

Download the presentation:



Investigative Reporters & Editors



Bolstering source diversity

Setting the stage and building it to enrich your stories

Developed by Francisco Vara-Orta
DBEI Director



*Investigative
Reporters & Editors*

It's all about trust

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Some key table setting



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General approach

- Be genuine
- Be available (set limits that make sense for you)
- Be responsive
- Be organized
- **Put in the work**



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“Good sources that come to you are rare. It is up to you to go and find them -- a case of making your own luck. Either way, your success in cultivating them depends largely on earned respect and reputation.”

-- [Paige St. John, Los Angeles Times](#)

(tipsheet linked above)

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Finding sources beyond the surface

- Look for a guide on the inside
- Ask trusted sources to introduce them to other trusted sources -- work from the outside in



Don't accept the status quo – push forward

- Learn how to develop a clear view of our vocation and be able to explain it to the gatekeepers standing in our way
- This might require a sit-down meeting to explain why these rules are a roadblock for your organization doing its best job



Play the long game - tough but tried & true advice

- **Your currency is trust**, which takes time to accrue
- Call often, especially when you don't need a quote
- A source relationship is a two-way street: Set boundaries, but be willing to share a little about yourself



“Make it a habit”

- Make a list of people you'd like to develop a source relationship with, or people you'd like to improve an existing relationship
- Set aside time every week to call people on your source list for no reason
- Always carry a stack of business cards to hand out
- Have a goal to meet or talk to X new people on your beat every week



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Convincing people to talk to you

- Put yourself in their shoes: If the positions were reversed, **would you talk to you?**
- Help them weigh the risks vs. benefits
- What are their fears about speaking out? Address them



Centering codes of ethics

How we conduct ourselves matters as professionals to potential sources

A solid blue rectangular box with a thin white border. Inside the box, the text "CODE OF ETHICS" is written in a bold, white, sans-serif font.

CODE OF ETHICS

RTDNA RTDNF

— **Minimize harm**

Frankie de la Cretaz @thefrankiedlc

As a journalist, when you're writing about a marginalized community (even if it's one you belong to), one of the best questions you can ask your sources is, "what does most reporting get wrong about this?" Or "is there any framing or stereotypes I should be sure to avoid?"

 Twitter | Jan 27th

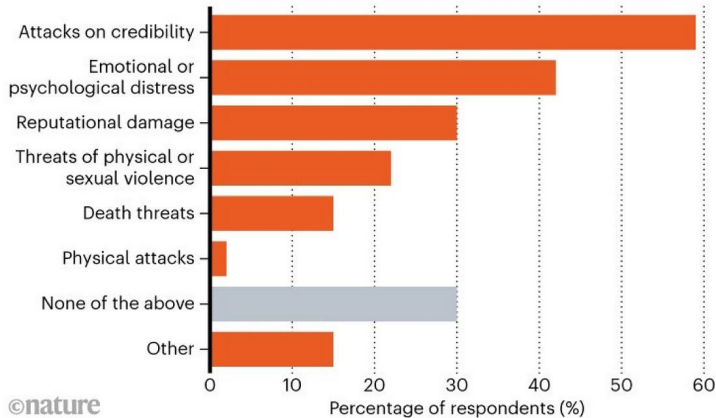
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Thinking about how our work impacts sources

NEGATIVE IMPACTS

In a *Nature* survey of scientists who have commented about COVID-19, 15% of 321 respondents said they had received death threats.

Question: Have you experienced any of the following negative impacts after speaking about COVID-19 to the media, or posting on social media? (You may select multiple options.)



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YOUR LOCAL EPIDEMIOLOGIST
KATELYN JETELINA
TRANSLATING PUBLIC HEALTH SCIENCE FOR EVERYDAY USE

Si quiere leer la versión en español, pulse [aquí](#).

Harassment against scientists is out of control

KATELYN JETELINA
JUN 27



SHARE

Last week Peter Hotez experienced pile-ons, stalking, and bullying after [events](#) unfolded on Twitter. So much so that [law enforcement](#) got involved. A complete nightmare.

He's not alone. These nightmares are now a common occurrence for scientists and physicians in public health. Both online and offline. For vaccines. For gun violence. For reproductive health. And apparently for wildfires now, too.

It's gotten out of control, which becomes an

**Breaking down the large
demographics umbrella of the
education beat, for example**

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FACTORS TO CONSIDER

Race, ethnicity, nationality, spiritual beliefs, religion, gender identity, sexual orientation, age, geographic residence, political affiliation, mental and physical abilities, education, and socioeconomic status and upbringing

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Marginalized student communities include:

- Students of color, especially Black and indigenous (BIPOC), Latinx and Southeast Asian students. *Especially noting that subgroups within the umbrella of 'students of color' (i.e. Black students, indigenous students, etc.) face marginalization and discrimination in distinct ways.*
- Identify as LGBTQIA+ and/or gender non-conforming
- With disabilities (e.g., IEP and 504) and/or learning differences
- With significant needs (e.g., health, behavior and 1:1 instructional services)
- English learners
- In alternative learning programs
- Experiencing poverty
- Living in neighborhoods of concentrated poverty
- In foster care
- Experiencing homelessness
- Incarcerated, court-involved and/or have otherwise been impacted by the criminal justice system
- Immigrants, undocumented and/or living in mixed-status households
- Who are migratory

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**Different cultures =
different approach**

Transactional vs. conversational

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IRE

**Anyone can do this work.
Everyone may make mistakes.**

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From Knight Foundation’s “Why diverse online communities don’t trust journalists and seven ways to fix it”:

1. Spend time in the community
2. Recognize your blind spots
3. Don’t hide behind the data
4. Acknowledge that educating people is hard work
5. Understand context, not just content
6. Platforms can regulate how tweets are used
7. User needs should be built into platform business models

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Who do we center as sources?

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Who gets centered in the stories?

Example: Critical race theory in schools

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The Dallas Morning News
Education Lab

Deepening coverage and conversations about issues affecting North Texas schools

February 14, 2022 | Prefer to view this online? [Click here.](#) 🔍



Good afternoon. I'm Emily Donaldson, the Education Lab's engagement reporter at *The Dallas Morning News*.

Jenelle Berry-Cook was hyperaware that she was one of only a few Black people in attendance at a seminar aimed at spotting and fighting critical race theory.

For more than an hour at this summer meeting, a Plano school board member lectured the crowd, offering tips for challenging lessons and instructing parents to look for keywords like "equity" and "narrative."

The crowd turned on Berry-Cook when she pushed back against one of the trustee's statements.

"We're not here to listen to you," a man a few rows ahead yelled. "Shut the f--- up."

In the nationwide uproar over critical race theory, the concerns of white conservatives have often been at the forefront, while Black voices — like those of Berry-Cook and her husband Michael Cook — have been missing.

Driving home from the event, the couple reflected on the experience of their first-grade daughter and 5-year-old twins. They wanted them to learn about America's honest history and understand how it lingers.

RACE & PLACE

White reporters: It's time to pop your parachute and share your byline

'Why haven't other journalists offered this to me?' Lessons on relinquishing ego, decentering whiteness, and co-reporting in rural Mississippi.

by ERICA HENSLEY

August 3, 2022

Erica Hensley, a white health reporter, whom we've worked with in the past, wanted to spotlight a crisis: Black farmers in Mississippi, a state marked by generations of land theft, are retiring and dying at higher rates than ever before. Neither Scalawag nor Hensley wanted to tell yet another story through the all-too-common lens of a white person butting into rural Black folks' business.

Ultimately, Teresa Springs, co-owner and operator of TKO Farming, agreed to co-report with Hensley, embarking the two on an uncommon but promising approach to journalism. Here, Hensley reflects on why more white journalists should also shift away from using people like Teresa solely as sources—and democratize the byline instead.

**Who do we consider
experts? And feel pressure
to cozy up to for access to
information?**

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Police Did Great Job, Police Say

| 8/08/22 7:41AM | Alerts



EVERYWHERE—In response to an unfolding situation on Monday, the police did a great job, the police said. “The actions of local law enforcement could not have been better,” local law enforcement reported in a statement, the veracity of which *The Onion* confirmed with local law enforcement. “Every measure undertaken by our officers went completely by the book, our officers told us, and we’ve since learned from ourselves that we once again saved the day. We can confirm that you’re all safe—just ask anyone in this police department. You’re welcome.” At press time, a grand jury was reportedly convening to investigate accusations of police misconduct.

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Adam Davidson ✓

@adamdavidson



On access journalism:

Early in the financial crisis, I did an interview with Tim Geithner that he didn't like.

I was told that I was CUT OFF from contact with him and the leadership of Treasury.

I told the PR person: that's bad for you but I don't care.

1/

Adam Davidson  @adamdavidson · Apr 23 ...

Replying to [@adamdavidson](#)

I thought we, at Planet Money, were doing a really good job explaining the financial crisis.

Access to top Treasury people wasn't especially helpful--they just told us PR BS most of the time.

We found a rich trove of smart experts to guide us.

Adam Davidson  @adamdavidson · Apr 23 ...

If we had worried about pleasing Tim Geithner, our coverage would have been way worse.

The weird thing was that we were probably, if anything, way too easy on Geithner and Treasury's plans. We weren't especially critical. We just weren't subservient.

**Framing is key to building
trust with communities
trying to reach**

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Words matter: Watch how you frame things.

Poynter.

**THE
POYNTER
REPORT**

WITH SENIOR MEDIA WRITER
TOM JONES



Interesting remarks

Speaking of the Tampa Bay Times, I found this letter to the editor from St. Petersburg, Florida, resident Laura Steiermann to be thought-provoking: “Can we please stop referring to radical right organizations like One America and Newsmax as conservative? There is nothing conservative about spreading lies and misinformation. There is nothing conservative about trying to overturn an election. Words matter. These are far right-wing institutions and nothing more.”

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Word choice on framing stories



Francisco Vara-Orta 

@fvaraorta



People often just read the promo online and don't click through to the story. So when tweets on stories aren't framed with context, you inadvertently parrot politicians' talking points despite your intent of looking impartial.



The Recount  @therecount · Aug 4

Gov. Ron DeSantis (R-FL), whose state is experiencing record COVID hospitalizations, to President Biden:

“Why don’t you do your job? Why don’t you get this border secure? And until you do that, I don’t wanna hear a blip about COVID from you, thank you.”

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Kat Stafford

@kat__stafford



We cannot shy away from calling racist acts of violence exactly what they are. Stating this clearly is indeed fact based reporting — which is supposed to be the tenet of journalism.

6:17 PM · Aug 27, 2023 · **45.6K** Views



Kat Stafford

@kat__stafford

Follow

Journalist | Global Race & Justice
Editor [@Reuters](#) | Past: [@AP](#)
investigative writer | Knight-Wallace
Fellowship alum | Contact:
kat.stafford@thomsonreuters.com

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"For journalists covering Charlottesville, its effect on their communities or similar events, the question may be: How can I objectively cover people who spew racism, anti-Semitism, homophobia and other outdated and repugnant beliefs? The answer is that we objectively know that discrimination based on sex, race, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability and other inherited traits is wrong. Journalists should feel free to say so and forcefully challenge people who believe otherwise."

SPJ Ethics Chairman Andrew Seaman



- The use of “racist” here

☰ **CNN** US Crime + Justice Energy + Environment More Audio Live TV 🔍 Log In

Woman charged with fake abduction story used racist stereotypes to describe kidnappers, advocates and scholars say

By [Nicole Chavez](#), CNN
🕒 Updated 5:41 PM ET, Wed March 9, 2022



in Jail

Sherrri Papini was released from federal custody on a \$120,000 bond on Tuesday.

MORE FROM CNN

- Jason Momoa apologizes after taking photos in the Sistine Chapel
- Jason Momoa's fans are upset. Here's why

S&P Global



Discover Essential Intelligence >

“When Sherrri Papini claimed she was abducted in Northern California, investigators were led to believe they were looking for two Hispanic women who spoke Spanish, played Mariachi music and fed her mostly tortillas and rice.”

It gets worse: Check out **the sketches** of the alleged abductors.

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Which word is most accurate?



Tao Leigh Goffe, PhD | 道 |

@taoleighgoffe



“Underrepresented” sounds like a random accident rather than what it is, the result of a deliberate plan of exclusion.

10:41 AM · Feb 14, 2022 · Twitter for iPhone

2,235 Retweets 86 Quote Tweets 11K Likes

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Adding context to gain trust and push back on disinformation

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Concerns about a rise in hate crimes and bias incidents have surged since the campaign and election of President Trump, who has frequently used coarse language and racist rhetoric when describing immigrants, people of color, and women. In schools, similar worries are echoed by some students, parents, and educators who suggest that Trump's influence has emboldened some children, teenagers, and even school employees to openly espouse hateful views.

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Neema Roshania Patel's 5 questions to ask

1. Are we including the voices of the people most affected by what's happening?
2. How are we defining "experts" in this story?
3. Are we engaging with a diverse range of sources, even when the story isn't explicitly about marginalized groups?
4. Are we making assumptions about our readers?
5. How are we explaining our process to sources?



Neema Roshania Patel

Neema Roshania Patel is editor of The Post's Next Generation Audience Development team. Previously, she was editor of The Lily. Before joining

Guide to the style guides: avoid problematic language

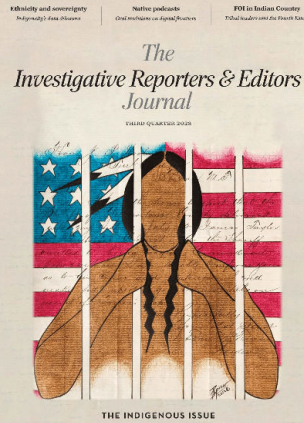
- [Language, Please](#)
- [National Association of Black Journalists' Style Guide](#)
- [Journalism for Black Lives Reporting Guide](#)
- National Association of Hispanic Journalists' [statement](#) on use of “illegal immigrants”
- [Asian American Journalists Association Style Guide](#)
- [Native American Journalists Association Style Guide](#) |
 - GJJN's [guide](#) on covering the Indigenous including data journalism
- [Race Reporting Guide](#)
- [Women's Media Center's best practices guide on reporting on women](#)
- [NLGJA: The Association of LGBTQ Journalists Stylebook](#) (Spanish version)
- [Trans Journalists Association Style Guide](#)
- [Diversity Style Guide](#) | [Conscious Style Guide](#) | [Buzzfeed Style Guide](#)
- Education Writers Association [guide](#) on inclusive language on marginalized communities

The
Investigative Reporters & Editors
Journal

PUBLICATION
WITHOUT
REPRESENTATION
Our diversity
problems stretch
back decades.



"The way
to right
wrongs is
to turn the
light of truth
upon them."



THE INDIGENOUS ISSUE

IRE Journal free issues online

IRE's diversity and inclusion guide focused on race (2020), the LGBTQ+ people (2021), Indigenous communities (2023) & disability justice (2024)



THE LGBTQ+ ISSUE

Getting it right in the newsroom and coverage.



Focusing on disability

Prabhu's Equal Reporting Network

Investigative Reporters & Editors

Free to everyone [here!](#)

Great newsletter

Today's trust tip: How to reach diverse audiences through listening



Today's trust tip: Talk to people who don't trust you

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It is a project of the Reynolds Journalism Institute and the American Press Institute.

A word from one of our partners



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First homework assignment*



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***“Pop culture is political” - Ko Bragg**

**As a newsroom:
Who do you want to reach?**

**How do we define what is
success when it comes to source
diversity?**

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The Journalist's Resource

Informing the news

MEDIA, RACE & GENDER

5 reasons news stories about research need source diversity

Many journalists work hard to include people from different backgrounds in stories about local issues and events, but might not realize source diversity is also important in stories about science and research. Here are five reasons why.

by Denise-Marie Ordway | November 8, 2023



1. Scholars who come from historically marginalized groups often provide new perspectives and approaches to the problems they study.
2. Scholars featured in news stories can help shape news coverage, which can, in turn, affect how audiences think about issues.
3. News stories about research and academia should reflect the diversity of the scientific community.
4. Helps journalists overcome biases in source selection.
5. Helps journalists reach key segments of their audience and build trust in news outlets.

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The background of the slide is a collage of newspaper text, tilted at an angle, creating a textured, busy appearance. The text is in various sizes and orientations, representing a dense field of information.

We're in the transparency business!

- Engagement = transparency
- Builds trust with readers
- Leads to better story ideas & sources
- Connects the community to the journalism process
- Makes the reporting process a two-way street

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Source diversity trackers




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A growing priority for news orgs

AMERICANPRESS
institute



 Are you ready for
source tracking?
Here's a practical
playbook to know.



The OPEN
Notebook®



wfyi
INDIANAPOLIS



[Backup link](#)



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NPR

- Focuses on historically excluded racial and ethnic groups
- Launched in 2013, verified and updated in 2021, soon to be again
- Paired with a source diversity tracker project in 2021 ([Poynter feature](#))
- Follow them on Twitter: @SourceOfTheWeek.
- NPR training team maintains them

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npr training / sources

Diverse Sources Database

Find experts from racial and ethnic groups underrepresented in the media.

Subjects Locations Tags keywords Search!

SOURCE OF THE WEEK



LYNNISE PANTIN
New York
Law

Lynnise Pantin is the Pritzker Pucker Family Clinical Professor of Transactional Law at Columbia Law School, where she focuses on systematic socioeconomic barriers faced by entrepreneurs of color. Her interests include clinical legal education, entrepreneurship, economic justice, and corporate and business law. [Read more](#)

Subscribe to the newsletter

We have a weekly newsletter. [Subscribe!](#)

August 12, 2021

Journalists across NPR are now tracking the demographics of their sources in real time thanks to a new piece of software that launched last month.

Dubbed Dex (after “Rolodex”), the tool is attached to NPR’s content management system. For each story, reporters, producers, correspondents and editors submit information about their sources’ race and ethnicity, gender identity, geographic location and age range. They can also indicate if a source declined to provide that information. Dex tracks all of this information so that journalists can later pull up reports to monitor their source diversity.

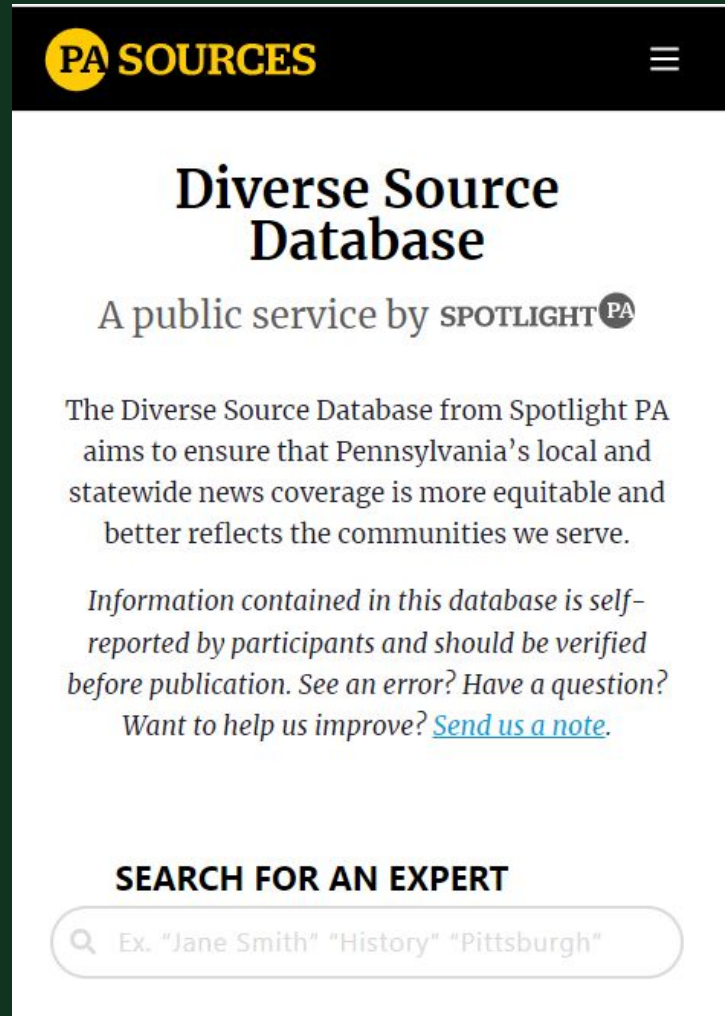
The hope is that NPR, National Public Radio, will produce stories and shows that more accurately reflect its audience — the public. In other words, NPR wants to “look and sound like America.”

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Spotlight PA

- An independent, non-partisan newsroom powered by The Philadelphia Inquirer in partnership with PennLive/The Patriot-News, TribLIVE/Pittsburgh Tribune-Review, and WITF Public Media.
- Launched in December 2020
- Created a new Twitter handle, @PA_Sources, featuring experts from the database each day and highlighting when they appear in coverage
- More on announcement [here](#)

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PA SOURCES

Diverse Source Database

A public service by SPOTLIGHT ^{PA}

The Diverse Source Database from Spotlight PA aims to ensure that Pennsylvania's local and statewide news coverage is more equitable and better reflects the communities we serve.

Information contained in this database is self-reported by participants and should be verified before publication. See an error? Have a question? Want to help us improve? [Send us a note.](#)

SEARCH FOR AN EXPERT

Ex. "Jane Smith" "History" "Pittsburgh"

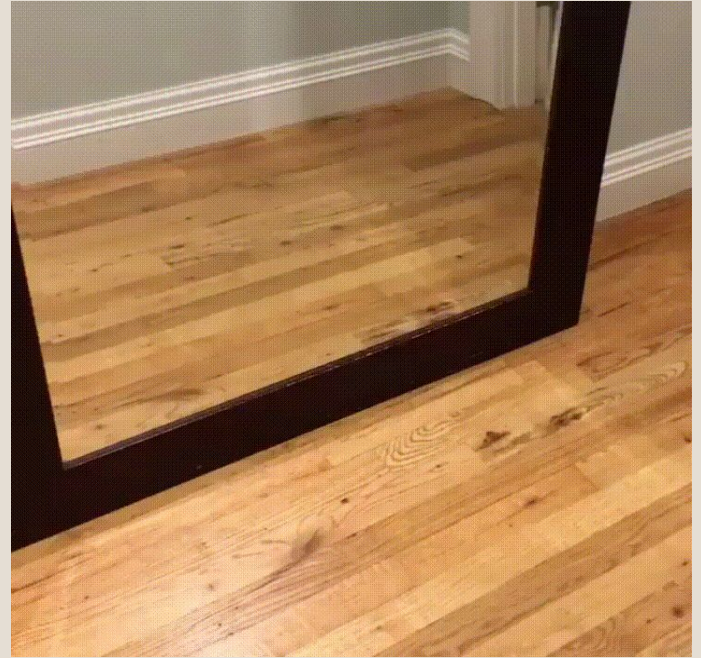
Other helpful diverse source databases

- [Society of Environmental Journalists' Indigenous Perspectives toolbox](#)
- [SPJ/PRSA's Sources of Color database](#)
- [Disabled Writers](#)
- [Gannett's Pass the Mic project](#)



Analyze your existing sources

- Audit who makes it into your existing stories. **Is this reflecting of your local demographics?**
- Set a goal (per newsroom, per reporter) and track who you use as sources moving forward.
- Analyze your sources again in a year and see if you've made improvements.
- Trust is earned through fair, accurate and inclusive coverage.



Take a look in the mirror.
You might be surprised.

COMMENTARY

Why we're doing an audit of our interviews



by **Leigh Munsil** and **Blanca Méndez**

November 27, 2023



After two initial tracking periods, just 27% of our sources identified as Latino in a city where more than 60% of the population is Latino — so we set a newsroom-wide goal to significantly improve that metric.

Our goal to increase Latino representation in our stories is based on our journalistic responsibility to accurately and thoughtfully portray our community. While who we quote and use as news sources is often affected by structures of power and influence in our city, that doesn't mean our work has to reflect those structures.

Some of the strategies we are using to improve how accurately we tell the story of San Antonio include seeking more Latino experts to offer insight, being more present in more of our city's neighborhoods and covering more stories that matter to Latinos in San Antonio.

Since starting our final tracking period on Aug. 1, we've made great progress toward our goal with 41% of our sources identifying as Latino.



A bot now tells Financial Times reporters if they're only quoting men

LINK: WWW.THEGUARDIAN.COM | POSTED BY: JOSHUA BENTON | NOVEMBER 14, 2018

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Multi-prong approach

The FT, long stuffed full with the male voice of finance, has made a number of recent efforts to increase its representation of and interest to women, as our Laura Hazard Owen has detailed in a [couple of stories](#) earlier this year.

[In April](#), she noted the creation of a “new newsletter aimed at (but not explicitly ‘for’) women that is now beating the FT’s other newsletters in terms of open rate,” regular promotion of articles that are over-indexing with women, and changes in the opinion section to encourage women to submit pieces. Here’s Renée



RELATED ARTICLE

“If the Financial Times were a person, it would be a man.” Here’s how the paper is trying to change that.

April 3, 2018

Also see: <http://arentalkingtoomuch.com/>



**A time for
courageous
journalism in
an era of mass
disinformation**

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Opinion | Actually, people don't hate the media as much as you think

By Tom Rosenstiel and Mariana Meza Hernandez

December 5, 2023 at 5:45 a.m. EST



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and the results look quite different. At the research firm NORC at the University of Chicago, we give people five possible answers to the question — a so-called five-point scale, rather than the four-point scale Gallup uses. By this method, more than half of Americans — 55 percent — trust the press's accuracy. The Pew Research Center asks the question differently still and finds that 61 percent have “a lot” or “some” trust in the information they get from national news organizations.

As for the assertion that conservatives are more skeptical of the media, that's not so cut-and-dried, either. When asked their feelings about local news, rather than national, conservatives and liberals look quite similar. In a NORC survey conducted this spring, a third of conservatives (32 percent) said the media does “very or extremely well” — the highest possible rating — covering local issues they care about, and close to half (46 percent) gave the middle grade of “somewhat well.” To any survey researcher, those are positive ratings. And the numbers for liberals were almost identical.

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Member benefits include:

- Thousands of tipsheets
 - Including templates on how I did the story
- Exclusive databases
- Newsletters with latest offerings
- Member listservs
- Fellowships & scholarships
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<http://bit.ly/JoinIRE>

Professionals/Academics: \$75/year

Early Career: \$50/year

Students: \$25/year

(Student members can retain this rate 1 year after graduation!)

Finding sources with IRE's help

IRE member? Check out our database of stories submitted for awards -- use them as blueprints for doing your own investigation



6. Major types of documents used and if FOI requests were needed.:

We filed numerous local and state open records requests for crash reports, detailed local police reports, and medical examiners autopsy reports of crash victims.

We also filed a request with the Texas Department of Transportation asking them to search their state traffic accident database to determine how many times vehicles collide with bridge pillars on Texas roads. We used this data to create an interactive map on-line .

We are still battling to obtain records of internal emails and other documents from the Texas Department of Transportation. The agency has recently claimed that "anticipated litigation" prevents the release of its internal records discussing why guardrails were not installed at some locations. We continue to appeal this decision.

7. Major types of human sources used.:

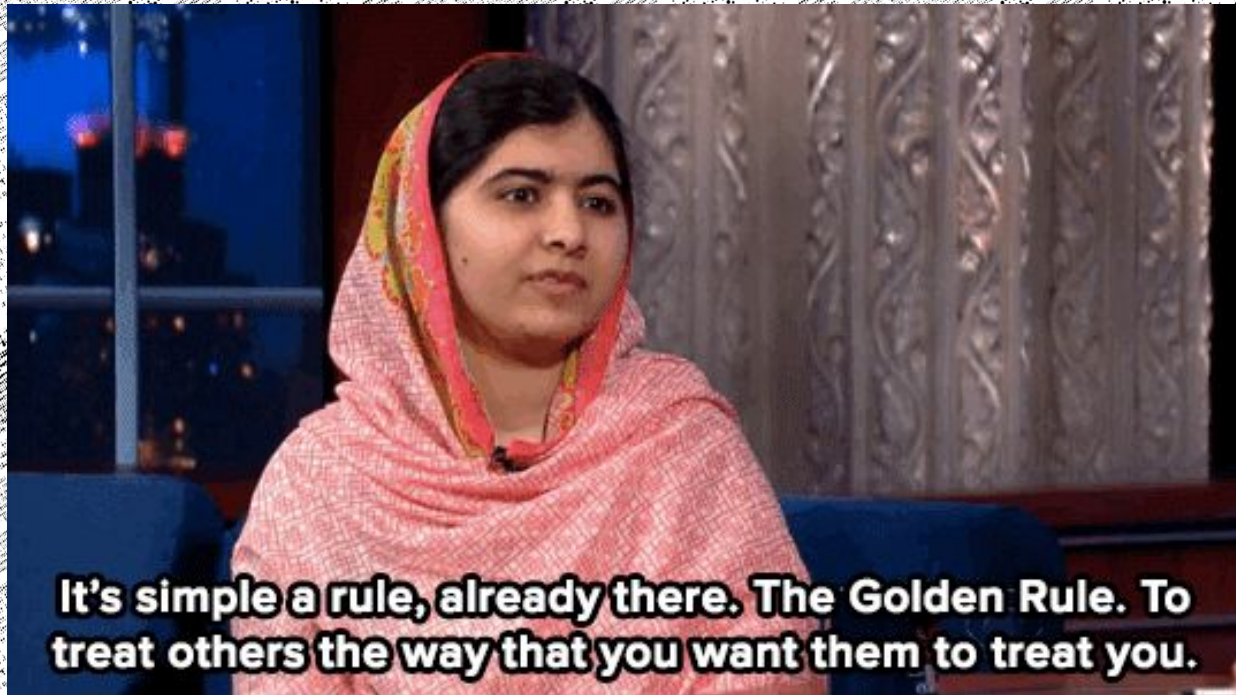
Families of crash victims.
Transportation safety consultants.
Experts on federal guardrail guidelines.
Local police and medical examiners.

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The best approach?



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It's simple a rule, already there. The Golden Rule. To treat others the way that you want them to treat you.

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Questions?



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