

AFRICAN-AMERICAN FEMALE ASPIRING JOURNALISTS AND THE LACK OF
AFRICAN-AMERICAN FEMALE TELEVISION NEWS DIRECTORS
AND PRODUCERS

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by
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The undersigned, appointed by the dean of the Graduate School, have examined the thesis entitled

AFRICAN-AMERICAN FEMALE ASPIRING JOURNALISTS AND THE LACK OF
AFRICAN-AMERICAN FEMALE TELEVISION NEWS DIRECTORS,
PRODUCERS AND GENERAL MANAGERS

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DEDICATION

It is with my warmest and most sincere regard that I dedicate this study to my mother, Betty Mobley, sister, Sabrina Mobley, aunts, Doris Brown, Peggy Houston, Bertha Edwards, niece, Britain Le' Anne, and grand-parents Katie Archie, Nehemiah Mobley and Walter Mobley. No sacrifice you made to make this accomplishment attainable went unnoticed. You ALL are greatly loved and appreciated. This work is a product of your love, support and prayer. I thank God for you all.

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ABSTRACT

African-American women have unique experiences in the workforce due to the intersectionality of their gender and race. Being a double minority has created challenges for them in various career paths, including U.S. television newsrooms. One of the challenges include diversifying executive positions and decision-making positions in the workforce. This is a familiar challenge in television newsrooms across the U.S. While television newsrooms have seen a sluggish increase in diversification, African American women are far from proportionately filling positions of producer, director and general manager. This study looks at African-American female aspiring journalists at four different universities to see if there are any factors that influence the lack of African American females in decision making roles in U.S. newsrooms. With the use of semi-structured interviews, this study analyzes the motivations, career goals and perception of challenges they expect to face in efforts to reach their set goals.

Chapter I: Introduction

“Right now, when we're hearing so much disturbing and hateful rhetoric, it is so important to remember that our diversity has been, and will always be, our greatest source of strength and pride here in the United States.”—Michelle Obama

Diversity, the very thing that makes the United States “great,” is ironically the thing that the United States has had the hardest time accepting and reflecting since - forever. Since its beginning in 1776, the United States of America has struggled with the idea of inclusivity as it relates to the diversity of gender, ethnicity, color, religion, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, and so on. This challenge to embrace all people, especially minorities, has reflected itself in the workplaces of so many different professions. Among the top professions struggling are U.S. newsrooms, specifically, the profession of broadcast journalism.

Television newsrooms across America have seen stagnant and sluggish progress in their attempt to diversify their staff, especially when it comes to the top-level leadership positions. According to data collected by The Radio Television Digital News Association (RTDNA), the number of African Americans in the television news force has decreased from 11.1% in 2016 to 10.9% in 2017 (Papper, 2017). And while men continue to ease their way into positions of authority, the number of women holding top-level leadership positions in media is declining (Collins, 2017). Additionally, there is a declining number of African American women in leadership positions. Men make up at least 83% of producers and directors in television news (Papper, 2017). Yet, the number of African American female directors and producers have both dropped since 2016. TV

newsroom directors and producers are positions that are still heavily dominated by Caucasian males - showing little progress of diversification.

The lack of black and brown faces in U.S. newsrooms is more than an issue of number differences. Journalists in many ways serve as gatekeepers of information (Shoemaker, Vos, & Reese, 2009). Through reporting, journalists tell the public what to think about and also apply a certain level of importance to that information (Shoemaker et al., 2009). Lack of diversity is then reflected in news coverage and eliminates perspectives of many minority groups. It also limits the efficiency of a profession that ambitiously prides itself on serving and informing an increasingly diverse public.

The inclusion of minorities in newsrooms has been a popular topic in research for many years. Researchers have focused on the hiring processes of media institutions to exhibit reasons to why there is a lack of minority representation in newsrooms (Ankey & Procopia, 2003; Mutchler, 2009). There have also been studies that focus on the impact lack of diversity in newsrooms has on the content produced by media outlets (Drew, 2011; Klein & Naccarato, 2003; Mellinger, 2003; Zeldes & Faco, 2010). Studies like these reflect the inability of news to capture and relay voices, issues and feelings of minorities in news coverage (Drew, 2011; Klein & Naccarato, 2003; Mellinger, 2003; Zeldes & Faco, 2010). Previous studies have also examined the experiences of African American journalists, to determine whether newsroom diversity makes a difference in the way they experience the work environment in comparison to white male journalists (Gayle & Meyers 2015; Rivas-Rodriguez, Subervi-Vélez, Bramlett-Solomon, & Heider, 2004). Much of the research that focuses on minorities in newsrooms focuses specifically on the either the quality of the work produced or the difference in work environment.

While all of these topics are important, a majority of research focuses on personal experiences of minorities in the newsroom or the effects that come from the lack of minority groups in newsrooms.

In order to better understand why there is an absence of African-American females in decision making positions in TV newsrooms, there needs to be research that seeks to explain the difference between the amount of journalism degrees received by African-American females, and the amount of African American females that pursue careers as directors and general managers.

Much research has been done to exemplify the issue of underrepresentation of minorities in newsrooms; however, there has not been much that focuses on the “why” behind the issue. Plenty of research has been done to show that there is not enough representation of African Americans and other minorities in news media (Coffey, 2013; Gist, 1991; Hardin & Shain, 2006; Meyers & Gayle, 2015; Nishikawa, Towner, Clawson & Waltenburg, 2009). There has also been a good amount of research that seeks to express the lack of minorities in management and top-level leadership positions in different professional fields, including journalism (Collins, 2017; Hoobler, Lemmon, & Wayne, 2011; Litzky & Greenhaus, 2007; Powell & Butterfield, 2013; Rivas-Rodriguez, Subveri-Velez, Bramlett-Solomon, & Heider, 2004; Seo, Huang, & Han, 2017). However, there has been little research done that focuses on the reasons why there is a lack of female African American journalists in positions of power within U.S. television newsrooms. More specifically, there is little research that studies factors that cause the lack of African-American females, who major in journalism, to go into television news producing and directing.

The proposed research looked specifically at aspiring African-American female journalists to understand their motivations, goals and perceptions of challenges in the field of broadcast journalism. Knowing this information and bridging it with available research provides a better understanding of factors that play a role in the decline and overall underrepresentation of African American female TV producers and news directors and general managers. These factors could aid in bridging the racial gap in leadership positions in newsrooms. Being able to do so will bring the profession of television news journalism a step closer to efficiently portraying a more diverse perspective of the world we live in, while providing a voice to an otherwise quieted group of people.

Chapter II: Literature Review

Introduction

A wealth of research has focused on female journalists and their career experiences. Similarly, a body of research has focused on the African American population and their experience in newsrooms. While both of these topics are very important, because of their intersection, they are vital to gaining a better understanding of African American female journalists and their unique experience. Because African American female journalists experience challenges due to both their race and their gender, their experiences cannot be summed up in two separate groups.

Using intersectionality as an analytical framework allows me to look at the interconnected nature of the two social categories: race and gender. According to Lisa Harrison (2017), “Fundamental to intersectionality theory is the belief that social identities, such as race and gender, intersect in a distinctive way such that each identity can only be defined through the intersection with other identities” (p. 1024).

Understanding and applying this theoretical framework is important because both aspects of humanity, race and gender, bring about challenges for African-American women in U.S. newsrooms. Using intersectionality as a lens for my research does not simply serve as a way to explain how intersecting marginalized identities operate, but also has a political undertone that highlights how the intersection of identities can leave particular groups oppressed (Harrison, 2017). Applying intersectionality theory to this research allows the researcher to further explore the ways the intersection of race and gender influence their career aspirations and overall perception of U.S. television

newsrooms. The purpose of this study is to explore the motivations, goals and perceptions of challenges of aspiring female African-American journalists to see if they have any impact on the lack of African-American female television news directors and general managers.

Historically, women and minorities have faced the most resistance and challenges in the attempt to enter into the male dominated field of journalism. The challenges and unfair treatment of women in newsrooms range from inequity in pay to sexual harassment by their male counterparts (Engstrom & Ferri, 1998). The mistreatment of women aligned with the clear resistance in the career path to keep women and minorities out altogether. In television news, the progress being made in female employment was noticeable but, was also indicative of the underrepresentation of minority groups (Meyers & Gayle, 2015). As the number of women increased, more attention was drawn to the need to diversifying the staff in television news (Coffey, 2013). In doing so, some hoped that newsrooms would soon be racially proportionate to and further exemplify the diversity of the U.S. population (Bramlett-Solomon, 1993). However, the challenge to diversify by including more people of color, is very much a prominent “today” issue. Not only is the field of journalism struggling to portray our colorful nation through the employment of women of color, but the challenge to diversify extends to positions of leadership and power in newsrooms, specifically television newsrooms (Collins, 2017). The historic issue of diversity in America is reflective in the underrepresentation of minorities in specific careers and in management and leadership positions in those fields (Hoobler et al., 2011). This remains true for newsroom where the number of African

American females in top positions, while never proportionate to their population, is decreasing (Papper, 2017).

Earlier Challenges and progress for Women in U.S. Newsrooms

U.S. newsrooms have always operated with a hierarchical structure that perpetuates male hegemony (Hardin & Shain, 2006), leaving women at the bottom of the totem pole and often times, mistreated. Men dominate the field of journalism and for a while, women were very small in number (Engstrom & Ferri, 1998). In the early 1970's women made up only 13 percent of the television news workforce (Engstrom & Ferri, 1998). Being that the field of TV journalism was so heavily dominated by white men, it was easy for women to be disregarded and disrespected.

The lack of female representation in newsrooms and the treatment female journalists are concerns that have and continue to attract varying levels of research. In the article, "‘Feeling Smaller than You Know You Are’: The Fragmented Professional Identity of Female Sports Journalists," authors Maria Hardin and Stacie Shain focus on the experiences of female sports journalists and the challenges they encounter. According to Hardin and Shain (2006), the purpose of the study is to explore "how women who are U.S. sports journalists negotiate the tensions inherent in their profession" (p. 322). The research seeks to address the issues female journalists face, in what Hardin and Shain (2006) consider to be "a male dominated profession that is resistant to notions of gender equity" (p. 323). Hardin and Shain conducted focus groups with several female journalists to get responses to their research questions. The research reflects the articulated uphill battle women face in the attempt to balance their identities as females

and professional journalists and express the ways in which being a female and a journalist are compatible.

Shane and Hardin found that women face a great deal of challenges in newsrooms in their attempt to be accepted and treated fairly. Many of the research participants said that they feel a need to uphold the social definition of femininity (compassion, kindness), while meeting the expectation of professionalism in U.S. newsrooms (independence, competitiveness, confrontation) (Hardin & Shain, 2006). This expectation from their male counterparts creates tension for female journalists. Hardin and Shain (2006) also find that women are in a consistent bind because “U.S. newsrooms operate with a rigidly hierarchical structure that perpetuates male hegemony through norms such as independence, detachment and ‘objectivity’” (p. 324). Women found that “feminine values” clashed with the expected qualities of journalists such as directness, distrust and toughness (Hardin & Shain, 2006). Utilizing a more masculine approach can also have its problems for women. Women may then be seen as too pushy, choosy, mouthy or having slept their way to the top by both sexes (Hardin & Shain, 2006). Previous research shows that women sports journalists in particular attempt to fit in the male dominated environment. In doing so, they are sometimes seen as too “mannish” and their sexuality is questioned, or they may experience scrutiny from their male counterparts for being a “quota hire” (Hardin & Shain, 2006). Research that focuses specifically on job satisfaction for female sports journalists finds that women are also dissatisfied with harassment, discrimination and the lack of opportunity for advancement in the newsroom (Hardin & Shain, 2006). Women also find that sports and feminism are seen as

incompatible, so instead of challenging the male hegemony and the sports coverage hierarchy, they embrace it as a survival strategy (Hardin & Shain, 2006).

Other research finds that because of their desire to be treated the same as their male counterparts, female journalists also have professional motives for distancing themselves from the idea that women practice the craft differently from men; in a profession where “objectivity” is valued, they may not want to be seen as advocating for women (Chambers et al., 2004). Women typically deny that gender has a major impact on their journalistic practice, except for their inclination to report on issues that impact women (Chambers et al., 2004).

Other research focuses on the progress women have made. They argue that women have come a long way from the early, ground-breaking studies of the 1970s which showed the ways in which women were being ‘symbolically annihilated’ by a news corps who appeared to be living in a parallel universe where women were neither seen nor heard (Ross & Carter, 2011). Van Zoonen, for instance, speculated that the U.S. journalism industry is becoming more “feminized” with the rise of market-driven journalism, and as such, may be more open to upwardly mobile women and feminine values (Van Zoonen, 1998). More recently, female journalists are said to have and utilize a more diverse pool of sources in their news stories than do male reporters (Rodgers & Thorson, 2003; Van Zoonen, 1994). Studies also indicate that women tend to “humanize” the news more overtly, making it more relatable across audiences, than do men (Chambers, Steiner, & Fleming, 2004). While Hardin and Shain found that opposing expectations create obstacles for female journalists, their research also finds that women see some compatibility in their role as females and as journalists. For instance, females

are said to use a more diverse pool of sources in their stories and they tend to humanize the news more so than men (Hardin & Shain, 2006). While these points may be true, women have a long way to go in order to rid of the daily challenges and barriers they face in U.S. newsrooms, one of the main ones being lack of representation.

Women in Today's Newsrooms

Though there has been progress, things are far from perfect. Ross and Carter (2011) suggest that “Despite the very real changes in women’s lives and their role in the world over the past few decades, their inclusion in the media agenda as news subjects, newsmakers and news producers is still significantly below that of men” (p. 1148). Research conducted by the Women’s Media Center in 2017 shows that across several platforms of news media, the voices of male journalists are invited on a larger scale than that of female journalists. This is clear in the newsroom for Daily News, USA Today, The Denver Post, Wall Street Journals, New York Post and The New York Times. Of them all, USA Today is the least diverse in gender, with a staff that consists of 70% men and 30% women. Not only are men dominating in number but also in their air time. These numbers are even worse for television news. In top market television newsroom like ABC, CBS and NBC, men report three times as much of the news than women do (Women’s Media Center, 2017). For ABC in particular, male anchors, correspondents and reporters cover 88% of the news while women cover 12% (Women’s Media Center, 2017).

Alongside the struggle of being included in television newsrooms, women are also marginalized when it comes to the stories they are given to cover (Ferri & Keller, 1986). A lot of times, men are given the “hard” news to cover and women are an

afterthought when assigning stories (Ferri & Keller, 1986). When stories are distributed, men dominate in coverage of a vast majority of the topics (Women's Media Center, 2017). Of the topics, men produce the most coverage of sports, weather, crime and justice, religion and U.S. politics (Women's Media Center, 2017). Women only produce 11% of sports stories, 28% of weather stories, 32% of crime and justice stories, 33% of stories on religion and 34% of the stories on U.S. politics (Women's Media Center, 2017). Women produce more coverage than men on stories about health, education and lifestyle news and commentary (Women's Media Center, 2017). Even in those areas of news, women cover only 2%-7% more often than men (Women's Media Center, 2017).

For a long time, women have had a hard time finding their place, comfortably, in American TV newsrooms without being met with some sort of obstacle. It is clear that women still struggle with breaking into the field of journalism and gaining the same respect as their male counterparts. This is reflected in the treatment they receive that is reported in research and in the lack of their ability to gain higher positions in newsrooms. However, women are not the only minority in newsrooms that have struggled for years to be given the respect and credibility due to them. Minorities and people of color have too had a hard time accomplishing some of the same goals in the male dominated newsrooms in these great United States. Not only are they low in number but, they too, struggle to climb the ladder of leadership to positions of power in U.S. newsrooms.

Beginning of Racial Diversity in Newsrooms

For the past 50 to 60 years, one issue that has been at the center of attention, alongside the issue of gender diversity and the lack of women in newsrooms, is the lack of racial diversity in the broadcasting workforce (Brooks, Daniels, & Hollifield, 2003).

Not only were newsrooms struggling to advance gender equity in the world of journalism, but by the 1960s, racial representation inside the newsroom to reflect the diversity of the world outside the newsroom was the focus and the new challenge (Brooks et al., 2003). This new challenge reflected the events prevalent in the United States at the time. The 1960s are known for the racial tension, segregation, inequality and the rise in advocacy for racial equality, particularly for African-Americans in the United States (Brooks et al., 2003). But it is also the time that marks the rise of television journalism (Coffey, 2013). Subsequently, this brought about a rise in the employment of African Americans in U.S. television newsrooms.

This concern gained national recognition in late 60s, a time surrounding the peak of the Civil Rights movement in support of people of color (Brooks et al., 2003). During this time, advocates for equal rights were gaining national attention in both print and broadcast news headlines (Marinova, 2014). But the 60s were also a highlight time for television journalism. By the late 1960's, 90% of households, regardless of race, had a television (Marinova, 2014). Because of the popularity of television in the 60s, more people relied heavier on TV news for their daily headlines than print journalism (Marinova, 2014). Nonetheless, both print and television newsrooms had low representations of minorities during a time when African Americans graced the news frequently in the attempt to be heard.

According to Brooks et. al. (2003), “the issue of broadcast workforce diversity surfaced as a significant federal policy question in the late 1960s, when the 1968 Report of the National Advisory Committee on Civil Disorders argued that diversity in media personnel was a necessity” (p.124). They argued that diversifying newsrooms,

particularly at the managerial levels, was very necessary to ensure that minority populations were accurately represented in, and served by the American media (Brooks et al., 2003). Thus, mass media institutions began accelerated efforts to diversify their newsrooms through implementation of policies and programs that included preferential training, hiring, and promotion of minority journalists (Brooks et al., 2003). In response to that concern, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) began actively monitoring personnel diversity in the broadcast industry and regulating industry personnel procedures in the early 1970s (Brooks et al., 2003).

The efforts to diversify U.S. newsrooms included planned attempts to accelerate hiring of minority journalists in order to meet goals that were often stated quantitatively (Coffey, 2013). The goals set reflected the desired percentages of minorities on news staffs (Coffey, 2013). After the mid-1960s, news industry leaders began to establish such corporate minority hiring goals. These goals were put in place to not only increase numbers of black and brown faces in newsrooms but, to also increase profits, expand minority audiences, ease their consciences, and achieve more effective coverage of certain minority related topics, beats, or events (Brooks et al., 2003).

While the recorded number of minorities in newsrooms around this time did increase, they were not an accurate representation of minorities holding journalist related positions (Brooks et al., 2003). Some studies included every staff member from management to secretarial to custodial staff (Brooks et al., 2003). The numbers were provided to show newsroom diversity did not represent a variety of positions in the newsroom (Stone, 1988). Stone (1988) found that minorities were concentrated in the lowest-paying newsroom jobs and underrepresented in decision making roles in

relationship to their overall presence in broadcast news jobs, as compared with the proportion of white women and white men in decision making roles. However, minute progress has been made in numbers more recently and even less progress has been made in diversifying staff in higher ranked positions of newsrooms.

Racial Diversity in Today's Newsrooms

My, how times have not changed. Today, both women and minorities face the same challenge in the male dominated field of journalism; the main one being getting and staying in. Television newsrooms are still overflowing with white men and declining in the number of women and minorities.

Has there been progress? Yes. In research conducted by the Radio Television Digital News Association (RTDNA) in 2017, one will find that there has been a 6.6% increase in minority presence in newsrooms (Radio Television Digital News Association, 2017). In 1990, broadcast newsrooms had a minority population of 17.8% and in 2017 they have an increased population of 24.4% (Radio Television Digital News Association, 2017).

While we applaud progress, one must note that this is only a 6.6% increase over a span of 17 years (Radio Television Digital News Association, 2017). In this time, the minority population in the United States has increased by over 10% (Radio Television Digital News Association, 2017). This shows the challenge and minute progress television and other broadcast areas are making in diversifying their staff. It also reflects the lack of progress that has been made since the late 1960's.

Though the overall goal for newsrooms is to have a staff that reflects the diversity of the country we live in, the underrepresentation of African Americans in newsrooms

today stifles the possibility of achieving that goal. Progress stopped in 2016 and began to decrease. Research conducted by the RTDNA shows that African Americans made up 11.1% of the television news workforce in 2016. This was .3% increase from 2015. However, in 2017, the percentage rate dropped to 10.9%. While this decline seems fairly small, any setback means that there is an even larger gap to fill in order for people of color to be proportionately represented in television newsrooms.

Aside from simply being a decline in numbers, a drop in the amount of African American journalists in the newsroom means a further silencing of their voices. Research conducted by Nishikawa, Towner, Clawson and Waltenburg (1998) shows that the presence of African Americans in newsrooms adds to the diversity of news coverage and the advocacy for the underrepresented group. Nishikawa et. al. (1998) argue that, “Despite the constraint of mainstream norms, the interviews also illustrate that some minority journalists engage in ‘stealth advocacy’ or even openly engage in advocacy, thus bringing a unique perspective to the news- room” (p. 254). The journalists in the research study generally agreed that their presence helps with news coverage (Nishikawa et. al., 1998). They believe that it reflects the entire community fully and fairly, noting that they consciously consider the diversity of their audience (Nishikawa et. al., 1998). Minority reporters also see themselves as “watchdogs,” pointing out stories that are not sufficiently attuned to cultural difference and nuances (Nishikawa et. al., 1998). They also found that having minorities as a part of newsroom staff also gives white journalists the ability to learn from them and become more sensitized to ethnic issues and perspectives (Nishikawa et. al., 1998). The interviews from the research further showed that minority journalists believe they raise new issues in the newsroom, even if covertly

presented, that their colleagues may otherwise overlook in their absence (Nishikawa et. al., 1998). Other journalists say they bring in fresh perspectives by using resources beyond official government sources (Nishikawa et. al., 1998). The findings from this research show that proper representation of minorities in newsrooms goes beyond meeting a quota but, serves as a bridging mechanism between the newsroom and the voices of an otherwise silenced and poorly represented minority group.

Similar to that in 2017, the necessity to understand why, decline in the representation of minorities in U.S. television newsrooms, even though the minority population still continues to increase in the U.S. has been covered in research many times. Allen (1990) makes a strong argument to continue to focus on numbers because diversity is a key component to the functionality of a society:

We also need to count bodies in the media to be sure there are enough of each shape, origin, color and conviction, because it is only through their presence in the media, expressing their own perspectives in all their diversity, that society can attain the information it needs to function viably, peacefully and productively (p. 14).

Since the 1960s, there has been great progress, but there have also been great setbacks for people of color in newsrooms. Among the challenges ahead, aside from the goal to better represent minorities in newsrooms, is the challenge to diversify the positions of power that lead to the decision making the overall leadership of newsrooms.

Diversity in Leadership

In television newsrooms, the popular goal of diversification and inclusion of minorities extends to the need for diversity in leadership positions. This is not a goal

solely tied to the field of journalism. This has been a topic in research for many years and across many professional avenues (Seo et. al., 2017; Rivas-Rodriguez et. al., 2004; Hoobler et. al., 2011; Powell & Butterfield, 2012; Litzky & Greenhaus, 2007, Collins, 2017). In previous research, many arguments are made that may explain why there is a lack of women in leadership positions across professions in the U.S. These researchers usually choose a specific profession to focus on and conduct a survey to collect the thoughts and feelings of both male and female participants to see what their thoughts are on management level positions (Seo et. al., 2017; Rivas-Rodriguez et. al., 2004; Hoobler et. al., 2011; Powell & Butterfield, 2012; Litzky & Greenhaus, 2007, Collins, 2017). In doing so, they gain a better understanding of reasons that may explain the absence of women in top positions of specific professions.

In a research study conducted by Jenny Hoobler, Grace Lemmon and Sandy Wayne (2011), they gave insight on four reasons that may explain why women lack ascendancy to the top jobs in various career paths. First was the glass ceiling explanation. This explanation focused majorly on discrimination against women due to various causes (Hoobler et. al., 2011). It listed sex role stereotyping as one of the examples. Sex role stereotyping is when an individual tends to associate male characteristics to successful leadership ability (Hoobler et. al., 2011). The second reason discusses something called a pipeline argument. This argument points historically to the lack of career advancement for women (Hoobler et. al., 2011). However, the assumption is that when enough qualifies women are added to “the pipeline,” they will eventually assume leadership positions in senior management or positions are equal to that of their male counterparts (Hoobler et. al., 2011). The third reason involves the idea that women are not genetically

predisposed to top management roles (Hoobler et. al., 2011). This reason proposes that women and men are different when it comes to preference of power (Hoobler et. al., 2011). For instance, it argues that men prefer the high stakes of top-level management and women prefer the security of a less challenging role (Hoobler et. al., 2011). Lastly, the fourth explanation focuses on the way the work day is structured and speaks directly to the time and energy required in the workforce (Hoobler et. al., 2011). Hoobler et. al. argue that these four explanations for why few women are underrepresented in upper management positions are the most common, and all have some support based on academic research.

Leadership in Newsrooms

Just like the work areas studied in the aforementioned research, newsrooms too, both professional and educational, have a flow of power and an established hierarchy that is used to divide levels of leadership, responsibility and power (Collins, 2017). In a typical newsroom, normally information and decision-making flows from the producer or executive producer out to everyone else (Collins 2017). The producer is considered to be the gatekeeper of the newscast and the individual who controls which story gets in or is left out of the newscast. From the morning meeting until the end of the news show, the producer is in charge of the newscast and is directly and indirectly in charge of key personnel, such as reporters and videographers (Collins, 2017). Along with producers, directors in newsrooms carry a lot of responsibility and are in charge of a lot of decision making. Both positions are important in deciding what television news stations produce.

Today, which is no different than any other time, white journalists dominate full-time positions and are the key decision-makers in the mainstream media. This finding

coincides with the norm found in previous research that shows male dominance in higher positions. Particularly in television news, not only are women struggling to climb up in ranks as journalist, but African American women arguably have the hardest time obtaining leadership roles in television newsrooms (Radio Television Digital News Association, 2017). In television news this year, African American news directors dropped from 5.5% to 5.3% (Radio Television Digital News Association, 2017). Percentages of general managers of television newsrooms for both women and minorities decreased from 2016 to 2017 (Radio Television Digital News Association, 2017). These findings show that not only are the number of minorities decreasing in the newsroom in general, but they are also leaving or losing positions of power and leadership that are detrimental to their representation and voices in news media.

Diversity in leadership is a critical aspect for the African American community. A major concern of the African American population is that news images are predominately constructed and controlled by white decision-makers (Rivas-Rodriguez et al., 2004). Rivas-Rodriguez et al. found that:

Racial and ethnic diversity has come to play a pivotal role in socially responsible news coverage. And the perceptions of ethnic minority journalists are vital to the news industry because of the special role they play - or it is assumed they play - in diversifying the content of the nation's news media. (p. 42)

Nonetheless, the representation of African Americans in roles such as news producer, news director and general manager are decreasing. The question is why? Racial diversity in television newsrooms plays a large part providing a voice to minority groups. The inclusion of minorities in the newsroom is a way to reflect the diversity of people,

thoughts and ideas that flood the outside of the newsroom. The people in top positions in newsrooms control what voices are heard and what voices are silenced in news coverage. Thus, diversifying the roles of news producer and news director is a necessity in order to help balance the coverage of minorities in newsrooms.

For their entire existence, newsrooms have been densely populated by white men. Many of the practices in newsrooms are forced upon women and minorities as a means of survival. Women are constantly looking for ways to balance the role of woman and journalist in U.S. newsrooms. Not only do they struggle to find their place, but they struggle in numbers. Minorities face some of the same struggles. In a newsroom where majority of the decision makers are white males, many minority journalists are asked to cover stories that wrongfully represent their culture or people who look like them. Historically, women and minorities, separate from one another, have frequent issues in U.S. newsrooms. But I would argue that the African American woman, a double minority, in newsrooms where she lacks representation in more ways than one, may struggle the most.

Ultimately, diversifying the leadership level in newsrooms may provide African American women a chance to better represent both minority groups. However, knowing the numbers and the facts are only a minute part of solving the problem. In order to change the circumstance, one must look into the reasons that cause it. Therefore, this study addresses the following research question:

RQ1: What are the motivations, goals and perceptions of challenges for African American female aspiring broadcast journalists?

Chapter III: Methods

In order to answer the aforementioned research questions, I conducted in-depth, semi-structured interviews (Fontana & Frey, 1994). Interviews are a qualitative method used to gather in-depth responses. There are many types of interviews that can be used to collect information and data. However, to gain the best understanding of participants' experiences and thoughts, I conducted a series of semi-structured, in-depth interviews. Doing this allowed me a chance to receive information from interviewees that will help me understand their complex behaviors without imposing any categorization that may limit my findings.

Semi-structured interviews allow the researcher freedoms that may further enhance the ability of collecting quality and in-depth information from participants (Fontana & Frey, 1994). Semi-structured interviews do not consider these deviations from the list of questions as an error. It is seen as a way to make sure of parallel understanding between the interviewer and interviewee. It also allows for participants to share their experiences without limit, giving them the freedom to share as much as possible. Semi-structured interviews allow the researcher to best understand response without limited communication.

With structured interviews, interviewers have pre-established questions that they should not stray from (Fontana & Frey, 1994). Structured interviews also do not allow for variations of questions, further explanations of questions or deviation from the script of questions. They also increase the likelihood of the researcher and participant not being on the same page when it comes to comprehension of certain words and phrases used. This

can, in return, lessen the chances of the researcher receiving accurate answers to their questions. The guidelines for structured interviews are in place to minimize the chance of error in a social interactive context but rarely are 100% effective.

With interviews, I was able to ask a series of questions that produced responses to answer the overarching research questions. Doing so gave me the personal insight from aspiring African American female journalists. Interviews gave me insight of how these women feel and a broader explanation of their experiences. They are also useful when trying to obtain detailed responses and information about the participants' personal feelings, perceptions and opinions.

Semi-structured interviews were used in a research study conducted by Gayle and Meyers. The researchers used an intersectionality framework to analyze the experiences of African American females in U.S. newsrooms. They used semi-structured interviews in a research study to determine “whether the social location of journalists as African Americans and women affects their work practices in ways that increase racial and gender diversity in the news, challenge stereotypes, and otherwise resist normative news constructions of race and gender” (p. 292). By using semi-structured interviews, they were able to get in depth responses from African-American female journalist and details of the experiences that shaped their viewpoints and opinions. From the detailed responses, Gayle and Meyers were able to find common themes that provided answers to their research question.

Data Sample

I conducted 13 semi-structured, in-depth interviews with African-American female aspiring television journalists. This means that no interviewee was working as a

full-time journalist in a television newsroom unless it is for school credit (internship, assistantship, fellowship, etc.). All participants are in college, pursuing a bachelor's degree or higher with plans to enter a television newsroom post-graduation. This was a necessary requirement of participants because most television newsroom positions have a minimum requirement of a bachelor's degree in order to be hired for a position. Also, since all degree levels are welcome, I did not apply an age limit. Not applying an age limit increased the pool of possibilities for participants and acknowledges the fact that ages range broadly at the college level. There was also not a focus on a specific major requirement for student participants. Requiring that all participants be pursuing a degree in journalism could lessen my access to other students who may desire to go into the field of journalism. For instance, two of the universities used in this study have journalism programs, one has a journalism and mass communications program (JOMC) and the last one has a media studies program.

With the attempt to focus on the individual experiences of each interviewee, seeking a sample size that is sufficiently small for individual cases was much more favorable. According to Robinson (2014), smaller sample sizes allow participants to have “a locatable voice within the study, and for an intensive analysis of each case to be conducted” (p. 29). For these reasons, researchers are often given a guideline of 3–16 participants for a study (Robinson, 2014). According to Robinson (2014), my chosen sample size range “provides scope for developing cross-case generalities, while preventing the researcher being bogged down in data, and permitting individuals within the sample to be given a defined identity, rather than being subsumed into an anonymous part of a larger whole” (p. 29).

I conducted face-to-face interviews and interviews over the phone to increase my sampling size. Finding enough African American female students who aspire to be journalists to reach saturation was a challenge. So, I conducted interviews with students from four different universities. This study includes responses from students at two historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs) and non-HBCUs. Considering the location of the four schools mentioned, allowing the opportunity for phone interviews increased my access to participants.

The school selection enlarged my sampling size. I had direct access to students and faculty at every university making it easier to request participation. I was also intentional about including HBCUs with journalism programs. HBCUs have a predominately African American student body which further increased my chances of finding students who qualify for participation in my research. I also noted that experiences on an HBCU campus could be different from those on that of a campus that is predominately white. There was intentional decision making in choosing these colleges in hopes to increase my chance of reaching saturation during my research. These schools allowed me direct access to students African-American female students that aspire to be TV journalists.

Data Procedure

As mentioned before, I conducted individual interviews face-to-face or via phone call. I recorded all interviews and transcribed all responses. I carefully looked for reoccurring themes that came up while analyzing the data and categorized responses.

The interviews lasted about 30 to 45 minutes. This is ideally enough time to be efficient yet connect with the interview participants. According to Jacob and Furgerson

(2012), “Asking someone to devote more than an hour and half of their time can become problematic for several reasons” (p. 5). If the interview runs too long, participants may begin to lose interest (Jacob & Furgerson, 2012). Furthermore, Furgerson notes that six to ten well-written open-ended questions can easily take an hour to an hour and a half to get through (Jacob & Furgerson, 2012). Thus, the time frame I planned, allowed for in-depth responses on a specific and concise list of questions, while being considerate of the interviewee's time.

The safety and privacy of participants were of utmost importance. All names are kept confidential with the use of pseudonyms. No information was shared from one interviewee to another by the researcher and was discouraged to be shared between participants. This will lessen the chance of group think and responses based off outside influence or direct opinions of others. Data was kept private and safe with the use of password encryption where nobody could access it but me.

For the purpose of this research, descriptive questions, open-ended questions and example questions were used to incite heavy, in-depth responses. When closed ended questions were used, it was to lead into a question requesting a more detailed response. In Appendix 1 is the list of questions that were asked in order to collect enough information to answer the research question. They are listed strategically.

Chapter IV: Findings

Participants

When conducting this study, participants were sought out from 4-year universities that have programs to prepare students for a career in journalism. Students from four different universities participated. Two of the universities were historically black colleges/universities (HBCUs) while the other two were not. There were 13 students who were interviewed during this study. All of the students were African American females who desire to partake in a career in TV journalism post-graduation. Ten of the participants are seniors preparing for graduation in May. Two were juniors, and one was a sophomore.

Interviewee's Name	Year in School	Type of Interview	Intersectional Characteristics	School Type
Lauren	senior	Face-to-face	Naturalista, bi-racial, light-skinned, TV owner	PWI #1
Jasmine	senior	Face-to-face	Naturalista, plus sized, TV owner	PWI #1
Danai	senior	Phone	Naturalista, TV owner	PWI #1
Melody	senior	Face-to-face	Naturalista, TV owner	PWI #1
Shayla	senior	Phone	Naturalista, TV owner	HBCU #1
Breilyn	junior	Phone	Naturalista, TV owner	HBCU #1
Taylor	senior	Phone	Naturalista, TV owner	HBCU #1
Daijah	senior	Phone	Naturalista, plus sized, glasses, TV owner	HBCU #1
Essence	senior	Phone	First generation college student, TV owner	PWI #2

Mila	senior	Phone	TV owner	PWI #2
Tiara	freshman	Phone	TV owner	HBCU #2
Myesha	sophomore	Phone	First-generation college student, TV owner	HBCU #2
Kailyn	senior	Phone	TV owner	HBCU #2

The interviews with each participant was recorded either in person or over a phone call. Differentiation between the two interview options depended heavily on my access to students for a face-to-face interview and students' time availability to meet. Research participants were interviewed either on a university campus in a researcher's office, or via phone call at a private residence. The interviews, lasting approximately 30-45 minutes each, were audio recorded and transcribed for analysis. Commonalities and patterns in responses from participants were sought out during the analysis.

Analysis of the interviews revealed themes in career choice motivations, anticipated challenges concerning physical appearance and lack of opportunities, resources and cultural preparation provided by selected college students' universities. In this section, themes found during analysis are discussed in depth as they relate to the research question.

While the focus of this study is on the intersection of race and gender, some participants also expressed an intersection of other identity characteristics. Aside from race and gender, interviewees noted several other physical attributes that influence how the experience things. They noted hair texture, skin complexion, weight, seeing imparities, etc. They also passively expressed their access to TVs and cable as a factor that influenced their motivations, goals and perception of challenges as it relates to their

goals to go into TV news after graduation. The intersection of all of these identities are expressed as in-depth responses to the research question. Again, all names used are pseudonyms.

Motivations

The first part of the research question sought to find what motivates aspiring African-American female journalists to pursue a career in TV news. Many of the participants considered journalism as a major because of influences prior to college but, some switched to journalism after entering their first year of college. Each participant noted several motivations for wanting to pursue TV news but there are three motivations that were shared amongst all participants. Each student admits to being motivated by lack of representation of people who look like them in news media, lack of acceptance due to their physical appearance either while growing up or in their programs, being encouraged by family or friends, and by the noted success of media moguls like Oprah Winfrey.

Physical appearance. While also seen as a challenge that each of the participants expect to face, participants made it very clear that others' challenges with accepting the way they look motivates them to pursue TV news. Each participant either noted a time in their past when people were reluctant to grant them opportunities or extend inclusivity because of their physical appearance.

The newsroom culture of straightened black hair being more acceptable and professional than natural black hair, which tends to be curly motivates many participants to pursue an on-air position. Kailyn said for the longest, her hair has been the center of negative attention and comments from white people. But she said she has decided to use it as fuel to move forward in her career:

“I believe that's part of my drive to be on air because it's not about wanting to be like the prettiest person on air. I could care less about my appearance, but it's just about being able to stick to my natural appearance that I was born with and not changing. So, whether I have people complimenting my hair or whether I have people telling me my hair is too distracting, either way, it's still going to drive me forward to say yeah, this is acceptable, I am acceptable and [my hair] is okay.”

Lauren, a senior with a couple years of news experience, said that her challenges with people accepting her hair texture is one of her motivations to pursue a career as a news reporter after graduating. Lauren shared her thoughts on how journalist who influences others:

“I never thought I could be on TV until I got to college and this was after pursuing psychology first. I always got picked on for my appearance. So, now that I've gained my own confidence in my natural hair, it's important for me to help give that to other people. I'm sure they're like, 'oh, I don't see anyone on the TV like me', 'I don't see anyone in my classes who looks like me'. I hope that I can be the reminder that you shouldn't change any natural part of you for anybody.”

For most participants with like responses, being on TV as their natural selves, unapologetically is motivation to pursue a position on screen. Cheneeta said her hair has been deemed a deal breaker for future news employers before they even saw her news reel. She, like several other participants, deemed this a challenge and motivation.

Cheneeta said, “I think being an anchor and reporter on air and being somebody who's black and wearing my natural hair is important to showcase. I show that people with natural big hair can be represented.”

Other participants noted their body type or figure as a motivation to pursue a career in front of the camera as a news reporter, anchor or on-air news personality. Both Jasmine and Taylor made remarks about their curvaceous bodies and how they hope that being on TV will resonate with younger African American girls who may not think an opportunity in front of the camera is for them. Jasmine stated, “My hair is not straight. I’m also thick and chunky.” When I asked her why she noted her body type and physical traits as a motivation she explained the message she hopes to send to other black women:

“I want other black girls to know you don't have to get a relaxer on your hair. You don't have to straighten your hair to work in this industry. You don't have to be thin to work in this industry. In sports journalism, you don't have to be a pageant girl to be on air. You don't have to get a boob job to be in front of the camera. You don't have to wear pounds of makeup on your face to be around the camera.”

Taylor, though less descriptive in her response, made it clear that she too saw the lack of acceptance when it comes to black women’s bodies in the media as a motivation to dive head first into a career as a news reporter. When asked about what motivated her to go for an on-air position, she stated, “being curvaceous.” She said although being curvaceous isn’t the only reason, she knows her presence will encourage other people. Taylor said, “Black girls are naturally curvier. Get over it and put us on TV. The only way to ‘normalize’ it is to show it more. That way other girls will see it as an opportunity to do the same.”

Participants clearly noted physical traits as a problem in the eyes of those who don’t look like them. Hair and body type were the two characteristics that came up, no

matter what position in the newsroom the participants hoped to fill post-graduation.

While participants also saw it as a challenge for African American women hoping to go into TV news, they also use it as a motivation to continue. They are motivated by the chance to motivate others who will see them or see their work on the news.

Ability to change lack of representation. The participants in this study indicated their knowledge of the lack of African American female representation in the news as a motivation to fill the void after graduation. However, they expressed lack of representation differently depending on where they wanted to work in TV news. Eight of the participants plan to seek a position as a reporter or anchor after graduating while the other five plan to pursue a role in production (producer, production assistant, video production, sports producer). Those who want to fill an on-air position specifically described lack of representation as it relates to lack of physical African American female representation seen on TV news stations. They spoke of lack of representation as it related to physical traits and race. When asked what motivates them as aspiring journalists, most participants answered much like Tiara. Tiara stated that when she turns on the TV, she doesn't see herself and that motivates her to move into reporting. She said, "The biggest thing that comes to mind for me is representation. Not just as a black woman but as a black woman that looks like me. I am overweight. I wear glasses. I think my forehead is a little too big. I have never seen anyone on news who looks like me." Not having enough women on air that wear their naturally curly hair, different body types that are African American was an issue for all participants and was a motivation for them to pursue TV news.

However, those who plan to go into production are motivated by lack of representation as it relates to lack of black voices represented in news coverage, lack of black voices in decisions made in TV newsrooms as well as lack of physical representation in air and in coverage. Shayla, who is a senior who desires to be “Oprah Winfrey’s successor” said she is motivated because she doesn’t see a lot of brown females “doing more.” To Shayla, “doing more” consisted of roles related to both productions and media ownership. Shayla said, “There should be a lot more Oprah Winfreys than there are Harvey Weinsteins in the news and media industry. It motivates me to be more. I want to own my own media company.” Other participants made similar arguments and referenced the lack of black female voices making decisions behind the scenes in TV newsroom production positions. Breilyn, who is set on pursuing producing after graduation, said she’s motivated by the power producers have to change the way black people are perceived in news by simple decisions. When I asked her to give me an example, she stated, “You know how the media always portrays black people as mad? I want to change that. For instance, instead of putting their mugshot on the news for stories that don’t pertain to any crime committed, let’s put up a regular picture like everybody else.”

Current African American TV news workers. When asked to note people on TV who they looked up to growing up, each participant noted either African American female news reporters in their hometowns or nationally/world-renowned journalists. Amongst several African American female local news reporters, Oprah Winfrey, Gayle King and Robyn Roberts were noted as inspirations to participants. The name mentioned as a motivator and career influencer in every interview except one was Oprah Winfrey.

Often times participants would respond as if Oprah would be an obvious answer. Sasha started her list by saying, “Of course Oprah.” She continued, “She was a black woman and was very unapologetic about taking up her space in the journalism field. That is very inspiring.” While some listed her as an obvious answer, other participants like Britain, went into more detail about why Oprah influenced their career choice.

“I always look up to is Oprah. I feel like a lot of people can say that as well because at 23 Oprah was broke, but does she ever give up on her dreams? No. Now she's one of the richest people in the entire world because she fought for what she wanted. She didn't lie down and take no for an answer. I think that's another reason why I'm the way I am. I notice Oprah's at this stage in life and I'm going to get there. Maybe not as big. I may not be a billionaire someday but I better be a millionaire.”

All of the women, and in on interview, men, that were named as influential people for the participants were African American and were on-air personalities. Each participant named approximately 2-4 people that motivate them to pursue news.

The majority of the names were of people on national news shows like “Good Morning America” and the “Today” show. But these African American TV news anchors and reporters weren't just named because they are on TV. Participants seem to affiliate a level of success with being on TV. By naming these people as inspiring figures, participants acknowledge them as people worth study to achieve their desired level of success. They are motivated by the success that these women have accomplished being both African American and female. The participants' motivation is rooted in the possibility of success that these national news reporters and anchors represent.

It was also noted that there wasn't a variety in the names given by participants. They noted the same 2 or 3 African American females. This could possibly speak to the scarcity of African American women who reach that high of a level in on air positions in news media.

Goals

The second part of the research question seeks the different career goals that each participant has. Eight participants want to begin their news careers as news reporters at a local news station. The other five said they plan to begin their career producing. What is interesting is that each person local TV news as an introduction to much larger goals. Breilyn like many others made it clear that reporting was just the first step towards a larger goal. Breilyn said, "I would love to be some sort of reporter for the first few years of my life. Then I would like to go on to be a social media manager. Growing up I always wanted to be on TV. Reporting is one way to honestly, be on TV. I would like to branch off in entertainment. I like covering events and not necessarily a car crash and things like that." Daijah, another aspiring reporter, said while news reporting is her initial goal after graduation, becoming Oprah's successor is her ultimate goal. Daijah said, "My biggest goal is to have my own network. That desire comes from wanting to take more ownership of what we see on television. A lot of what we see is not controlled by people of color and are definitely not controlled by women. So being able to give opportunity to people who just so happen to never be at the right place at the right time is important. They can have a platform to share their own work but I would want to afford people who look like me a chance to succeed."

There were two participants who hadn't given much thought to changing paths in particular but looked to take their talents to other levels and even countries. Lauren, who desires to news reporting for as long as she can, said that she does not want to do local news for long. She ultimately wants to do national entertainment news for a syndicated news outlet. Danai, whose parents live in Nigeria, said she know first-hand how the United States falsely depicts events and news about African countries. She wants to do all she can to fix that. While beginning as a news reporter in the U.S. is her initial goal she said she hopes to take her talents to her parents' home country. Danai said, "I want to work in an African country. I've found out the stories about African are framed in a way that creates this stereotype about us. So, I would love to be like a correspondent or working freelance. I want to frame these stories in a way that aren't so one sided." Both reporters desire to keep storytelling as a part of their careers but desire to use local TV news as a step towards even bigger goals.

Of five participants that desire to work in production of some sort, two of them are only considering producing because they feel ill-prepared to start their career as news reporters. Sanai, who is now a senior in her program said, "Right now, I am looking at a production assistant role because people have been telling me that's the best way to get my foot in the door. On air-talent would be my ultimate goal. I want to increase representation." The other three participants expressed their desire to change the way stories about minorities are told. They see the role of producer as a sure way to do that.

While the initial steps of the participants are fairly similar, they seem to be the first step towards a much bigger goal.

Perceptions of Challenges

The final part of the research questions asks about challenges that the participants expect to face in their pursuit of a career in television news. Every participant shared at least one challenge that they expect to face either while trying to enter the workforce as a journalist or once they get into the work force. All of the perceived challenges that are anticipated are due to life experiences associated to race and gender as a child, lack of career preparation while in college or life experiences at the college level also associated with either race or gender.

Past experiences. All students perceived either their race, gender or physical appearance as a challenge that could hinder a positive work experience once entering the workforce in their anticipated areas of interest. However, some of the challenges expressed were due to childhood experiences that shaped their perception of like challenges as they encounter white men and women in their career. For example, Melody, who now attends an HBCU, said her college experience was totally different from her upbringing. Melody grew up in Clayton, NC in what she called “a racist environment with a lot of stereotyping.” She went on to say, “there wasn’t a lot of positive light shone on black people, especially black women.” Melody expressed her anticipation to see the same challenges as she enters the workforce as a news reporter. She acknowledged that TV newsrooms are predominately white which means many of the stories are being told by white men and women. Melody, like several other participants, expect to enter TV newsrooms to find that they face a challenge to tell positive black stories and a challenge to reverse the use of negative framing when it comes to telling the few black stories that are told.

Other students reference the inability for others to accept them growing up because of their skin complexion and physical traits that were perceived as not being white enough. Lauren, who identifies as an African American also identifies as being biracial, stressed her hair being a challenge. With an African American father and white mother, she said she struggled with fitting in with either community growing up because of her very light skin and what others called, “poofy hair.” Lauren said as a child, she was often told by other children that she was either too much of something or not enough of the other to “fit in.” Referencing her childhood experiences, Lauren said, “If I’m in the room with black people, it’s you’re too white. If I’m in a room of white people, it’s you’re too black. Or, do you want to do this because you’re black. Somebody in high school actually asked me if I wanted to rap because I am black.” When it came to her hair, she got used to people commenting negatively about its buoyancy, unique fullness and curl. Lauren developed a habit of trying to appear whiter in an area where she was made to feel like her race and physical identity was inferior to her white counterparts:

Lauren: “I grew up in what was a pretty racist town and it was always ‘oh your hair is too poofy.’ So, my older sisters would start straightening their hair and then it made me want to straighten my hair to be more accepted and pass for white. Then people would be like, ‘oh but your hair's too frizzy when you do straighten it’.” It's like either way I couldn't fit in.”

Lauren said these experiences later created a defensive attitude when it came to her appearance. She then made it clear that she didn't expect anything to change once she gets into the workforce. These were childhood challenges she faced that she anticipated would be her biggest problem in her career as well.

College experiences. Other perceived challenges were expressed in relation to some of the experiences the interviewees had with staff, students and news recruiters while in their programs. Interviewees said they anticipate dealing with racial insensitivity and having to work harder to prove their value and capabilities than their white co-workers. Some students also voiced concerns about facing the challenge of being ill prepared to start a career right out of college due to lack of resources in their program and the lack of diversity in the staff.

Several of the non-HBCUs' students heavily expressed their expectation for racial insensitivity to continue in the newsroom as it did in their program. She like many others sees their career atmosphere as an extension of the atmosphere they experienced in college. This includes the potential challenges. All of the participants from this university expressed at least one experience where either a staff member in their program or a recruiter invited by their program was racially insensitive toward them or another African American student. One incident, in particular, was mentioned by 2 of the 4 interviewees from the school. A white female recruiter was invited to the school to speak with and interview students for TV newsroom positions after graduation. Interviewees said the recruiter held a general meeting where she addressed broad questions and concerns from the students. They said while at the meeting, the recruiter made a comment that struck a nerve with the African American students in the classroom: "One recruiter was arguing the ease of moving from one position to another in the newsroom. She went about emphasizing her point by saying, 'Oh you're not trapped in this company. It's not like slavery'. That is unacceptable. How do you represent a whole entire company, but yet say something so ignorant and so offensive and not even notice it? Let alone our school of

journalism who did not question it for a second. And if they did question it as a director, professor or any person of power in the room, they did not stand up. They let down their students and the entire school of journalism. I think there's a lack of respect there from white recruiters and staff.

While only 2 of the 4 students interviewed from this university mentioned this particular incident, there were certainly other experiences with recruiters that made all 4 of the students believe that they were facing an uphill battle when it came to racial insensitivity in their career. For instance, Lauren, who expressed many times her challenges with being accepted because of her fairer skin and very full head of hair, said she had several experiences with recruiters that lead to insensitive comments that she could only attribute to her race:

“Every director I've spoken to, besides one, has said my hair is too distracting on air. ‘You need to pull back your hair.’ ‘You need to thin out your hair.’ ‘You need to braid your hair.’ There's comments like, ‘you have an exotic look about you’. Yet, there's a white guy in my class who has bright orange hair and nobody has asked him to change his hair color. That could be distracting for me. I don't see black people with orange hair. There is an anchor whose eyes are so blue, they are like ice. That could be distracting to me because I'm not used to that. So, when things are said about my hair or my appearance, I can only attribute that to my race.”

The students from this university connect the racially insensitive comments to the lack of cultural and racial diversity amongst the journalism programs staff. They argue that they often are fighting these challenges along and sometimes they aren't noticed as challenges

in the eyes of their professors. The four interviewees plainly stated that they now expect, and somewhat prepare for the same behavior to take place in the workplace.

Students from all 4 universities expressed the expectation to work harder than their white co-workers to prove their value while in the newsroom. Other than life experiences that shaped this perceived challenge, some of them experienced challenges like this in their programs where they felt that their worth was questioned by professors who taught their journalism courses. Jasmine shared a couple experiences where she felt like her ideas were overlooked because she is an African American female wanting to do sports reporting. She said a professor who taught the introductory course for students with a reporting emphasis said to her, “You shouldn’t do sports and should consider news anchoring or regular reporting.” She said she was also told she would never make it as a reporter because her work ethic wasn’t good enough by the same professor. After passing the class she felt a lack of support from staff working in her school’s TV news station:

“The gender discrimination in sports reporting is so real. I got told every single time I did a reporting shift, that I better not do a sports story even though I am here to do sports reporting. Coming in to pitch meetings, I was told straight up that sports stories couldn’t work. Then there was a pretty big story on our college team facing sanctions. Clearly it was deemed a story that is considered to be newsworthy and deals with sports. Of course, I was overlooked. They let a male reporter cover it that didn’t have an emphasis in sports reporting.”

Jasmine said it wasn’t the experiences alone that created her anticipation to have to work harder than others. It was the fact that her white constituents didn’t receive the same push back from professors. She said, “Even though I may be more qualified than a white male

going for the same position, there is always the chance that he will get it over me because he is white and he is male. A white female would get a job before me. They [professors] don't talk about the different factors that will impact where you end up after graduation.”

While several students from the HBCUs anticipated having to work harder to reach their goals in the newsroom as well, they didn't share the same kind of experiences that influenced that anticipation. Some of the students base this perceived challenge on a reminder that their professors give them. Asante, who attends this HBCU, said, “We are constantly reminded that the newsroom does not look like our classrooms. They [the newsrooms] are predominately white. So, me, being an African American female, people may not respect me as quickly as they will somebody else.” Other participants who attended an HBCU said the anticipated challenge to work harder than the next person comes simply from their choice of university. Breilyn said she's preparing to face that challenge daily. She said, “I go to an HBCU. People still look down on HBCUs and what they can do for black people. People may assume that I went to my HBCU because I couldn't get into a PWI. It's that kind of foolishness that will have to be faced.”

Interviewees that attend an HBCU anticipated some of the same challenges as those that attend a non-HBCU but the anticipation came from different experiences.

There was also a collective feeling of lack of career preparation across the board for participants. The interviewees see being ill-prepared as a challenge they will have to face while trying to find a job or while becoming acclimated to the typical work environment of a newsroom. Participants from one university said that while they would much prefer to begin their career as news reporters, the lack of resources provided in their program made this goal seem nearly impossible. They said they were not able to take

news related courses until their senior year. Even when they did take those courses, they didn't feel like they got nearly enough experience to prepare them for a job after graduation. Mila, who attends this school and is a senior said her experience in their program has left her confused and ill-prepared for the job she actually wants:

“The fact that I am just now taking these classes as a senior is ridiculous. They say they can't control that but they can control that because there are only 2 classes that even pertain to news. So, if there were more than 2 classes, I could've at least done one before I got to my final year in school and maybe I wouldn't just now be making decisions on what I want to do career wise. It would've given me time to see what it is about journalism that I actually wanted to do. We need to research and we need to have an idea of what we want to do. At the same time, we go to college to learn and to figure out what works for us. I have been a Media Studies major the entire 4 years. I wish they had concentration areas for us to choose. Maybe if we could pick news, maybe I would be able to get to the news related classes sooner. I haven't had enough experience with the field I even want to go in.”

Other participants from this university said not only is there a lack of courses but a lack of internship opportunities. The students said the school has a mass email listserv which they use to send out internship opportunities. Not many of them are news related. Mila said, “They send out a lot of internship opportunities but they lack opportunities in broadcast. There have been only 2-3 opportunities out there since I got here.” The lack of resources and opportunities reinforces the students' anticipation to struggle finding a job or even being prepared for certain positions. Tatyana, who is a senior at the same school

said, “I thought about producer and director because I feel like I am a pretty good leader. But I don’t know because I don’t think I even have the skill set to imagine myself in that position. A lack of experience makes me second guess my ability to go for a position for that.” Feeling ill prepared by their program, some participants are uncertain of where their desired career will lead them.

Lack of staff diversity is a concern for participants at three of the four schools interviewed. Students argue that the lack of diversity in faculty and staff enhance their feeling of being ill prepared for the newsroom work environment. Myesha, a senior media studies major said, “I don’t know much about how African Americans feel or operate in newsroom spaces because the people I interact with are not African American. Our professors try but they can’t relate on that level and with those experiences because they don’t have them.” Other students’ comments reflect Myesha’s concern. Essence, a senior journalism major, said her school prides itself on diversity but it’s not reflected in the staff, especially in her program:

Essence: “My school is now a minority serving institution. It’s no longer a PWI, which means that we have so many people at this university of diverse cultures and race. The fact that people of color come into the Media Studies program and there is no one that represents or looks like them is an issue. So, if we don’t have that and we don’t even have a space where we can talk about our race and how it’s going to affect us in the media, then we basically go through these four years playing the guessing game. Sometimes it feels like we should’ve gone somewhere else because we don’t have the chance to experience the realism of what life in the newsroom will be like for us.”

Myesha's disappointment in her school's lack of diversity in staff was a familiar disappointment for other participants. For Tiara, who acknowledges the difference in work experiences for African American female compared to their counterparts, lack of diversity amongst staff while in college incites frustration:

“One, have professors who give a fuck about you and having people who actually look like you who have been in that industry. We have so many professors who have been out in the real world. They've worked for CNN, top stations in the nation, The New York Times, The San Francisco Times. They've worked and done everything under the sun within journalism, and you're telling me they can't find professors that are minorities?”

Several students noted that there is nothing particularly wrong with the staff members they've encountered. However, they feel that having someone on staff who is African American and female would be of great help in helping these participants feel more prepared for work after college.

Tiara: “Professor Tom is a good professor but he and I have nothing in common at all. So, when I talk to him about my concerns he can only give me a white male perspective. Some of the stuff he gives me is fine but I can't help but think Bob remember who I am. Sometimes when he talks to me, he doesn't get it. For instance, when I talked to him about moving for a job, he was encouraging and honest. He told me that I would definitely have to move. I wanted to ask him so badly if he could put himself in my shoes for a second. I don't know that I would have the means to support myself with a job where I am now, let alone moving somewhere else. Having someone who looks like me on staff could increase

relatability and help students like me get the perspective they need in order to feel secure in the transition from school to career.”

Without that desired diverse faculty and staff in their different programs, students feel like they lack the insight they need to navigate the newsroom work environment as African American females.

Chapter V: Discussion

The findings in this research relate to previous literature. While very little research has been done on African American female aspiring journalists, it is clear that some of their anticipated challenges align with many of the challenges women in previous literature claim to have faced. In this study, I found that less than half of the women interested in TV news were interested in being a producer. Only one of the participants considered director and none saw interest in the role of general manager. These numbers, while not identical to the findings in the literature, are very similar. They suggest a lack of interest may play a role in the deficit of African American females fulfilling certain roles in U.S. TV newsrooms.

It comes to no surprise that a vast majority of participants have little to no interest in becoming a producer, director or general manager. They expressed little interest in the position and responsibilities that come with the roles or a lack of preparation and education to consider the positions after graduation. Participants also expressed challenges they anticipate after entering the workforce as journalists, due to both their race and gender. All participants consider the intersection of both race and gender as the reason their past, present and possible future experiences with racial insensitivity and racism are different from their white counterparts. In past studies, African American women have expressed challenges specific to their newsroom experience due to being a double minority in predominately white TV newsrooms. Participants, some with minimal newsrooms experience and some with none, expressed expectations to experience

identical challenges based off of childhood experiences, college life, both inside and outside the classroom and the current state of TV news.

Challenges are not new to the newsroom experience for African American females. As mentioned in the study by Hardin & Shein (2006), women have expressed the unique and sometimes, no so pleasant experience in U.S. newsrooms. Many of the anticipated challenges listed in the findings align with the challenges women expressed in the study conducted by Hardin & Shein (2006).

Aside from challenges, the findings in this study align with the research found in the Women's Media Center report (2017) that states that women of color are entering into the U.S. newsrooms at a faster rate than in the past. However, the lack of interest that participants show in upper-level positions in the newsroom comes as no surprise. Their lack of interest varies in reasoning. However, the lack of intention to even consider decision making positions in TV newsrooms are a reflection of the study conducted by Hoobler et. Al. (2011).

This study provides preliminary insight into some factors that play a role in helping some African American female aspiring journalists shape their desired career paths. After analyzing the information provided by interviewees, this study makes the following observations:

African American female aspiring journalists believe that they will face challenges others won't have to face because of the intersection of their race and gender.

All of the perceived challenges expressed seemed to overlap, no matter what school the participants went to. Most of the challenges were due to physical appearance, feeling like others will see them as inadequate or actually feeling inadequate or ill-

prepared due to various college experiences. Nonetheless, participants tied these challenges to their gender and race. They all described challenges that stemmed to their race or gender.

While each participant plans to start in TV news, more than half don't plan to stay in local news.

All of the participants planned to start in local news. As they begin to share more and more about their goals, I found that a majority of them see local news as a step in the right direction. It puts them in the position to get the experience and connections they need to extend their talents to syndicated news outlets or other platforms all together.

African American female aspiring journalists are motivated by the lack of representation in TV news.

Every participant noted the need for more African American females in TV news. This fact motivates them to pursue positions in U.S. television newsrooms after graduation. All participants shared the ways they considered changing the field of news with their presence and their voices. Not only are they motivated to be in the newsroom. Many believe that being in front of the camera will be a sure way to encourage young African American girls that this too is a possible career goal for them. They also consider the challenges that the intersectionality of their race and gender bring about as motivation to pursue a position where they are seen and speak for themselves. Seeing that there is a need in this field motivates these participants to push past any challenge to get in

African American female aspiring journalists consider producing as a way to get their foot in the door.

According to the career goal responses in the study, only 5 of the 13 students planned to pursue a position in producing and only 1 planned to go further as a director. The others saw producing as a way to get their foot in the door in hopes to further their career as a TV news reporter. For the students who felt like their program did not prepare them enough to get a job in front of the camera, they seemed to be willing to settle for a position as a producer until they could find an avenue to do what they actually wanted to do. Outside of the five participants who considered producing as their first career move, other participants acknowledged producing as a skill they needed to know in order to be a well-rounded reporter. Some said they would consider producing if they absolutely had to but it was not their initial career goal.

Not many African American female aspiring journalists even consider director and general manager a position they would want to fill.

There was a lengthy list of challenges that the participants provided; from being accepted and treated fairly to actually being prepared. When asked if they would consider positions like director or general manager, they either answered no because they didn't have any interest in the positions or because they felt so ill prepared, it seemed far fetched to even consider them. Either way, there was only one person who considered working towards being a director because they actually believe they would enjoy the career. Nobody showed interest in wanting to be a general manager for television news.

African American female aspiring news reporters associate power with visibility.

Participants exemplified a clear knowledge of the hierarchy present in newsrooms. However, when asked about how they associate power with the positions in U.S. TV newsrooms, they argued two things. They argued that power is evenly distributed

amongst all positions in the newsroom because if one position is missing, things do not work nearly as efficiently. They also argued that news reporters hold a great deal of power because they are the ones constructing the stories that are seen and heard on the newscast. They are also the faces of those stories. So, alongside the understanding that the general managers, directors, executive producers hold powerful positions where decision making is vital, participants consider their positions to be either equally powerful or more powerful.

Limitations

The interviews provided a lot information but not without limitations. I conducted 13 interviews from four different universities but did not consider the difference in structuring for their different programs. For instance, one of the programs was more of a media saturated program rather than being specifically focused on journalism. This created a variation in certain responses. For future research, it could be helpful to choose schools that have similar structured programs. This will create an easier comparison when it comes to analyzing responses.

Another limitation for this research study was the variation in ages and years of college experience. Some of the interviewees were sophomores and juniors. This could have had an impact on their responses and their overall amount of experience in an actual newsroom. Because seniors tend to have more experience with assistantships, fellowships and internships, there was a significant difference in the experiences they had to offer while answering the questions asked during the interviews.

There was also a difference in the kind of journalism programs some of the universities offered, which served as a limitation. One of the non-HBCUs offers a Media

Studies program which focused its courses on students that desire to study film. Because their program wasn't specifically geared towards students who desire to do journalism, the participants from this university were limited in examples and experiences pertaining to the questions asked in the interview.

Direction for future research

Other researchers could seek out participation during large conferences or events geared towards journalists of certain racial or gendered groups such as the Women in Media Conference or the National Association of Black Journalist Convention. This would increase access to participants and it would be helpful to see if any of the patterns seen in this study's findings are consistent amongst a larger population. Future research could also explore other marginalized groups of people in newsrooms.

Another direction for future research could look into the motivations, goals and perception of challenges for African American men who desire to have a career in U.S. newsrooms after graduation. This will acknowledge a different intersection of identities and may produce interesting differences and similarities in findings.

A research study could be done that focuses on the differing possible difference in experiences students have in journalism programs on HBCU campuses as opposed to PWIs. It was noted that the perceived challenges for the interviewees were very similar no matter which type of university they attended. Noting their experience could provide insight on ways institutions can better cater to students of color no matter what type of institution they attend.

Power was a concept that produced interesting responses in this study. Future research could look specifically at how responsibility is distributed in U.S. newsrooms. It

could then look specifically at how the concept of power is understood in different roles in the newsroom. It could bring findings that further explain why people lean towards or against certain positions in TV newsrooms.

Conclusion

Understanding and applying intersectionality as a theoretical framework is important because both race and gender bring about challenges for African-American women in U.S. newsrooms. While it is not unheard of to focus on race and gender simultaneously for a research topic, there is little research that uses it as a way to gain an understanding of why African American females are more motivated to fill positions in television newsrooms that lack leadership and power to make decisions. My research works to explore the ways in which the dual identity African American and female can shape decision making in one's career and how it can shape experiences and perceptions of U.S. newsrooms. It is my hope that gaining this understanding will lead to a change in how educators address diversity as it pertains to the newsroom experience differences for minorities. I also hope that these findings will incite conversation on how minorities, specifically African American females view power as it pertains to TV news.

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Appendix A

Interview Questions

Biographical information (searching for intergenerational inheritance and family resources/influence).

1. Are you a first-generation college student?
2. Do your parents have any college experience?
3. What do your parents have a degree in?
4. What do your parents do for a living?
5. What media experience do members of your family have?
6. How much information and help have your parents provided to help you prepare for your career goal?
7. Who were some of your role models growing up?
8. Who were some people you admired on TV growing up and why?

Educational information (seeking educational resources/influence).

1. What role do you hope to fill in the newsroom once you graduate?
2. Why do you want to go into this career field as a news anchor/reporter/producer/photo journalist etc.?
3. What impact do you think your position make?
4. Have you had any internships in a professional newsroom? How did you come across that opportunity?
5. In what ways have your professors challenged you to experience other positions in the newsroom?

6. In what ways do your instructors/professors inform you about opportunities in the field of journalism?
7. What resources were provided to you in school to help you learn about career opportunities beyond your role of interest?

Career goals.

1. As you gain experience in this industry, what other goals do you hope to accomplish?
2. What does moving up the ranks look like to you?
3. What other areas do you see yourself working in in the newsroom?
4. What challenges do you think you will face as you try to accomplish those goals?
5. How do you associate levels of power with positions in the newsroom?
6. Have you considered leadership roles in the field of TV news or broadcast journalism? Why or why not?

Perceptions of challenges.

1. What have you learned about the role of African American women in the media industry?
2. What challenges do you think you will face once you begin working in a newsroom?
3. How has gender been discussed in your program as it relates to your desired career path?
4. How has race been discussed in your program as it relates to your desired career path?
5. How has gender played a part in your newsroom experiences?

6. How has race played a part in your newsroom experiences?

By providing these general questions, participants will be able to shape the direction of the discussion based on their personal experiences and the researcher will have a general framework to compare participants' answers.