

MEDIA, RACIAL MINORITIES AND THE MINDSET OF JOURNALISTS:  
Exploring the formula(s) used to tell crime/violence victim stories in minority communities

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by  
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## **DEDICATION**

I dedicate this degree to my boys: Tobias, Jerell, Paul and Ayden. I dedicate this project to my cousin Tobias Robinson and to the many other black and brown boys who were boxed and muted by the media and the justice system.

Toby, I'm sorry this happened to you. You were a leader of light. I know your light still shines because I live in it every day. You put perspective to my purpose. You have motivated me to change the way our stories are told. I will do my best to give you and boys like you the power and peace you deserve. I thank God for your life and the legacy I will create because of you.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

Thank you, God, for gifting me this passion. Thank you for guiding my path and giving me the platform to educate and change this world. Thank you Tobias and Auntie Evelene for giving me the strength to move in my purpose every day. I give thanks to my family for loving and supporting me unconditionally. Thank you, to all 12 media professionals who were willing to give their time and share their experiences with me. Lastly, to Dr. Perry and Dr. Volz, thank you for your patience, encouragement, and guidance. This project would not be possible without your support.

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## **CHAPTER 1**

The introduction of this study, according to The University of Missouri's requirements, is to explain what I did and why. I can't tell you what I did before telling you why I did it. My why is more important than anything I will ever write in this report. My reason for this research is my call to action for the entire profession. It is tangible evidence that when journalists don't put people first in storytelling the end result is formulaic and desensitizing.

The saying goes something like, "you never know how bad something is until it happens to you." Well, something bad happened to me and this report is my stake in making sure that it doesn't happen to you.

### **My 14-year-old cousin was murdered on Wednesday, July 18, 2018.**

I didn't share this for your sympathy, but I do want you to see what I saw when I turned on the television that morning, and when I got online and read articles about my cousin who was much more to me than my uncle's son. Tobias was like my little brother. The headlines you are about to read are real and they come from reputable news outlets both print and broadcast. Here are a few:

Boy, 14, shot to death in West Englewood  
Boy, 14, shot to death in West Englewood drive-by identified  
14-year-old boy killed in drive-by shooting in West Englewood

The headlines you read failed my cousin because it gave a static view of a boy who lived a full life. The reporters who wrote the headline and body of the articles didn't deliver a level of care when explaining his life to the public or consider the people affected by his death. The failure to include human-elements and provide follow up is why my research is pertinent to the industry at large.

I was heartbroken and angry that some news organizations didn't, from what I observed, find out through his family or friends' what kind of person this 14-year-old boy shot to death in West Englewood was. It was in this moment that I realized the depth of influence and ignorance the media has when telling stories of crime and violence.

I wanted to know what factors make the framing of stories like Tobias' the standard. I wanted to explore reporting processes directly from the people who report on these stories. This study is not to make the media out to be the bad guys, but it showed me in many ways that before a title and role we are human first. We are humans who make mistakes, but we are also humans who have the capacity to do right by the communities they serve.

## **CHAPTER 2**

The media is a powerful tool. It has the power to tell us what to think about, not what to think (McCombs and Shaw, 1993), but the media does impact the way stories are told. According to a 2015 report titled [Color of Change](#), black men are overly represented as perpetrators of violent crimes in local New York media. The study found four news outlets showcased black people as more threatening than their white counterparts by depicting black people more in police custody and putting more emphasis on cases where victims are strangers.

The reality is similar for coverage of violence victims. The disparity in crime coverage is personal. On July 18, 2018, 14-year-old Tobias Robinson was shot and killed on the south side of Chicago. He was on a bike in his neighborhood at midnight. No one in his family could have anticipated this loss. The next morning the top news networks had banners and similar reports that read, “14-year-old boy killed in Englewood.” Tobias Robinson was my cousin.

News organizations thrive on stories of crime and violence. Kenneth Dowler, in his 2003 Media Consumption and Public Attitudes toward Crime and Justice study, attributes this norm to Western society and the popularization of crime talk in books, films, magazines and television. The old saying goes, if it bleeds it leads. Specifically, local news organizations adhere to the age + race + neighborhood + incident equation, or variations of it, to report on stories of racial minorities who have undergone brutality or violence. “Covering crime is the easiest, fastest, cheapest, most efficient kind of news stories for TV stations because it has a one-to-one ratio between making the assignment and getting the story on air” (Grossman, 1997). This study is important for the industry

moving forward because it seeks to first understand and eventually improve the quality and care journalists give violent crime victims and their families by providing insight toward a better model for crime and violence reporting.

Each station that reported on Tobias Robinson's death highlighted the reality of his neighborhood and how it was a high-crime area. A study by Bjornstrom, Kaufman, Peterson, and Slater (2010) details how a societal power system based on the concepts of 'racial threat' and 'racial privilege,' directly led to increased depictions of the victimization of white individuals, and the possible over reporting of crimes committed by African Americans. Thus, making African American and other racial minorities appear deviant, which in many cases makes it appear justifiable that these males were shot and killed. The nature of the reports chalked Robinson's life up as just another kid who was a product of his environment. All five stations failed to provide information about his life. They did not interview family members nor do any additional reporting outside of the Chicago Police Department information emailed to them.

The media portrayals of black men and boys affect individual attitudes about the group. According to a 2015 Racism and Media Textual Analysis by Kassia Kulaszewicz, "The research offers a conclusion, that on average, "black" is used three times more in news reporting than "white." The over usage of the word "black" becomes a racial microaggression because it can condition the mind to associate the word with negative connotation. Patterns of criminalization and justification are exposed. Black men are often criminalized and represented as violent is the media" (Kulaszewicz, 2015).

Local news outlets did not showcase Robinson's life to the public. The news outlets only provided a single story of a complex individual. They reported on him as a

victim. “If news is biased, it is argued, it has less to do with the individuals who process the news and more to do with the organizations, communities, and cultures within which they work” (14) (Macfarlane, 1992).

Author Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie described in her TED Talk the dual danger and power of a single story. She argues, “Power is the ability not just to tell the story of another person, but to make it the definitive story of that person.” According to the [Society of Professional Journalists](#), media professionals should provide context and always be careful not to misrepresent or oversimplify in storytelling. A [2012 Nieman Lab report about crime reporting models](#) suggests more should be done to stretch the molds of traditional news reporting. The article suggests changes can be made by not relying heavily on the police report to tell the story, visiting the crime scene and asking questions the police did not ask.

To determine how journalists frame stories of crime and violence this study aimed to answer:

**RQ1:** What process do television journalists use to produce stories on crime in minority communities?

**RQ2:** How do journalists understand the ways in which story frames impact racial minority communities?

For the fall semester, I interned at Universal Kids, an entity of NBCUniversal. At Universal Kids I served as a creative brand production intern where I pitched and produced visually appealing content for Universal Kids channel. I wrote, produced, and edited scripts and videos for Universal Kids' social media platforms and on-air spots. I also collaborated with Universal Kids' social, digital, and programming teams on creative

production projects. My research project required me to interview 12 journalists and editors about their reporting process as it relates to crime and violence stories. The city of New York and demographics of the people allowed me to interview a solid sample of subjects who have varying ideas and news practices.

The framework for my research is set in framing theory, which is defined as referring “to the process of selecting and highlighting some aspects of a perceived reality and enhancing the salience of an interpretation and evaluation of that reality” (Entman, 1993, p. 52). Everyday reporters, anchors and producers have the power to choose what is newsworthy. Media professionals select the stories of the day and the angles to take on each story. Altheide found that the media’s power to choose news holds weight and has a large influence on public perception. According to Altheide (2006), the words “crime,” “victim,” and “fear” were three of the most commonly used words that have been strongly associated with the news coverage of the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001. The major findings of this study show these specific words were linked to the audience’s increase in fear of terrorism.

In the case of racial minority communities, word choice is vital for perpetuating negative stereotypes. Cynthia Frisby’s (2015) research suggests that black and brown people are often portrayed as criminals or tropes of what their cultures are. “It is through the media that we as consumers of media become exposed to individuals that we would not otherwise encounter in our everyday lives.” The fact is, all stereotypes are not bad, but the interpretation of those ideologies can create damaging psychological consequences (Ericson, 1998).

Creighton et. al. (2014) found that black men are often negatively stereotyped. The study revealed these portrayals may lead not only to criminal activity, but to five separate associations titled the “five D’s: dumb, deprived, dangerous, deviant and disturbed.” Those categorizations can impact self-esteem, future criminal activity, incarceration rates and employment. The ways in which journalists frame stories about community disparities help shape the ways in which the public understands social problems. Researchers use the term comparative risk to explain this phenomenon (Gandy and Li, 2005).

The “if it bleeds, it leads” mentality of television news has become the norm. Stories of blood and crime has captivated news culture and audiences alike because it is easy to produce, and people continuously watch. Schulberg’s (1999) study found that local news is still largely “the superficial and reactive” stories that “require little planning or knowledge from the reporter.”

Viewers watch the news for local coverage. Roper (1985) found broadcast television news is a trusted source that people rely on for information. News organizations are always looking to localize national stories and bring the larger issues closer to home. This type of coverage “has always played an important role in the way a city and region understand its problems, its opportunities and its sense of local identity” (Kaniss, 1991, p. 2). Kaniss also said local news provides different perspectives of dominate national news (1991, p. 2).

The normative practice of crime and violence has created a culture of fear in television news media. People are afraid to leave their homes based primarily on the information given to them on the news. Some people are more inclined to stereotype a

certain group negatively based on their representations on television. Mass media has become a fear-making machine, which in turn has created the problem frame. The problem frame “promotes a discourse of fear that may be defined as the pervasive communication, symbolic awareness and expectation that danger and risk are a central feature of the effective environment” (Altheide, 1997).

Published research on journalists’ ideals when framing stories of racial minorities indicate that journalists include their own biases when crafting these stories. “Biases are normally thought of as the inappropriate intrusion of subjective opinion into an otherwise factual account, and error, as incorrect facts in those accounts. Cognitive biases and errors, in contrast, consist of a variety of ways of thinking (indeed a variety of routine ways of thinking) that constrain one's perceptions and interpretations of the world” (Macfarlane, 1992). Macfarlane used cognitive biases to explain the behaviors of journalists when crafting general news stories.

The findings of the 1997 study, “Race and Risk: Factors Affecting the Framing of Stories About Inequality, Discrimination, and Just Plain Bad Luck,” align with the conclusions of Macfarlane. The authors concluded that race does matter in the newsroom. The race of the victim, source and reporter matters for how stories are constructed and disseminated to the public. This practice is important when highlighting inequality in news and the framing that goes into the stories of minority groups and non-white races/ethnicities. The researchers include factors such as newsroom composition and racial inequality risks as reasons why stories are slanted for minority groups. The researchers coded the number of times journalists emphasized the disparities between white and black people in news stories (Gandy, Kopp, Hands, Frazer, and Phillips, 1997).

Framing theory is key for understanding the realm of how journalists, as individuals, impact the stories they tell. Framing is a part of the gatekeeping process and allows stories to be told in particular ways. A 2014 research study by Michael Brüggemann explains how frame setting and frame sending are practiced in the media. Brüggemann found, “Frame setting implies that journalists mostly frame their coverage in line with their personal interpretations of what is at issue.” All aspects of framing shape the content of news the public receives. (D’Angelo and Kuypers, 2010).

Scholarly research by Dietram (1999) explores how framing can be structured in two ways: the type of frame examined (media frames vs. audience frames) and the way frames are operationalized (independent variable or dependent variable). It is also important to consider the factors that go into the final product for the public. Dietram details the four factors as frame building, frame setting, individual-level processes of framing, and a feedback loop from audiences to journalists. Frames structure both journalistic thinking, patterns of interpretation, and journalistic reporting, patterns of presentation. Journalists do have a stake in the stories they report. Other scholarly work found, “the overwhelming tendency in those articles that involve comparisons between Whites and Blacks is to emphasize the hardships faced by Blacks, rather than the advantages enjoyed by Whites” (Gitlin, 1980). This insight was important for this study because allowed journalists to become aware of the framing disparity and provide opportunity to consciously consider frames in future work. Most of the journalists interviewed said they are combating the framing disparity by crafting people-focused stories.

Research suggests no matter how objective a journalist may try to present themselves; biases do seep into their reporting. “Journalists do much more than simply report news. They also frame and interpret news and, in doing so, shape public perceptions of issues and events” (Schneider, 2012). The key point of Schneider’s study is the othering presented by news organizations, in this case newspapers, in regard to a marginalized group. Media priming also plays an important role into the way stories are framed and presented. It is described as the response by viewers when “exposed to a certain stimulus, this stimulus primes or triggers ideas in the viewer’s mind that are related to what they have just seen or heard in that stimulus” (Foreman, Arteaga, and Collins, 2016). This project used individual journalists to possibly uncover and understand the institutional motive for telling stories in the “age, crime/incident, race” perspective.

News organizations pay too much attention on race distinctions. An average of 41 percent of allotted news time that covered violent crime stories between three local Chicago news outlets depicted black criminals (Entman, 1990). The study did not provide statistics on other races, but it is prevalent that black men are overwhelmingly targeted in coverage of crime reporting. Kulaszewicz dubs this type of reporting as a racial microaggression. Kulaszewicz research (2015) found that, “on average, “black” is used three times, more in news reporting than “white”. The over usage of the word “black” becomes a racial microaggression because it can condition the mind to associate the word with negative connotation. Patterns of criminalization and justification are exposed. Black men are often criminalized and represented as violent in the media” (Kulaszewicz, 2015).

This research project is important to me because of my cousin, but also for the hundreds of thousands of other black and brown boys who did not get their just due from the justice system or local television news. This research is larger than Tobias Robinson. This research is greater than black and white. The research is for the industry at large because journalists should become more cognizant of the role they play when telling stories of people, identities and incidents different than what they are accustomed to. Entman (1992) explored the connection of media and systematic racism. There is a variance of newsworthiness on behalf of different news organizations and that impacts the value of stories told by each outlet. My 14-year-old cousin was born, raised and murdered in the city of Chicago. I cannot change that reality, but I can do my best to understand and help shift the way stories of this realm are told in the future.

It is no secret that black people are overrepresented in the media through portrayals of crime and violence stories. This study was not meant to chronicle why this is the reality in America, but more so, illustrate how journalists create this reality through the framing of text, visuals and broadcasted reports. Negative stereotypes and biases inherently make television news (Pinsker, 2015). This argument showed the salience of race when it comes to the framing of stories. This fact was also explored in my research to uncover how journalists, editors and news organizations unconsciously use race or minority status as a tool to frame stories, which in turn affects the way the public views these communities. Goffman (1974) concludes journalists use a narrative framework for crafting stories popular and important to society.

The research explored the decision-making process for crafting these stories. Previous research from (Gant and Dimmick, 2000) found the planning assignment editor

was solely responsible for reviewing the news to select news story ideas as potential news stories to be evaluated during morning meetings, and the content of newsworthy stories were selected by valuation. It is the responsibility of journalists to be ethical, but also accurate.

In my research, I asked journalists if and how they believe their formula perpetuates negative and positive stereotypes of racial minorities. Interviewees of this study understood the role the overall media plays in perpetuating both positive and negative stereotypes of certain communities, but each communicated how they try to round out a story with details specific to the story and persons involved. Waymer (2009) conducted an auto-ethnography of his hometown of Cincinnati. He found the role, intentional or unintentional, that reporters and journalists play in community and public relations issues. The researcher explored how the coverage in this manner continues to marginalize groups involved and continue the formula often used by television news organizations.

The findings and recommendations of this report will most likely run in trade websites such as the Reynolds Journalism Institute, Nieman Lab or Columbia Journalism Review. The style of writing will be modified to fit the language and format of each professional publication. For example, if published in Nieman Lab, the writing will take an equally authoritative and informative approach in order to fit the format of the publication. The publications mentioned above may publish the entire study or solely recommendations for the industry at large.

## **Methods**

Through semi-structured interviews and the support of previous scholarly work I investigated, interpreted and began to understand the mind of journalists who report on stories of crime and violence victims in racial minority communities. This study was not meant to solely explain framing theory, but to use the theory in addition to the application of real-world experiences to explore the minds of journalists as they report on these stories.

My strategy for recruitment went as followed: I worked independently to secure interview subjects by phone and email. The study called for interviews with 12 journalists (editors and reporters). I found reporters who aligned with the general assignment, crime, and violence beats at local television news outlets in New York. After creating a list of potential subjects based on the above beats, I began emailing and calling reporters to ask for assistance in my research. This process was a rigorous yet rewarding one. Several assignment desks denied me direct contact with reporters by phone, so email was my only way through to possible interviewees.

I persistently followed up by email with more than 30 journalists in New York City. Each week I set a goal to secure at least two interviewees. The method for getting journalists to understand the scope my research and subsequently schedule an interview was hard. Most times, I got no response. Other times, reporters declined to help. Of the journalists that did support, a couple of reporters referred colleagues who are also included in this study. I also asked journalists to share my request for participants with their entire newsroom. Originally, interviews were to be conducted in two-parts. However, in the interest of time I asked most of my questions in one-sitting.

The 12 reporters and executives interviewed in this study will be addressed as reporter 1, reporter 2 and so forth for confidentiality reasons. On average, these journalists have worked in the industry for four years. The most experienced journalists have more than 20 years of local news reporting. The journalists interviewed come from six local news outlets in New York (News 12, WABC, Chasing News, WNBC, WCBS, WPIX.) Experience of the group range from senior and mid-level, but all have covered general assignment and crime related beats.

## **Findings**

**RQ1:** What process do television journalists use to produce stories on crime in minority communities?

To answer **RQ1** I asked journalists for the beginning, middle, and end of their story creation process. I listened for the sources they spoke to, their protocol in the field, how they interacted with editors, and tools they used to better tell the story tasked to them. I asked journalists to provide two examples of stories involving crime and violence. Some of the examples given: death of a famous New York chef, child hit and killed at a bus stop, and a jewelry heist in the Diamond District. This process provided a holistic view into the mind and factors that influence the resulted formula, if any, of these stories. This hands-on approach allowed journalists to truly analyze their role in the way stories are presented to the public.

My goal for the research project was to ask journalists their own formula for crafting violence and crime stories, and discover if it is an individual, news organization or industry at large equation. What I found was a sweet surprise. All 12 journalists and editors interviewed for this study stated the intention for telling crime and violence

stories is to always make people the forefront of the story. Each interviewee echoed the importance of speaking to witnesses in addition to authorities. Based on the media aftermath of my cousin's experience, I was shocked to understand how much these journalists care about the work their doing. Journalists detailed, in many variations, the following process:

1. Editor assigns reporter a crime or violence story.
2. Reporter does as much preliminary research before contacting official sources.
3. Reporter goes out into the field to gather witness accounts, all while coordinating with the assignment desk on statements from officials.
4. On occasion, reporters reach out to experts who can speak to the topic at hand and add an extra element of character to the story.
5. When getting eyewitness interviews, generally reporters filter and find people who actually saw the incident. Reporters said they strictly avoid hearsay.
6. Reporter/photographer gets broll of the scene.
7. Reporter typically types script and edits/photographer edits video in the field.
8. The script gets sent to editors for review. This process may include multiple rounds of editing.
9. Reporter reads edited script for on-air newscast(s).
10. Once a story is off air and onto the web there is a small chance for follow up stories. Follow up is at the discretion of the news director depending on news of the day.

**RQ2:** How do journalists understand the ways in which story frames impact racial minority communities?

To answer **RQ2** I made sure journalists were comfortable sharing with me honest experiences. I ensured a safe interview environment by reinforcing the fact that the ideas they gave were for research purposes and would not be broadcasted. At the end each interview I disclosed my purpose for research and what I hoped to discover. Based on the interviews I conducted, I was pleased to learn that journalists in New York City not only recognize the disparity of more reporting in communities of color, but by telling the story correctly it may lessen the long-term impact. Each interviewee said they cover lots of crime and violence, but the way to combat the negative impacts associated with the quantity of coverage is to improve the quality by telling the story through the lens of the people involved and/or afflicted.

The research proves that story framing does matter to journalists. Collectively, they are aware of how their work affects those who see it. The research found that reporters recognize the problem and are doing what they can on an individual level to ease the effects of the overall industry problem. Reporters mentioned pitching follow ups as a way to counter negative frames and provide closure to families. Other remedies included speaking up in editorial meetings to suggest different angles and doing the work in the field to talk to as many people connected to the issue as possible.

Each journalist I spoke to gave a different and unique perspective to my research questions. I appreciated how they took their time to answer questions because it showed me they were actually thinking and working to provide thoughtful answers. I valued the examples of work and their ability to not only talk about their process but speak to the

feedback they received from viewers following certain stories. I really respected when reporters were honest about the negative feedback on their work, and what they do to constantly combat storytelling mistakes. Overall, I see that journalists are cognizant of their position for telling stories about the public to the public.

**Researcher and Journalists:** Two-part interviews

**Part one (will answer RQ1):** Establishing means

Researcher to journalists:

1. Tell me about yourself (education, hometown, professional career, years at the outlet).

**The researcher will use this time to introduce herself and establish an honest and judgement free interview session.**

2. Please define the following terms in your own words: racial minority, violence, violence victim, crime, framing.
3. For crime and violence stories what kind of sources do you go to? Is it a ready-made list?
  - a. If there is a list, does it come from other reporters or is it your own? How did you create it?
4. Does your news organization have specific guidelines for covering crime stories? Do your editors suggest certain things need to be in a story?
5. I asked you to bring at least two samples of your crime and/or violence victim stories. Please tell me why you chose the articles you have.

6. For the first story, please walk me through your reporting process after assignment. Be as detailed as your memory allows.
7. For the second story, please walk me through your reporting process after assignment. Be as detailed as your memory allows.
8. How do you know when a story is complete?

**The researcher will repeat questions six and seven if more examples are given.**

9. Can you select the story you want to cover each day? Most days? What does that process look like each day?
10. When you write these stories, what are the factors that contribute to making the final product? Ex: deadline, news director, access to sources, content?
11. How do you, the (insert title), frame and approach crime stories of minorities communities? Tell me about your pre-reporting, source gathering process and methods of production.
12. Did you learn this approach in college or on the job?
13. How do you, the (insert title), frame and approach violence victim stories of minority communities? Tell me about your pre-reporting, source gathering process and methods of production.
14. Do you think news organizations, including your own, have a formula for reporting on crime and violence victim stories? Why or why not? What is the formula?
15. In your practice, how have you changed the frames over the last few years? Can be yes or no.

16. Is there anything that I didn't touch on or something you would like to expand upon that I did not ask you about your framing process.

**Part two (will answer RQ2):** Framing matters

1. How does your identity (cultural, social, economic) factor into the stories you report on? Has it ever occurred to you?
2. How do you feel, or do you feel your education plays a role in your ideologies and style of reporting? What have you learned?
3. In what ways do the stories you report impact the communities affected?
4. During the last interview you brought in examples of your work. To reiterate, how do you navigate the formula/news framing process?
5. who are the main subjects for crime and violence stories? I know you may go to police report but who else do you reach out to?
6. Do you try to revise the formula to add a personal touch?
7. What do you think of the current formula?
8. Do you recognize the disparity in reporting between white and non-white violence victims and reporting of criminals?
9. Does the normalization of the formula make it acceptable? Why or Why Not?
10. Do you want to revamp it? How would you do it?
11. How reflective are you of your own biases while reporting on these stories?
12. If white: how do you approach covering racial minority communities? How is it different from stories of other minorities or white people?

13. If non-white and minority: how do you approach covering racial minority communities? Have you ever inserted yourself into a story because of the shared experiences?
14. Is there anything that I didn't touch on or something you would like to expand upon that I did not ask you about your reflective processes.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **CHECK YOURSELF BEFORE YOU WRECK SOMEONE ELSE:** Protocol for Journalists Reporting on Crime and Violence in Minority Communities

Author Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie described in her TED Talk the dual danger and power of a single story. She argues, “Power is the ability not just to tell the story of another person, but to make it the definitive story of that person.” When my cousin was murdered on July 18, 2018 his definitive story became “Boy, 14, shot to death in West Englewood.” This formulaic process did not showcase his life or include follow up a week, month or year after his death. In the eyes of the media, public, and criminal justice system, he was just another 14-year-old boy who succumbed to violence in the city of Chicago.

The media has that power every day to decide how a person’s story is broadcasted to the public. The question for television journalists becomes, how do they execute character-driven storytelling amid deadline, sources, managers, and the host of other factors that impact them on a daily basis? How can they shape stories with the people affected in mind?

The answer to those questions is a complex one. However, in interviews with journalists and producers of local news in New York City that have produced reports of crime and violence, they provided an inkling of hope and protocol for journalists. These professionals emphasized the following strategies for journalists when covering crime and violence stories: **slow down, check yourself and your newsroom, and use discretion.**

Many of the journalists and executives interviewed dubbed deadline as most invasive to a reporters’ workflow. In a cyclical television news process the goal is to

make air every time. Sometimes a reporter's sources, research, and delivery are driven by the deadline alone. A reporter from News 12 identified deadline as a high-ranking factor for the framing of one-dimensional stories, but he also identified managers as the moving force behind such hard deadlines because "they are the people that decide what gets put on air and how it gets put on air."

A close second to deadline was access to sources. In sensitive cases related to crime or violence the reality can be that victims, victims' family members, or suspects don't want to talk to reporters. A journalist from WABC best described it as, "dropping into people's lives at the most devastating time," which is why it is even more pertinent to get the story correctly in the eyes of the public. Through all the interviews, there was an emphasis on considering all sides of the equation. Meaning, in particular cases, think with empathy above editorial.

Reporters hit roadblocks in their news process often, but these professionals identified communication as a key for combating flustering moments that make or break journalism. One reporter at News 12 said, "In everything you do you have to find a way to maintain communication with your producer and build relationships with other reporters because they're also on the scene." She went on to say that the job of the producer and assignment desk is to help reporters out in the field, so if reporters get stuck, they have support in-house. Other interviewees echoed this idea and added that it is important to build relationships with other reporters at different outlets because they too are resources to help you get the job done.

When it came down to understanding if local news organizations have a formula for framing crime and violence, the answer was not so black and white. Many journalists

made a point to say they try their best to deviate from the formula and include more human elements, but they failed to provide clear ingredients of the formula. The age + race + neighborhood + incident equation revealed to be true to some extent. Journalists understood that the formula above is often done in the interest of time and lack of sources, but they also recognized that formulas in news reporting are easy to produce and they work in the eyes of most viewers. “If it bleeds, it leads.”

One reporter at News 12 synthesized the formula best, “The concrete variables that never change is the formula. The police never change. We can’t go to air with something that’s not confirmed. Now, as far as deviating from the formula, every time we go out there, we’re taught not to tell the story in our mind and write the script around that,” he said. “When you get out there things change so you have to let the story make an impression on you. That’s what we try to do, but sometimes stories are similar. If you dig deep enough there is always something that is different.”

Framing factors include the people involved and the authorities who provide clarity to the story. One of the general assignment reporters interviewed mentioned how in New York City the police have the ultimate authority, and the voice of the department often overshadows the voice of the people. He stressed the importance of finding a balance in reporting and emphasizing the humans affected.

“The police are the gatekeepers, and sometimes that’s not good because they are looking out for themselves and they might not share information that makes them look bad. It is a battle having to hold the gatekeepers accountable,” A General Assignment Reporter at News 12 said. “The gatekeepers influence what information I have... If the police don’t give all the information that affects my frame of the story.”

When telling stories of crime and violence write for your readers not your sources. Journalists must understand that storytelling is a process that involves multiple players. It's like peeling back the layers of an onion. Things may seem one way in the beginning of reporting and shift completely toward the middle and end. The ever-changing nature of reporting requires journalists to be even more intentional about what sources they use to better explain the story. The reporting process must be equally accurate and honest to the people it touches. Essentially, the storytelling process must be careful and purposeful otherwise it will ensue negative impacts among viewers.

Many of the interviewees identified that stories of this nature could be done better if more follow up is done to combat definitive story lines. However, interviewees expressed resistance for follow up on behalf of their news organization because of power dynamics. They described their stations as either manager-led or producer-led. According to these journalists, producer-led newsrooms are more open to follow up and investigation, whereas manager-led newsrooms are more likely to be concerned about ratings and the "if it bleeds it leads" reality of crime coverage. In most cases, journalists expressed that follow up stories are rare.

Journalists interviewed for this study argued that storytelling is about finding the individual affected and tailoring the message around it or the larger issue. It's about the people first, and the people sometimes get lost in formulaic approaches, deadlines, and in edits by managers. Nevertheless, reporters interviewed for this study identified the following strategies for creating more multi-dimensional stories related to crime and violence:

**One**, slow down. Don't let your lesson about catering to your audience be an afterthought. By slowing down in your reporting process you are able to think about the humans involved and how you would want this story covered if it happened to you or someone you loved. An Emmy Award-winning anchor and reporter admitted, "one thing that none of us do well is follow up." Slowing down could also mean not being too eager to continue on to the next story. Take time to digest what you've reported on and see if there's more that needs to be uncovered.

A journalist at WABC shared how she slows down and thinks about the humans involved, "I try to memorialize a life instead of just recording a death. And I feel it's a big difference," she said. "Some people do it like 24-year-old Johnson died. But I try to say, the 24-year old-father, who had three jobs. You're putting a little bit of a human element."

One reporter described character-driven stories as reporters being the autobiographer of the publics' story. She believes, "Once you have your character you don't speak for them, you let them tell you what to say... You're just telling their story through their eyes."

Slowing down the process means taking your time, literally. All interviewees admitted that a story is never complete. There is always room for follow up. Just because a newscast is over, doesn't mean the story ends with it. Don't be afraid to pitch follow up stories with different angles that weren't previously covered. Granted, there isn't much time for follow up, and interviewees said especially in New York City, news of the day wins. But, slowing down mid-reporting is such an important part of the news gathering process.

Slow down and put yourself in someone else's shoes. The rush of deadline and the pressure of managing editors are all temporary. The lasting effects of a reporter's work is in the lives they impact because of the work they do.

**Two**, check yourself and your newsroom. Many journalists interviewed self-proclaimed to "check themselves" in the field. To check themselves, they said they put their biases out of the story, they understood their position and how their personal identity may inherently affect the way a story is framed, and ultimately scrapping it so that it doesn't seep into the story they are trying to tell. A part of checking yourself and your newsroom including your superiors is to understand that all things work together for the whole. News reporting is a process, and sometimes mistakes are made when reporters think more about the factors driving the story rather than the story itself.

"I think it's important for young journalists to think about the story they are covering and not go into the story with a checklist of things to get. That's really the wrong approach," said one award-winning storyteller. "A lot of reporting goes wrong and is less effective because they don't think about the victims or the subjects in the story. Quite honestly, some journalists use the victims and the circumstances as props for a made-for-tv movie about themselves."

Don't be so pressed to get every fact into a story. Checking yourself means prioritizing the information you have. One journalist simply put it, "people connect with people." How are you using people to tell the story and not bombarding the viewer with facts because an editor said so or because it's the word of officials?

The most self-aware part of reporting is knowing what to include and what not to include. This idea was reverberated amongst all interviewees. By checking yourself in

real-time, you check your newsroom. You aren't afraid to provide diverse ideas in morning meetings, you won't be fearful of adding new elements to a story, and you won't back away from digging deeper in the interest of time.

One reporter shared with me a time she didn't check herself when covering a story about welfare benefits. The reporter made the mistake of interviewing only Black people. It wasn't until after the story was published, she received backlash about perpetuating negative stereotypes. It was in that moment, she said she vowed to always consider the stakeholders and how stories will be perceived to the public. She has never made that misjudgment again. By checking herself, she in turn checked her newsroom.

Diverse thoughts and people are necessary for the advancement of any news organization. "We talk about sensitivity to victims and whether or not you should use the race of a suspect. It is something that came from my manager/news director," said a reporter from WPIX. "It is something that she's aware of and has shared with the entire newsroom." Checking yourself requires journalists to be aware of how something might be interpreted at every step of the reporting process.

**Three**, use your discretion. This point ties into prioritizing your information. Everything gathered in the process is not news. When thinking of the implications of how things can be interpreted, ask yourself if certain information needed. One reporter described it as a delicate balance. The industry standard is fairness and objectivity. Be cognizant how certain words or phrases can impact the viewer and persons affected.

Discretion is an important step in the news creation process. For example, a 10-year-old boy was killed in Brooklyn after an SUV jumped the curb during the driver's medical episode. One reporter mentioned that another local station included in their

reporting that the boy was looking down at his phone at the time of the incident. This reporter said she didn't include that fact into the story because she felt like it diminished the child's death.

Each journalist confirmed in their own way why it's necessary not to lose sight of the people you're working for. Consider the emotions of the people you spoke to, and that's how you use your discretion in real-time. This does not mean coddle your subjects or leave out information relevant to the story, but it does go back to thinking with empathy over editorial. All journalists stressed the value of people-driven stories. The human experience is what journalists strive to tell. One reporter at WCBS described this process as getting people to feel and care about both sides of the story.

One journalist said it perfectly, "Overall, you have to think of it like this: did you feel what the people were feeling enough in order to relay it to people who weren't there?" That's the job of a journalist, and that is why people and stories matter more than the formulaic desensitizing equation executed because of editors, deadline, sources, etc.

In recent years, journalists are becoming more reflective of the work they are doing. This approach is more self-aware and requires journalists to think about their production process while they work in order to combat care-related mistakes. It is a movement scholars are calling delayed-gratification or slow journalism. Megan Le Masurier described in her study of slow journalism that this method involves discovering multiple perspectives through ethics of care, "the Slow movement itself, is more a critical orientation to the effects of speed on the practice of journalism." If the frame of my cousin's murder was done in the spirit of slow journalism, his depiction would've

been more mindful of who he was, considered the feelings of his loved ones, and included follow up as needed to better broadcast his life to the public.

The initial questions of the study were to explain how do journalists execute character-driven storytelling amid deadline, sources, managers, and the host of other factors that impact them on a daily basis? And how can journalists shape stories with the people affected in mind? The answer lies in journalists doing their job better by following the recommendations of fellow journalists, and also by keeping in mind who they are working for. According to the [Society of Professional Journalists](#), the first principle of ethics is to seek truth and report it by providing context, and “taking special care not to misrepresent or oversimplify in promoting, previewing or summarizing a story.” So, in all cases, it’s better to check yourself first before you wreck someone else.

## **APPENDIX I**

### **WNBC – Reporter 1**

#### **Terms:**

Racial minority – I feel like my view on minorities has changed since living in New York because there are so many minorities around. But race, obviously you know what race is and minority is very difficult to define and that's why I'm skipping around. I feel like my view set here has changed. I think if you would've asked me that growing up in California, I would've said African American. Here, it is so diverse that I would say African Americans, Hispanics, Asians, go down the list. In New York the city is so diverse you bump into everyone and you hear every language walking down the street.

Violence – anyone lashing out; verbal or physical

Violence victim – someone who says that happened to them. With our journalism background I do think you have to be weary of what people are saying, question and verify what they're saying because not everyone who says they are a victim are a victim.

Crime – something that you shouldn't do. It can be any and everything. It's the wrong part of right.

Framing – I like to walk in without a frame, and maybe that's because I cover too much crime in NYC.

#### **Sources:**

Every day is different. Each morning we have our morning meeting where we get assigned stories. If the story is here in NYC, I would do a lot of research on my own then reach out to my sources to help fill in the gaps. On occasion, they will give me information that will help and that I can share with everyone else. Last week for instance, I covered a story about a chef, who initially went missing, but soon it turned into a criminal case when they found him deceased. We found out through our police sources that he was found deceased in a room with a naked woman and she told the police what happened. If it wasn't for our sources, we wouldn't have had that information to help flush out those details.

Like anyone else in a new market, you build sources as you go along through your reputation and introductions. Fortunately, I work with a lot of welcoming people and they've introduced me to a lot of people. Also, I've gotten sources by being myself and calling them up on the phone and talking about everything and anything.

#### **Guideline for covering crime:**

No, but we do have an open-door policy. If you are out and seeing something report back into your people. We don't have specific guidelines, but we were hired with the knowledge that we're experienced, and we know what to do. They can direct sometimes, but we already know what to do.

#### **Story example 1:**

In this city when you think something is one thing it can rapidly change into something else. So, in that instance, I didn't do the initial story. I picked it up a couple days later. The original story was a high-profile chef went missing. The police sent out an alert and by the time I got the story he was missing, and I was sent out to do an additional story about that. While we were out trying to talk to his neighbors, someone emailed the assignment desk and said a body was found close by. When we got there, we saw pretty intense police presence and while working the scene and talking to sources we verified it was the chef's body.

#### **Describe the scene:**

We were just going to report it as a body found. But, after talking to people and neighbors they said they were kicked out of their homes. I ran into a neighbor who had video of the body coming out of the building. That neighbor said women were questioned that night. At 3 o'clock police confirmed that the guy was dead. At 3:30 they confirmed it was the chef. I had to rewrite that story three times before the 4-o'clock newscast. I rewrote it for the last time at 3:40, fronted it live on TV at 4, and then we got even more details from a working source between then and my next hit at 5:30. Then we had to refresh everything and put the new details in.

#### **Story example 2:**

There was a story a couple of years ago that became a part of the national dialogue about violence in schools. I got a tip that a student stabbed another student in class. It was a high school stabbing, and we were able to confirm that later with the police. It is because of the relationships I developed on the ground, we were able to break that story and the first to have a picture of the weapon that was used. Most recently, I covered the trial related to the stabbing and the student who did it was convicted and sent away.

There was a lot of twist and turns along that process. When a report like that comes in, everyone floods the scene. The attacker was a victim of bullying. He's gay and he felt like people were picking on him that day, so he lashed out. He'd purchased the weapon a couple of weeks before from Amazon because he was sick of being picked. He pulled it out that day killed one classmate and wounded another.

#### **Story completion:**

They're never really complete. In this case, even after the trial there were more details, we didn't learn that day. It's a reminder that you always have to keep pushing. I feel like in NY there is so much focus on moving forward that sometimes the little details slide.

#### **Story selection:**

They are assigned to me. In NYC the news of the day rules. What you do is you have to send an email prior to 8:30 describing what you want to do and then there's a meeting at nine where everybody discusses the ideas and then you're assigned generally by 9:30. Other places I've worked in, especially in Atlanta, the atmosphere was nice. Everybody would gather in the room, but you would kind of rapid fire your ideas around the room. It felt very cohesive.

**Follow up:**

It depends. In New York City, the new of the day wins. So, if President Trump flies into town, guess what, everything else gets blown out because he's in town.

**Contributing factors:**

I'm constantly working on deadline and that's the biggest hurdle. In NYC, it's also traffic. Getting around is extremely. It's difficult getting stuck in traffic. So, once you are somewhere you need to stay somewhere, and you just have to work the deadlines that you have.

**Changing delivery:**

Before I would say, 17-year-old died. Now, as a parent you're like, 17-year-old died like you feel it. I feel it in my soul. I think the emotion you have behind some of the things you're reporting changes.

**Identity:**

Today is a great example of how my background was beneficial and helping me work on the story because I speak Spanish. If I didn't know Spanish, my photographer and I wouldn't have been able to tap into that part of our community.

**Education and reporting:**

It makes me want to dig deeper into something that really care that whatever I put on TV is only going to be a minute long, I will have a desire to know much more about the topic, and maybe sometimes when I'm done recording it I'll do more research too so I have a better background. I think that's because of the skill set that I learned. You don't stop you keep digging and you kind of try and figure out how to well out there that has not been uncovered.

**Manager led newsrooms:**

My last newsroom is an example of producer led. My current newsroom is manager led and they decide what goes on tv.

**Formula:**

No, I don't think there's a formula. Formula can have a negative connotation. I would call it the basics. It's just the way they do your job, and, you know, when I think a formula, I think of people saying like oh you lead every newscast with a package or live reporter with the package. And then after that you go to a crime story and another reporter package. That process can be detrimental to the news business if you operate that way because I feel like every day should feel fresh and different. And I do think a lot of organizations to suffer from a formula in that respect. But I don't think storytelling per se, is formula.

**Coverage disparities:**

It's the headline that's the first grab of attention. We cover things in all communities, but generally minority stories.

**Final thoughts:**

It's important to have a diverse workforce white people, young and old, in the middle. Those experiences help shape storytelling. And those things are critical. I think newsrooms have identified that and they're pursuing it.

**WNBC – Anchor and Reporter 2****Reporting Process:**

The challenge is gathering the facts. I try to complete whole pictures as much as possible. Listening is key. I go off the police report, but it may look different when I get on the scene. Location, circumstances and now video needs to be evaluated...this process of doing this goes against the norm.

That's storytelling: gathering and reporting what you know.

**Contributing factors:**

The biggest factor for me is loss of life. Deadline, sources, managers and content all factor into the final product. Another factor is location and circumstances. A crime in Central Park gets more attention than a crime in prospect park in Brooklyn. I'm not sure why that is but there is a difference in importance for the station and public and how/if it gets reported.

**Biggest challenge:**

I have to find a balance. I might have to hold some information back for clarification.

**Identity:**

I bring my knowledge and background of who I am, certain neighborhoods, et. to a story because of my cultural history. They teach you in school to stay objective but what really is objectivity? I do try to present non-biased information. My position as a man, black man and father keep me well rounded and add perspective to the stories I'm working on if it relates.

**Formula:**

The fact is certain things are driven by the news of the day. Yes, there is a formula. The formula may be right or wrong, but it definitely shapes the newscast.

Ex: Man bit dog is more interesting to viewer than dog bit man. It grabs the attention and gets people to watch.

**Story completion:**

A story is complete at the time but there is always room for follow up. (gave example about the man wrongly convicted but still not given a new trial even with new evidence 25 years later.)

**Follow up:**

One thing that none of us do well is follow up. Follow up depends on the story and if something emerges.

**Final thoughts:**

What do you keep in the back of your mind when telling stories of crime and violence? I try to stay balanced based on the info at hand. I try to think of the people involved and what this story does for the public.

ex: environment protest video of the black girl that didn't end up getting arrested.

**WCBS – Reporter 3**

**Terms:**

Racial minority – person of color  
Violence – psychical confrontation  
Crime – breaking the law  
Framing – the way the story is told

**Sources:**

Sources come with the job and with experience. I speak to people on the street, The Office of the Deputy Commissioner, Public Information, and other experts on the topic at hand. It depends on what the subject of the story is.

**Story completion:**

A story is never really complete. Sometimes there is room for follow up.

**Follow up:**

Follow up is possible, but it all depends on the day. The managers prioritize what is important, and sometimes follow up isn't possible.

**Pitching stories:**

So, when I come in at 2 p.m. we have a meeting like a planning meeting. Every day I stuff to pitch, two or three stories every day. Some of them I am very passionate about and some of them are kind of like eh.

**Contributing factors:**

Deadline is the heaviest weighing factor. Of course, there are time constraints. We have one minute 40 second packages and sometimes the managers let you go to two minutes depending on the story. I have a photographer now. In my first two roles I had to shoot and edit everything. I've learned how to, you know, effectively communicate with them, and relinquish some because you're not the only one putting it together now.

**Formula:**

I wouldn't say it's a formula, but I will say there are ingredients that make the story. It's a process in the newsroom and in the field. The assignment desk helps field a lot of those stories and once they are assigned to reporters they go through revision and editing.

**Framing:**

I am self-aware and aware of circumstances wherever I am. I think that people identify with people. I always try to frame the story I'm doing in the eyes of people. I start with a really compelling interview to show the human side of it, and not making it so ab ab ab. I want to make it more of a story because it effects people. I want people to have an emotional reaction to it. I want them to see both sides. I want them to care about both sides. I want them to feel.

**What does that process look like?** It's very cut and dry. I try to keep in mind the implications my stories have to me and the public. I try to keep in mind how my story telling framed and conceptually in terms of a broader picture. I try to get nuances of the situation so I'm not being insensitive.

**Identity:**

I'm a white girl from Connecticut. I'm definitely aware of that. It's hard not to be aware of who I am going into minority communities. It was a culture shock. I was having an experience working in the Bronx every single day and working on crime stories. It was a great way to kind of throw me into a scene and environment that I was there not familiar with at all. It made me more aware and give me a better, you know, not some narrow view of things.

**Impact:**

I hope that I help people and it has a positive effect.

**Growth:**

A year or so ago, there was a federal shut down and it was affecting food stamps. I ended up going to the offices and it turned out that all the people that wanted to talk were black. I didn't realize, and the next day all of the Facebook comments said that I was racist because I used all black people. It was teachable moment. I learned and grew from it. I had a sheltered upbringing, so I'm trying to make sure I don't go into anything with that attached to me. I try to learn from situations like this and become better at it.

**WPIX – Reporter 4****Impact:**

I've told stories in so many different communities, on so many different issues, and across the country. But I wanted to be able to provide a service in my hometown and to the city that I grew up in. And I do cover a lot of crime. Unfortunately, that's just the way of the world, however, it is so meaningful to me when I am able to do stories that matter, or stories that come back with a result for stories to come back with some sort of change.

**Formula:**

I would say they have specific guidelines. We do a public service to the community. So, whether they're in danger because there might be a gunman on the street, I'll go out there, whether someone was injured, or, you know, family has died. That's our responsibility to

cover that story. Especially as it impacts those neighborhoods. So, yeah, I mean, I think that as a rule of thumb, some of the guidelines when you're covering stories, whether it be crime or anything, but as you stick with fine, you always want to make sure that you probably get information from police directly. You can just listen to what people on the streets are telling you. That's hearsay. It's making sure that you're reporting facts and not opinion. But it is important to go into the neighborhood and get perspective and talk with the community and see what's going on because those are your firsthand witness account, those people affected.

**Story process:**

And then, of course, you want to talk to the family, you know, it's good. It's the hardest part of my job. And what family, you know, after they've lost a loved one. They may not want to talk about this, but here I am knocking at the door.

**Humanizing:**

I try to memorialize a life instead of just recording a death. And I feel it's a big difference. Some people do it like 24-year-old Johnson died. But I try to say, the 24-year old-father, who had three jobs. You're putting a little bit of a human element. Right? You know, we're all human. So, everyone appreciates the human element of many kinds of stories. The fact is that sometimes it's not a conscious decision by the reporter or the manager to include that human value into the story, and how sometimes it's just that this is what happened. This is what we know, based on police report, or speaking to witnesses on the street.

**Story completion:**

The story never really ends. I think the kind of ends when the bad guy is in police custody. But it still, depending on the story. There are different layers. We may have to come back and look at, you know, so, you know, again, it's never really over.

**Contributing factors:**

Not getting enough information for police is a challenge. So sometimes it's not getting the right information from police. And I mention in all fairness to them, sometimes they can't really share the information to us because they are still gathering their story. Your deadlines are definite. You can't hold up the story of the day or, you know, breaking news story or you got to get on the air.

**News 12 – Reporter 5**

**Reporting process:**

I report in the community that I grew up in, and I think that is a benefit. I have the context of knowing different neighborhoods, how it's pronounced and how the people who live there identify themselves.

**Terms:**

Racial minority – person or community within a larger community that is not good representative of the whole.

Violence – any sort of behavior that hurts another. It can be physical, mental or emotional.

**Sources:**

Here in New York, it's the police. I don't personally agree with that because we don't report on something as official until the police say something. We typically don't go with outside sources unless it's overwhelming evidence.

**Guidelines for covering crime:**

They're definitely guidelines. That goes through whether or not officials have confirmed it. However, there is flexibility if I believe something, I can push for it. Generally speaking, in New York a lot of the news flows through the police. The police are the gatekeepers, and sometimes that's not good because they are looking out for themselves and they might not share information that makes them look bad. It is a battle having to hold the gatekeepers accountable. We really should report on them not from them.

**Gatekeeping and framing:**

Sometimes they won't release all the information and at times they might even twist information knowing that we as journalists rely on it. I still have to report on it even if it's not the entire truth. The gatekeepers influence what information I have. And really my job is getting the information out there. If the police don't give all the information that affects my frame of the story. It's our job to sift through that when they aren't entirely truthful and really press them on things. In my story I'll say this is what the police say, but it doesn't line up with what witnesses say.

**Story process:**

I get assigned a story. I do my initial research to check it out before I go out. When I get there, I access the situation for police, blood, bodies, etc. Then, I the people on the ground to piece together what happened. A lot of times it can be hearsay, but I try to get eyewitnesses. All while, confirming information with the police.

**Follow up:**

There are multiple layers to follow up. Once the story is done for the day, I might follow up with a perp walk or anchors might share new details as they arise.

**Contributing factors:**

The deadline. Where I work, we are deadline driven. I'm always working to get something up on the air. Deadlines are the driving factor. After that it is getting sources and reputable information. Also, it is the people involved. An innocent bystander affected is a much bigger deal, in the eyes of my manager, than a person killed involved in a gang. I'm not sure how I feel about that, but that is just what it is. We're not as enamored story if it was a kid walking down the street who happened to get shot. It makes people think it could've been anyone.

**Formula:**

It's kind of like a guideline. It happens in a case by case basis. It also depends on what else is happening that day. If we have a lot of other things covered. It also affects whether or not we cover the crime. We are constantly pushing content to make deadline. The characters are an influence, they aren't a major influence, but we do take them into account.

**Expanding upon emphasis:**

I'm going to tell you what I think. I am not justifying it. I think the distinction is that a perceived innocent bystander resonates with the audience because it could've been them. Whereas, gang related is targeted, and it makes it seem like people are fighting and it's their business not ours as the public. If it affects the general public, they worry. If it doesn't affect the general public the people don't worry.

**Identity:**

I haven't thought too much about that. I empathize more with people in diverse socioeconomic backgrounds, but it doesn't affect my coverage of it.

**Impact:**

A lot of times people say journalists only report on the bad things, and we perpetuate the bad stereotypes. I don't like reporting on crime, but it drives ratings and people actually do watch it. It is attention grabbing. I see the narrative, and I don't enjoy that. I don't agree that we only cover bad things because I do cover good and happier stories.

At the end of the day we are rating driven. We have to go with what works and what people watch, and a lot of times people watch crime and violence. It does come from some truth. If it bleeds it leads. I personally, doesn't think it affects people on a day-to-day basis to know about all of this crime. At the end of the day, I do think it's just about ratings. For example, they make out rain coverage to be a big thing and it's not. We take that to another level, and we emphasize it because people watch. It comes down to dollars and cents. It leads to more advertising revenue.

**Reflexivity:**

I keep an open mind. I try to understand where I come from. I try to see how people are perceived and what they perceive of me. I can see why a community might be distrustful or me, but I keep my head down and do the work to prove them different.

**Final thoughts:**

I do want to point out that it is important to have relationships with community leaders. They speak on behalf of the whole. Otherwise, the only voice you have is the official narrative that the authorities give and that's not fair. Give the people a fair voice. Give them their say. The narrative of the media only being there when bad things happen is not true. I cover plenty of great stories covering good things in the community.

**Terms:**

Racial minority – person of color  
Violence – crime  
Crime - violence  
Violence victim – survivor  
Framing – how the shot is framed

**Sources:**

We have police sources, family members of the victim, and the Core of Violence System.

**Guideline for covering crime:**

As a professional I just know. There are some personal guidelines that I have, and there are some station guidelines when it comes to sexual assault, minors, etc.

**Story example 1:**

A few years ago, when Eric Garner was killed in Staten Island, I covered that story. People called the assignment desk and said they saw police kill a guy. We called DCPI and they didn't have any information about it, but since we got so many calls, we decided to go check it out. We got to the scene and immediately began interviewing people who were there and looking for officials.

**Story process:**

I take the lead on my stories. I sent back a summary to my newsroom of what I found and what witnesses and police said, UGC video and police statements.

**Story selection:**

I pitch stories every day. 60 percent of the time I'm doing a story I pitched. I also like to do things that's enterprise.

**Story completion:**

For tv, it's over when my hit is over. However, there's always room for follow up. My managers make that decision.

**Contributing factors:**

Sources and working with my colleague who shoot and edit it. Finding people to interview is the hardest part.

**Formula:**

I don't want to call it a formula, but I will say there are certain elements that typically need to be included in a crime story. The basics of what happened, where, when, who, and proper attribution. There is definitely a level of standard I would say. There are certain elements that go into every crime story because sometimes you might not know all the details.

### **Anything missing?**

I mean there are conversations we have in our newsroom. I can't speak to everyone else. We talk about sensitivity to victims and whether or not you should use the race of a suspect. It is something that came from my manager/news director. It is something that she's aware of and has shared with the entire newsroom.

### **Identity:**

I think that my background makes me empathetic to people who may come from similar backgrounds. For example, doing a story about women. It's not just an abstract issue because I am a woman and an African American woman.

### **Education:**

My college education stressed the honor code of ethics. That standard is something I carry with me as a journalist.

### **Impact:**

There's a big impact. My work can help inform people about what's going on in their world. I help people understand what the news means for them.

### **Revamp:**

I think I always try to personalize the story as much as I can. Instead of giving basic details, I try to go a step beyond that.

### **Disparity in coverage:**

I'm going to humanize a victim and tell a little more about who they are regardless of race.

### **Reflective:**

I am aware of my biases. We're all biased, but recognizing the bias allows me to check myself. That's why we have script approval and managers who read over things.

### **Final thoughts:**

We need to make sure that these newsrooms are diverse. They are not as diverse as they could be. The more diversity you have will help foster these kinds of conversations.

## **News 12 – Reporter 7**

### **Terms:**

Racial minority – brown

Violence - city

Crime – city

Framing – finding out what's the most exciting thing about this story?

### **Sources:**

When it comes to crime it's typically breaking news and a follow up. Here, it's police and people on the street. We call DCPI for updates, but they send out a sheet with information

and it'll say if they're looking for somebody. The third layer to that is your advocacy groups.

**Guideline for covering crime:**

Typically, it's obvious what's the news aspect is. We don't show bodies. We show bodies covered and sometimes we show blood. I guess what's extremely unique about our operations is that the reporters really cover their day. We are MMJ reporters. We don't have photographers. Go out and get a story when you come in. And then you pick a camera and you shoot, write, and edit yourself.

In everything you do you have to find a way to maintain communication with your producer and build relationships with other reporters because they're also on the scene.

**Story completion:**

Obviously, you'll never be able to tell every little thing. You're not the paper. I think everybody has a different approach to writing their story. I know with my story as for me, it's more of an organic process. I've been doing it for so long that I don't necessarily think about it. The story kind of tells me what to write. So, it just naturally ends when I feel it.

**Contributing factors:**

Deadlines are there. I don't have an attachment or feeling about deadline. Overall, you have to think of it like this: did you feel what the people were feeling enough in order to relay it to people who weren't there. Essentially, you're the middleman. For example, a fire. You went to that fire, the people at home didn't. Are you able to convey that story with passion and purpose? Did you make the person sitting at home on their couch feel something? That's your job.

For me, I find characters. I may interview five people, but one person always stands out. They might have a bit more passion, something interesting about their face or something else unique. I listen to everything people said. Once you have your character you don't speak for them, you let them tell you what to say. You're the autobiographer. You're just telling their story through their eyes. It comes with time, tons of experience. It doesn't happen overnight.

**Formula:**

I don't follow a formula all the time. I try to break out of it. At the end of the day it's all about people. It's about finding different ways to tell stories. You don't have to always start with video. You can start with an actual person to make it more interesting.

The regular formula is the victim and what happened only.

Some details that I think are unnecessary aren't included in my report. Some random details may diminish a person's death or whatever happened to them. I use my discretion because I am a person of color and I try to be fair.

**Identity:**

Socially men and black women talk to me. In black communities I get a lot of respect. There's also been times where I've had to prove and defend my intelligence in rooms of people who don't look like me.

I don't know what it is about television, but people put you on a pedestal no matter what. I think that it is being conscious of that and presenting myself in a certain way.

**WNBC – Executive 8****Sources:**

First, what I'm trying to say relationship based. I think it's really building relationships with people whether you're out in the field and that's how you cultivate sources, or if it's here dealing with a photographer who can grow more.

**Framing:**

I try to provide really clear direction on, you know, how I think we should do stories and then I'm certainly open to having people say well what if we try it this way, you know, because we've always done it this way let's try something different. I'm okay with that as long as we're not missing the goal of telling the story. Being fair and being objective and doing all those sorts of things. So, you know, I think I'm really lucky I have a really good newsroom filled with really wanted to say are journalists in a fair many, you know, know how to make sure all the sides are covered and not fair like they're mediocre.

**Trusting reporters:**

I have to trust them. I mean, if I don't trust them in the field, it's just going to be a mess. But, you know, we do the morning editorial meeting and when they might get assigned to a story or they try something and we say, you know, go do it. I'll try to say something or one of my managers will about, you know, asking some basic questions will you include X Y or Z, because, you know, we are human, and sometimes we forget something. If I were in their shoes, I'd be okay with someone asking me, okay what do you have this, or do you have that? I think most of them will tell you the same thing. We kind of have to have some checks and balances on it, and then we you know we have an approval process, so they'll go out and do the story but it's got to be you know approved by manager here before it goes on the air.

**Contributing factors:**

I think sometimes people not willing to talk about it. You know, you go, you go into some neighborhoods and people want to talk to you. I think that's part of it too, you know I think it's a variety of factors. You know the police sometimes are investigating you don't get a whole lot from them. As you know, because they have to do the investigation.

**Marker of a successful story:**

You know, I think, I think you're answering questions you're telling people something they don't know. I think it's okay to say we don't know the answer to something.

**Story completion:**

You know, I think it just depends i mean I think it's a story is not ever complete, I mean like right now I'm watching you know Joe Biden speak, and the story is not gonna be complete anytime soon. With the story of Joe Biden, you're just doing it on his news conference and or has availability whatever you want to call this thing has been. If that's just what the story is, you know, I don't think, stories are really ever finished, I think there's sometimes a follow up, there's things that you can't get, you know, I think a lot of reporters will tell you if I just had a little bit more time, can I get x y or z, but we know there are deadlines. So, I think the stories are always continuing.

**Formula:**

A formula, no. I don't think so. I'm glad that we don't, because I think then it becomes really kind of, you know, white noise. There are some places in the world where they get their two soundbites, shoot a stand up and show crime broll. I hope that we ask as many questions as we can. And we kind of look at all the stakeholders of the story you know who who's involved and it might just be the person you see on camera who's been the victim, but there's, you know the victim's family there's, you know, you know if there's if there's a suspect there's not just the suspect there's the suspect's family there's the suspect's coworkers that are the people who witnessed, you know, and so I think I don't think there should be a formula that you know if there is one, I mean sometimes. In the interest of time, people might fall into a formula, but I don't think like our folks go out and say, well, all I need is this this add water and I'm done.

**Final thoughts:**

We constantly wonder how you make those relevant stories of crime and violence relevant and important to the viewer and making sure you put a face and a name to the people involved.

**WABC – Reporter 9****Sources:**

A lot of times I persuade people to see that doing this story interests them. I'll often say to people, help me help you. Then they are more inclined to share. I get it, we're dropping into people's lives at the most devastating time. It's very situational. You can't generalize with what we do. You have to get directly to the source.

**Guideline for covering crime:**

They do trust me to be sensitive. My job is to get the story for sure, but they'll let me be sensitive to the victims of crime and their relatives. It's a certain understanding that I have. It's the way I live my life. I put myself in the people of the people I'm covering. I try to imagine how they must be feeling. The very first thing I say when approaching a victim's family is, "I'm so sorry, how can we help you?" I don't say it with an agenda because I really am there to help. If I can ease pain or provide clarity, I will do that. I've seen so much pain over the years and it does inform you. It does help you tune your

sensitivity and sensibility. I've reported on Columbine. I'll never forget the parents who've lost their kids or the classmates mourning their friends.

**Framing:**

I think that my viewers are more inclined to pay attention to the story and watch if they see someone like them and can identify with the subject of the story. People connect with people. I've seen a lot of young journalists be so pressed to get every fact that they lose sight of the people and humanity. The soul of the story ends up getting lost in the avalanche of facts. I like to include a fact or two in every story that I do, but it's more about the people. The trick is to decide what don't they need to know and what do they need to know. Consider who they are and what emotions they're going through. To me it's not that hard.

The hardest part is to decide what to leave out and prioritize information.

**Education:**

Everything I learned about was on the job and through mentors and talking to people. I wasn't self-taught, but you do learn a lot on the job. I don't have any formal journalism training.

Storytelling is about finding the individual affected and tailor the message around it or the larger issue.

**Formula:**

I'm not sure. Sometimes when I see reporters at smaller cable stations and markets it makes me wonder if journalism schools are mass producing journalists in a sort of homogenized curriculum where they're being taught a formulaic approach to broadcast journalism rather than taking the courage to stand back from the stories they are covering and ask themselves, what does the audience need to know and how can I best execute it and what is the most effective way of doing that.

**Impact:**

Well, I think that is a difficult question because I think my answer will be different depending on the story that I'm covering. Ultimately, I want to bring awareness.

**Contributing factors:**

We have a mechanic focused system. Some people have a laundry list of things to do given to them by their boss. When I go out of my editors ask me what kind of elements I want to get. We bounce off ideas. There's a give and take and sometimes other processes are more top down than bottom up.

**Final thoughts:**

I think it's important for young journalists to think about the story they are covering and not go into the story with a checklist of things to get. That's really the wrong approach. A lot of reporting goes wrong and is less effective because they don't think about the victims or the subjects in the story. Quite honestly, some journalists use the victims and

the circumstances as props for a made-for-tv movie about themselves. That's not how you do it. I don't come into my reporting with a self-indulgent way. If you're in this to tell a story remember what the story is, who the victims are and lose sight of that.

## News 12 – Reporter 10

### **Story process:**

Every day we have a mandated pitch meeting. I work a shift that is technically breaking news. Usually when crime happens, it happens later in the day or early morning hours. I come in every day and I'm usually assigned a story, but if breaking news were to happen and it's big enough, that takes precedence. I see that a lot on my shift. It's just the nature of news nowadays. We pull out of preexisting hard news for breaking news. Personally, I like to do happier stories, but as long as the story is meaningful and something the public should know about or investigative and makes a difference, I don't mind doing it.

### **Sources:**

My game plan when showing up to a crime scene is to get the visuals. I'm a multimedia journalist. I have the ability to shoot, write and edit. I find elements to concentrate on to properly tell the story. I keep the line of conversation open if I do have a photographer. We're looking for crime scene tape, police lights, locator video, ambulances, etc. We get all of the visuals to establish where we are and what happened there. Certain things may warrant us jumping into action to get other things once a medical examiner shows up or someone is apprehended at the scene. All of these things keep you on your toes. I keep in constant touch with my editorial managers and producers on what I got, and the determination is made on how we move forward with the elements I have.

When I'm on the scene the important thing about storytelling is the people that are going to tell the story. We're telling the story, but it means nothing if we don't get who the story is affecting. I aim to get witnesses who can verify that on camera, relatives of the victim, or the suspect. Our objective is to always give both sides a say. We're trying to be fair and unbiased. Aside from identifying those people if applicable, I'm also in touch with the police and EMS. My assignment desk does a good job of finding that information. It's pretty much a formula. It's pretty consistent of who we get and what we get out of them.

### **Formula:**

The goal is to deviate from the formula every time. You don't want every story to be the same because every story isn't the same. The concrete variables that never change is the formula. The police never change. We can't go to air with something that's not confirmed. Now, as far as deviating from the formula, every time we go out there, we're taught not to tell the story in our mind and write the script around that. When you get out there things change so you have to let the story make an impression on you. That's what we try to do, but sometimes stories are similar. If you dig deep enough there is always something that is different.

When we use the word formula there are various things that it can mean. There is a formula for putting a package together for the track and the sets. I think it's because when people find something that works, and it can be applied to many different situations and it still be effective in doing your job it ties everything together and allows a simple process to get things done. In the sense that we tell stories with a heart broken family opening the story and crying, information from police and broll. I don't like that and necessarily agree with it because every story we go to is a bit different. There's a different crime. There is a different motive. It's important to break away from the idea that we're applying the same formula to every story. You really want to focus on the people and not paint everything with the same brush. It can be very desensitizing. At the end of the day you have to be sensitive to who you're interacting with on a daily basis, especially with crime stories. You can't look at everybody as a number, figure or piece of a formula.

I catch myself remembering that we are all human here. If you were in their shoes that you would or wouldn't want to be done. This goes for the victim, suspect and their loved ones.

#### **Reflexivity:**

I mean a lot of times we are reporting on situations we may have never been involved in. We encountered situations and people that are involved in these stories and we may not know what it's like to be in their shoes. When you are telling a story of that nature it is important to remind yourself that everybody is human beings. If you're inflicting bias, you aren't doing your job. Our job is to state facts and let the people speak from themselves. This is how journalists avoid putting personal experiences or biases into the story.

#### **Story completion:**

Our news is very much let's get this to air and let's move on. It does pose an obstacle for follow up until it is quote unquote complete. We do our best to follow up, especially if there is a major update. There isn't enough time or resources to follow up in this industry because we move so quickly from one story to the next. We do a lot of day-turns here. It is a very deadline driven based business. It's always changing. You might turn something for the 5 and get put on a different story by the 7.

#### **Contributing factors:**

Deadlines are certainly something we answer to. At a local news station, we answer to our managers. They decide what gets put on air and how it gets put on air. The one thing that I am proud of is I work for a station that is very fair. We preach that journalism should be unbiased, there are so many stations that do. Many of them are bigger than the one I work at. I'm glad the superiors I answer to see things in a very fair lens. It aids our goal of putting truth to air. It is our managers and producers that drive everything, but we do work as a team to vet things and put the best things out there.

#### **Final thoughts:**

We don't do this enough where we examine what we do and how we can do it better. I

think what you're doing is very admirable. A lot of people wouldn't go to the extent of what you're doing to make a difference.

## **WABC – Reporter 11**

### **Identity:**

My goal is to translate the human experience to our viewers, regardless of my own identity. Because the human experience is what binds us, the human experience is what really makes that story a memorable part of a person's mind.

### **Sources:**

People talk to me. Particularly in the Black community, people will talk to me very easily. This came from the way I was raised by my father to treat people the way I like to be treated. So, I build bridges, that is what I do. The charge of a true journalist is to make sure you are presenting facts.

We reply on NYPD to find out if they got the bad guy and if they need help finding him. There are tens of thousands of police reports filed every day in New York City. None of this is online at all. It's a conversation. They send out specific emails and we call for further information.

### **Impact:**

I am compassionate and the light for the people who I interview. I know I'm coming to their lives at the worst moment, and there's nothing I can do to change that.

### **Reflectivity:**

To be quite honest with you, I don't think I have any biases. I'm just a non-judgmental person that's why I love my job because I'm a collector of information and I am a people lover and I'm a people watcher. So, I wouldn't even say that I have any biases so there's no bias toward what I do

### **Framing:**

My job is to go out there, assess the situation, and then tell the story based on my assessment of the current situation because I'm a people person and I've had various experiences just to travel and of my career. I am experienced and I know how to speak to people. So, what I do is formulaic. Every story, same approach; get to the scene. When I get to the scene, I speak to everyone because I want a witness to what occurred.

### **Contributing factors:**

It's the people. I don't want to talk to random people on the street to get their opinion. I want to speak to the person who was directly involved, who could add information and insight to the event that I'm covering. At my station we are event based not issue based news.

## **Chasing News – Reporter 12**

**Guideline for covering crime:**

They give me helpful guidelines on how to phrase questions and approach people. The communication with my assignment desk is very good. We're such a small team and it's very well connected. We communicate about the story and they are a resource to me out in the field. It seems like everyone is getting some input and guidance from upper management.

I always run my sources by my bosses to make sure I'm not missing anything.

**Story process:**

I pitch stories all the time. Half of the time what they want goes. The news director lays out the headlines of the day and assigns it to different reporters. The reporters then pitch, but most of the time the news of the day is most important. It is a give and take process.

**Framing:**

It depends on the story. People care about the human angle. We try to figure out what the impact will be for the public. We go into it looking for the human angle first. Most of the day I'm doing man on the street interviews because it's all about the people. I try to figure out their feelings and relate it to the news.

**Contributing factors:**

I think sometimes it's difficult waiting on an agency to get back to you. It's best to reach out as soon as the story gets assigned to you. Also, getting at least two sides of the story. But sometimes I deal with people who don't want to talk. However, it's truly about finding balanced soundbites.

**Formula:**

I was in earshot of a conversation recently about a crime story I wasn't assigned to. I remember the person was running the script by the editor and the reporter had something like it was a black man. The editor said it wasn't crucial to describe the person as a black man. She made him take it out because it wasn't necessary at that time. In that moment she deviated from the typical formula.

Honestly, it's tough because you want to be objective. But as a person of color it is difficult because it makes me wonder what people are going to say about us. For me it's difficult finding that balance and speaking up to ask if certain things are necessary.

**Final thoughts:**

How much of an impact the executive producers have on the angle of a story? They definitely have a lot of input because they are running the story, literally. Sometimes they push me to ask different questions. They have a huge impact.

## **APPENDIX II**

### **Week 1:**

In New York thus far, I've contacted journalists for my interviews. I've secured one journalist so far at NBC4. I've also been trying to get the lay of the land and reach out to friends who live here. I'm learning the subway system and my neighborhood surroundings. I'm also discovering interesting and fun ways to explore the city while I conduct research and get settled in. My biggest challenge thus far has been securing interview subjects. I've sent emails and made a few calls, but I'm going to start following up and using my connections to secure my 10 subjects this week and the weeks coming. I hope to successfully conduct my first round of interviews with my first subject. I'm excited to hit the ground running and begin asking the questions I've wondered about regarding crime and violence stories. I'm also excited to be connected to more local journalists in the city who can help answer my research questions.

### **Week 2:**

I haven't started my internship yet, so I explored the city with friends. I was also a guest on Good Morning America speaking on my anxiety related to student loan debt. I haven't started my internship yet, but what I've learned about myself since being in New York is that if I continue to do the work good things will come to me organically. An example of this is my GMA segment. I was originally supposed to be sitting in the audience, but I stepped out on faith and got even more than I expected in return.

Here's the link to my segment:

<https://www.goodmorningamerica.com/living/video/overcome-financial-anxieties-65376496>

I scheduled part two of my interview with the reporter from NBC4 and arranged a phone interview with a CBS New York reporter for Tuesday, Sept. 10. I've also followed up with several reporters and editors about speaking with them. My biggest challenge thus far has been securing interview subjects. I've sent emails and made a few calls, but I'm going to start following up and using my connections to secure my 10 subjects this week and the weeks coming.

### **Week 3:**

This week I accomplished more toward the end of the week than at the beginning of the week, so I'm happy with my work environment and pace of assignments given to me. This was my first week of my creative production internship. On Monday, I went to our weekly creative meeting where every person in the department runs through their tasks for the week and give updates on certain projects. We use a system called air table that lets everyone's dashboard of work be visible to the whole team. The VP Veronica approves additional assignments or gives updates on the items her team sent for review. After the meeting I got assigned my first project. One of the social media producers was working on a family day promotion, so it was my job to watch all the shows and pull screen shots of the sibling pairs. The promotion will run in a social media campaign for the different types of siblings. For example, sibling pairs might be athletic (American

Ninja Warrior Junior), fun and loving (Get out of My Room), or stern big sister and little brother combo (Just Add Magic).

Tuesday was the same pace as Monday. I worked on the same project for the entire day. I had trouble getting my official badge because the system still had all of my credentials still set in Universal City. It took days and lots of checks to security office before I finally got my badge on Thursday. Everything in the badge is locked for security reasons so it was a bit annoying at first to get around without a badge with floor access. Wednesday was a good day because I attended a Universal Kids Olympics brainstorm meeting to figure out how to incorporate UK shows and characters into press runs with the Olympians. I also got invited to the Chica Halloween shoot.

Also, on Wednesday, I was assigned another project after my sibling one got approved by my supervisor. My first project showed me how important it is to pay attention to details because when I don't pay attention, I'll miss out on what I'm looking for. This idea came into play for my second project also. This project will carry out longer than the sibling one. I was tasked to find screams and costumes in all of the UK shows because another social producer will be creating an on-scene Halloween promotion slot. I continued my second project all day Thursday leading into Friday.

Friday was shoot day for Chica the Chicken. She's coming out of retirement for a few social videos. The higher ups want to make sure she's still sellable. One thing I didn't know about production until now is the long shoot hours. Before I went down to the shoot, I noticed noon to 4 p.m. on my calendar and I thought to myself, "that can't be right." We were actually there later than 4 p.m. Details are so important for production and I see that now. Even the script for Chica and the voice/hand actor Lis was edited on

site. The directors had an eye for what they wanted, and we did not stop until it was done. I even had the role of handling teleprompter for the actors. It was a very cute shoot. Chica tried more than four costumes and the set was Halloween festive. I enjoyed the shoot, but most importantly I got hands-on experience in production. It's something that I've been wanting for a while and I'm glad that my supervisor heard me when I shared what I wanted to gain out of this opportunity. Thank you Jess.

This week I learned how important it is to have well-rounded editing skills. I learned short cuts in adobe premiere. Everyone in the office uses the program, so it was great learning and taking notes from photoshop and premiere experts. I learned a new trick every day and that's because I wasn't afraid to ask questions or ask for clarity on the projects assigned to me. I also learned that details matter the most in production. Compared to news broadcasting, every detail down to the outfit, length of the script, and tone of voice matters for putting together the final product.

Something I could have done better this week was being more adaptable with the tasks given to me. For example, the sibling project was on a tighter deadline than the Halloween one. I had only two days to grab the sibling pairs and watch/sift through all of Universal Kids shows for my siblings. I would have found extra pairs and different variations of the sibling pairs I did get if I had more time to flesh it out more. Although my manager and the social producer was satisfied with my work, I wish I were able to grab more full body stills versus chest up ones.

The only real frustration I faced this week was the struggle to get an ID. As I said, my information was still registered in California because the internship coordinator quit unexpectedly. All of the interns through NBC were scrambling for the first few days

because the woman left and didn't train anyone for her role. Thankfully I was already in the NBC system and didn't need to repeat orientation, but it was a hassle not having a pass because no one on the campus to career side was available to complete this request. Nevertheless, it worked out and I got my badge Thursday afternoon.

In the week ahead, I hope to bring more ideas to the table for the tasks given to me. I want to give several options because I noticed that more is appreciated. In terms of my master's project, I hope to complete at least 5 more interviews. So far, I've done 4 interviews with journalists from CBS, NBC, Pix 11 and News 12. Next week, I have interviews scheduled with people from NBC, ABC and News 12. The next challenge is confirming a person from FOX. I'll do this by continuing to email them directly. When I called every news station, they emphasized that they don't connect the public, in any capacity, to their reporters so it's best to reach out by twitter. Thankfully, I have their emails and I'm going to continue being persistent because it got me this far.

#### **Week 4:**

This week was definitely slower than last. My supervisor was out of the office all week, so my workflow shifted. We have the same weekly meetings. On Monday was the creative meeting where every person in the department runs through their tasks for the week and give updates on certain projects. Monday through Friday I continued my Halloween screening, in which I search for screams and costumes in all of the UK shows. The final product will be used for Halloween promotional slots on the UK channel and website. During this weeklong task, I learned that nothing is ever complete, and I have to be okay with that. Each show was different and every time I watched I picked up on

something different. The details are so important for this project, and I'm glad that by taking my time to complete it I don't miss any details. Aforementioned, my supervisor was out so all of my requests and questions must be sent to the VP of brand. The middle of the week is when I took initiative and asked Veronica if she needed help with any projects. This was important for me to do because I want to be an asset to not only my area of the UK brand, but I want to be beneficial for all parts of the team. Veronica politely thanked and declined my request for help, but at least she knows that I am willing and able to help in more ways than one.

As said before, I reached out to Veronica to see if I could help on additional projects. I could've been the silent intern that was comfortable with doing only what is asked of me. That is not how I operate in my personal and professional life. I'm always trying to get better, and especially in a team setting where all hands and ideas are welcome. I'm glad I spoke up because even though she didn't have anything additional for me to work on she can get a sense of my work ethic and who I am as a person. I also learned that nothing is done until is done. I'll admit, I was a little annoyed that I was tasked to continue this project for a week, but it taught me to be more detailed in everything I do and to take my time because I never know what I'll find

I am a natural people person. I speak to people, say thank you and smile and I realize that isn't the case for most New Yorkers. In an office setting, this atmosphere is amplified, and most times people don't speak back. I will do more next week to try to put a dent in this office culture. No matter how tight they might look, they are people first. I'm going to do more to find out who is next to me and around me. They may or may not

be responsive but at least they'll know more about me. It is silent most days, and I want to be a beacon of light to everyone when I enter the office

The only challenge I have is following up with journalists. I don't want to seem annoying, but I need to get this done. I feel bad for a quick minute then I continue to follow up politely about interview availability. I've noticed that it worked and I'm glad for it. I have 7/12 completed.

### **Week 5:**

This week was productive. I got introduced to new projects and came up with creative ideas for the UniKids brand. Here's how my week went: Monday through Wednesday I worked on grabbing cliffhangers for several of the universal kids shows. The goal was to find moments within the shows that left the viewers guessing. The clips will be used for promotion across UK social platforms. Thursday and Friday were a change of pace. I was tasked with crafting ideas and eventually executing them for Pop Jam, a kid's social media platform. According to the Pop Jam website, "it is a moderated, curated content-sharing app for children." I drafted ideas for integrating UK shows into content, art, and puzzles for kids. I can't share those ideas for legal reasons, but the ideas were well received by my supervisor and the Director of Universal Kids.

This week I learned how to improve my editing skills. I'm getting much faster with premiere because of my daily uses of the program. Technicality is important and the skills I'm enhancing and learning every day will be transferable and beneficial in my future. I also value the importance of speaking up. By greeting everyone in the office I

connected with a SMP from Chicago and the same neighborhood as me. We bonded, and I definitely see this encounter growing into a mentorship relationship.

Something I could have done better this week was asking more questions than usual. Naturally, I'm a curious person and I ask for clarity a lot to make sure I get things right. This week was a bit less than normal. For example, with my cliffhanger project I could have asked more direct questions to find out what kind of clips they were looking for because in the review stage I spent time going back and clipping more precisely. I could have asked more questions up front to avoid extra steps on the back end

In the week ahead, I hope to continue to bring ideas to the table for the tasks given to me. I want to give several options because I noticed that more is appreciated. In terms of my master's project, I will complete my last two interviews. After, it's on to synthesizing and putting it all together.

### **Week 6:**

It was a good week. It went pretty fast. This week I was tasked with creating social content for the Universal Kids preschool and 6+ audience. For the first half of the week, Monday to Wednesday, I was assigned to create a “what to watch” for preschool kids. “What to watch” is basically a would you rather for television. It required me to watch two preschool shows on the Universal Kids channel; “Mofy” and “Moon and Me.” I watched the shows to find common themes or characteristics. Both shows use stop motion animation. The graphic I made in photoshop emphasized the stop motion emphasis on both shows. The copy for the graphic reads as, “If you love the stop motion feel of Mofy, you should check out Moon and Me.” My supervisor was really impressed by my first attempt but offered tips on how to clean up the cut outs of the characters and

remove excess background from the image. After my preschool graphic was approved, I moved on to the 6+ age group. For the second half of the week I worked on finding comparisons between the show “All Hail King Julien” and “Home” then created a graphic for Facebook and Instagram.

Now, I’m working on reading other projects to better understand and synthesize the second half of this process. I’m hoping to stick to my timeline and begin sending my drafts in a few weeks.

I definitely learned new tricks in photoshop. I’ve always known the legality of the media industry, but this week I definitely got an inside look. For example, while working on those photoshop projects I learned the legally correct font, colors for both preschool and 6+ Universal Kids shows. I now know the verbiage to put on social media and on-air spots so that it complies with all of the broadcast regulations and NBCUniversal standards. It was very interesting how creativity is set in parameters while working for big brands like NBC.

Since my photoshop was a little rusty in the beginning of the week, I could have taken better notes when my supervisor gave me critiques so when it was time for me to correct the things she told me I’d have less questions on how to do things and more questions on clarity and standard practices. Taking cleaner notes would’ve been easier to follow, but sometimes things are said much faster than I can write.

Photoshop can be really annoying sometimes. I hadn’t used the software in a while professionally, so it was a back and forth process with my supervisor to get things approved to her liking and up to the Universal Kids model. I was mostly frustrated with

the updates to photoshop 2019. Some of the things that were in the 2018 version has changed. It took me a minute to get my bearings but once I got it, I got it.

### **Week 7:**

Monday through Wednesday I worked creating more social content. This week, I created 6+ what to watch. If you recall, “What to watch” is basically a would you rather for television. I watched Universal Kids’ 6+ shows to find common themes between two series. I landed on Totally Spies and Mako Mermaids because they were girl power themed and featured three main characters. My supervisor liked the images I created and sent them off to the VP for review. On Friday, I worked on the Totally Spies Thanksgiving slot. It was for an on-air promo framed around the thanksgiving holiday. I was tasked with finding phrases within the show that could fit after the announcer remarks about the time and date of the show. The comments had to be food and eating related to match the promo. After finding the right bytes, I was tasked with finding video of the spies eating or sitting in a cafeteria. I also began typing draft one of my project. I’ve been using the example on canvas as a frame of reference for what mine should look like.

This week I learned more about on-air promo slots. It’s funny that I recognize them more now that I know how it’s made. It’s kind of like a commercial but brand specific. S, for the Totally Spies promo an announcer is promoting new episodes and a marathon around thanksgiving, but the broll is all totally spies characters and bytes from the show that support the theme of the slot, which is thanksgiving.

I began typing draft one of my project. I've been using the example on canvas as a frame of reference for what mine should look like. I have no challenges or frustrations at the moment about work, but I do wish there was more structure to the program to know how to approach every stage of the research process. It is very trial and error. I wish there was more guidance or blueprint outside of the examples online.

### **Week 8:**

Monday and Wednesday, I worked on drafting game ideas that parents can play with their children while they watch Universal Kids show. This project required me to go back to my childhood and think of which games I enjoyed playing with my family. I had to get creative to think of interesting and fun ways to integrate common games into preschool shows. I also had to refresh my memory on preschool shows at Universal Kids. I spent a lot of time watching the shows and taking notes on common themes and expressions. Here are a few examples of the games I came up with: Simon says, which can be translated to Barney says or Norm says for Norman Picklestripes. Another game/activity I tailored to shows was I spy and coloring pages specific to the show the family is watching. The rest of the week I worked on sorting photos for American Ninja Warrior Season 2. I was tasked with selecting the best photos in the categories of action shots, junior ninjas, hosts, and set design.

This week I worked diligently to put together my first draft of my report. I spent many long hours this week sifting through my findings and drawing themes based on the information given to me. It was interesting to see how much these journalists had in common outside of the normal reporting process.

This week I learned that creativity is so important, especially in a kid-driven environment like Universal Kids. My supervisor welcomes my ideas and overall in meetings they want fresh ideas to advance the company. I don't shy away from sharing my thoughts and ideas and that's something that my boss has noticed and complimented me on.

### **Week 9:**

This week was steady. Monday through Wednesday I worked on the "Faster Than a Speeding Ninja" project, which consisted of me logging run times for every race during season one of American Ninja Warrior. It was a tedious task, but it was necessary because the times will help during an upcoming promo shoot in November. The theme of the campaign is "Faster Than a Speeding Ninja." Thursday the class and Marty's business class toured WSJ, Moxie Communications, and Quartz Media. On Friday, I worked on selecting photos for ANWJR season 2, editing a what to watch promo for mako mermaids and totally spies, and creating a thumbnail for an IGTV video.

For my project, I wrote and submitted my first draft. I'm in the process of making edits. I learned more about production this week. I see how every project is tied to another, and that every task is connected to the larger picture. For example, my Faster Than a Speeding Ninja project seemed small compared to the grander scheme of things, but by logging the times of the kids it will be very helpful for determining the fastest ninja. Also, when the shoot happens in November, my supervisor can pull the fastest kids for the promo slot. It all works together, and my part definitely matters and contributes greatly.

**Week 10:**

Monday through Thursday I worked on selecting images to be used for promotional slots for Universal Kids social media and stunts. I sifted through thousands of images of children, hosts and set to select the best ones for promos. I took over the Mizzou Journalism Abroad Instagram account to walk students through a day-in-the-life of my job. It was a cool experience even though I couldn't show them much because of legal reasons. I answered questions and gave my best NY pro tips for living, working and researching in New York City. Late Thursday and Friday I compiled funny clip footage of junior ninjas, hosts and mentors to create a blooper reel as a season 2 promo. For my master's project I submitted and received feedback on my second draft. I'll be sending in a third draft soon with corrections.

**Week 11:**

This week was the most fun I had at my internship. Monday through Wednesday, I was in the office continuing to work on finding bloopers for American Ninja Warrior Season 2. I'm surprised by how I haven't become tired of looking at this show footage. I'm amazed by how talented and knowledgeable these kids are. Some of the children know multiple languages and have traveled to more countries than me. It's so exciting to see these kids do things they thought they couldn't do on a large platform such as this. Again, I'm pulling bloopers and funny moments from onset of season two. On Thursday, we had a shoot for "Faster Than A Speeding Ninja," which is a promo that will air from

thanksgiving onward. I can't go into the details of the shoot, but I will say I thoroughly enjoyed serving as a PA.

I met a lot of interesting people and got to immerse myself in a role I truly see myself in. Onset, I recorded liners of the ninjas and casted children for social media and youtube. I also served as a runner for certain props and things that the EP needed. The shoot took up two studios and it was exciting to see how the production process worked in real time. I asked lots of questions and got to connect staff of the production company. So far, this has been the highlight of my experience.

### **Week 12:**

This week I did a lot of the same assignments from last week with a lot more tasks thrown in because of the holiday rush. For the entire week I worked on clipping video for an ANWJR season two promo as well as pulling three to five-minute clean clips of course obstacles. It required me to sift through lots of shoot footage to grab clean, no people shots, of the courses. At the same time, I worked on created a social media post for Instagram surrounding the show Get Out of My Room where siblings design their own room. For my project, I submitted the suggestions given at defense to my chair, as instructed.

### **APPENDIX III**

This research has filled my heart with a great sense of closure and pride.

Aforementioned, my purpose has perspective because my cousin. His death was not in vain, and I see now why it wasn't. Although this report is bigger than him, it was all about him. I know what kind of boy he was, and I will always cherish his memory. However, the public didn't see the light of Tobias Robinson. It is because of him that I have a list of recommendations for journalists in the industry on how to humanize stories of crime and violence. His life and death pushed me beyond my comfort zone and made me ask questions of the industry I know I'm called to be in. His story made me question journalist on the local level, and I'm so blessed that professionals took the time to share their experiences with me.

I didn't know what to expect going into this process. I hoped that reporters would be open and honest with me about their news framing procedures, but I didn't expect the amount of care and compassion these journalists have for what they do. It helped me realize that the formula is a part of the process, but it is not the standard. It is not the standard by which journalists follow. It was comforting to hear all 12 journalists say they work with the victims and the victim's family in mind. I was equally shocked and appreciative.

I pray that my recommendations through the truths of these professionals will help future journalists and even seasoned reporters. The beautiful thing about being human is that we aren't perfect. We make mistakes, and we have the ability to correct them. I want this project to be top-of-mind for every journalist, so they don't feel the same pain I felt when I turned on the television and heard desensitizing messages about

my 14-year-old cousin. The reality is, variations of the formula will always exist, but the more journalists work on an individual level to put truth to people and the stories that involve them, the less damage is done in the long run.

I am proud of what I produced. I am proud of what my work will mean for the industry at large, big or small. In terms of my own workflow, I am pleased that I stuck to my own deadlines as best as I could. Along the way, I challenged myself and had to relinquish the control I thought I had in order to get it all done. This was a true testament to my faith and my belief that all things don't work on my time. This life is a process, and I've learned to enjoy all the little accomplishments because they mean just as much as the big ones.

I also got a chance to immerse myself in New York City. It's funny how God hears all things. I remember saying as a kid that I wanted to live in New York. Back then, I didn't know to what capacity I'd be living and starting my career in the city. Now, it is clear through my master's journey why I'm here and what my impact will be. This has been a beautiful and peace-giving process for me. I know that Tobias would be proud of me. I know that what I do from here on out will be to enhance his legacy and the millions of other black and brown people disenfranchised because they were only given a single story.

As I write this reflection, my heart is swelling. I feel proud in the humblest way because everything that I've done and everything that I will do it's not for me. I work for the glory of God. I want his love and light to shine on everything that I do, and I truly believe that's why this project has been so successful. Every part of my research came together organically. My research proposal was showcased as an example for fellow grad

students. I was the first person in my project cohort to start and finish my interviews. Once my program is complete, I'll be the first person in my family with a master's degree. All of this, I couldn't have imagined for myself, but I am so grateful that I am the one to carry the torch for my family and others like me.

There's a saying embossed in the stone outside of the Missouri School of Journalism. It reads, "Wise shall be bearers of the light." My research journey embodies this quote, and I'm so enamored by the woman I've become because of this experience.

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