The doors to the fourth estate are locked
Socioeconomic barriers to becoming a professional journalist and the implications of newsrooms that lack economic diversity

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2016

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank my adviser **Professor Caley Cook** for her consistent support and invaluable insights into my work. For the last two years Prof. Cook has been an incredible mentor and role model to me in the department. In selecting her to be my adviser for my honors research I knew I was asking to work with someone who would push me to my intellectual limits, challenge my ideas, help me cultivate important questions and expect nothing short of excellence. Whether I've delivered excellence or not, the process of learning from and alongside Prof. Cook has been unlike any other experience I've had during my time as an undergraduate here, and I cannot convey how grateful I am for that.

I would also like to express my gratitude for **Professor LeiLani Nishime** for her guidance and patience during the Fall 2015 Honors Seminar. Prof. Nishime nurtured my interest in the program and in research carefully and kindly over the course of the quarter, and was a key mentor as I structured my prospectus and meticulously glued together my final poster. I appreciated and respected so much the sincere interest Prof. Nishime expressed in each of her students' work, and I feel lucky to have had her there to help me form my research question and write the prospectus that would inform the next two quarters of work.

Finally, I would like to thank the **University of Washington, Department of Communication** for affording me this opportunity to pursue structured, long-term academic research as an undergraduate. Like so many of the opportunities I've received through the department, this one has been crucial to my growth as a learner, writer, communicator, leader and colleague. Conducting interviews, collecting data, crafting theses and working with the many people who so generously devoted their time and energy to help me will forever be a memorable and character-building parts of my career at the University of Washington.

ABSTRACT

In an increasingly connected world full of increasingly well-connected people, journalism plays a more nuanced role than ever in disseminating news and information. There are any number of biases and barriers that may change the way journalists interpret and share the news, but this research has focused on one in particular: socioeconomic backgrounds of the journalists themselves.

This research analyzes demographic changes in a university journalism program and both obtained and analyzed interviews with professional journalists. The aim was to better understand what this and the next generation of journalists looks like in terms of background and identity, and to consider how these backgrounds will change the way newsrooms do their job. This research attempts to synthesize that data to achieve an intersectional understanding of race, sex, class and the role in the workplace, albeit across a problematically small sample size.

The findings in this paper look at the ways a socioeconomic gap in who does and does not become a journalist manifests itself in classrooms and newsrooms alike, and the implications of a working force of journalists that lack socioeconomic diversity.

INTRODUCTION

The thinking that went into conceptualizing and eventually creating this paper is summed up neatly in 10 words by an Al Jazeera author: “Who is a ‘journalist’? People who can afford to be” (Kendzior, 2013). The assumption here is clear: journalists come from a very specific class background. This socioeconomic class that allows them to get a college degree, or to work for free, or to buy $5,000 cameras, or to make just enough to cover rent — and nothing else — in a metropolitan area and still survive somehow. From these assumptions about the requirements to become and remain a journalist, I formed the basis for my hypothesis. My conclusion was that to become a journalist one must be able to afford all of these things, and to be able to afford these things and still survive and be able to intellectual work, one must start with some inherent economic advantage to be successful. In short, my hypothesis was this: There is a socioeconomic gap in who can become a journalist, and it starts in the classroom and grows increasingly evident and impactful in the workplace.

I formed this hypothesis, which was born as a mere “hunch,” during my reading described in my Literature Review. Academia has done very little in the way of formally recognizing the socioeconomic barriers to the field of journalism, but journalists are beginning to discuss it in their own writing. Increasingly, they’re reclaiming their voices from the void of “objectivity” to discuss their own opinions on their world and their field. They argue that there exists at the entrance to the field of journalism a pair of wrought-iron gates sealed tightly to anyone who can’t afford a college degree or to earn little as a freelancer or nothing as an unpaid intern. As Dennis put it (and as my interview subjects echoed), “The practice of asking recent graduates to spend their days working for free while paying rent and living in a city like New York is a barrier for entry to students from mid- to lower-class backgrounds” (2013). However, tangentially, and quite contradictorily, a new idea of who can be a journalist is spreading, not just among the public, but in newsrooms, as well. The belief that with the advent of free online hosting services and social media tools like Twitter, *anyone* can be a journalist, or at the very least *do* journalism. So which is it? Is journalism an inaccessible rich kid’s club, or a sort of open-source profession available to the masses?

These questions are firstly important for journalists and their editors, publishers and other affiliated staff. A better understanding of why current journalist demographic norms (including race, sex, and other factors, but emphasizing income or class background) exist could serve newsrooms in a number of ways. A possible example is in helping newsrooms diversify their demographics by increasing the number of racial minorities and women in the newsroom (both historically shown to make less than their white and/or male counterparts). However, the audiences of these journalists may also benefit from this. If U.S. journalists are primarily from financially privileged backgrounds, a limited range of voices are being heard that do not, and inherently *cannot* be representative of a great many readers. The result is what Dennis concludes is a tangible hole in coverage and service to the public and readership: “Until publications find that more well-rounded reporting is more important than cutting financial corners, they'll continue to alienate a large portion of the American population, and the stories that lay in the shadows of America's dark corners will never come to light” (2013). This is echoed in other writings as well (Ehrenreich, 2015; Savchuk, 2016). In fact, the continued publication of articles revisiting this idea and discussing it with a tone of alarm indicates that this is not some ignored and established norm of the industry, but an issue around which buzz has been and is being created. Perhaps that’s because of the perceived importance of the press in a democracy like that of the United States.

If the press is to function as an entity that is equatable in power and influence to the government (i.e. the "Fourth Estate"), or as a means to hold those in power accountable, those who are a part of the press must be representative of the public they're serving. Professor and author Lance Bennett describes the role of journalism in the public's lives in his book *News: The Politics of Illusion*: "Whether setting the tone for routine politics or for crisis, the news is the core of our political information system" (5). Throughout the text, Bennett looks at biases in news and news reporting and their impacts on journalism's role in society. Importantly, he describes journalists' role of "gatekeepers" of information, "opening the news gate to admit certain voices and ideas into public view and closing it to others" (10). Later, he talks about how writers are assimilated into newsrooms and learn to fit in "harmoniously" with the types of news that is covered at their publications and how it is covered (165). All that is to say that journalists, deliberately or otherwise, hold an important role in the power structure of U.S. government and information. As gatekeepers capable of both elevating and squashing voices, it is necessary for these journalists to come from diverse backgrounds. If the minorities and women so noticeably absent from national newsrooms are more frequently from low-income backgrounds than their white, male counterparts, it is clear that in the hierarchy of political power and information the gatekeepers are not from low-income backgrounds.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The most notable characteristic of existing academic literature on American journalists in a modern context is its absence. With increasingly rapid changes to how journalism can be defined and the ways it can be executed, data on who the people doing journalism are is outdated or limited – or both. This could be attributed to the lengthy timeline to produce peer-reviewed academic articles in combination with the rapid shifts in the industry. However, considerable patterns have emerged from what literature does exist, trends that seem to be acknowledged by the authors as normal or at least expected. When analyzed with an emphasis on socioeconomic backgrounds, some alarming trends in the literature surface in areas concerning pay, professional identity and job satisfaction, gender and minority representation, and contradictory expectations for training and education for those entering the field.

I analyze these texts through the lens of questions such as: "What is the full cost of becoming a journalist?" and "Is journalism a field made accessible to everyone by the Internet?" If not, is it due to that cost?" It should be noted that none of my academic texts explicitly address the socioeconomic backgrounds of journalists in any context. As de Burgh clarifies: "… we have not asked about the educational levels, occupations, and incomes of journalists' parents in our 1982, 1992 and 2002 surveys – nor have many other studies of journalists for that matter" (2005).

Of course, to discuss "journalists" and "journalism," it is important to establish who does and does not qualify as a journalist. Washington State law describes a journalist as:

"Any person who is or has been an employee, agent, or independent contractor of … any entity that is in the regular business of news gathering and disseminating news or information to the public by any means, including, but not limited to, print, broadcast, photographic, mechanical, internet, or electronic distribution" (see RCW 5.68.010).

However, documents from the Capitol Correspondents Association of Washington (CCA) say that a bona fide journalist's "principal income is obtained from news correspondence," regardless of medium. The discrepancy between these definitions — two of the most "official" definitions written down, and one only in an informal document — is clearly the factor of a reporter's income. Income is the only objective, quantitative measurement of who is a journalist, whereas "news gathering" and what constitutes a news outlet is highly subjective. For my research I will be working under the RCW definition of a journalist, and will be speaking to journalists which adhere to the RCW and CCA codes of journalism: employees which receive most of their income from their work at a news organization news gathering and reporting.

The economic and education gap between a civilian laborer and a journalist

Many authors have described the prototypical American journalist, but perhaps Derek Thompson, writer for *The Atlantic*, put it best in the headline: "Report: Journalists Are Miserable, Liberal, Over-Educated, Under-Paid, Middle-Aged Men" (2014). Nearly all sources observed the same trends in areas of race, gender, education standards and income of the average U.S. journalist. Newsrooms have been homogeneously white, male, and educated newsroom since researchers started taking data some 40 years ago (de Burgh, 2005; Willnat and Weaver, 2014). Willnat and Weaver (2014) surveyed 1,080 U.S. journalists working for "daily and weekly newspapers, radio and television stations, news services and news magazines, and online news media." The journalists and news organizations were selected at random and interviewed online. Notably, they found that journalists have always been highly educated, with 51 percent holding a college degree in 1971 and 92 percent holding a degree in 2014. Clearly, journalists are growing increasingly educated, while the cost of a degree increases disproportionately (*Digest of Education Statistics*, 2013). The number of journalists holding at least a B.A. is nearly triple the percentage of American adults who hold a degree (31.7 percent) and of those in the civilian labor force who hold a degree (34.6) (2014). This does clash with common notions of journalism being available to anyone, or as Mark Deuze put it: “Ultimately, digital and networked journalism in whatever shape or form must be seen as a practice that is not exclusively tied to salaried work or professional institutions anymore” (2008). But, according to Willnat and Weaver’s data, all journalists who work for salary are inherently tied to professional institutions in some capacity.

The literature also continually references the low income of journalists in combination with the burden of the cost of a college degree. The median annual income for journalists in 2012 was just over $50,000 (Willnat and Weaver, 2014). It should be noted that women in the field made, on average, 83 percent of what men made in 2012 – taking this into consideration men made more ($53,600) than the civilian labor force (about $45,000, with 34 percent holding a degree) and women made slightly less at just over $44,300 (Willnat and Weaver, 2014). Willnat and Weaver note in their report that these relative salaries have not kept up with inflation. While salaries have increased five-fold since 1970, they would need to make nearly $67,000 a year to have the same buying power. A survey by University of Georgia in 2010 found that the median reporter salary is $30,000 and had not changed since 2005 (Becker, et al., 2010).

Putting aside the gender pay gap for now, it is clear that there is a disconnect between the general civilian labor force and journalists in the U.S., calling into question Deuze’s argument that the industry is no longer necessarily tied to income and education. Even if physical acts of journalism – that is, a simple task like taking a photo on a smartphone or tweeting about an event happening at the time – are not tied to an income and education, those making their living reporting and working in the news certainly are. The long-term research Willnat and Weaver (2014) produce clearly outlines a disparity between the education (and therefore implied class background, assuming it is and has been easier for those with money to go to college) between journalists and the general public. This trend echoes the ideas de Burgh touches on in his writing: the perception of journalists as a well-to-do "cultural elite" (2005). de Burgh summarizes the argument neatly: "One recurrent criticism of journalists is that they no longer come from working-class backgrounds, but rather from professional or upper socioeconomic families" (2005). He concedes, however, that due to a lack of data, there is no systematic evidence that journalists do actually come from a privileged family or class background.

This idea of journalists being comprised mostly of a wealthy elite is neither new, nor limited to discussion among critics. Journalists themselves have acknowledged the stereotype. Take for example Richard Harwood, late Ombudsman for the Washington Post. His 1995 article in American Journalism Review "Are Journalists 'Elitist?'" considers fully the roots of the label, and the validity of its use. He writes "A central question here is whether the elitist perceptions of the press are valid. Elites today are characterized by more than attitudes. Income, wealth and education are the defining factors" (Harwood, 1995). He pivots, however, and claims that due to the low salaries of most reporters, particularly those starting out, they cannot and do not belong with the rest of elitist intellectuals. Of course, by attempting to illustrate the economic barriers present for journalists of low-income backgrounds, I may bolster the voices of the critics who claim that journalists are in fact removed from the proletariat and can be considered, by some degree of separation, an elite unto themselves.

Women and minority representation and economic implications

As touched on briefly above, journalism lacks gender equity in pay and representation. This is examined in terms of pay, length of time in the field, and job satisfaction (often in relation to the latter two points) (Everbach and Flournoy, 2007; Cushion, 2007; Tharp, 1991). All three authors point out pay inequity as a normal and relatively unchanged trend within the field. Everbach and Flournoy identify the pay gap and a lack of perceived respect in the workplace as the primary reasons that women leave the field sooner than men, a trend supported by data that says with every five years of experience in the field, the gender gap increases anywhere from 5 to 13 percent (2007; Willnat and Weaver, 2014). For reference, 37.5 percent of journalists were women in 2013 (Willnat and Weaver, 2014). Whether intentional or not, discrimination either via socioeconomic means or due to socioeconomic status seems to be occurring toward women in the field. Women may be able to access the field but for financial reasons appear not to stay. Similarly, minority groups tend to be extremely underrepresented. Willnat and Weaver found that the percentage of minorities working in media has actually decreased from 2002 to 2013, from 9.5 percent, to 8.5 percent (2014). As they point out, this is wildly out of proportion with the percentage of minorities in the U.S. (36.6 percent) and with the number of degree-holders that are minorities (27.9 percent). Considering that, according to Census data, minorities and women make less annually than whites or males, it seems telling of a socioeconomic gap when neither minorities nor women have an equitable representation in the field.

However, the question of why and how minorities are not employed in media has varied answers. One author speculates that the number of minorities in the field may be in some way tied to journalism education at the high school level (Callahan, 1998). Callahan argues that participation in journalism in high school has a direct relation to participation at the collegiate and professional levels, and that participation at the high school level is lower among minority students (and students in leadership roles are disproportionately white). A possible conclusion here is a pipeline of white, statistically wealthier students (given Census data which indicates clear gaps in income by race) are being fed into the journalism field. If, as Callahan implies, experiencing journalism at the pre-college educational level is what is leading students to study or pursue journalism then whoever has access to that experience will be more likely than their peers to go on to pursue journalism at the collegiate or professional level. Callahan's findings show that inner-city schools in his sample area have few newspapers, and that those that do don't print often and have disproportionately white advisers. In his discussion, Callahan proposes ensuring there are high-quality papers at schools rich in diversity to better aid diversity in collegiate and eventually professional newsrooms. If high school newsrooms only exist in privileged areas and also have a direct influence on students' decisions to move forward with a journalism career, a pipeline is possible.

Education or professional requirements as a financial barrier

While nearly all journalists have a degree, not all experts within the field consider one necessary. A discourse which treats a degree in journalism as a sort of "pedigree" or unnecessary qualification exists in many circles (Frith and Meech, 2007). However, Willnat and Weaver say their findings make it clear that "the four-year bachelor's degree is the main qualification necessary for being hired as a journalist in most U.S. news media" (2014). Their findings also state, though, that only about one-third of the degrees journalists hold are journalism degrees. Here is where the subjective nature of what a journalist *is* and what journalism looks like makes drawing any finite conclusion impossible. Some may argue that a tweet sharing a photo of a breaking news event, such as a car crash or a snowstorm could be considered journalism — certainly it is, by the most fundamental definition, reporting. But does the author of this tweet then become a reporter or a journalist? By the definitions set forth in Washington State law, no. And by hiring trends within the field, it would seem editors and hiring officials in newsrooms don't think so either. If that truly is this case, and the newsroom demographics discussed above really are representative of who and what a journalist looks like, then it seems fair to say that some of the "work" of news gathering and disseminating has become accessible to everyone, but that the intellectual craft of news gathering, the support of a newsroom, publication and editor, and, importantly, the title and paycheck that come with being a "news gatherer" have not.

It is worth noting here that journalists have considered this inaccessibility to the field through the lens of socioeconomic background and its ties to social justice reporting. In an article in University of California, Berkeley's magazine *CALIFORNIA* about coverage of poverty, the author points out the concern: "...journalists warn that as news outlets balk at paying good wages and instead rely on enlisting freelancers on the cheap, they drive out the contributions of people who, like Alexander [a writer who has experienced homelessness], bring an innate understanding of poverty born of personal experience" (Savchuk, 2016). The article refers to Barbara Ehrenreich's 2015 article, "In America, only the rich can afford to write about poverty," in which she critiques an unforgiving economic climate which squashes the ability of the low-income to do journalistic work by "refusing to pay, or anywhere near adequately pay, its 'content providers.'" She continues, "This is the real face of journalism today: not million dollar-a-year anchorpersons, but low-wage workers and downwardly spiraling professionals who can't muster up expenses to even start on the articles … much less find an outlet to cover the costs of doing them" (Ehrenreich, 2015). Ehrenreich's point about the inability of even journalists to do important journalistic work calls into question the notion of open-access, by-the-public reporting and newsgathering. It also puts into context the earlier example of the tweet: perhaps newsgathering in it most basic form (pointing out that news is happening) is accessible and sustainable for the public, but anything past that is struggling to survive in the newsroom already, much less outside of it.

METHODS: OVERVIEW

In this section I will look at the methods I used to collect information to inform my hypothesis. I will analyze my interviewing and data collection in detail, explaining where relevant the participants, procedures and inconsistencies in my research. Each section (Interviews, 5.1 and Data Collection, 5.2) aims to inform the reader of my steps to a degree of detail that allows the casual reader (or future Honors student) to replicate my research and to justify or point out original intent of each step of my process.

5.1 METHODS: INTERVIEWS

1. Section overview

I conducted five interviews over the course of two months with professional journalists working in a metropolitan region in the American Pacific Northwest, referred to from here on out as "my selected city." In this section I will review how and why I chose to speak with the people I did, how successful my interview methods were, the form the actual interviews took, and other important observations concerning my interview methodology. I will also look briefly at the limitations of my research, the implications of which will be analyzed further in my "Discussion of Results" section.

I selected this method after surveys done by academic sources discussed in my Literature Review. Specifically, the work done by Willnat and Weaver (2014) and Marty Tharp (1988), which surveyed journalists about job satisfaction. Instead of surveying, I chose to interview my subjects to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of their experiences. I also felt that the nuances and complexity of a subject's thoughts about or experience with something like socioeconomic differences might be lost in the impersonal space of a survey.

2. Interview subject selection criteria

I selected my interview subjects along a few specific criteria, but attempted to seek equity across race, sex, gender, and other identities. My criteria for my subjects was:

1. Must currently work or have worked as a professional journalist (in any capacity),
2. Must have worked or currently work in or within a certain distance of my selected city
3. Must have no existing relationship or a strictly professional relationship with the interviewer.

My criteria was formed for these reasons, respectively:

1) The person must be or have been a journalist in order to offer me insight into the workplaces and professional careers of journalists. I considered professional journalists those who have worked full-time or done journalism as a primary source of work or income. I borrowed from definitions of "news gatherers" given by the Washington State law (RCW 5.68.010) which bases one's status as a professional news gatherer on income received from news gathering and distributing.

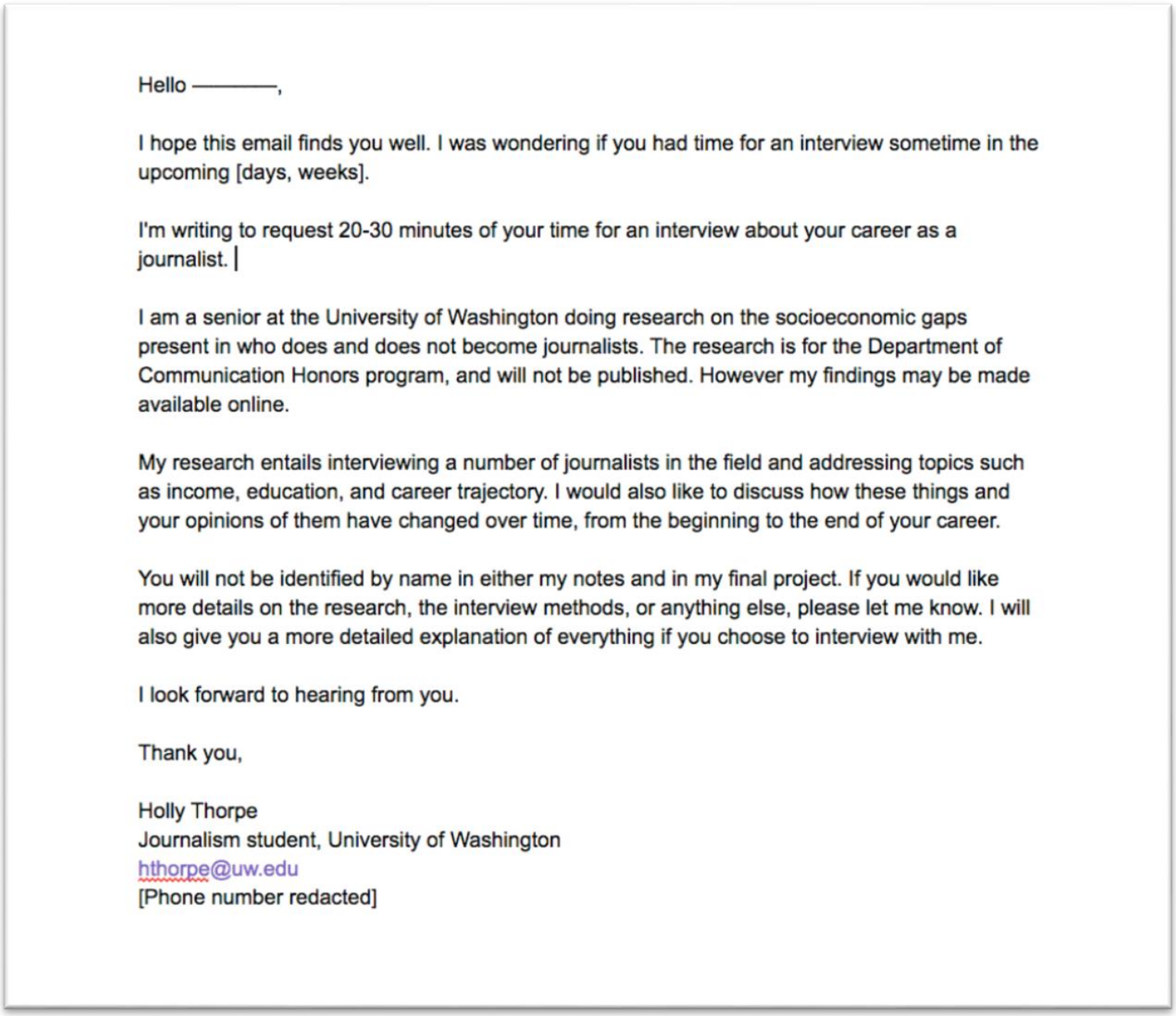
2) I limited my search to those who have experience in my selected city for a few reasons. The first being accessibility. I knew more journalists in this area, and the networks of myself and my adviser through which the survey was dispersed are largely inclusive of my selected city. Secondly, limiting my interviews to one area allowed me to draw conclusions and comparisons between interview responses and make assumptions about socioeconomic qualities of the region, like cost-of-living and average pay. Finally, by creating a geographic boundary for my research, and focusing on a major metropolitan area in the selected state, my aim was to be able to draw conclusions *across* my collected data (interviews, University program data, etc.)

3) Finally, my third criteria aimed to achieve relative objectivity during the interview process. Because of the closely-knit nature of the journalism community, it would have been possible for me to speak with many professional journalists in my selected city with whom I had a relationship with as a classmate, past or present coworker, or otherwise. I chose to avoid interviewees with whom I had a previous relationship in order to preserve the objective nature of the interview, particularly when discussing sensitive and personal topics such as salary and employer habits. It is worth noting that my original intent was to speak only with those whom I did not know in any capacity, however an exception was made for one journalist whom I knew in a strictly professional setting. I contacted a few others that would have been exceptions as well, but I failed to complete an interview with them.

As I mentioned previously, my original aim was to achieve equity across subject identities like race, sex, gender, etc. These factors did not disqualify subjects in any way, however I did seek to actively contact more racially diverse subjects after the interviews completed from survey responses were mostly White or Caucasian identifying. While I attempted to achieve some level of diversity in my interviews, and attempted to reach out to more diverse subjects, diversity was ultimately low, the implications of which I will look at more closely while considering limitations of my methods.

3. Collecting and scheduling

In compiling potential interviewees for my research, I used two approaches: direct personal contact and a survey distributed by myself and shared by my adviser across their networks, followed by scheduling processes. Direct personal contact involved me contacting someone whose contact information I already had through some event or mutual connection, and emailing them a request to interview (see Figure 1 below). I reached out to three people using this method. The first person I emailed directly with a short personal message and a formal request to interview attached (the same later included in my preliminary survey). I used the same format for the other two. All in all, two persons completed an interview, while scheduling mishaps prevented the third from participating.



Hello ————,

I hope this email finds you well. I was wondering if you had time for an interview sometime in the upcoming [days, weeks].

I'm writing to request 20-30 minutes of your time for an interview about your career as a journalist.

I am a senior at the University of Washington doing research on the socioeconomic gaps present in who does and does not become journalists. The research is for the Department of Communication Honors program, and will not be published. However my findings may be made available online.

My research entails interviewing a number of journalists in the field and addressing topics such as income, education, and career trajectory. I would also like to discuss how these things and your opinions of them have changed over time, from the beginning to the end of your career.

You will not be identified by name in either my notes and in my final project. If you would like more details on the research, the interview methods, or anything else, please let me know. I will also give you a more detailed explanation of everything if you choose to interview with me.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Thank you,

Holly Thorpe
Journalism student, University of Washington
hthorpe@uw.edu
[Phone number redacted]

Figure 1. A screenshot of my request to interview email to direct personal contacts.

The second method, using a Google Forms survey, contained multiple steps, which I will detail here. The survey was created by myself, and responses were compiled automatically in a linked Google Sheets document. Questions on the survey included logistical questions about availability to interview, contact information and identifying information, as well as questions used to determine whether the person completing the survey fit my interviewee guidelines. These questions were: "Do you work in [selected city]?" and "How would you describe your socioeconomic background?"

It should be noted that I intended these questions as sorting mechanisms, and while they did function to a degree in that manner, due to the lack of variety in my responses, they also became analytical tools to better consider the shortcomings of my methodology. For instance, of my 9 respondents, 7 identified as "Middle-class/moderate income," one identified as "Upper-middle-class," and one identified as "Upper-class." I will discuss the implications of receiving homogenous responses when I look at the many limitations of this method later in this section.

Of my 9 respondents, I emailed 7 to complete an online poll to select interview time availabilities. Two were not contacted because they did not meet interviewing qualifications according to their survey responses. Of the 7 that were contacted, 5 completed the survey and were emailed to confirm a time. Four responded, confirming an agreeable interview time and completing the interviews.

4. Methodology during interview

In this section I will detail the setting and conduct of the interviews and give an overview of questions asked during these interviews and what these questions aimed to address.

4.1 Setting and conduct

Four interviews were conducted over the phone, and one was conducted in-person. All interviews happened at a mutually agreeable time during the daytime hours (after 8 a.m. and before 6 p.m.). The in-person interview took place in a cafe in a public library during business hours. All interviews lasted, on average, 40-45 minutes. Prior to the interview, subjects received a brief overview of questions (on the formal request and Google Forms survey) that read: “The interview will address topics such as income, education, and career trajectory. I would also like to discuss how these things and your opinions of them have changed over time, from the beginning to the end of your career.” No questions were given beforehand. At the time of the interview, all subjects were given an overview of the objectives of my research and an outline of the topics I would be asking about. Additionally, I informed them that they would not be identified by name or other personally identifying qualities, and I informed them of their right to end the interview at any time or to refuse to answer any question. Finally, in both cases, I received their verbal consent for the conversations to be recorded for my personal use. All subjects were invited to contact me at any time with questions, feedback, or corrections or additions to their responses and my contact information was made readily available.

4.2 Questions and desired question outcomes

My questions were broken down into three parts when I was conducting the interview: biographical, personal experience and opinion, and final feedback. The last section was largely clarifying questions and an invitation for the subject to make additional comments. I will detail the questions asked in the other two sections and my reasons for asking them below.

Biographical

This section included general identifying information (name, age, race, and gender, educational background, etc.) as well as work-related information (job title, workplace name, time in current position and at current workplace, etc.). I also asked about their careers long-term (length of journalism career, etc.). Specific questions included:

- What was your annual income at your first paying journalism job?
    - Was this full-time?
- What is your current income?
- How many journalism positions have you held?
- Did you do part-time or unpaid work before working full-time? (If yes, details about employer, length of employment, pay and job title were collected).
- What level of education have you received?
    - Did you get a degree in Journalism?
    - Were you a first-generation college student?
    - Did you receive need-based financial aid?
- How would you describe your socioeconomic background (low income, middle-class, upper-middle-class)? (In this case, clarifying questions about parent work history or income were also asked if necessary).

The aim of these questions were multi-faceted. Logistical questions about pay and time spent doing unpaid or part-time work allowed me to place interview data into conversation with larger trends within the industry (e.g. average pay). Similarly, questions about education allowed me to compare to national data on journalists' educational backgrounds. Additionally, biographical information like education and socioeconomic background can be used to frame their answers in the next section.

Personal experience and opinion

This section asked respondents about their own perceptions of economic gaps in the workplace and elsewhere. Most questions were a yes/no format, followed by a request for explanation. Specific questions included:

- Do you think a socioeconomic gap exists in who does and does not become a professional journalist?
- What do you think makes it difficult for low-income people to become journalists?
    - Do you think the annual income of a journalism job is a cause of this gap?
    - Do you think accessibility to internships (particularly unpaid or those that require the participant to move or pay some other cost) contributes to this gap?
- Do you think a college degree is necessary to become a journalist?
- Do you think internship experience is necessary to become a journalist?
- Do you think there is a socioeconomic gap is present at the University/Collegiate level in journalism programs (or on student publications)?
- Is socioeconomic diversity important in the newsroom? If yes, why?

The objective of these interviews, once again, was to give a qualitative insight into the lived experiences of professional rather than collegiate journalists. It was also, in part, to gauge to what degree journalists were aware of a socioeconomic gap in the professional journalism landscape and to what degree they consider that gap problematic. My questions therefore first verified the existence of a problem, asked about the roots of that problem (that is, the actual barriers to certain people which creates the socioeconomic gap), and asked about their specific theories about the roots of that problem. I also asked for their responses to theories others had proposed (for instance, if one person claimed accessibility to internships was the problem, I would pose that theory to another interviewee and ask for their thoughts and feedback) I then asked whether some of the specific barriers to certain economic backgrounds (in this case, unpaid internships and a college degree were both brought up frequently) were necessary to become a journalist. Finally, I also asked about the importance of this gap, and about the importance of socioeconomic diversity in the newsroom - essentially, asking the journalists to problematize the perceived gap.

It should be noted here that I asked about perceived economic gaps at the collegiate level as well as the professional level. While the responses weren't entirely fruitful, the intent was to gauge at what point in a typical career that journalists perceived this gap occurring. This raises larger questions about the terminology of "access" (getting into the field, becoming a journalist) versus "maintenance" (remaining in the field, surviving/thriving as a journalist). However, because many respondents identified college itself as an economic barrier to success in the field, the point is somewhat null. Under that assumption, the student has already gained a certain degree of "access" by being in a collegiate journalism program at all.

	Gender	**Race**	**Age**	**Job Title**	**Place of employment**
Interview 1	F	Asian	N/A (30s)	News Editor	Small online news site
Interview 2	F	White	25	Assistant Editor	Hyper-local mid-sized magazine
Interview 3	M	White	34	Producer/Reporter	Mid-sized public radio newsroom
Interview 4	M	White	32	Editor	Small community newspaper
Interview 5	M	Asian Pacific Islander	36	Editor in Chief	Small nonprofit community newspaper

Figure 2. Compilation of biographical data for all five interviewees.

5.2 METHODS: DATA COLLECTION

1. **Section overview**

For my research I collected data about the journalism program in a sample public research university in the American West. I collected records by submitting requests to the university's public records office, and asked for data about students in the journalism program specifically. My data looked at student race, gender, age, and receipt of financial aid. In this section I will first look at why I selected these data sets and this population, then I will detail my methods in obtaining this data, and finally I will describe my methodology for analyzing and utilizing this information in my findings.

2. Choice of data

The data I received and used in this research was the result of an email requesting "documents that can tell me what types of financial aid students in the [REDACTED] Journalism program are receiving. I would also like whatever demographic information is available to me for these students that would not violate FERPA (e.g. age, gender, race/ethnicity, etc.)" (Public records request, Jan. 18, 2016; identifying information redacted). I chose this data for a couple of reasons. First and foremost, I wanted to look at what percentage of students received need-based financial aid. Because need-based aid is based on the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) application of the student, which measures both student and family income, this could give me some insight into the socioeconomic background of the student, at least at the time when they applied for the FAFSA. My goal here was to determine whether the socioeconomic gap (i.e. lack of accessibility to the field) was occurring before the first professional job in a traditional career trajectory or whether college classrooms were in fact socioeconomically diverse. As for other data about race, gender and age, in my literature review and elsewhere I point to socioeconomic barriers present for others that may not be present for white or male individuals. I look at intersectionality, and how the effects of socioeconomic barriers are multiplied by other factors (including inherent pay gaps for women and people of color (Willnat and Weaver, 2014)). I was therefore interested in seeing how reflective of general national trends in the workplace this university was in terms of diversity of all types in the classroom. If, for instance, there are a majority of women in the classroom, and upwards of 30 percent people of color where there is a majority of men and less than 15 percent people of color in professional newsrooms, what differences between the academic setting and the professional setting are creating those race and gender discrepancies? While likely not the sole cause of these demographic shifts from classroom to newsroom, socioeconomic barriers may contribute to them.

3. Collection Methods

I collected student journalist data primarily using public records requests through the university's designated public records office. My initial public records request was submitted via email on January 14, 2016. Since then, I have submitted three more formal requests for additional data or new data. Of all four requests, two have been fulfilled. The first request was for student applications to the journalism program. I intended to use these documents to collect biographical information, correlations between certain student and admission rates, and information on program diversity. This request was rejected because giving me the information would have violated the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) which protects individually identifiable student information. After speaking with records employees over the phone about how to clarify my request, I submitted two more requests. These requests were for the general admission data described above. I requested these documents for the 2014-2015 school year, and later expanded the request (April) to include all of the same data since 2012. The most recently requested (April 25, 2016) data is, according to the office, expected to arrive in late June of this year — too late to be included in my research here.

4. Analysis

I looked at this data in a couple of ways, discussed briefly in section 2 above. My goals were to put my data collected from this program into conversation with national trends of pay and diversity, as well as with the data I collected from my interviews with journalists. Here I'll go over each of my decisions in breaking down and using this data beginning with my selected timeline, then looking at race and gender data, and finally, looking at my comparisons between financial aid data. It should be noted that the age data I received was not considered in my research and therefore isn't addressed in my outline below.

Timeline

I received data from 2012-2015, divided by school year (2011-2012, 2012-2013, 2013-2014, 2014-2015). This offered me a four-year overview of the diversity of the program. While a broader range of years would have been preferable, it is worth considering that new students are admitted to this journalism program three academic quarters out of the year. Additionally, on a traditional university quarter system, students are also able to graduate during any given academic quarter — and often do — meaning significant fluctuation in the number of students in the program is possible over the course of just four years. The presence of noticeable changes in some areas of data and consistency across others is also an indicator to me that trends or patterns are, however weakly, identifiable across this short time span.

Race and gender

I received four years of data on six racial groups (African-American, Hispanic, Asian, Native-American, Hawaiian/Pacific-Islander, and Caucasian) and on "Unspecified" students. I charted changes in diversity among each specific group over the course of four years. I also charted overall percentages of White students versus People of Color in order to draw comparisons between my national data on newsrooms, which look at overall percentages of "minorities" in sample newsrooms. Similarly, I charted percentages of men and women in the program each year and of the course of four years. The university provided no data on students identifying outside of these genders.

Financial aid

Finally, I tracked two aspects of financial aid. For every year and in an overarching four-year chart, I looked at: a) students receiving *any* form of financial aid and b) students specifically receiving *need-based* financial aid. This discrepancy is important to make, because aid that is not need-based has not causal ties to socioeconomic background or family or student income. For my purposes, then, need-based financial aid is the more important number of the two. That said, I tracked each per school year (e.g. X percent of students *overall* received financial aid; X percentage of students *overall* received need-based financial aid). I also looked at what percentage of students receiving financial aid (not overall) received need-based financial aid. This allowed me to determine whether or not the majority of students receiving financial aid were specifically receiving need-based financial aid.

RESULTS: OVERVIEW

In this section I provide my findings from both areas of my research: university data and interviews. In the first section, I provide all the relevant data I obtained from my public records request. Included are graphs depicting annual and overall changes in various demographics. My aim is to effectively make available all of the data I am working with in other sections and point out clear and apparent trends and anomalies in the provided data. The second section analyzes what data I have collected from my interviews, included some quantitative data concerning salary, length of career, and other numerical figures. I also attempt to provide the reader a clear understanding of qualitative answers given to abstract questions. For instance, while “What are potential causes of a socioeconomic gap in journalism?” doesn’t necessarily have a quantifiable answer, I have found that there were enough consistencies across interviews to allow for general trends to be identified.

6.1 RESULTS: UNIVERSITY DATA

1. Overview

In this section I will provide all relevant results from my data collected from the university journalism program. I will look at data for three areas: race, gender and financial aid. In each section, I will break down data by school year first and then look at overarching trends across the four-year time period from 2012 to 2015. I will also use this space to observe and detail clear trends across data sets to be expounded upon in the discussion of results.

2. Data analysis

Data on race

I received four years of data on six racial groups (African-American, Hispanic, Asian, Native-American, Hawaiian/Pacific-Islander, and Caucasian) and on "Unspecified" students. "Unspecified" likely includes student who either forgot to or did not want to identify themselves in their application materials. Figure 1 charts data for each group during each academic year from 2012 to 2016.

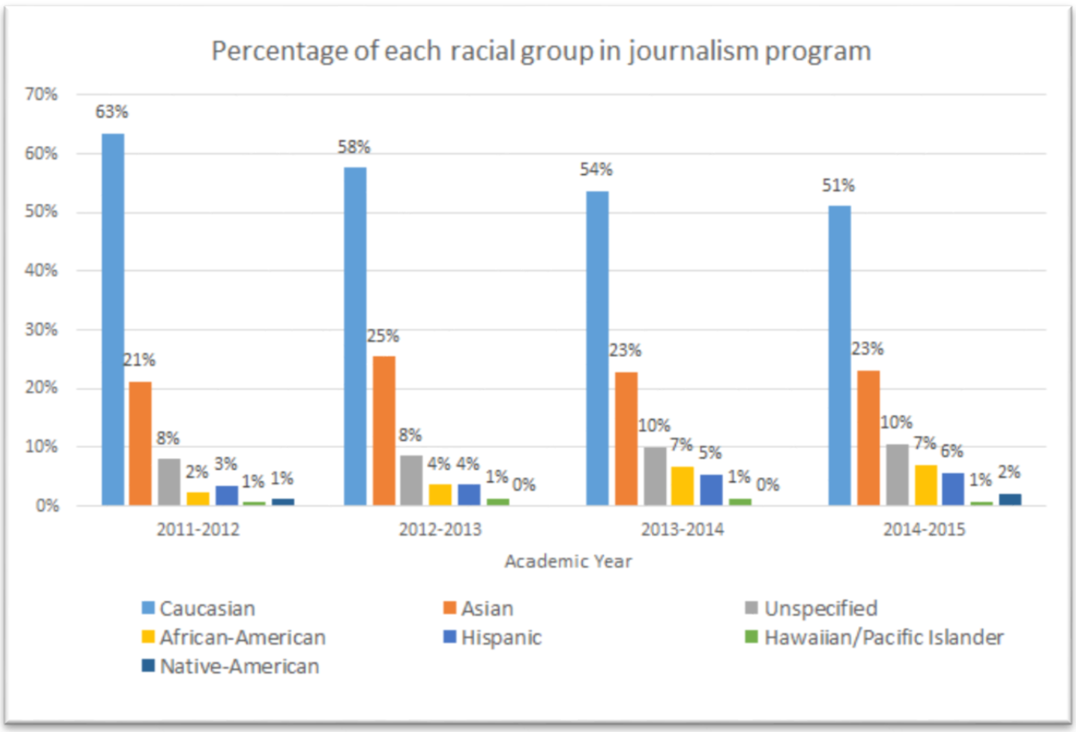


Figure 1. Data from 2012-2015 on racial diversity of sample university journalism program. Percentage of six different groups composing overall program enrollment.

A few clear trends are apparent. The first is that the journalism program I sampled is not only overwhelmingly White, but consistently so. On average, White students made up 56.5 percent of the program during any given academic year. Asian students were the second largest group, averaging 23 percent of the students enrolled in the program each year. As a result, 79.5

percent of the student body was either White or Asian, and the remaining 20.5 percent accounted for the four other groups and “Unspecified” students.

Additionally, it seems that, at least over the course of this short sample size, racial diversity was gradually increasing. The number of White students dropped every year, and numbers of African-American and Hispanic students rose consistently. Native-American and Hawaiian/Pacific Islander students hovered at about 1 percent all four years.

It’s worth noting that the “Unspecified” category does skew the data — something I will address later in my limitations. On average, 9 percent of students were of “Unspecified” race every year.

Data on gender

The data I received on gender covered all four years and included only “male” and “female” identities. As I stated in my Methods section, I don’t know whether this is due to an actual lack of other gender-identities, or due to external factors. Figure 2 charts the percentage of each gender for each academic year. It is clear that the program is consistently majority women. The program averaged about 68 percent female and 32 percent male — or roughly two-thirds female — all

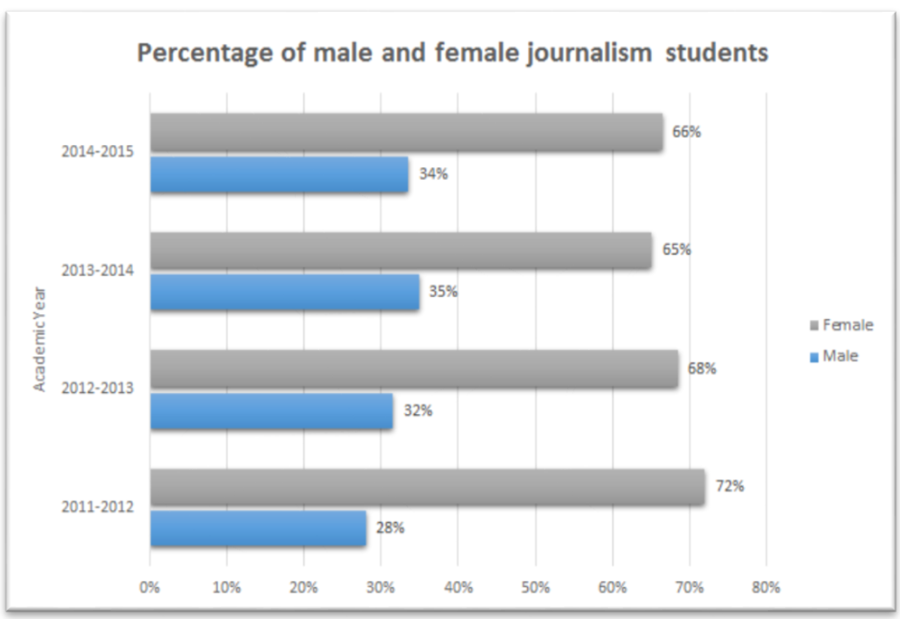


Figure 2. Data from 2012-2015 on gender of students in sample university journalism program.

four years. From 2011 to 2016, these percentages do appear to start equalizing somewhat, with the percentage of women down by 6 percent over four years. However, this may not be indicative of a trend.

Data on financial aid

I received two different financial aid components in response to my requests: journalism students receiving any financial aid at all and journalism students receiving need-based financial aid specifically. I broke down each of these accordingly. Figure 3 charts what percentage of students are receiving any form of financial aid.

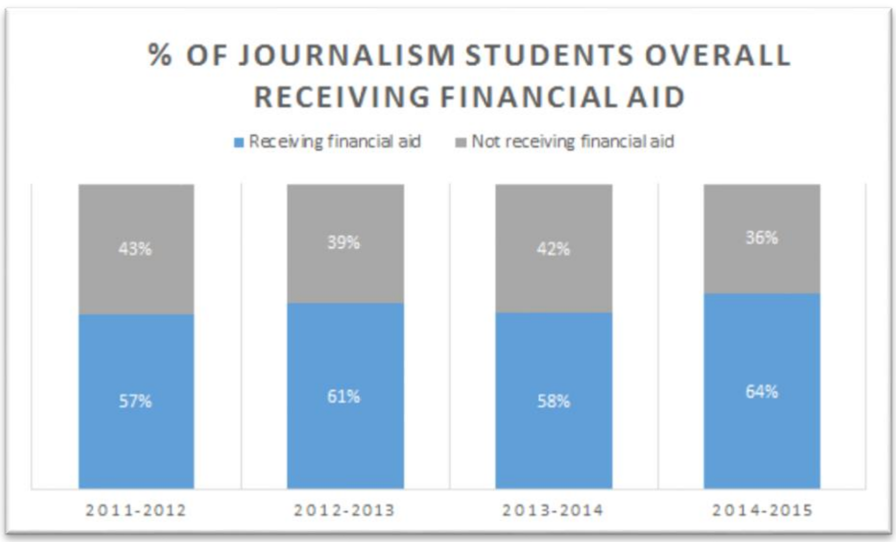


Figure 3. Data from 2012-2015 on percentage of sample university journalism program students receiving any financial aid, need-based or otherwise.

On average, 40 percent of students received some form of financial aid each academic year. The lowest percentage — 36 percent — occurred in the most recent academic year, 2014-2015. Figure 4 takes the data set from Figure 3 and charts what percentage of those receiving *any form* of financial aid are receiving specifically *need-based* financial aid.

As Figure 4 shows, a majority of the students receiving some form of financial aid are receiving need-based financial aid — on average, 69 percent. Therefore, the majority of students

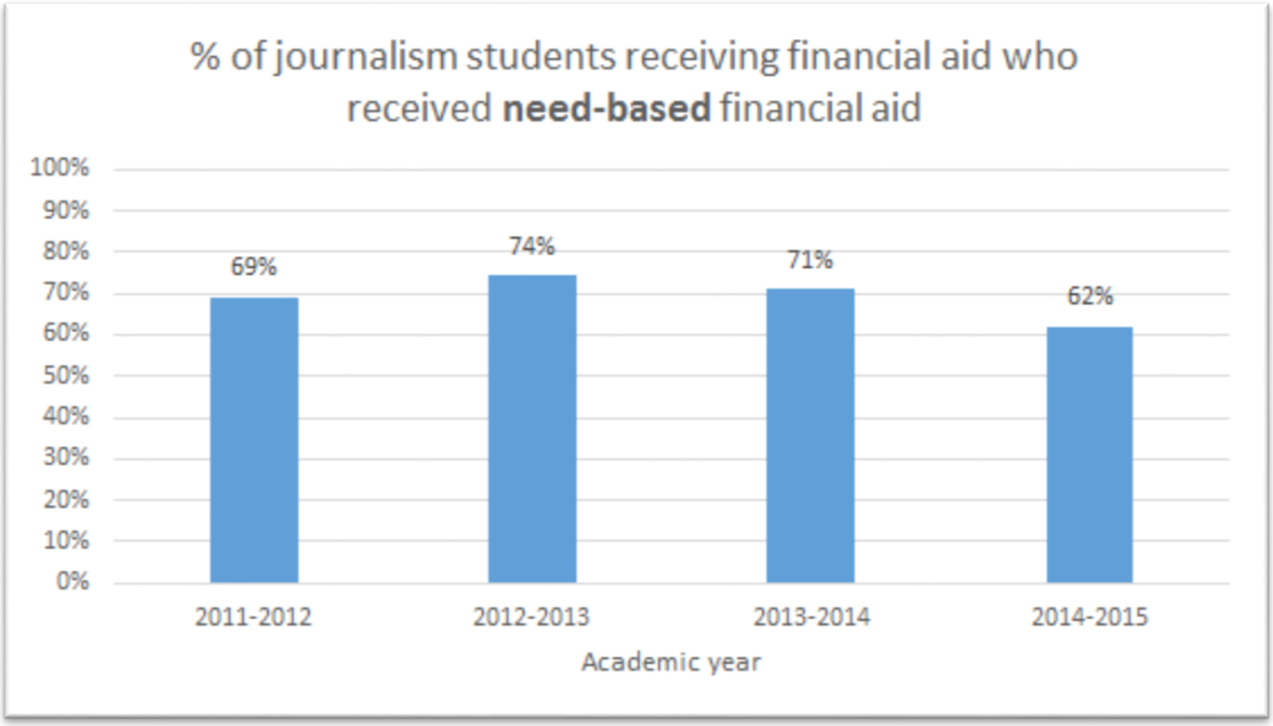


Figure 4. Data from 2012-2015 on percentage of sample university journalism program students receiving financial aid who are receiving need-based aid specifically, compared to Figure 5, which calculates which percentage of all journalism students in the program are receiving financial aid.

being admitted who receive financial aid at all are receiving need-based financial aid. Figure 5 takes this group, and looks at how many of the journalism students in the sample program are receiving need-based financial overall. This compares need-based aid recipients to students receiving other types of aid and no aid at all.

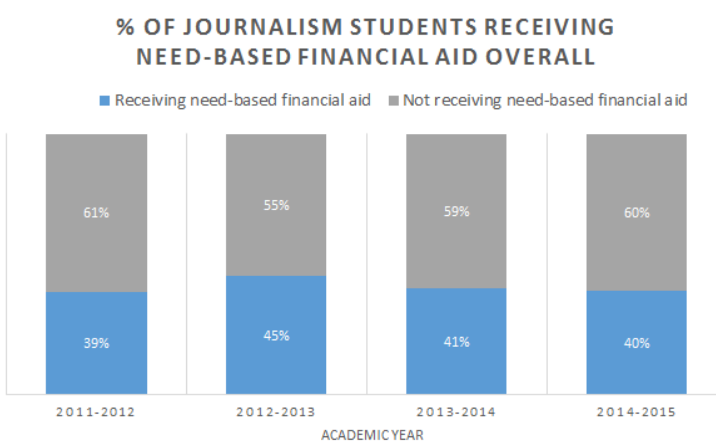


Figure 5. Data from 2012-2015 on overall percentage of journalism program students receiving need-based financial aid. This compares need-based aid recipients to all other students.

On average, around 41 percent of students overall in the journalism program are receiving need-based financial aid. This stayed relatively consistent over all four academic years for which I received data.

RESULTS: INTERVIEW DATA

1. Overview

In this section I'll go over all of the data I collected from my interviews, starting out with quantitative data on the journalists themselves, their educational and career trajectories, and their salary, and then moving on to qualitative findings from discussions about the socioeconomic gap.

2. Background and biographical data

I collected background and identifying information from each of my interview subjects. In this subsection I'll share data on race, gender, class and employment.

Race and Gender

Of my five interviews, there were three White/Caucasian subjects, one was Asian and one was Asian Pacific Islander. I spoke with three men and two women.

Socioeconomic class

All interview subjects self-identified with an economic class in response to the question "How would you describe your socioeconomic background?" Three subjects described their background as "Middle-class," one described his background as "Upper-class," and one described his background as "Lower-middle-class." As one interview subject pointed out, ideas of “class,” particularly “Middle-class,” are often highly subjective and varied. Some additional information was obtained from each subject, including parents’ professions. Those identifying as “Middle class” had parents who worked or served as: nurses, teachers, military personnel, mechanics, among other things. One subject who identified as “Middle-class” estimated her household income at above $100,000 annually for a household of four.

I also received some data on class background from my preliminary survey. As I mentioned in my methods, not all responses were used and the survey was not originally intended to collect data for my research. However, it seems notable that of nine respondents, seven identified as “Middle-class/moderate income,” one identified as “Upper-middle-class,” and one identified as “Upper-class.”

Current occupation and workplace

Each person I spoke with had a different job title: Editor, Assistant Editor, Editor-in-Chief, and Producer. These titles make it evident that all of my respondents were in leadership positions at their workplace. Many also do reporting in combination with editing work. The newsrooms they currently work at were described as follows:

- Small online news site
- Hyper-local mid-sized magazine
- Small community newspaper
- Small nonprofit community newspaper
- Mid-sized public radio station

A strong majority of my respondents were print or online reporters, with one broadcast reporter.

3. Education

All respondents had received at least a Bachelor’s degree from a four-year university. Two of the five respondents attended private universities, while the other four attended public universities across the country. None of the respondents said that they were first-generation college students (a person whose parents have not received a Bachelor’s degree). No respondents reported receiving need-based financial aid as students.

I also asked respondents whether a college degree was necessary to get employed in journalism. Generally, respondents said they thought a college degree was the expectation or norm for journalists applying to jobs. One respondent said:

> “I think journalism is an interesting field in the sense that you don’t necessarily have to have a degree in it, and you definitely don’t have to go to journalism school… I’ve worked with a lot of people who have different backgrounds. That said, I think that the norm is mostly for people to have some kind of college education…”

She continues:

> “I think that what matters more, at least personally, is caliber of writing - if I was looking for a writing or an editor, or a photojournalist or whatever…that said, is [a degree] an immediate marker on a resume that that person has more experience doing that kind of work? Yes. You know, if I see someone went to journalism school or went to an accredited college and had an equivalent degree. But, that said, I’ve worked with a lot of very talented people who didn’t go to journalism school and do great work, so, I always kind of fall back on what’s it look like? What’s it sound like? But if you’re going quickly through a hundred resumes, I’m sure it’s an easy way to sort out candidates.”

Generally, this seemed to be the consensus: quality of writing and experience can trump a degree, but a degree is, typically, advantageous. Another respondent said:

> "It's hard for me to say whether college is important or not. So, as a person who's hired, no, it's not important to me, but as a person who's been through a hiring process, people have asked, and I don't know where it fell in their priorities. I can't say it was a factor."

4. Internship and freelance experience

I asked my respondents whether they had done internships, unpaid work, or freelance work prior to their first job as a journalist. One journalist completed an internship as a student for college credit and freelanced for approximately two years before getting his first full-time job. The other journalists said they had not completed any unpaid internships or other programs before getting their first job. This seems surprisingly low, however I was unable to find data on how many journalists specifically have completed unpaid work before their first job. The Student Press Law Center wrote in a report on unpaid work: "A survey published by the research firm Intern Bridge found that more than 51 percent of [all] students did unpaid internships, and more than half did not receive academic credit for the experience" (2015). They note that employers in the media specifically have been "targeted in a recent wave of lawsuits questioning the widespread practice of asking interns to work without compensation" (2015). It seems, then, that these results are lower than expected.

5. Work experience

Subjects reported the number of years they'd spent as journalists and the number of jobs they'd had during that time period. Length of career varied widely among the five subjects: 17

years, 11 years, 11 years, 8 years, and 4 years. Three of the subjects have worked in the field for over a decade, and two have been in the field for less than five years. Number of jobs also varied somewhat, although less so: 6 jobs, 4 jobs, 3 jobs, 2 jobs, and 1 job.

Three respondents said they had held other non-journalism jobs since their first journalism job. Two said specifically that these jobs had higher pay and better benefits.

I also collected data on the time at their current job (of the titles and workplaces listed in sections above): 8 years (2 years in current position), 3 years, 2.5 years, 16 months, and 4 months.

6. Salary

I collected data about each subject's starting pay and current pay and have included the averages and medians of each below. The wide range of "starting dates" for the journalists may affect the relevance of the "starting pay" data, which has not been adjusted for inflation.

Median Starting Pay	**Average Starting Pay**	**Median Current Pay**	**Average Current Pay**
$23,000	$26,138	$43,680	$46,036

The highest current annual salary of my subjects was $64,000 annually and the lowest was $34,000 annually (after all bonuses).

7. Socioeconomic gap (causes and implications)

First, I asked my subjects if a socioeconomic gap existed in the workplace. There was unanimous agreement that they perceived a socioeconomic gap in who does or does not become a journalist. One respondent answered:

> "Yes. But I think it's getting better. I hope it's getting better… Journalists joke about how we're all poor and don't have a lot of money and this and that, but yeah, I would say, yes, it's a lot easier for people with means or who come from supportive households to go into and to stay in professional journalism."

Another, who had identified themselves as "Middle-class" added:

> "I personally have never perceived a gap, but I'm sure there is one. I just haven't been experienced enough or worked in enough newsrooms to actually notice it, or talked to enough people about what they actually make, because I do think in most workplaces that's a little bit hush hush. So I would say there is one, but I can't point to a time where I had that realization."

7.1 Causes

I also asked my subjects about what they perceived as major financial barriers to people from low-income backgrounds. Their responses included: 1) access to college, 2) ability to take internships, 3) tools necessary to do work, 4) changes in the industry, and 5) low pay, to a degree.

First, concerning college as a barrier one said: "That said, I think that the norm is mostly for people to have some kind of college education, so I think immediately, that's probably a barrier of entry for a lot of people. I have worked with a lot of people who went to community college and have an associate's degree and are working journalists." Another added: "I think there is an opportunity for folks who don't graduate from that prestigious university. But they'll probably have to spend 10 years building their resume before a really big prestige publication will give them a shot."

Second, many interview subjects cited getting clips as one of the biggest keys to getting a job. They found that getting internships — particularly unpaid internships or internships that have associated expenses — were a major barrier. One subject said: "If you can't afford to go on an internship or you know, like, moving to New York is not a feasible thing for you because your parents can't pay for an apartment in New York for you to work at some unpaid internship at some national publication, I can see how that would leave out people..."

She added that unpaid internships are "paying for the privilege" of getting experience somewhere. "When a kind of prestige publication offers an unpaid internship I think that's kind of a really crappy thing … for a while a lot of papers were offering unpaid internships and I think that that's not fair to people who come from families who can't afford that," she said. "Then you've got this kind of class system where like really only the people who can afford it can work at a prestige publication and then the kids who can't afford it, they work for some smaller local paper and so their clips look different than someone with a prestige byline."

Another subject echoed her concerns. He said internships were "key" in journalism, and that for "somebody who needs money to pay bills and support themselves" unpaid internships are not feasible. Additionally, he said that whereas college education or the prestige of that education might not stop someone from getting a job, access is limited by the ability to "get good" at journalism. He said: "If you show up and you're good, you can get a job and nobody's going to say 'Yeah, but you didn't go to Harvard.' But it's making sure that people have the resources and have access to the resources to get good that's lacking."

Third, journalists included the cost of materials (ranging from hardware and software to personal appearance) as a potentially prohibitive cost. "I think it depends also what type of journalist you are. If you're a writer or an editor like I am, I don't need a lot of tools to do my job," one journalist said, noting that to do her work she needed her phone and laptop. "If you're a photojournalist, for example, I think that that barrier is much, much higher because you probably want to own your equipment and that can probably be very expensive and so."

That sentiment was echoed by another respondent, who agreed that costs "stratify" depending on the journalist's discipline (citing for example, photo equipment costs, or the costs associated with maintaining a wardrobe for television anchors).

Fourth, on the changing industry of journalism, one subject said: **"**It used to be that there were a lot more local papers and that if you wanted to write you'd just go get a job there. It was just like any — it was just like kind of a blue collar job." She added that now, "people are kind of at a loss of how to enter the profession."

Finally, all journalists agreed that income may be a factor, but is not solely or independently a cause of the socioeconomic gap. Those who said pay was not prohibitive were quick to note that they were mortgage- and child-free, and often had two incomes in their household, from a partner, for example.

7.1 Implications

I began asking subjects if socioeconomic diversity in the newsroom was important and why. Four interviewees answered decisively in the affirmative. One gave offered this reasoning:

> "I've reported on transgender politics, I've reported on issues that involve race or different education or economic backgrounds and I know just inherently that my view of it is obviously going to be informed by where I come from," one said. "So if you can have someone who perhaps is transgender, or perhaps is African-American, they are just inherently going to lend something different to that story that I think is valuable that you don't always see. If you can have increased diversity, I think it can only help inform the narrative."

Another spoke to the power, specifically political, inherent in journalism:

> "Journalism is a profession that kind of shapes the societal agenda, right? You can get a president impeached, if you're a journalist. You can get the governor indicted, you can get your city to overturn laws or get your state legislature to change the way it funds the schools. This is a profession that shapes the way that society functions and it needs to reflect society," he said. He said that "homogenous newsrooms" lead to homogenous coverage and coverage that ignores certain issues, people, and places. "You've got to have a bunch of people in the newsroom who can say 'You know what we're missing here?' and then fill in the blank. And without that only certain types of societal change can be affected by any given newsroom."

However, one subject said diversity was an "asset" but not necessary. He said that diversity in coverage and representation is "much more complicated" than just ensuring "X number of people who were raised poor" are in the newsroom. He also countered statements above by saying that someone can cover issues they aren't personally attached to. "There are a lot of ways someone from a specific background can have empathy for another community’s issues,” he said.

7.0 DISCUSSION OF RESULTS AND LIMITATIONS

1. Overview

I will now discuss my results and their implications, followed by a complete breakdown of limitations in relation to data, methods, interview selection, among other things. I will discuss data in relation to my working hypothesis coming into this research: That there is a socioeconomic access gap present at both the collegiate and professional levels of journalism.

2. Discussion of University Data

First and foremost, the data I collected from the sample journalism program challenged my expectations for a socioeconomic gap at the collegiate level. Under my hypothesis, I expected there to be indications of a predominantly middle- and upper-class student body. What I discovered instead was that, using need-based financial aid as a rough indicator of class, on average 60 percent of the student body was not receiving any need-based financial aid. However, on average every year, 41 percent of students overall in the journalism program are receiving need-based financial aid — a trend that remained consistent over all four academic years. Comparatively, the National Center for Education Statistic found that nationally "51 percent of students at public institutions received student loan aid" (2015). This places the journalism at slightly lower than the national average, however I can't compare the program to its university as a whole. My conclusion here is that economic diversity is higher than I had expected in the sample program, and that contrary to my understanding of the "pipeline" of white wealthy students into journalism programs and the professional field, the student body is complex and varied in multiple areas. This could be due to a significant number of major applicants are receiving need-based financial aid and are therefore presumably not upper-middle-or upper-class. However, these conclusions rely on my assumed correlation between need-based financial aid and socioeconomic background — an assumption I will look at more closely while discussing my research limitations.

This data also included race and gender information for the major over the course of four academic years. These inform my research tangentially. As I described in my Literature Review, I am working with an understanding of an intersectional relationship between class, race and gender. Therefore, in hypothesizing that there would be low economic diversity, I implicitly hypothesized that there would be low racial diversity as well. That said, it's necessary to emphasize here that a relationship between economic background and race does not imply a matched decrease of one in relation to the other. Intersectionality and expectations for economic diversity in the program aside, I also based my hypothesis on national data described in my Literature Review, which places the number of professional minority journalists at a modest 10 percent. Yet, the data from the program sampled showed a roughly even split between White/Caucasian students and students of color — a significant difference from national newsroom data. A diversity program at the selected university found that on average, "White/Not Indicated" students made up less than half of student enrollment during the same time period. This means the journalism program is slightly less racially diverse than the university as a whole. Data also showed a surprising number of women in the program — composing roughly two-thirds of the student body during any given year. This is also contrary to the data which informed my hypothesis which indicated national trends of male-dominated newsrooms across the country.

My conclusion from this data — which was my only measurable insight into the collegiate journalism world for this research outside of relevant literature — is that the former part of my hypothesis was at best wrong in relation to this particular sample and at worst foundationally incorrect. In the case of the latter, my theory about a functional “pipeline” of certain types of students from high school newspapers and white-collar backgrounds into journalism programs and eventually into the field that was informed by Callahan (1998) is incorrect. From this I can conclude that the findings of de Burgh and Willnat and Weaver I used to inform my hypothesis about collegiate classrooms may be applicable to professional newsrooms, but is not representative of the university environment.

2.1 University data limitations

There were multiple limitations to my university data collection and analysis. The first was a lack of baseline data. I requested all the same data (race, gender, financial aid) for the same time period for the College of Arts and Sciences as a whole at the sample university. The request did not arrive in time for publication. As a result, I can only compare the data to my own expectations and to national newsroom data (not applicable for financial aid information). The percentage of students receiving need-based financial aid may be similar, lower or higher than the average for the college as a whole, which includes a number of other majors. If that percentage is *lower*, my hypothesis about low-economic diversity may be correct. However, if the percentage is average, or higher than the college overall, that would indicate more socioeconomic diversity in journalism than in other programs at the university.

Another limitation to this data is the short timeline (2011-2015) I have available to me. This timeline is problematic for a couple of reasons. First, the sample size for data (four data points) is too small to identify any provable trends or changes over time. Second, there is possible data overlap (students being counted twice) between academic years. Because students spend, on average, four years at university and anywhere from two to three in their major program, the same students could have been recounted each year, which would have made my data look homogenous on such a short timeline. The only way to address this particular problem without violating FERPA regulations would be to get a larger sample size. Additionally, my sample size was influenced by the size of the program itself. Complete enrollment totaled 175 (2011-2012), 165 (2012-2013), 149 (2013-2014), and 143 (2014-2015). On average, classes are under 20 people. As a result, my sample size was limited by a short timeline and less than 150-200 people per data point.

The third major limitation to my data is an uncertain correlation between need-based financial aid receipt and socioeconomic background. The assumption is that someone receiving need-based financial aid is not of a higher class bracket. However, due to varied definitions of middle-class (which speaks to the limitations of subjects self-reporting their class background), and varied types and degrees of financial aid (any sum of money and a variety of types) makes drawing a distinct or provable correlation difficult.

Finally, the data on race may have been skewed by the 8 to 10 percent “Unspecified” students each year. Depending on the identities of these students, the program could actually be more or less diverse than it appears. This limitation is notable but minor in terms of its impact on my hypothesis. Even if the program were 10 percent *less* diverse, it would still be roughly four times more diverse than newsrooms on average.

3. Interview data

My interview data aimed to inform my understanding of the professional newsroom. As a result, I used these interviews to better understand salary, employer expectations, typical career trajectories, education standards, and awareness of diversity issues in the newsroom.

Despite limited sample size, the socioeconomic background of the journalists I spoke with and who responded to the Google Forms survey more or less aligned with my expectations set forth in my hypothesis. All the journalists I spoke to came from middle- or upper-class backgrounds, with one semi-exception of a respondent identifying as “lower-middle-class.”

Additionally, interviews verified the assumptions about education I was working under for my hypothesis. All journalists I spoke with said that they had received a degree, and all, to varying degrees, viewed a college education as normal and even useful in breaking into the field of journalism. These results align with my assumptions, as well as national data on newsrooms across the country, which indicate that a hypermajority of journalists receive at least a Bachelor’s degree.

Interview responses did not, however, align with my expectations for average amounts of unpaid work. I expected more journalists to have completed internships (paid or unpaid, but particularly unpaid) and to have spent more time freelancing prior to starting their first full-time journalism job. As the data shows, most journalists did not complete any unpaid work prior to employment, and one freelanced for two years in combination with other, non-journalism work.

My hypothesis did not incorporate number of jobs or length of career in any way. However, the varied data, somewhat high number of journalism jobs and some unexpectedly brief data for time spent at their current job could have been useful in informing a discussion about job instability and its socioeconomic implications. However, for my purposes, the data was not directly applicable.

As for responses concerning salary, average and median salaries were higher than expected with a few particularly surprising outliers — $64,000 and $34,000. In relation to Willnat and Weaver’s reported 2014 national average (just over $50,000 per year), the average pay of around $46,000 for my sample group isn't too far off the mark. However, both extreme outliers in my data set are almost $15,000 too high and too low. My expectations overall were for a lower salary, however, my sample group had inherent limitations which I will discuss below that explain the higher-than-expected salaries.

Finally, perceptions of a socioeconomic gap and contributing economic barriers to that gap. Overall, I was unsurprised to find unanimous agreement about a perceived socioeconomic gap in who becomes a journalist. However, journalists perceived reasons for this gap and about the implications of socioeconomic diversity in the newsroom opened up to larger conversations.

First, the varied answers about what things constituted economic barriers to journalists posed larger questions about access to the field versus surviving in the field. For instance, early-stage problems like access to college or the ability to pay for college (and how much debt the person graduates with, if any) are all questions of access. Similarly, the experience journalists cited as equivalent to a degree while hiring (clips, writing and communication skills) are also questions of early access. As one interviewee put it: "It's making sure that people have the resources and have access to the resources to get good that's lacking." However, concerns about access to materials like expensive camera equipment and concerns about the limitations resulting from generally low wages are later-order concerns, for journalists who have already obtained some sort of experience and *accessed* the field. Two interviewees emphasized being childless or mortgage-free, and another mentioned the fear of raising a child with his salary. This, too, is a *post*-access concern. The question that remains unanswered by my research in this specific regard is, if there really is a socioeconomic gap occurring in newsrooms, is it due to problems with access or is it due to problems post-access? That is, are batches of relatively highly-diverse journalism students graduating and then unable to enter the workforce, or entering the workforce and unable to sustain themselves in it?

Secondly, interviewee feedback about the importance of socioeconomic diversity and, as a result, solutions to the gap. Four of the journalists I spoke with shared a very clear connection to the stakes outlined in my introduction and title: if the press is going to serve a diverse community it must be, in and of itself, a diverse community. However, one journalist I spoke with felt that while diversity was an “asset” it was not “necessary” for rich reporting on diverse communities. I think this, in a way, returns to the access versus post-access discussion above. Whether people from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds have access to the field but are for some reason not present in the newsroom is a separate question from whether they have access in the first place. In the latter case, the stakes presented in my earlier sections are then a secondary or tangential benefit to the primary goal of allowing access to diverse groups of people, particularly with consideration for intersectional communities. That said, the concerns brought up by one interviewee — a sort of quota system which demands a certain percentage of the newsroom be from specific backgrounds — are valid. My research is limited in its scope in that it stops short of offering or exploring solutions. However, the journalist in this case brings up an important point about attempting to micromanage diversity in newsrooms solely for the sake of “being diverse.” Additionally, it brings up a secondary concern, which is the tokenization of people from certain backgrounds (e.g. expecting one transgender person to speak on behalf of all transgender people).

3.1 Interview data limitations

My interview data had a number of limitations. The first and perhaps largest limitation was the small sample size. As a result, trends were difficult to identify and diversity was limited. In terms of diversity, more mediums (e.g. television, photojournalist, etc.), more job titles (staff reporters, section editors, etc.), and more variation in age/length of career would have been helpful to better inform and dehomogenize my thinking and generalizing about newsrooms my selected city.

Additionally, my collection methods limited me to my own and my adviser's networks. It is also worth considering inherent respondent biases — that is, the type of person who is interested in participating in a research interview is the same type of person who thinks critically about socioeconomic diversity.

Finally, there are regional limits to my data. Because of the geographical boundaries set on my interview selection, my diversity data may have been skewed. My selected city is a very White, generally wealthy area. This, in combination with already very white newsrooms across the nation, may have warped my response rates from socioeconomically and racially diverse people (Willnat and Weaver, 2014).

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