

SPIRALS OF SILENCE: EXAMINING AFROCENTRIC AND EUROCENTRIC
HAIRSTYLING FOR BLACK WOMEN IN BROADCAST NEWSROOMS

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ANALYSIS

Method

This research examined if black women in broadcast news may be forced to conform to traditionally white hairstyles, despite having different cultural norms for styling techniques. While there has been research “on the workplace practices and experiences of African American women journalists to determine whether their newswork challenges or reinforces journalistic norms,” (Meyers and Gayle, 2015, pg. 293), there hasn’t been a study on the intersection of race, gender and Afrocentric hair styling for black women working in broadcast news. Rosette and Dumas point out that black women face a “constrained choice and formidable dilemma” when choosing whether to wear a hairstyle that represents culture or one that conforms to American broadcast newsroom standards (2007, pg. 410).

I proposed to look at how the marginalization of black women in broadcast newsrooms leads to a strong distinction between their public and private spheres of themselves and how that distinction affects their roles at work. Studying the intersection of race and gender for black women in broadcast news is something that can improve both newsroom relations and news coverage. Understanding burdens black anchors and reporters face with hairstyle choices is key to examining how they may feel pressure to

conform in order to advance professionally and therefore, keep silent on issues that affect them as minorities.

Twelve interviews were conducted with producers, anchors and reporters from across the United States. The on-air talent- reporters and anchors- were all black women. The producers consisted of both men and women from varying races. Upon completion of each interview, the information was transcribed and then compared to see if there was a spiral of silence- a theory developed by Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann that says people become silent (spiral) and go with a majority opinion when they sense a threat of isolation *and* fear that isolation (Bowen and Blackmon, 2003). From interviewing reporters and producers, this was the case when black female on-air talent made choices on whether to have Afrocentric or Eurocentric hairstyles in the workplace.

Initially, participants from CBS News in New York City were recruited for on-camera interviews for the documentary component of the research. A total of six reporters and producers from various departments of the division were interviewed. Additional participants were recruited either through random selection or networking to create a sample that represented different market sizes and different regions of the country.

A total of 10 questions were asked to seven producers and five reporters and/or anchors. The goal was to get media personalities and producers to reveal information through explanation, which details their lives, negotiation issues, stages of their lives, and how they interpret text (Lindlof and Taylor, 2002).

Interviews with participants lasted anywhere from about 25 minutes to an hour and were conducted in person, via Skype or phone call. Participants ranged in age from

their early 20s to their mid-60s.

All of the interviews for this project were carried out in March and April 2017 in person in New York City or via phone from participants outside the New York area.

After talking to several of the participants about regional differences, I looked at Nielsen's Designated Market Areas (DMA) to compare hairstyles of black women in top markets.

The sample size was chosen by selecting the top five cities in every region of the country (South, Midwest, Northeast and West), then comparing the hairstyles of black women of each network affiliate in those top cities (see Appendix). A total of 80 stations were examined in the Nielsen markets New York City, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, Hartford/New Haven, Boston, Los Angeles, San Francisco/Oakland/San Jose, Phoenix (Prescott), Seattle/Tacoma, Sacramento/Stockton/Modesto, Dallas, Washington D.C., Houston, Atlanta, Tampa/St. Petersburg, Chicago, Detroit, Minneapolis/St. Paul, Cleveland/Akron (Canton) and St. Louis.

Results

Regardless of race or sex, overall, those who work in broadcast news believe the industry has progressed. However, producers and reporters who started their careers in the '70s and '80s are more optimistic about the industry than younger black, female reporters because they believe newsrooms have become more diverse and tolerant.

Most of the black female talent interviewed agreed that they felt additional pressures and misunderstandings for being black in the newsroom, especially concerning Afrocentric hairstyling norms.

The white producers admitted they had never thought about the intersection of

race and gender for their black female talent. Additionally, they had never considered black hairstyling techniques and cultural norms.

Looking at the DMA numbers, there were a total of 190 black women on the talent pages of the stations. Out of that total, 182 of the black, female talent had Eurocentric hairstyles, while only eight chose to wear an Afrocentric style.

The stations examined in the Northeast region of the country had 49 black women working as on-air talent, with none of them having an Afrocentric style. In the West, there were 28 black, female personalities and only one of them wore an Afrocentric style. The stations in the South had the highest number of black women working on-air with 67 and four of them chose to wear Afrocentric styles. Finally, in the Midwest, there were 46 black women working as anchors or reporters at the stations examined, with three of them wearing Afrocentric styles.

What these numbers and photos show is that the younger black women who work on air are the ones embracing natural, Afrocentric styling in the southern and Midwestern regions of the country. Usually, black women in metropolitan areas in the West and Northeast, who work for major networks, conform more.

After assessing responses, there seems to be a spiral of silence for black women in broadcast newsrooms for their choice to conform or resist Eurocentric hairstyling norms.

Spirals of Silence

For her theory, the spiral of silence, Noelle-Neumann believed “for spiraling to occur people must perceive a threat of isolation *and* they must fear isolation (Bowen and Blackmon, 2003, pg. 1396). Her 1970s theory examined how singular thoughts and actions can turn into public opinion (Noelle-Neumann, 1993; Scheufele & May, 2000, as

cited in Clemente and Roulet, 2015).

Noelle-Neumann found the spiral of silence theory worked like this: When people determine whether or not to express an opinion, which is formulated from external factors such as media and interpersonal opinions, they consider the dominating opinion and assess how expressing that opinion can impact their future (Noelle-Neumann, 1974, as cited by Clemente and Roulet, 2015).

Researcher Andrew Hayes conducted a study that showed how people will often use avoidance strategies when giving their opinion when knowing it doesn't fall under the majority viewpoint or could lead to a hostile environment. In his study, Hayes found people came up with sometimes several avoidance strategies when asked to provide an opinion on topics involving race, capital punishment, and vandalism as a means of protest. From how participants, college students in this case, responded to questions about the scenarios, Hayes found people used the following avoidance strategies- reflect the question, express uncertainty or ambivalence, express indifference, talk about someone else's opinion, change the topic of discussion, say nothing, walk away from the discussion or pretend to agree (Hayes, 2007, pg. 794).

From interviewing reporters and producers, it became clear a spiral of silence was present and sometimes Hayes' recorded avoidance strategies were used when black women or their white producers brought up wearing Afrocentric styles on air or in the newsroom.

Nia Stevens is a young, black woman who wears her hair natural behind-the-scenes at CBS News, but that wasn't always the case:

I mean, I pretty much wore my hair straight most of my life.
Like...hot comb, straightener, you know, a blow dryer. My mom

instilled in me that that was professional. Like, in order to be taken seriously and look professional, you needed to wear your hair straight. (Nia)

When it comes to black women in broadcast news and their hair, for some, there's a fear of isolation (loss of job, advancement opportunities) both internally and from external pressures. That isolation is what Nia's mother instilled in her at an early age and what she continues to feel regarding whether to resist or conform her hairstyle in a newsroom.

White, male producers were unfamiliar with black styling techniques and the costs associated with it.

"To be honest with you, it's never...it's never crossed my mind. I mean, honestly," said Michael Karzis, a producer for 60 Minutes. He continued:

Except that, you know, I mean, I assume there is a process involved. But I don't, I don't...I can't answer. I don't know. I've never had to intersect with that, personally or professional. So, yeah, maybe I should know. (Michael)

When asked the same question about black styling techniques, "60 Minutes" associated producer Jack Weingart, a white male, added on, "I don't know anything, to be honest."

The spiral of silence has been proven present for Nia in newsroom discussions about black women and their hair:

When people say things about black people or black women, my hair, whatever it is- it makes me feel uncomfortable to a certain degree. Like, I've had people make jokes at black people's expense...and not, again, not maliciously but make jokes at black people's expense, and then it's like, I don't know what to do because they're higher ups, and I'm the only like black person. So I've had to like...I don't know what to do in those situations, you know? And it eats me alive all day, you know? I'll talk about it or I'll tell my friend, 'This person just said that right in front of me,

and I didn't even know what to do.' I think that's a big problem because especially as a young, black woman, you're just trying to get by and you know, climb the ladder. And it's really difficult when people who are higher up than you say those things because then you're kind of like at a weird impasse, and you don't know what to do or what to say or how to combat that issue. (Nia)

Raven, a black reporter in Kirksville, Missouri, said showing up to work with her natural hair would make her feel in the minority, which according to research, could lead to a spiral of silence:

If I were to go natural, I feel like someone in the newsroom would probably, definitely say something. They'd be like, 'Oh, what are you doing with your hair?' Something like that. That would definitely make me feel marginalized. But I, once again, have to kind of explain this is natural hair. This is natural black hair. This is what it looks like. (Raven)

And a discussion Ashley Holt, a black reporter in Tulsa, Oklahoma, had with her executive producer shows just how much the spiral of silence existed concerning Afrocentric hair in her newsroom, with the topic avoided altogether:

...I remember talking to my executive producer that hired me and she was asking me about...there was another girl in the newsroom, a producer, who had braids...and I made the same comment that if I wasn't on air I'd be wearing braids. She was like, 'Well, why don't you?' I kind of looked at her, and I was like, 'Well, can I?' And she was like, 'Well, I don't know.'

She continued:

...I think a lot of the time we just assume people or hiring managers don't want us to wear our hair a certain way, so we don't even ask. (Ashley)

Morgan is a black reporter in Montgomery, Alabama, and felt the way her station managers and news directors viewed black hair styled Eurocentrically was "they're wanting a product that could be very damaging, but they don't know that because they're also not asking..."

And while preparing for vacation, black Bakersfield reporter Alicia Pattillo wanted to style her hair in braids but was afraid to get them because she “didn’t think they were going to be appropriate for TV,” which she said, “kind of speaks volumes.”

On the flip side, a university professor and Filipina TV producer, Jeimmie Nevalga, thinks black women should know a spiral of silence exists when considering Afrocentric hairstyles in broadcast news because “part of me thinks they understand what they’re getting into when they’re getting into this business.” Additionally, she thinks black women who conform to Eurocentric styling in broadcast news will not be shunned for it in the newsroom, but may be shunned outside their workplace, especially in black communities.

Women in TV News

Most of the reporters and producers in this project agreed that women did not truly start breaking into the TV news industry until the 1970s and 1980s. With their debut came a set of beauty expectations and sexism.

Ashley, the reporter in Tulsa, Oklahoma, works with a photographer/videographer on a daily basis and felt the need to defend her point of view while on assignment one day:

When they say things that are kind of off, especially about women or if there’s an underlying racial something in there, I’ll tend to call them on it, in a respectful way, of course. And so, yesterday my photographer was making a comment about the Bill O’Reilly thing and he was like, you know...what he got from it was how are men supposed to ever hit on women in the workplace without being called out for sexual harassment. And I said, ‘I’m going to have to call you on that really fast because out of that whole situation, your male privilege just showed me that you’re worried about men in this situation, like they’re the victim, and that’s just not going to work.’ And he just kind of sat there and looked at me like, ‘Oh, I did not even know I was saying that.’ (Ashley)

Morgan, in Montgomery, said it was tough to fit the mold of a woman in TV news after a recent consultant visit to her station:

Like, men are allowed to be authoritative and, you know, they don't have to wear as much make up and they don't have to be pretty, like, people just watch guys TV and like them, even if they're joking, even if they're assholes, even if they get it wrong.

She continued with how she felt about the industry standards of being a female reporter.

They want you to have a deep enough voice to be taken seriously, but then they also want you to be soft, you know. Because if you're not soft enough, then they think you're a bitch and you're too hard. They said that the number one thing that they want from women is to speak empathy and compassion, but they also say keep your voice down so you don't sound annoying and too feminine. But also, at the same time, you need to look really attractive, but not too attractive to the point that it's distracting. (Morgan)

Jack, one of the producers for "60 Minutes," agreed with how female talent gets judged harder for their delivery, on-air presence, and interviewing techniques and that they're "held to a higher standard":

If a man asks a tough question, he is seen as a hard-hitting journalist. If a woman asked a question, I think she can often times be dubbed a bitch. So I think women have a harder time walking that fine line of challenging someone but at the same time, remaining objective because if a man does it, no one...typically, people don't criticize the man for being...for having an opinion. Whereas, if a woman does, it it's like, 'Oh, she's a bitch, she's a conservative or she's a liberal,' and I don't think that's fair.

He also noticed the additional wardrobe cost associated with being a female on-air talent:

I think women have to consistently dress both appropriately for television but also differently in the sense that like a guy can own four suits, throw on...and like 10 shirts... you don't even need 10

shirts...throw on a different tie or the same tie and you're good.
You don't have to change your suit that often. (Jack)

Nia feels although her co-workers judge her less based on her race at CBS News, she said, "I feel like I'm not being heard, and I can't help but think, 'Is it because I'm a woman?' You know?" Raven, reporting in Missouri, feels like "even sometimes your bosses don't think you are up for something because we're women." Alicia said from her observations as a reporter that "women in general, like...they may give a guy the harder story because, you know, they feel like women can't do it."

Another white producer with "60 Minutes," Michael Karzis, says women have been climbing up in the industry and "it's been a harder ladder, I think it's been a harder ladder and a longer one to get and maintain their place..." in a male-dominated industry.

Barriers of Women of Color

On top of beauty expectations of being a woman in broadcast news, black female reporters and anchors also have to consider their race as a factor in their everyday lives. It's a barrier many white HR professionals, station managers and producers may choose to overlook or may not understand. Raven, the reporter out of Kirksville, Missouri, thinks about her next career move, and in her search, says it's been hard to find on-air talent who looks like her:

And I'll do research, and I'll be looking online and at like the news teams and looking at the photos and it's like an all-white team, or like a couple of Hispanic people. But I feel like rarely, rarely...and I was talking to my mom about this- you rarely see black women on TV, and it's hard because you have to get that big break.
(Raven)

While the Radio Television Digital News Association (RTDNA) didn't publish data looking specifically at the number of black women on TV in 2016, it

did show African-Americans made up 11.1 percent of the television news workforce that year, with the overall percentage of minorities in the industry at 23.1 percent.

Rosette and Dumas looked to previous research to examine how women and minorities have issues in crafting a personal image “due to negative stereotypes, lower expectations, and workplace norms that run counter to their cultural values and that reward white male standards of behavior and appearance” (2007, pg. 407). Concerning woman and minorities in the TV newsroom, RTNDA released numbers in 2016 that showed although “minority TV news directors hit an all-time high” at 17.1 percent, the number of African-African news directors hit 5.5 percent.

A lot of participants in this research agreed that people of color, in general, face adversity in the American workplace. One participant, who is a black, female producer at “60 Minutes,” said, “any non-white person, I think, has a different path than their white counterparts in any profession.” Many of the black women in this study expressed frustration with the intersection of race and gender in their industry of television news.

Nia works in CBS News’ daily programming and plans on becoming a producer. She said some of the interactions she has with her co-workers as a woman of color impacts how she feels in the workplace.

I definitely think there are adversities for women of color in the newsroom. I think it’s more about the micro-aggressions that we face on a day-to-day basis more than it is anything else that like impacts the way you feel at work, more than anything. (Nia)

Ashley Holt, the reporter in Oklahoma, feels her producers scrutinize her more than her white co-workers for her on-camera delivery and presence.

I feel like all of the time I have to...I’ve been told to soften my

demeanor, you know, as to not intimidate people in the newsroom when I'm just kind of ...I feel like I'm not doing anything, you know, I'm just being myself. (Ashley)

She continued by saying she also feels "women that are not black don't always have to carry that burden as well," and that she has to be "twice as approachable, twice as polite just to connect with people the same amount as a white woman doing the same job." Raven added on by saying:

I just feel like you have to work extra hard to prove yourself when you're a woman of color because I can do the same thing my friend does, but then if she does it, she might get judged. But if I do it, I would. (Raven)

Ashley and Raven weren't the only reporters who felt they were viewed differently in her jobs. Alicia Pattillo works in Bakersfield and thinks, from her experiences and interactions, that "people are scared of black women, especially educated black women that have an opinion." Alicia also mentioned her newsroom demeanor has sometimes been addressed- "I've been at editorial meetings where I'm sitting there, and it's like, 'Do you have an attitude?' No, like, why did you just ask me that?"

Being a reporter in the South has shown Morgan she faces a lot of unique barriers that her white co-workers may not face. In addition to being young, she says she finds it difficult to sometimes earn respect from some of the people she interviews.

Adversities, of course, I think that, you know, whether people want to acknowledge it or not...I've interviewed plenty of older, white men who are not rude to me, but they...I can tell. I'm not supposed to be asking you tough questions. I...you know...it's not supposed to be that way. I think sometimes they're more sexual than they usually would be because they think they can. And it's an uncomfortable thing to talk about, but it is what it is. And it's something that I think that there are a lot of things that...there are a lot of like micro aggressions that we just have to accept are happening and just deal with it. (Morgan)

Finding whether there was a spiral of silence between black, female talent and their white managers or producers meant also talking to those in charge behind-the-scenes.

Michael Karzis is a producer for “60 Minutes.” Admittedly, he knows that working in news in New York City and also at “60 Minutes” has given him a different and more racially inclusive perspective of black women in broadcast news. Though he still isn’t quite sure what barriers and difficulties black women in newsrooms may face. When asked if adversities for black women in broadcast news existed, he said: “I don’t, honestly, know. The African-American women that I work with here at CBS News, are top-notch professionals. I don’t look at anybody as, you know, male, female, black, white, you know, Caucasian, Asian,” Michael said. “I mean, I just look at their work. I think that’s the virtue of this place is that, you know, it’s an adult shop.”

Concerning what those adversities and barriers may be, Michael added, “So I don’t know. But generally speaking, I would think that (adversities/barriers) exist, yeah.”

“60 Minutes” producer Jack Weingart believes there are barriers or adversities for women of color and broadcast news and that, “they (women of color) face additional barriers because if you look at the landscape of television, it's mostly... especially television news, it's mostly white men and white women.” Even though he admits he doesn’t know many women of color on TV, he continued on by mentioning the intersection of race and gender in TV news and what issues women of color may face in the industry:

I think that women of color face both the issue of being a woman on television, which is hard, harder than a man, and the issue of being a minority on television, which I think they're dealing with traditionally white bosses, white men. And they're dealing with a

group of people and an audience that may not be as comfortable or familiar with them, so I think they have to try little bit harder to be more...probably more careful of what they say and how they say it. (Jack)

Ashley Holt mentioned she felt the scrutiny of her on-camera performance really might be related to stereotypes associated with black women for her station's viewers:

...My bosses say, "You don't connect on camera" and all these other things because I don't smile. And so, when I watch other talent, white talent, on our station, others...they don't smile, you know. But I think that because this is a market with less black people in it, you know, there's that concern that the black people won't connect. And so that's kind of where my insecurity will play in, at times- are people not connecting with me because I'm doing serious content? Do I need to do fun content? Do I need to be, you know, overly polite when I go to this place or that place where I meet people because they've never met a black person before? (Ashley)

The reporter in Kirksville, Missouri attributed the harsher judgment on a black reporter's demeanor to how "people don't understand black culture and black hair," which leads her to feel marginalized. She continued with saying black women will eventually have to deal with race discussions in the newsroom, even if they haven't already:

My whole thing with race in the newsroom is you're going to get something from someone eventually. If you're not going to get it now, you're going to get it in the future. And I feel like if you're a young journalist...black, female getting into this field, you have to be prepared to do that. And I also feel like another reason we don't see a lot of black females in the news industry is they're not willing to kind of take that step because it's hard; it's very hard. (Raven)

Another issue that came up with some of the on-air talent was how they felt about stories concerning race overall and also coverage of minority neighborhoods in their viewing area. Despite growing up in majority white communities and attending predominately white learning institutions, reporters like Ashley said they came into their

current stations with pressures from higher-ups to cover black communities in the news.

I don't want to do the black stories just because I'm the black reporter. And one of my mentors said to me, 'Well, if you don't do it, who's going to do it?' And I just kind of sat there like, 'Well, I don't know,' you know. (Ashley)

CBS News national correspondent Michelle Miller, who is black woman with a lighter skin tone, acknowledged there is also discrimination based on the shade of skin on-air black talent may have.

I don't...and sometimes, I find that there's an acceptability when the hue of your skin is of a certain...your complexion is of a certain hue...that maybe some people who are darker don't have. They don't have that freedom or leeway. I do recognize that. So where somebody thought that that was funny or cute with me, with someone else it might be taken in a different vein. (Michelle)

Nicole Young, a black woman who produces segments at "60 Minutes," believes the popular opinion of natural black hair versus how black women may want to style their hair can lead to drastic professional and private selves:

You know, I do. I think that it's...it's hard when you want to be yourself but still get the job done. And sometimes you do have to sacrifice one for the other, depending on where you want to be and where you want to go and what you want to do. So it's a fine line...it's...in trying to make sure that your identity is not lost while still progressing and still growing and still getting those opportunities that you want to get and that you need to move to the next level and then to move to the next level after that. (Nicole)

Although hair is one of our most alterable traits, it also stands as representation for culture and beliefs.

Black Hair in Broadcast News

Black, on-air talent working in broadcast news face the challenge of resisting or conforming to industry standards when deciding how to style their hair. CBS News national Correspondent Michelle Miller acknowledges how black hair has a historical

framework that “goes back centuries” and leaves society wondering, “You know, what is good hair? What does good hair look like? What is bad hair? What does bad hair look like?”

Ashley Holt thinks how black, female on-air talent wear their hair is less about peers and more of an internal battle because black hair is “a unique part of us that no other culture really has that experience because there’s history in the way we wear our hair.”

At a time when some of the reporters, anchors and producers started their careers in the 1970s and 80s, conforming to industry styling and hair norms was expected. Susan Zirinsky is a white woman who is the senior executive producer for 48 Hours and has seen the evolution of black hair styling in the industry:

So, I think that...but in ‘72, maybe people felt like they had to conform. That they were looking at, “Well, if I’m too Afrocentric or I’m too ethnic, I can’t make it.” And so, Michele Clark was kind of a very stylized but not very Afrocentric look. But then, in the late 70s and the 80s, I think there was an evolution to a more natural look, and it was both ways because there was a woman named Lee Thornton who was kind of prissy in a proper way and she had very kind of stylized hair, yet there were women with Afros. (Susan)

Susan continued by saying for black female TV news talent, “the pressure on the air was probably more rather than less to make yourself look in a way- less ethnic and more “Yes, you may be black, but I’m going to look like her, her, and her in total.”

Morgan thinks there’s another shift in how black women have to choose to position themselves during a natural hair movement in today’s society:

...the reason I think this is such a big deal is because I think there's a concept of there's a certain group of black people who are acceptable, and they're just white enough so that they're accepted because she's got straight hair and her name is Taylor or Morgan or

Ashley or whatever and she talks white, we can accept her. We can accept the news from her. But I think that if we go a little too far, if she's got an Afro, if she's got braids- now we have to actually accept that she's a black person, and we are taking what she says seriously. To be honest, I think that's the problem. (Morgan)

Ashley Holt admitted that if she weren't working in her current position, she "would have braids in my hair right now or faux locks or something" because she loves Afrocentric hairstyles. However, she understands the industry standards and how "they're just not catered to black women." Ashley also said: "I think most of us conform toward the beginning, but I'm starting to see that women that are more established in their careers, black women, they're kind of doing whatever they want."

Kim Godwin, a black senior producer for the CBS Evening News, started her career as a reporter and anchor. When asked about her hair styling in the early stages of her career, as an anchor, she mentioned she had "the traditional, you know, straight hair kind of look with the curl" and advised younger black women in the industry to straighten their hair as well. She also said that if she wasn't the only black person at the station, then she "was one of two and maybe there was a black cameraperson on staff, maybe." As Kim's career shifted into more of a producer role and behind-the-scenes, she began to try different styles.

And then when I became a producer, I started letting it (hair) grow and sort of experimenting with different things. I...you know, I got the short Halle Berry cut and then I got a weave and had it long and, you know, flowy. Then, became the natural hair phase, and it was sort of like, you know, let your hair be natural. So I got rid of the weave, actually went to the two-strand twist thing and my hair was kind of wild and experimented with color. (Kim)

However, Kim admitted that her ability to embrace her hair came after years of being in the industry. "As a producer, I could do that. And by then, I was confident

enough in my career that I didn't feel like I needed to conform," Kim said. "And as long as I kept it neat and it looked businesslike, I was totally comfortable with it and, you know, it became sort of a personality statement for me."

Nicole Young has always been on the producing side of the industry but agreed that wearing her hair natural came after earning respect from her peers. "Well, you know, I personally wear my hair natural as a personal statement that you can be a successful black female or woman of color at a place like "60 Minutes," which is, essentially, a very white place," Nicole continued. "I am the only female producer...black female producer. I'm the only female producer of color, actually, on the floor."

Both Kim and Nicole said that 10, 15 years ago, the expectations for black women in broadcast news leaned more toward going with the industry norms for hair styling, and there was a lot of angst about hair styling. Nicole said, "ten years ago, I don't think a lot of people had the courage to...not even myself" to go natural because she felt doing so would "hinder my promotions or my growth in a company, based on how I looked- if I didn't conform."

Coming from a family of Jamaican heritage, Nicole has always admired dreadlocks, but felt, especially in the beginning of her career, that a natural look would hold her back in broadcast:

But when I was first starting out, I don't think having dreadlocks would have helped me in anyway, get promoted or move faster. Now, did anyone ever say anything to me? No. Was that how I felt? Yes. Was the truth? I don't know. I never tried it. I wouldn't have tried it. (Nicole)

Eventually, Kim and Nicole crossed paths at CBS News and bonded through their natural hair styling. They now both proudly showcase their natural, Afrocentric hair in

the newsroom to show young girls of color that it's possible to balance both professional and personal identities in the same space, as Nicole said:

And I understand that the position...I understand where I'm positioned and where I sit and as a result I know that people see me. So I like people to see me, especially younger women of color, to see that a woman can wear their hair natural and still get promoted and still be taken seriously and go to war zones and still, you know, sit in the screening room and still be considered a professional woman while still holding onto her identity and things that, you know. (Nicole)

Kim also thinks wearing braids and natural hair in the newsroom makes a point to younger black women in the workplace that you can be confident in who you are and change norms.

Because Nicole and I are here, and we're more established, Nia has a little more freedom, you know what I mean? And can say, "Look, we have two executives who are doing well who already have their hair like that. I don't have to be...I don't have to conform as much. (Kim)

And Nia has taken notice of their efforts for change:

And I think seeing more black women, especially black women who have the status, in terms of like rank, you know, at work, is really important because when I first started there was a black woman, a senior producer, with a 'fro. Straight up 'fro. And I was like, "Wow!" (Nia)

As well as Michelle Miller:

And what I've noticed here at CBS News is that two of my senior managers wear braids. They've worn twists. They've worn Afros, and nobody says anything other than, 'Oh, that's cool. I like that,' or...you know what I'm saying? There's no outward expression of, 'Whoa, that's too ethnic. (Michelle)

However, Nia hasn't encountered the same optimistic response concerning her natural hair in CBS' newsroom. She finds it invasive when people, including her

supervisor, ask her questions about “how long my hair took, how much,” which she thinks those aren’t things “we ask white women when they get their hair done or get it cut.” Nia said she doesn’t change her hair often, so when co-workers ask her questions about her hair that she believes they can Google, she finds their actions “inappropriate.” One of those inappropriate situations happened when Nia wore an Afrocentric hair accessory: “I wore a head wrap one day, and someone was like, ‘Oh, like next time we’ll wear matching du-rags.’ And I was like, ‘It’s not a du-rag. It’s a scarf...okay.’” She continued with her feelings about the situation:

Like, again, you wouldn’t have gone to a Muslim employee wearing a hijab, or you know, a head scarf and said, ‘Oh, I’m going to wear a du-rag.’ And it’s just like that cultural ignorance is just like...it’s really...it really bothers me. (Nia)

While some participants said there’s been progress when it comes getting Afrocentric styling accepted behind-the-scenes for established black women in broadcast news, it’s a different narrative for those in front of the camera. There’s more pressure to conform to an industry Eurocentric style for those who anchor and report the news. However, after decades in the industry, Kim has seen the discussion of industry hair norms evolve amongst black women.

Now if you are on air, you still have to be aware of your look, and, you know, you can’t just change every day or whatever, you know. You sort of come in and look a certain way. And on-air people I think there is still a lot more pressure about that, you know. Do you keep your hair straight? Do you wear a weave? Do you wear a wig? Do you...you know...all of those things. But I think now people feel like they have the ability to sort of explore it and talk about it openly and not be so, you know, scared of that issue, to just say, “Look, you know, I need something that works for me so that I’m not bald-headed, you know, in 20 years. (Kim)

Kim continued by saying that on-air talent has to think “more about how you are

perceived.” But while most of the participants agreed an on-air talent’s look should be consistent, it may be hard to define what a “professional” hairstyle looks like. Depending on the audience and region of the country, sometimes only Eurocentric styling may be acceptable. Participants had varying viewpoints and opinions on what a professional, Afrocentric style looked like. Raven said the on-air talent’s style shouldn’t distract the viewer “with crazy colors going on.” Additionally, she said there’s no problem with styles like Afros “as long as it’s like cleaned up looking.”

Professor and producer Jeimmie Nevalga agrees that the look of Afrocentric hair should be non-distracting. She said she tells her students to keep their hair “consistent and professional but even the term professional for me makes me cringe because I’m like, ‘What’s professional?’” While Jeimmie admits she’s a little more liberal with hairstyling in that she wishes “that we could wear our hair the way that makes us comfortable,” she also acknowledges she “would be doing a disservice to students when I say...if I say, ‘Oh yeah, you can wear your hair however you like.’”

For Nicole Young, assessing whether hair is professional enough is one of the things she says black women have to consider, on top of other pressures of working in TV news:

Have I spoken to different women? Have I mentored other people who have told me or who have asked questions like, ‘do you think the way I wear my hair will hinder my trajectory?’ And I have to assess that answer based on where I see that they’re positioned to, I see they’re positioned under and etc. So it’s a case-by-case basis. It’s an unfortunate conversation and question I’m asked all too often by young women of color, about whether or not the way they wear their hair will be a factor in whether or not they’ll be able to grow. And it’s sad that that’s the sort of thing that not only newsrooms or CBS, but just in corporations in general are thinking about, rather than, ‘Am I good at this job? Am I smart enough to do this work? And will my work stand for itself?’ (Nicole)

Another “60 Minutes” producer, Michael Karzis, thinks professionalism for on-air talent has more to do with dress, rather than conforming or resisting to Eurocentric hair norms. He thinks for that side of the business, “there’s a code” and “there’s a tie and a jacket and all...” Michael also said if he were staffing a newsroom, he cares more about having an honest reporter who can “absorb a story and distill it and disseminate it.”

CBS News national correspondent Michelle Miller has also been conditioned through experience and exposure “not to place that kind of value on a hairstyle. She focuses on the overall look for anchors and reporters:

I mean, it’s just like there’s no...that style, the style doesn’t tell me. It’s the dress that tells me. See, I look at the way someone dresses as a connotation professional versus non-professional or not even that. They can be in a professional manner, yet they’re dressing, especially in my environment and in my profession, it’s like what the story is determines the level of professional dress-given the point in time and point of story.

And thinks:

The audience is ultimately the person you have to make feel comfortable with who you are. The question is, can they get over this (motions hands to hair) and in many cases, time and time again, they have. (Michelle)

As an anchor, Michelle “wore very traditional earrings and necklace and always had a blazer on with a shirt. She said, “I think I was more quote of a conformist as an anchor than anything else.”

Producer Jack Weingart doesn’t have a problem with Afrocentric styling on air “as long as someone’s appearance doesn’t distract” and the style is consistent. He thinks in the end, on-air personalities should “neutralize and minimize any distractions” to keep the focus on the story and subjects. Additionally, he thinks Afrocentric styles come off as

natural and don't seem to make a statement or come off as unprofessional. In the end, Jack can understand why black women may feel marginalized for their choice to either conform to or resist Eurocentric hairstyling norms:

I think no matter what you end up choosing, it's a choice that carries with it some societal pressures and then also perceptions that are beyond a person's control. It's an awareness that I never thought about that the...women of color have to deal with in terms of physical appearance beyond...it's like hair is such a vain thing, too, but it's also such a personal part of somebody. And like you said, there is a form of expression with hairstyle, haircut. (Jack)

Reporter Alicia Pattillo thinks Afrocentric styles can be professional but is afraid to get one for fear of making herself less marketable in the industry:

You know, what if I don't know CNN or an agent was watching me that particular day, and I had those braids? I don't know how they would possibly feel or something. Would it hinder me? Would it make me less versatile...(Alicia)

Despite how long women of color have been in the industry of TV news, some of the participants felt black women who choose to have on-air positions know what they're signing up for when they choose to reject Eurocentric hair norms in the industry. Raven felt "if you're going to wear an Afro, more power to you. But you also should know that someone might say something to you, like that's just...2017, that's our world." Broadcast journalist Renee Ferguson experienced first-hand what it was like to have a hair discussion with her boss when she went on air in Indianapolis in the 1970s. In "A Dilemma for Black Women in Broadcast Journalism," Ferguson admits how she "had more discussions about my hair with news managers over a 30-year career than I ever wanted to think about." While the "black is beautiful" movement encouraged Ferguson to take on a job in broadcast journalism, it was also why she wound up having a conversation with her news director that she has never forgotten:

‘Renee, you’re going to have to get rid of the Afro,’ he said.

‘What do you mean get rid of my ‘fro,’ I shot back.

‘We’re getting a lot of calls from our viewers. They say you look militant, like Angela Davis, You’re scaring them!’ (Renee Ferguson, “A Dilemma for Black Women in Broadcast Journalism”)

After the heated discussion and the threat of being fired if she didn’t straighten her hair, Ferguson kept her ‘fro for a year because she “realized that my hair was making a powerful statement about my identity, about my blackness.” She says viewers also complained when Ferguson decided to straighten her hair.

Ferguson’s hair styling evolved throughout the years and she battled with straightening and wearing it natural, depending on whether she was in broadcast news or in an academic setting. She hadn’t discussed her internal conflict concerning her hair until the Don Imus comments, which she said “were a reminder that when it comes to the issue of image, beauty, and acceptance, American is actually not far removed from where we were in the 70’s.” In Ferguson’s mind, Imus’ commentary made her confront the fact that her battle to conform or resist still rages on:

It (comments) made me wonder if, as a pioneer in broadcast journalism, I hadn’t contributed to that lack of progress by conforming to a more widely acceptable image to promote my career. Did I give up the chance, through my position on TV, to normalize nappy? Has my continuing failure to confront the issue inside my workplace contributed to our nations’ ongoing obsession of a standard of beauty that, when it comes to hair, is decidedly non-black? Is my straight hair to blame?” (Renee Ferguson, “A Dilemma for Black Women in Broadcast Journalism”)

Maybe, in 2017, times have changed. Raven suggests that if a reporter now wants to wear their hair natural that they should explain to the news director, ‘This is my culture. This is how I like to wear my hair. This is how I’ve always worn it,’ and see how

the discussion goes from there. But professor Jeimmie Nevalga thinks otherwise:

So, if you do that and decide, 'I want to wear cornrows on TV.' I can tell you will not get a job, even if that's the way that makes you comfortable, even if you're like, 'This is what it means to me.' As a professor, I'm not doing you any justice telling you, 'Yes, fight for what you believe in and wear the way you want and let your writing speak for itself.' I wish it was that way, but I will tell you it's probably not. (Jeimmie)

Women of color also pointed out something white producers had no idea about—the cost and time for black women to conform to Eurocentric hair norms. While her co-workers are reimbursed for hair expenses, reporter Raven Brown is stuck paying for her and has to travel out of Kirksville to find a stylist:

And there's this one place that sponsors us, so that's where people go and get their hair done here, and it'll be hair done by Paragon. I know for a fact Paragon doesn't do weave. Paragon doesn't do black hair at all. There's not like a black stylist there, so what am I supposed to do? And it's just like, that's the part that's kind of been just like...needs to be clarified when it comes to being in the news business, especially in contracts. I feel like if you're going to be...have a hair policy, then everyone should be equal because right now I can't use the hair policy. (Raven)

Reporter Morgan Young out of Montgomery said talent at her station doesn't receive a hair and make up allowance at all. She feels as though her producers and managers don't understand what goes into making black hair look professional:

...But also the fact that we don't have a hair and make-up budget. They have no idea how much it costs to get the look that they want. We can't take a shower every day with Tresemme and blow dry it and flip it and switch it and...it doesn't work that way. They're not willing to pay for it. They want a product they're not willing to pay for.

On top of that, she said:

If I'm sitting outside in the sun, and I'm sweating, they don't understand the concept of I'm sweating my edges out and this is what's happening. They think, 'Oh, I'm sweating, and I'm going to

put my hair in a bun and I'll wash it every night and tease it up and make it look big.' (Morgan)

Filipina professor and producer Jeimmie connected with black women and learned about natural and relaxed hair processes while studying in the University of Missouri's journalism program:

And my friends used to call me out for complaining about the cost of how much it was to cut my hair. And they were like, 'Are you serious? Do you know how much money and time it takes to do our...' especially when we were in broadcast classes. Like, the upkeep of their hair was so expensive and even if they weren't getting it straightened, they were putting in sew-ins, weaves and whatever it was just so that it was they could keep it consistent. That's not cheap. It never has been cheap. (Jeimmie)

And while discussing black hair and its cost, producer Jack Weingart had a revelation on the topic:

Yeah, it's an area that I don't... it's funny because I've never thought about it. I never thought...I never knew a price...I didn't know how expensive it was. I just don't think about hair. I don't know if it's a guy/girl thing. In the sense of the responsibilities that women feel and that society places on them to have good hair, whatever good is deemed. (Jack)

In addition to styling her hair for TV being "a really difficult, expensive battle against something that should be so natural and something people shouldn't care about," Ashley said she has to figure out how to have a straight, Eurocentric style that doesn't damage her natural hair and curl pattern.

Finding the time to visit a stylist, to style their hair themselves or how co-workers don't understand the time it takes to style black hair also became a discussion point for some of the participants, especially for Nia:

They just think I wake up and I just walk outside. And it's really not that simple. Like I spend way more time on my hair when it's curly than when it's straight, just because there's more product, there's more...it's just so much more involved. And so I don't

think people realize that or they do and they always comment, like, 'How long did that take?' or 'Oh, what...' And I just can't. (Nia)

When looking at the Eurocentric hair standards still in place in broadcast newsrooms, Ashley Holt said, "...the problem is that these standards were set by people who obviously knew nothing about us and our culture. Even if they did know, they probably didn't care."

Contributing to the Newsroom Environment

Despite feeling a spiral of silence when talking about their private selves and hair with co-workers, young, black reporters and producers felt as though they could contribute openly and honestly day-to-day in their jobs. Though they have concerns about if they were selected to be a black female voice at their station, which is what Raven echoed:

Yes, in newsroom discussions, yes. On air, definitely yes. Like sometimes I also think...like sometimes I feel like, am I only here because I'm black? Because you know there's some places you have to have that diversity. You need the diverse viewers to tune in; they're not going to tune into an all white team, like you know what I mean? (Raven)

Morgan said she hasn't had any issues voicing her opinions in the newsroom because of Montgomery's historical racial history.

I think that my newsroom is very, very sensitive about how they talk about race, especially just because of where we are. Like, literally the Rosa Parks, "I'm not getting off the bus site," is literally 10 minutes away from our station. Like, they don't play that. Like no, not here. (Morgan)

Raven is more outspoken and feels comfortable expressing herself in the newsroom because she aims for transparency in her work:

If I know something's an issue, I bring it up because I don't want it

to continue to be an issue. I don't want a year to pass by, and they're still like, "Oh, you need to fix this," or calling Ela into the conference room because how does that help me, it doesn't help them, it doesn't help anyone succeed.

But yeah, I think standing up for yourself and going and saying your opinion on this is very, very important, which I think a lot of people are scared to do. (Raven)

Though Nia doesn't always feel comfortable contributing to newsroom discussions and interacting with her peers. She said a lot of the interactions that make her shut down at work have to do with both her Eurocentric hairstyling and young age.

Ashley believes she contributes equally and works well with her peers, even in the most stressful news situations.

Cultural Discussions in Newsrooms

What may help with spirals of silence in newsrooms with minority voices is discussion on cultural differences and employee councils. CBS News' Kim Godwin, a black woman who heads the company's employee council, is trying to spearhead cultural discussions within the organization.

I think we should. It's funny because we were just talking. We have an employee council here, and we were just talking about this yesterday because Nia, frankly, came up to me and said, 'You know, this touching of my hair thing...how do I handle that? It happens occasionally. I really don't like it, you know. I think maybe we should have more discussions about cultural differences in the newsroom.'

And I thought it was an excellent idea to get to the employee council to say, "How do we have this discussion? Who should lead these discussions?" And it's not just African-Americans, but culturally across the board, you know. I always feel like I need to know more about Islam, especially now that it's in the news so much, you know. Am I...I don't want to be offensive. I need to be educated about it. I read more, as much as I can about it. I ask my friends, you know, who are Muslim." (Kim)

Some members of the CBS News family in New York City, like Michelle Miller, think cultural discussions should only happen if the issue “comes up.” From her point of view, Michelle thinks if there’s not pressure to conform or there’s no one feeling uncomfortable due to cultural differences, then she’s “not quite sure why you should have an open discussion about something that is, quite frankly, rather trivial to a person’s conduct and professionalism.”

Jack Weingart is also a part of the CBS News New York community and thinks it should be less about cultural discussions and more about exposure when it comes to understanding cultures and different perspectives in broadcast news:

I think it's about immersion. I think...I'm so frustrated by the New York approach to media because I feel like everything's been centralized into New York. And because...as a result there's, a greater misunderstanding of the communities at whole-communities in every region of America. (Jack)

Alicia also thinks immersion is key to expanding culture:

...So, I think people just need to understand and open their window to their brain and understand that everyone didn't live in this bubble and everybody didn't grow up like you. (Alicia)

Ashley Holt, the young reporter in Oklahoma, has had to balance covering stories in the black community fairly with her overall skill, which she said is something her white co-workers don't have to do.

...when I got here, I was basically told outright that I kind of needed to be their gateway to the black community. And even that had to be a teachable moment where I had to explain, 'Listen, my upbringing was probably closer to yours than it was the people you want me to reach out to.' (Ashley)

That work/life balance for Ashley is forcing her to find ways to “help the station branch out into that community, but also make sure that I’m doing it in a way that I can

sleep at night and that I can tell those stories.”

Ashley said she’d rather take on reporting the black community in Tulsa, which has faced increased scrutiny in recent years concerning race relations, than to have the community’s narrative told incorrectly.

You know, the first day of Black History Month, I did pitch a Black History story. Did I do one every day that month? No. That’s not my job to do that, you know. But when there are things, anniversaries that happen in the black community, I will be the one to throw my hand up and go cover it because I want to make sure it’s told properly. But then I come back and have the conversation with the manager or whoever about why I told it that way, you know?

She continued:

Now, I’m going to do it, and I’m going to do a good job at it, but just understand that just because I’m black doesn’t mean I understand everything that they’re going through. And it may have been uncomfortable for me to say my what- third month here. But it’s comments like that and little teachable moments like that that I think can help people understand what we’re going through just a little bit more. They’re never going to completely understand it. And unfortunately, that is our job. I’ve always fought that.
(Ashley)

At the same time, Ashley sometimes has to say no to going out to stories in the black community to keep herself a well-rounded reporter.

Morgan feels as though she doesn’t “know anything about people getting highlights and low lights and bleaching, and they don’t know anything about relaxers” and due to cultural differences, she doesn’t “think there’s anything wrong with that.” However, she notes that black hair styling and cost is something that needs to be discussed in newsrooms because since so many news managers are white, “that if you’re going to manage people’s appearance, you should know.”

While some interviewees think it’s up to management to set up discussion on

cultural differences, Jeimmie took the approach of putting the responsibility upon minority talent to break the spiral of silence and educate newsroom management:

But I think it's on individuals to go out there and say, 'I want to make a change,' especially the veterans. The veterans who have been in the business, they could say, 'I'm not doing this. I have a six-figure salary, and I'm not changing my hair. And I'm the face of the station.' They're the ones to make the change because the ones who just leave college and say, 'I'm going to wear my hair curly,' they have no say because the news director could be like, 'I'm going to go find someone else that fits our mold.' (Jeimmie)

It took Nicole Young quite some time to get to a place in her career where she wanted natural hair and thought, 'You know what? No more. I'm going to cut it off and see where it goes.' She feels that if it's a conversation she had in her head, then other women of color must go through the same thing, which means there should maybe be Eurocentric and Afrocentric hair discussions in newsrooms:

It's clearly something that people, particularly women of color, feel. And so, if you feel it, and it happens, you know, I think more conversations need to be had to either get the conversation out of our heads- it is okay to wear your hair the way it should be worn or how you'd like it to be worn, without having any kind of consequences- or...and...you know, there should be more people, I think, in positions of...I think there also should be more people in positions of power who are seen by those young ladies. (Nicole)

Regional Differences

Producers in the New York City area may not witness black, female co-workers wearing Afrocentric hairstyles all the time, but they are open to the idea of the look for women of color both behind-the-scenes and in front of the camera. Producers in other regions of the country may not be.

Alicia, the reporter in Bakersfield, instantly noticed how very few black women work on air in her region:

“It’s so important to know your demographic, to know what you’re getting yourself into, know what the viewers are like, what they expect and things like that. And in the South, that’s big, you know. In the Midwest, there’s a lot of black reporters.”

In another instance, Alicia decided not to get braids in her hair because she felt like she want to upset her demographic. She would wear an Afrocentric style in a city like Chicago, Cleveland, Detroit, or New York, where she said the look would be deemed professional.

Meanwhile, Morgan said at her station in the South, women aren’t allowed to show their shoulders because it’s ‘unprofessional,’ and if she starts sweating in the heat, she has to “find a way to manage that without looking grainy.”

Kim Godwin, who started her career in the South, believes there’s definitely a difference in how black anchors and reporters wear their hair, depending on the region in which they work:

...mainly because in the South there are smaller markets, and I think people think differently, you know. They’re not used to the personality-driven or personality statement type of look. Whereas in the Northeast, you see people with all kinds of hair, and you know, different jewelry and tattoos and all kinds of things that are traditionally or have traditionally not been acceptable. (Kim)

She thinks black on-air talent in the South has to have more of the traditional mindset of, ‘I need to have, you know, the traditional straight hair and look more like the majority.’

Discussion and Conclusion

A spiral of silence exists between black women in broadcast news and their white male producers. Despite how the reporters and producers of all races viewed their experiences in broadcast journalism, most of them look forward to how times are

changing. They're optimistic about more inclusive and tolerant newsrooms across the country. Morgan believes, "there is no better time to be a black woman in television news." She thinks it's no better time for black female anchors and reporters because "so many stations have hired a certain type of person that they're starting to realize that diversity is becoming more important, you know."

Producers like Susan Zirinsky and Kim Godwin have seen broadcast news evolve for the better throughout the decades for women. Susan said, "I don't think you have to fit a mold anymore to succeed." Though she also knows the issues minorities and women face can be approached more tactfully:

So do women still have issues? Yeah. Do minorities still have issues? Yeah. And I think those in the management have to work hard at creating a balance of power, and I think they better. I think they're better. But I don't think it's solved, and I don't think it's solved for a while. (Susan)

And while Kim doesn't feel marginalized for Afrocentric styling as a producer, she views the future of broadcast journalism for minority women positively because "we're so used to seeing people who look different now." As mentioned before, Kim would like to have cultural discussions in CBS News' employee council to educate people on everyone's differences.

Also a member of the CBS News team, "60 Minutes" producer Michael Karzis thinks he sees conversations about cultural differences occurring in newsrooms:

I think that's happening. You know, I think that's just organically happening now. I mean, there's...I mean, I think that people are becoming more sensitive to, you know, all sorts of different aspects of people's, you know, personal tastes and personal likes and dislikes. (Michael)

Producer and university professor Jeimmie Nevalga agrees she has seen hair

styling for women become more diverse throughout the years. She wants to see the next generation of reporters further push the envelope of diversity and inclusion of Afrocentric styling:

I think workplaces are changing. I think the millennial generation in general is making things looser, whereas women used to have to wear suits to work. More and more places are allowing business casual. And I really do think that counts with hair. I mean, let's take black hair out of it. We can now wear long on air, whereas back in the day, they used to make us cut our hair to a bob and we all had the same hair. (Jeimmie)

Besides wanting black on-air talent to “feel comfortable with their natural hair” and do what they want with it, Nia wishes that the diverse, Afrocentric styling she sees with producers Kim and Nicole could transcend to anchor and reporters as well:

But I feel we're stuck either hiring or stuck with that like look of what it is to be a black anchor, especially as a woman. It's like, even the greats, you still always see straight hair- local news, wherever- it's straight. And I would love, love, love to see someone rock a twist out or you know, just like a fro, a wash and go, like, you know, even braids. Like, I've never seen that, and I mean, I don't when the day will come where that's just regular, you know? (Nia)

Overall, most of the participants believed we're heading to more acceptances of Afrocentric hairstyles. While not everyone understood Afrocentric processes or pressures to conform, most felt black women, whether in television news or not, should be able to style their hair with a look most comfortable with them. Michael Karzis reiterated, “People can wear their hair anyway they want. Again, I just think- are they good people?” and that the only issue with styling should be making sure the style is consistent so that viewers can feel familiar with who's delivering the news.

Jack Weingart feels, from his work environment and the people who are interviewed for the show, that “there needs to be a greater awareness of who is on

television, both in a reporter role and also on a character role.” Sometimes Jack notices a lack of diversity in the people and issues that are covered in a single “60 Minutes” show.

And while, despite some bumps in the road and some obvious changes still to come, most of the participants believed black women in broadcast news have come a long way, Michelle Miller pointed to recent racial incidents and the country’s climate to counter that sense of productivity.

But it seems to me the pendulum is switching sort of out in the rest of the country because you’re starting to hear people comment on people’s hair and not in a nice way. And it’s not...it seems to me they are attacking people based on who or how their hair identifies, if that makes any sense. (Michelle)

Time creates change. However, throughout those decades of change and people of color who have made an impact in broadcast news, reporter Alicia Pattillo feels one thing will always remain the same:

You’re going to have to work 10 times harder. It’s just like. It is what it is. But work your butt off and pretty soon, you know, people aren’t going to be able to see color. They’re just going to be like, ‘She’s a damn good reporter. She’s a hard worker.’ (Alicia)

Future Research

Several topics came up during my research period that could transform into further research on race and gender in broadcast news. From the gender angle, a few participants mentioned how all women face some scrutiny about how they wear their hair. Perhaps it would be interesting to see how woman with curly hair, regardless of race, struggle with beauty expectations in broadcast news. As Michelle Miller mentioned, “Like it is difficult for a lot of women... and there are some white women with some curly hair too that want to straighten...who feel whatever about it- they've been put in a box to conform as well,” she said.

Perhaps not only expanding the interviews, but also speaking to black women who choose to wear their hair Afrocentric in reporting and anchoring roles could further this specific research. The reporters I spoke to either wore their hair straight or weave instead of their natural hair.

I chose not to include pictures of Afrocentric and Eurocentric styles for comparison due to the fact that the participants provided more thought through and educated answers to my questions; they were aware of the implications of how they answered. Another possible inclusion for future research would be interviewing people in different markets and asking them to rank professionalism based on Afrocentric and Eurocentric styles. Jeimmie thinks, “depending on the audience you're serving unfortunately, it (hair) can be construed one way or the other,” in terms of professionalism.

Additionally, any future research might include even more participants from different regions of the country, with more attention placed on white male producers.

Narrowing down my research to just black women and hair was a difficult task. There are other aspects to include about minorities in newsrooms such as clothing and culture. Michelle Miller brought up an interesting point concerning perceived professionalism when saying “the (hair) style doesn't tell me. It's the dress that tells me.”

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