures to cater news coverage to the interests of the dominant market of richer white people skews how media covers stories, even on topics such as missing children, where ethically equity

would be easily arguable given universally accepted journalistic ideals (Min & Feaster, 2010). For example, missing black and female children were significantly underrepresented when the proportions of race and gender from the news coverage of five national television stations between 2005 and 2007 were compared to missing children statistics. (Min & Feaster, 2010).

While marginalized communities often express feeling left out in mainstream media coverage, and when included, are portrayed usually in stereotypes, findings so far show that having a more diverse staff doesn't seem to change those audiences minds on if they are being covered more fairly or more often (Adams & Cleary, 2006; Gross, et al., 2002). However, the community may not be aware of how diverse their staffs have become if the news outlet hasn't publicized it, and the attitudes of the dissatisfied marginalized consumers aren't changing because the minorities that get hired end up assimilating to the news practices and outlooks that their straight, white, male colleagues who are the majority ascribe to in order to fit in (Gross et. al, 2002). Audiences agree a more diverse staff ultimately is the right course for a news outlet to take, but feel it is only motivated by the management seeking profit to create niche publications or stories to sell to them, and not purely as public service to better represent the community, a survey of hundreds of Los Angeles Times readers found (Gross et. al, 2002).

Although minority staffing has increased since the Kerner Commission, the recession seems to have had a chilling effect on the push for diversity in recent years as managers prioritize staying afloat and hiring within their means as budgets are slashed (Turner, 2014).

The news industry lost nearly 40 percent of its workforce between 2006, when the recession began, and 2015 down to 32,900 news professionals from a pre-recession peak of 55,000 (Edmonds, 2015).

Older journalists are having a harder time adjusting and embracing new media formats, using social media, video, and operating on a 24/7 convergence model that better equalizes TV, radio, print, and online-only media that has never occurred in the industry (Usher, 2010). In this climate, it is hard to argue it has been hard for champions of diversity to be heard, although in light of events after Ferguson, Turner (2014) surmised in his research that could change as audiences start to demand media coverage more tailored to their interests and world views. Regardless, Usher (2010) that journalists who have shaped industry practices are leaving or being forced out in droves and blaming management for their profit-seeking ways, although she argues that good journalism was always a by-product of the media production process. Sales, coupons, and special interest sections allowed for the funding of larger news staffs and public service journalism, so some journalists are struggling with greater ideological concerns that journalism is in crisis unearthed by this loss of revenue that masked this reality. (Usher 2010).

Further research shows that journalists more often now think about ways to generate revenue in order to do their job well (Petersen, 2015). While some news outlets have paywalls and stress people pay for their content after years of giving it away online for free, some papers are throwing free copies of their editions tailored to affluent neighborhoods because advertisers want to reach them (Petersen, 2015). So the poor, who can't afford the paper but could use the information or arguably deserve more coverage,

are left out of the dark. Worse for some, editors are now pitching stories to advertising reps (Petersen, 2015).

The market-driven priorities have logically bled over to how news managers decide to staff beats, opting to cover restaurants and tourism that drive revenue through web traffic and circulation from affluent consumers, over assigning more reporters to intensively dig in on crime, courts or social services beats, which affect the most socially disadvantaged (Petersen, 2015). For those who are left behind, it doesn't seem much better, as news workers express they are often doing more with less but ultimately feel like they are failing to uphold the tenets of good journalism to meet corporate mandates to generate content that will result in more revenue (Siegelbaum & Thomas, 2015).

On the bright side

With a glum industry outlook in regards to general staffing and inability to reach parity along racial lines, there is one area of sustained diversity in recent decades with more conclusive research behind it: an increase in inclusivity of women. While women still aren't as visible in the top management roles, they have made significant headway since the days of Gerber's work (1967) where they nearly didn't register as a force to consider in decision-making on content or hiring, they now have more of an ability to impact news discourse, especially when it comes to how women's issues are covered (Rodgers & Thorson, 2003; Correa & Harp, 2011; Everbach, 2006). Women tend to draw upon a greater variety of other female and ethnic sources compared to their white, male colleagues, and when in management, create a more collegial environment where employees can better express themselves (Rodgers & Thorson, 2003). Usually though, all three studies found that women in larger newsrooms tend to still shape content in ways as

their male counterparts do, which could be due to trying to assimilate to the “good ‘ol boys” club rules in top big paper management, or, also because most journalists are all trained within a similar mindset in how to cover the news (Everbach, 2006). As with the minority within a minority challenges that can arise, a study of black women journalists found that they often had to inform their colleagues of more culturally enlightened ways to approach covering race and black people than they felt the need to interject on how to cover gender, which perhaps shows some progress may have been made on that front (Meyers & Gayle, 2015).

Another potential bright spot for minority journalists making some inroads does appear in management. Turner’s analysis of ASNE’s 2013 report found that 23 percent of the minorities in newsrooms, of a pool of 11 percent overall minorities, are in supervisory positions. Still, having a vote in how decisions are made regarding hiring and content – the two power plays media outlets possess – can have an invigorating effect on subordinate journalists of color (Rivas-Rodriguez, et al., 2004). That is, of course, as long as the minority journalists share a similar sense of professional values as their manager who is from a traditionally marginalized group (Craft, 2003). Craft (2003) found that champions of newsroom parity hope is that those managers will do a better job of balancing the news staff, but often, could result in the same practice that straight white male managers are accused of hiring their own kind. And often, managers admit they tend to put out content of interest to the marginalized communities the staff may come from because they know they can justify it as meeting market demand and not as much motivated in trying to improve the community. So ultimately, even market-driven tactics

drive minority-owned media, and is the same behavior in principle as their counterparts in the white dominant mainstream (Craft, 2003).

Changing media production and consumption

While mainstream media continues to be dominated by mostly straight white males, the proliferation of Internet access and social media in recent years now has created an environment where anyone can be a publisher or journalist, as the courts or Congress haven't strictly defined who is a journalist. Some scholars now argue that this has stripped the media oligarchy of its monopoly on information production, usually for profit or propaganda, and has lost the "power to marginalize" (Freedman, 2014). Freedman (2014) cites the Occupy Wall Street movement and Arab Spring in 2011 as examples of how social media allows people to come together without needing the mainstream media to help inform or corral them, bypassing them altogether, Freedman concluded. This, in theory, would allow for groups that don't feel as fairly represented in the mainstream media, from Black Lives Matter to the "alt-right", to use their own platforms online to circumvent needing traditional media to rally people to their cause. Even the powerful could take this approach too, as President-Elect Donald Trump has been ditching his press pool and using Twitter and YouTube to post messages without any contextual filter the media usually uses to vet and frame a public figure's statements, and thus, the mainstream media could face even more distress in how to remain relevant to consumers. However, McManus (2009) cites research that some journalism scholars are doubtful that Internet will erode the oligarchical control of media production, citing how radio eventually became a commercialized product in the capitalist model dominated by a few companies. McChesney (1999) suggested a social movement to reform the

media should include that the public be taught news literacy, companies should be taxed for using public airwaves for their productions in order to fund publicly-controlled media, and the labor movement create their own outlets to avoid an imbalance favoring corporate, profit-driven media.

These shifts would possibly create a new avenue for expression by marginalized communities to have their own journalists rise to prominence (Fuchs, 2014). Fuchs evokes the “public sphere” now becoming social media, where anyone can publish their views and have others consume it, giving a public space to people whose voice for whatever reason may have been squeezed out by the powers that shape mainstream media. Fuchs, a non-U.S. media scholar, coins the idea of social media and the Internet creating a new political economy population: civil society media, which is comprised of those who reject state-controlled or corporate, capitalist media (Fuchs, 2014). One could make parallels to this new approach to media already in practice with alternative media and ethnic media, created by marginalized communities long ago, but often relegated to subculture popularity and dismissed by the mainstream media as less than legitimate. Fuchs’ (2014) analysis only takes into account online outlets though. Fuchs and McChesney call for public fees to be assessed to help create independent news outlets. But other scholars push back on that, not because they support capitalism and frame any new government-collected fee as socialism, but because even in those Marxist and socialist constructs, people of color, women, LGBT people, and immigrants often are excluded from the initial power structure as splinters of the dominant class tend to first get the social power to be able to split off (Bolano, 2015).

But journalists of color could view splitting off from the mainstream as problematic for several reasons, chiefly that they will be dismissed by their industry peers as becoming an advocate if they want to champion more equitable coverage of the communities they come from that are historically overlooked (Bodinger-de Uriarte & Valgeirsson, 2015). Others come from poverty and so need insurance, and fear becoming a freelancer (Gollmitzer, 2014). Gollmitzer (2014) found that while freelancers or independent journalists working for their own non-profit outlets enjoy finally having editorial control free of corporate demands or that ascribe to their management's worldviews, they are still stressed trying to stay afloat, often suffer health problems and end up feeling pressured to get a more stable job. News outlets may shift to using more freelancers, but chiefly to save on costs and not diversify their staff or content (Gollmitzer, 2014). It would be reasonable to surmise perhaps these worker conditions taken collectively illustrate what pressures minority journalists face in wanting to stay in the tumultuous industry, such as women who want to start a family, and those of color who often come from less affluent cultural backgrounds and crave financial stability (Bell, 2009).

Some research stretching back as far as 1990 shows that the industry has pinned its hopes for reaching parity organically on the students that journalism schools are churning out throughout the country (Wearden, Hipsman & Greenman, 1990). Wearden et al. (1990) found that college newsrooms did a better job of reaching for parity than the commercial industry. However it seems that some of the habits that impeded sustainable improvement on diversity starts as far back at the newsrooms in academic campuses, as 60 percent of those newsrooms didn't have one person from a minority group in any of

the paper's top five managing roles (Wearden et al., 1990). Although the study found there had been a steady amount of trained journalism students from minority students ready for hire, editors still claimed they just can't find them to hire. Interestingly enough, as of 2010, the proportion of journalism and mass communication graduates was aligned with the current minority share – 37 percent (Bodinger-de Uriarte & Valgeirsson, 2015). But those graduates can often end up in the “internship ghetto,” where minority journalists are brought on after graduation to be further trained and end up behind their straight, white male peers in pay and newsroom promotion as the programs can take up to two years and often leave a mark on the participants as a “quota hire” (Phillips, 1991, p. 34)

Phillips (1991) advocated for a provocative solution to the diversity crisis: implement a strict, thorough, uniform evaluation process where all candidates, regardless of race, gender, or any other class attribute, find out where they are doing well and need improvement. That would ease tensions among white employees who think their colleagues from minority groups are less deserving, and also give evidence to those from minority groups of how they have what it takes to deserve to be there in the newsroom (Phillips, 1991). This ideology comes years before the Jayson Blair scandal, where a black *New York Times* reporter hired through a diversity initiative later was found to have plagiarized or fabricated information for dozens of stories, left many minority journalists feeling embarrassed - although he got caught plagiarizing another minority journalist, a Latina from San Antonio, whose work of hers at a daily newspaper in Texas he lifted from and whom he was in a New York Times minority journalists training program years before coincidentally (Henry, 2003; Gibbs, 2003).

However, media companies will never do this because it would allow good employees to argue for better wages, and open the company up to potentially costly and publicly embarrassing discrimination lawsuits (Phillips 1991), invoking cynicism along the lines of a political economy outlook on the capitalist, oligarchical media power machine that McChesney (1999) mentioned.

While Phillips argues that news managers have an inevitable market interest to achieve diversity, Brislin and Williams (1996) return to the mantra heard commonly in the landmark 1978 ASNE discussion that the media has a moral obligation to become more diverse in its staffing and in its news content. The authors suggest that news outlets formally incorporate into their code of ethics a commitment making diversity a priority and that diversity be taught an important tenet in journalism schools because they have a wave of the most diverse class of journalists heading out into a world that doesn't seem prepared to "recognize, address, and validate" them (p.18). Ultimately, taking these steps "will enable journalism to foster the kind of civic dialogue a truly inclusive democracy requires." (Brislin & Williams, 1996, p. 25). With a nation grappling with identity politics, which seems a long time coming upon examination of the tensions unearthed in research in how media covers issues like race and diversity, news media outlets would be smart to tackle head on how to be inclusive for an audience who is skeptical if the media really does care about them. It's an effort that can be argued on market-driven terms as much as it is to serve all members of the public it aims to reach in hopes of keeping an informed, democratic citizenry.

Methodology

Although my master's project will be formed through "journalistic investigation" of the topic on the power journalists of color yield within newsroom management chains, my technique in interviewing will be modeled somewhat off of traditional qualitative research methodology, which allows for interviews to be a conversation with a purpose (Brunner, 2008). In general, researchers use three basic types of interviews: structured, semi-structured and unstructured open-ended conversations (Brennen, 2013). Semi-structured interviews are usually based on a pre-established set of questions but have greater flexibility as the order can be changed and follow-up questions are permitted to clarify their answer further (Brennen, 2013). In comparison, structured interviews are best when an interviewer wants to contrast data across a large sample, must stick to a script of questions with little to no follow-up, and with hopes that answers can be coded for better analysis (Tracy, 2013). Unstructured interviews are on the opposite end and may be as loose as just a list of bullet points pertaining to the research topic that the interviewer can harness to organically come up with questions (Brennen, 2013). Semi-structured interviews offer some flexibility in better understanding what an interview subject is saying or feeling, and is not as rigid as structured interviews nor as unwieldy as unstructured (Tracy, 2013). The trade-off is that the information may not be highly detailed but the benefit is that there is some context to work with (Brennen, 2013).

Petersen found the methodology of conducting research through intensive interviews to be helpful in understanding how journalists interpret the business model they must operate within, with a goal of understanding what is going on in newswriters' heads when they make decisions in the workplace (2008). Conducting semi-structured interviews can help others discover participants' worlds that many would not know

otherwise (Brunner, 2008). There must be a set of questions though to guide the overall process, but Brunner stresses that it remains imperative that interviewees have room to air out their thoughts.

I plan to conduct a study by interviewing journalists of color in newsroom management throughout different parts of the United States. The interviews will be semi-structured as I will ask a series of open-ended questions regarding how they use their voice in shaping newsroom decision-making, and how they've managed to stay within the field. I'm interested in examining the spirit of "resiliency" in journalists of color who may have seen minority staffing levels decline or stagnate with the recession, despite the rapid growth of minorities in many metros their news organizations serve. The benefit of this approach is the potential richness and insight that the newsroom leaders may offer that could inform greater practice. As Brennen and Tracy noted, although with a limited sample size, no major trends could be ascertained as if this research effort was a national quantitative survey of more newsroom managers who are of color. With consternation at newsroom companies wanting to mask their levels of minority staffing out of embarrassment (Simpson, 2016), the voices of managers of color who are in positions of more power in journalism outlets may have more security in explaining why diversity initiatives have failed to reach parity and how they balance using their political capital in covering race and ethnicity and hiring or promoting those of color in their news organizations.

Several relevant media studies have used semi-structured interviews in their research methodology to examine political economy, race, and diversity issues in newsrooms and other service-related industries, such as public relations and health care,

with similar ethical commitments to parity (Brunner, 2008; Irizarry & Gallant, 2006). One notable media study using semi-structured interview techniques included conversations with 18 minority journalists at journalism conventions to gauge how they define themselves as a professional who also happens to be from a historically marginalized background (Nishikawa, et al 2009). Everbach (2006) interviewed 26 journalists about how women running the newsroom affected coverage and newsroom culture, and Meyers and Gayle (2015) examined the intersectionality of race and gender by interviewing 10 black women in a major U.S. city with predominately black population about how they operate within common newsroom culture. All three studies offered rich portraits of what newswriters of color internally weigh on shaping their professional practices.

The newsroom managers who are of color I hope to interview include:

- Andy Alford, Austin American-Statesman
- Steve Padilla, Los Angeles Times
- Emilio Garcia-Ruiz, The Washington Post
- Maria Reece, Minneapolis Star-Tribune
- Gilbert Bailon, St. Louis Post-Dispatch
- David Plazas, The Tennessean
- Mi-Ai Parrish, President & Publisher, The Arizona Republic/azcentral.com
- Manny Garcia, USA TODAY Network (Naples, Fl.)
- Andrea Chang, Los Angeles Times
- Nathan Olivarez-Giles, Wall Street Journal
- Dean Baquet, The New York Times

- Neil Foote, who led an organization of newsroom managers of color called NAMME (National Association of Minority Media Executives, later National Association of Multicultural Media Executives)
- Tom Huang, Dallas Morning News
- Mizell Stewart, currently president of the American Society of News Editors
- Nicolas Garcia, Chalkbeat Colorado
- Fernando Diaz, Center for Investigative Reporting
- Diana Fuentes, San Antonio Express-News

In hopes of answering my overarching research questions, I would like to ask them:

1. Do you think your racial or ethnic background played a role in your career in a positive or negative way in climbing the ranks? How so?
2. Can you share some examples where you may have feel pressured to speak up on minority issues coming from a minority background?
3. Did something not get published because of you saying it would deemed offensive or witnessed colleagues of minority backgrounds also make that argument?
4. Have you felt any pressure to downplay your racial or ethnic identity to be able to be promoted?
5. Do you think the recession pushed diversity efforts to the backburner?
6. What are your views on if diversity programs have been successful?
7. Why do you think we have not reached parity in newsrooms?

8. Has diversity as a priority in newsroom hiring gone on the backburner because of the recession?
9. Has diversity become a bigger priority again after the last few years of so-called “identity politics” featured in media discourse?
10. What should journalists who are not of color know would best help cultivate a more diverse newsroom staff?

Potential publications for this research:

1. Quill Magazine
2. Columbia Journalism Review
3. IRE Journal
4. Poynter Institute
5. Washington Post

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