

Representations of Transgender Murder Victims in Digital U.S. News Media:  
A framing analysis

by  
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## Dedication

This project is dedicated to the 27 transgender and non-binary (bn)/gender non-conforming (gnc) reported murder victims killed in 2016. Their stories have deeply impacted me. Their voices will be heard and it is my greatest hope to be a channel for them in this project and beyond – to share their voices, their identities, their names, with the world. It is my honor and responsibility.

Rest in Power, my beloveds:

Monica Loera  
Jasmine Sierra  
Kayden Clarke  
Veronica Banks Cano  
Maya Young  
Damarkis Stansberry  
Kedarie "Kandicee" Johnson  
Quartney Davia Dawson-Yochum  
Shante Thompson  
Keyonna Blakeney  
Tyreece "Reecey" Walker  
Mercedes Successful  
Amos Beede  
Devin "Goddess" Diamond

Deeniquia "Dee Dee" Dodds  
Dee Whigham  
Skye Mockabee  
Erykah Tijerina  
RaeLynn Thomas  
Lexxi T. Sironen  
TT Saffore  
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Noony Norwood  
India Monroe

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And to the rest of my tribe, I could feel your love and support throughout this project. Thank you for believing in me.

## *Forward*

From the very start of this project, I knew that I had to build an intimate relationship with each one of the 27 victims. By many, they had been erased. This would not be a project that again stripped these human beings of their identity, minimized to numbers. These victims of violence deserved for me to know as much about them as I possibly could.

Maybe I watch too many detective TV shows, but I felt like a detective - gathering artifacts for each victim, pinning each one to the city where the homicide occurred on the U.S. map plastered to my wall, studying each case with precision, obsession. I needed to feel witness to the pain. Many of the 106 articles made it easy to envision the crime scene, the victim's ravaged body, often laid out in detail.

I am a writer, researcher and investigator. Academic mentors, loved ones and colleagues have taught, pushed and inspired me to trust my voice. All their voices remind me that mine is important, intelligent and empowering. Innovative thinking and creative communication leads to the opportunity and fortitude to accept responsibility for my voice and use it – to allow the voices of these 27 transgender people to be heard.

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## Abstract

Transgender murder victims are routinely mis-identified, misgendered, misrepresented in news media. GLAAD (formerly the Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation), the main media watchdog for LGBTQ+ rights and advocacy, reports that transgender people, particularly transgender women of color, are disproportionately affected by hate violence and these tragedies are often compounded by reporting that does not respect (or exploits) victims' gender identity [misingendering] (2016b; June, 2016).

This project is a qualitative framing analysis of digital U.S. news media representations of transgender and non-binary (bn)/gender non-conforming (gnc) murder victims. The framing analysis was informed by a general content analysis of the artifacts. This project consists of the 27 reported transgender homicides of 2016, through the lens of online news. A total of 106 artifacts were gathered. Eighty-nine percent of the victims killed last year were of color (reported as Black or Latino). Seventy-seven percent of the artifacts are from these cases.

This is an exploratory academic research project to begin looking at *how* news media are reporting transgender and non-gender conforming murder victims. And to provide insight on what the problems are, and the solutions. Ultimately, the intent of this work is to better inform news media and institutions like law enforcement, to then accurately inform their audiences. Simultaneously, it is intended to create a space and direction for a more robust academic body of research on trans representations in news media – a newly recognized field of research.

## Chapter 1: Introduction of the Project

India Monroe was the 27<sup>th</sup> and last reported<sup>1</sup> transgender murder victim of 2016 in the United States. She was 29 years old. The police ruled her death a murder-suicide. All the online news articles that reported India's death misgendered her and did not provide any indication of her true identity. This is an unfortunate example of how often transgender and non-gender conforming people are incorrectly identified in death, erasing them. India's case is also an example of how commonly families misgender the victim. Mic.com published an article after her death describing how the family buried India under her birth name. They cut her long hair and dressed her in a man's suit. Her manicured nails were covered with gloves (Rodriguez, 2017).

Transgender murder victims are routinely mis-identified, misgendered, misrepresented in news media. "When law enforcement refuse to recognize someone for who they were, it leaves out a huge piece of the story," said Chai Jindasurat, co-director of community organizing and public advocacy for the Anti-Violence Project (Stafford(a), 2015; June, 2016). GLAAD (formerly the Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation), the main media watchdog for LGBTQ+ rights and advocacy reports that transgender people, particularly transgender women of color, are disproportionately affected by hate violence and these tragedies are often compounded by reporting that does not respect (or exploits) victims' gender identity [misgendering] (2016b; June, 2016).

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<sup>1</sup> It was ruled by police in January, 2017 that Lexxi T. Sironen died from a drug overdose and was not murdered. This research includes data from her case because the project's focus was first news reports that were published in 2016.

The transgender women, transgender men and nb/gnc individuals in this project were often *double-victimized*: victimized by their killer or killers, and then victimized when misgendered by media (GLAAD, 2016b). Their life and identity are stripped away in an instant. Stripped unmercifully of their authentic and true identity; by reporters, police, coroners and family members. In this project, all 27 people have been treated with the utmost dignity, respect, reverence, kindness and compassion. Through their stories, it is my intent to give them voice and inspire and motivate me to share their voices with you. There was no other way. Throughout this manuscript, their voices will be heard.

This project is a qualitative framing analysis of digital U.S. news media representations of transgender and non-binary (bn)/gender non-conforming (gnc) murder victims. The framing analysis was informed by a limited content analysis of the artifacts. This project consists of the 27 reported transgender homicides of 2016, through the lens of online news. A total of 106 artifacts were gathered. Eighty-nine percent of the victims killed last year were of color (reported as Black or Latino). Seventy-seven percent of the artifacts are from those cases.

While I provide information on the landscape of my data, including all 106 artifacts, only a sample of 11 have been comprehensively examined through framing analysis. The smaller sample was broken down into framing categories: 1. Victim Blaming, 2. Misgendering, 3. Dehumanizing, 4. Policing/Police Authority/Criminalizing, 5. Empowering (identity affirming of the individual), and 6. Trans Visibility (providing education on trans community and issues they face). These categories were based on the following content: trans education; family, media, law enforcement misgendered victim; sex work mention; hate crime mention; use of victim's deadname; incorrect pronouns; confusing gender language (i.e. switching back and forth from

female to male pronouns, use of quotes that misgender and then affirm a victim's chosen identity).

Numbers need faces and stories. Numbers alone can be dehumanizing, especially to an already marginalized population of people. If we, as a society, are to bring those at the margins out of the shadows of stigma, stereo-types, discrimination, and ignorant hatred cast upon them by the dominant society, those at the margins require a voice, a place at the table.

The world did not start tracking transgender murders until 2008, according to Transgender Europe (TGEU) and the Trans Murder Monitoring (TMM) research project (2009). There is no way to determine exact and fully comprehensive statistics because there is only data on *reported* cases, finding reports online is troublesome for trans and gnc victims if they are misgendered (2009).

Every year we learn more about transgender people, finding new mechanisms to better report statistically, scholarly, institutionally, governmentally. The numbers are still far from accurate, but progress is being made. My intent with this project was to start looking to academia for collaborations with these transgender affirming organizations, and to further my own research methods and work.

Well-known publications are pushing the dominant society to look at gender outside the strict gender binary like, *Time's* "The Transgender Tipping Point: America's next civil rights frontier," (Steinmetz, 2014), *Neiman Reports'* "Beyond the "Coming Out" Story: How journalists are responding to this watershed period for transgender coverage," published by The Neiman Foundation for Journalism at Harvard University (Morrison, 2016), and *National Geographic's* "Gender Revolution" (National Geographic, 2017). They are providing well-

researched information to their audiences about the transgender community and the fluid landscape of what gender looks like and how it should be reported.

Advocacy organizations like the National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs (NCAVP), GLAAD and the National Center for Transgender Equality (NCTE) have conducted and released comprehensive, substantial reports on the transgender community (GLAAD, 2016a; GLAAD, 2016b; NCAVP, 2015; 2016; Grant, Mottet, & Tanis, 2011). Some of these are annual reports that have been released over a period of time. Reports on violence against transgender people (NCAVP); representations in the media (GLAAD); and discrimination, laws that protect or deny trans rights (NCTE).

Presently, minimal academic research exists on the *news* media portrayal and representations of transgender people and the link of the medias' power to the treatment of this population, visibility (or lack thereof), discrimination, police reporting, skewed statistics, in the United States and around the world. I have conducted multiple searches using academic scholarly databases, (WorldCat, EBSCO, Project MUSE, Sage) to determine the body of academic work in trans representations in news media. The results produce a negligible amount of research done on news media. Research is published on television and movie representations of transgender people, but even in this arena available academic research is limited. Hackl, Becker and Todd (2016) and additional scholars they cited, recognize the frequency in which transgender people are left out of LGBT studies (p. 468); with a focus on sexual identity and gender identity is left out. This lack of scholarly research around the representations of transgender people in the media, specifically news media, implies further marginalization and discrimination of the trans individual.

The organization, approach and dissemination of data, information and analysis of this project have been conducted in the essence of what I have learned from bell hooks and the importance of creating a voice that can speak to the masses, a voice that is easy to understand and interpret. The audience I pursue is beyond academia. While I include the audience of researchers and scholars, I also intend to reach the transgender community, media, law enforcement entities, law and policy makers, national LGBTQ+ advocacy groups, local grassroots LGBTQ+ advocacy and activist organizations, and possibly most importantly, family and friends of anyone who is transgender or gnc. This begins the discussion, the dialogue, the debate, the conversation, the dissemination of education and understanding.

In 1998, bell hooks, a prominent black scholar and feminist, said in an interview with Maya Angelou, that “some people act as though art that is for the mass audience is not good art, and I think this has been a very negative thing. I know that I have wanted very much to write books that are accessible to the widest audience possible (Shambhala Sun, 1998).” Melvin McLeod, who introduced the two women for the interview wrote: “bell is someone who shows that the true life of the mind is not one of disinterested speculation but one of questioning that consumes the whole person, full of emotion, often painful (1998, p. 1).” hooks is one of my greatest mentors, included in the number of them all, who have taught me to be creative, innovative, and intelligent.

This project is meant to begin building a foundation and framework for continued research in this arena, leading to global exploration and study; based on the wide spectrum of affects, causes, and influences created by the news media which directly impact the transgender population. For three years, I have monitored U.S. news media and how they have covered transgender homicides. Previous research (June 2014; 2016) helps to inform much of this

project. This is an exploratory academic research project that examines how news media are reporting transgender and non-gender conforming murder victims. And to provide insight on what the problems are, and the solutions. There is a dire need to recognize the importance of this research niche, academically.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

### Important Terminology

The transgender community is so often misrepresented, misgendered, and maligned, it is crucial to begin by providing definitions to terms that will be used throughout this paper. To eliminate confusion or misinterpretation, and to clarify, the following terms have been vetted through my previous research (June, 2016; June 2014), using definitions that are comprehensive, inclusive and informing.

*Transgender* is an adjective and umbrella term that describes people who do not identify with the gender on their birth certificate or who are *gender non-conforming* (gnc) (GLAAD, 2016a). The transgender umbrella may include (but not limited to) people who are transsexual, crossdressers, drag artists, androgynous, two-spirit, genderqueer and agender (Serano, 2013). *Non-binary or gnc* people do not feel male or female and often embody elements of both (Trans Media Watch, 2013). *Cisgender* describes people who identify with their assigned birth gender (GLAAD, 2016a).

A *transgender man* was assigned female at birth, but identifies and lives as a man. A *transgender woman* was assigned male at birth but identifies and lives as a woman (GLAAD, 2016a). According to the 2015 National Coalition of Anti-Violence report on hate violence against the LGBTQ population, more than half of all LGBT homicide victims were trans women (NCAVP, 2015).

*Misgender/ing* means referring to people using a word, especially a pronoun, that incorrectly reflects the gender with which they identify (OD, 2016). *Deadnaming* is a new term I



learned while doing this project, used in the trans community for calling a trans person by their assigned name at birth (Ramirez Talusan, 2015).

“Dissociation with biological sex is perceived to be unnatural” (Collins, McFadden, Rocco, & Mathis, 2015); leading to the significance of defining gender. The Gender Spectrum (2016) articulates the difference between sex and gender:

Biological gender (sex) includes physical attributes used to assign sex at birth. Gender is the complex interrelationship between an individual’s sex (gender biology), internal sense of self (gender identity), and outward presentations/behaviors (gender expression). (2016)

Each one of us embodies a particular gender articulation, even if one’s gender articulation is fluid (Knauer, 2007).” Through this articulation we define ourselves; through the gender we are assigned at birth, the gender we choose, create, reject, or are assumed to be (2007).

Sociologists Maxine Baca Zinn, Pierrette Hondagneu-Sotelo and Michael Messner argue that “gender is no longer viewed simply as a matter of two opposing categories of people, male and female, but as a range of social relations among differently situated people” (as cited in Garcia, 2015, p. 3).

### **Oppression of a Marginalized Population**

For decades, transgender people have been demanding the right to choose self-definitions, working to shatter the prison walls of binary genders (Feinberg, 1992). Transgender people frequently face multiple manifestations of discrimination, including harassment and violence, economic and employment discrimination and no access to healthcare (Breslow et al., 2015). Philosopher David Ozar said, “when a person is deemed “invisible” by someone [of a

dominant group], they feel no moral obligation to that person” (personal communication, February 20, 2016).

Philosopher Hilde Lindemann Nelson argued how dominant societal groups justify oppression over subordinate groups, distorting their identity by depicting them as morally subnormal (2001). She lists Iris Marion Young’s “Five Faces of Oppression:” exploitation, marginalization, powerlessness, cultural imperialism and violence; noting many ways identities can be distorted, degraded, or rendered unintelligible, but oppression’s impact on identity is systematic, negatively depicting entire social groups (Lindemann Nelson, 2001, p. 108-112).

Marilyn Frye, feminist theorist and philosopher, said “one of the most characteristic and ubiquitous features of the world as experienced by oppressed people is the double bind-situations in which options are reduced to a very few, and all of them expose one to penalty, censure, or deprivation (2000).” Frye likened oppression to a cage, “being confined and shaped by forces and barriers that are not accidental or occasional, but are systematically related to each other in such a way” that catches and restricts one between and among, restricting or penalizing motion in any direction. “All avenues, in every direction, are blocked or booby trapped (p. 12).”

To compound oppression, Patricia Hill Collins (1993) noted that we are all entangled in a “complex web of problematic relationships that grant our mirror images full human subjectivity while stereotyping and objectifying those most different than ourselves” (p. 26). In other words, we have biases, judgements and assumptions about others, based on their gender race/ethnicity, class, religion, ability - which perpetuate the oppression of certain individuals and groups of people.

Sandra Harding further qualifies gender oppression specifically, by defining three structured dimensions: institutional, symbolic and individual (as cited in Collins, 1993, pg. 29). The systemic relationships of dominant and subordinate groups are made through societal institutions, for example: schools, government agencies, corporations, media; creating the *institutional dimension* of oppression (1993). The justification of relations of domination and subordination that encompass *symbolic dimensions* of oppression are society-sanctioned ideologies. And finally, the *individual dimension* of oppression is based on each of our biographies, which are directly affected and maintained by the institutional and symbolic dimensions of our existence (1993), our identities. The unfortunate power of these dimensions can provide supremacy to members of dominant groups to erase the existence of marginalized groups (1993).

Another aspect of this perspective of oppression is voyeurism by the privileged, who are fascinated with how the “other” or “different” less privileged people live (Collins, 1993). The latter group doesn’t have control of whether or not they participate in this voyeurism, because the dominant group controls the institutional and symbolic oppressive underpinnings (1993, pg. 37). I might add that this is a form of “othering” and dehumanizing an individual or subordinate group. Here is an example: Christine Jorgensen captured America’s attention in 1952, when the media announced that a former GI had undergone sex-reassignment surgery, introducing transsexuality to many Americans (Skidmore, 2011). Skidmore said that media representations of Jorgensen “were able to articulate transsexuality as an acceptable subject position through the embodiment of the norms of white womanhood, most notably domesticity, respectability, and heterosexuality (p. 271).” On the other hand, there were also transgender women of color (Marta Olmos Ramiro, Laverne Peterson, and Delisa Newton) who publicly came out as transgender

women around the same time as Jorgensen but the media treated these women as jokes, subjects of ridicule, sexualizing and objectifying Ramiro, Peterson and Newton, implying that they were not “authentic” transgender representations, palatable to the media or the American society at large (p. 271). To further this marginalization of transgender women of color, mainstream newspapers failed to even report their stories; only African-American press and tabloid newspapers published stories on the trans women of color (2011). Dominant society, via the mainstream media, constructed a white heteronormative representation that would align with their views, beliefs and perceptions. Not much has changed in this landscape over the decades, as will be attested in this project.

History has shown how cultures and societies have dehumanized subordinate groups of people: the colonization and genocide of American Indigenous people; Nazi Germany and the attempt to annihilate Jews; slavery; the Japanese internment camps of World War II. These horrific tragedies were based on a dominant group dehumanizing and attempting to erase or make subordinate groups invisible, through the power structure dimensions of institutional, symbolic and individual oppression.

Talia Mae Bettcher (2013) philosopher and trans woman, critically analyzes two models of transgender oppression: 1. the “wrong-body” model, in which there is a misalignment between the gender identity of a person and the sexed body; and 2. the “beyond-the-binary” model, when transgender people do not fit into either of the two dichotomous categories of woman or man (female or male), society forces them into one of them (p. 383-384). In the first model, a transgender person is a man or a woman “trapped in the wrong body” and in the latter, society attempts to erase them. In both models, transgender people do not have a *choice* in how society views or categorizes them, which directly leads to oppression (2013). They are forced by the

dominant societal group(s) into boxes, spaces and labels deemed “acceptable” by society, but do not correctly align with transgender peoples’ full identities.

The beyond-the-binary model suggests that trans people are mistakes by invalidating their self-identities, recognizing them as politically problematic because they disrupt the strict gender binary which oppresses them (Bettcher, 2013, p. 385). The social world we live in is constructed in a way that privileges those who live well within the gender binary or sexed identity of male or female (2013). While Bettcher agrees with many aspects of these models, her primary concern with both is that neither model prescribe ways to theorize how trans women are subject to sexual oppression (as women) and transphobic oppression (as trans) in ways that are fully blended. Bettcher (2013) said, “once transgender people are seen as oppressed through the wrongful imposition of a binary, it’s unclear how a transsexual woman can ever be seen as being oppressed as a woman at all (since she’s “beyond-the-binary”), let alone in ways that blend the oppression of women and the oppression of trans people (2013, p. 387).” Because trans bodies do not “fit” within the dominant interpretation or definition of the gender binary, they are seen as “outsiders,” the “others;” the epitome of oppression.

### **The Intersectionality of Identities**

Individuals don’t identify simply on the basis of their gender identification. The individual and society both are enmeshed in intersectionality. In 1989, Kimberle Crenshaw introduced the concept. Individuals create their senses of self and society categorizes people based on many different aspects of identity, which may include race, gender, class, sexuality, ability, sexual orientation and economic status (Bhattacharya, 2012; Garcia, 2015). Crenshaw said that identity categories in mainstream discourse are treated as vehicles for bias and domination, creating intrinsically negative frameworks for social powers to exclude and

marginalize anyone who is different (Crenshaw, 1991). When aspects of identities are combined, that intersection can result in multiple forms of discrimination and oppression (Bhattacharya, 2012).

People use gender identity and expression as markers to decipher perceptions of others, perpetuating the status quo of heteronormativity and cisgender normativity (Collins et al., 2015). Culture in a society is not static, but rather contested and negotiated because individuals and groups are positioned differently within society (Garcia, 2015), based on their intersectionality. With different societal positions come different views as to what is considered most desirable for their society (2015). And as pointed out earlier, the dominant groups in a society have the loudest voices. The media are one dominant group that have the power to create positive change, destroying instead of perpetuating stigmas, stereotypes and misrepresentations of marginalized groups of people.

Frye (2000) described this concept with an analogy:

The physical walls of a prison no more dissolve to let an outsider in than to let an insider out, but for the insider they are confining and limiting while to the outsider they may mean protection from what s/he takes to be threats posed by the insiders. A set of social and economic barriers and forces separating two groups may be felt, even painfully, by members of both groups and yet mean confinement to one and liberty and enlargement of opportunity to the other. (pg. 14)

Crenshaw pinpointed the problem of intersectionality by relating it to violence against women of color. This violence is compounded by the different dimensions of their identities (Crenshaw, 1991). Crenshaw used domestic violence and intervention as an example, saying

“when systems of race, gender and class domination converge, ..., intervention strategies based solely on the experiences of women who do not share the same class or race backgrounds will be of limited help (p. 1246)” because those who come from different class, race or gender background face quite different obstacles.

Here is an example of what intersectionality may (and often does) look like for a transgender woman of color, who is already at great risk for violence, discrimination and suicide. She is black and been forced out of the traditional workforce because of her gender identity, has resorted to sex work to make ends meet, while living in an impoverished area of a city because the rent there is all she can afford. Consider the layers of identity and intersectionality presented: non-white, transgender woman, unemployed, poor, marginalized - with the constant threat of violence, because she is trans, black, a sex worker and lives in a low-income neighborhood. This shows how different parts of a person’s identity can be tragically bound together, creating oppression and discrimination based on a variety of factors (June, 2016).

Three decades since Crenshaw introduced intersectionality to feminist, critical race and law discourses, she wrote an article for the *Washington Post*, “Why intersectionality can’t wait (2015).” Over the course of time many have opposed her concept saying that there is no solution behind the concept (Crenshaw, 2015). Crenshaw counters these critics by noting the importance of knowing and understanding intersectionality allows for the examination of the structures of power that continue to oppress marginalized groups and individuals in order to create change (2015, para. 12): “We need to sustain a vision of social justice that recognizes the ways racism, sexism and other inequalities work together to undermine us all.”

Philosopher Ann Garry (2011) proposed a “broad and inclusive” concept of intersectionality:

Oppression and privilege by race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, class, nationality, and so on do not act independently of each other in our individual lives or in our social structures; instead, each kind of oppression or privilege is shaped by and works through the others. These compounded, intermeshed systems of oppression and privilege in our social structures help to produce (a) our social relations, (b) our experiences of our own identity, and (c) the limitations of shared interests even among members of “the same” oppressed or privileged group (p. 827).

With Garry’s concept of intersectionality, she aims to focus on the interconnectedness of our identities and how it perpetuates either oppression or privilege (2011). Other views of intersectionality, including Crenshaw’s, are more focused on how intersectionality oppresses, and not on how it also gives privilege. Garry (2011) said that we must have a self-understanding and awareness of how intersectionality can result in improving scholarship but also forcing dominant groups to recognize their unacknowledged privileges, including the privilege of remaining ignorant of marginalized communities. And to counter those who oppose intersectionality, Garry advised that we not expect too much from the concept; that it is neither a methodology or theory of power or oppression, but provides a framework when analyzing issues and challenges of marginalized people (2011).

### **Transgender Identities and the Media**

In early 2016, *Neiman Reports* published an article on journalists’ coverage of the transgender community. Sara Morrison begged the question, “How do journalists cover a



community, which has been for so long maligned and voiceless, in ways that are considerate of the community's needs as well as those of readers, some of whom need basic concepts explained (2016)?" Morrison refers to a survey conducted by the Human Rights Campaign (HRC), the largest LGBT civil rights organization in the U.S.; only 22 percent of respondents said they knew a transgender person (2016). With lack of knowledge, interaction or connection to the transgender community, coupled with the rapid rise in visibility, newsrooms face unique challenges when reporting on the transgender community (2016).

Bell hooks' critique of the media advocates for the use of communication to disrupt and eradicate the ideology of domination, which hooks defines as white supremacy capitalist patriarchy (hooks, 2011). Similar to the concept of intersectionality, hooks asserts that domination involves the interlocking systems of racism, sexism, class elitism, capitalism and heterosexism (2011). Hooks said the critique of the media is important because of the pervasiveness and power of the media, and everyone - not just the media - contributes to the ideology of oppression (2011). Those who are at the margins have a unique opportunity to disrupt the hegemonic discourse because they are on the outside looking in and also on the inside looking out (2011).

Hooks presented the solution for disrupting domination: *decolonization* – two forms, *critique* and *invention* (hooks, 2011). Decolonization changes the reality assumptions of the dominant culture and involves the critical, analytic and strategic creation of models of a nondominant reality (2011). Critique and analyses is imperative because it allows review of the media, since “the politics of domination inform the way the vast majority of images we consume are constructed and marketed. There is a constant presence of the colonizing mindset passively consumed that undermines our capacity to resist (2011).” For hooks, critique will interrogate,

challenge and confront the dominant reality (2011). *Critique* is useless, however, hooks says, if there is not *invention* - action of change within individual habits of enacting nondominating and nonexploitive ways (2011).

While there is an increasing amount of depictions of transgender people in the media, the representations are not necessarily positive. And in this current climate, media is the predominant source where both cisgender and transgender people gain information about transgender topics (McInroy & Craig, 2015). Not only do media representations of transgender people inform and influence the dominant culture, these representations directly and significantly impact transgender individuals' lives, experiences and the development of their gender identities (2015).

Representations and information provided in the media may be inaccurate, incomplete, biased or ignore historical content (McInroy & Craig, 2015) and in turn, exploits, dehumanizes and marginalizes transgender people. Trans Media Watch released a study in 2010 on transgender people and the media in the United Kingdom found that participants frequently reported experiencing victimization because of popular depictions of transgender people in the media (2010). Other research conducted found that these negative representations could have detrimental impacts, like depression or shame on transgender people and incite fear in the cisgender population (McInroy & Craig, 2015).

Hackl, Becker & Todd (2016) conducted a content analysis on Chelsea Manning's representation in mainstream print newspaper coverage, after she released the statement to *The Today Show*: "I am Chelsea Manning. I am a female (as cited in Hackl et al., 2016, p. 467)." Heckl et al. used Chelsea's case as an avenue to research mainstream media's portrayal of identity, gender and transgender issues. These scholars successfully show the struggle media has

around the fluidity of gender identity and note that “media language has a significant impact on the audience’s understandings of depicted individuals (2016, p. 471).”

There is a gap between what representations the media provide the audience and the actual diverse lived-experience of transgender people. So often media use one or two examples of what a transgender person “looks” like, and fail to show representations of the diverse lives and gender identity of the whole transgender population (Heckl et al., 2016). *The Washington Post* published an editorial September 2, 2013 acknowledging that Chelsea’s case was a good opportunity to highlight the “oft-forgotten ‘T’ in ‘LGBT’ and what remains America’s most marginalized and neglected minority groups (as cited in Heckl et al., 2016, p. 480).” Chelsea is a white transgender woman and imprisoned for crimes against the U.S. government. Does this set up a frame by the media that transgender people are white and criminals? Or Caitlyn Jenner, another white transgender woman the media cannot seem to get enough of. Not only is Caitlyn white, she has already been a prominent figure in mainstream media, is affluent, has access to anything and everything she could possibly need or desire, and she fits the white woman, heteronormative frame, “acceptable” for the media to push out to their audiences. Again, this is a transgender individual whose life-experience is far from the majority of diverse life-experiences of the transgender population. It is true that Black trans women like Laverne Cox, an actress, and Janet Mock, an activist and author, have seen considerable media coverage, but in a lot of ways, even their stories are not reflective of the community at large (Glover, 2016). For those whose bodies fall outside the dominant society’s views of it is to be a male or female, news media’s attention is motivated by the need to entertain (Kerry, 2011). These issues make the argument for a need in academia to address why news media so often misgender transgender victims of violence.

## **Framing: Media Power and Responsibility**

Erving Goffman, one of the classic framing analysis experts in sociology, provides insight to framing with the theatre (1974). He said that theatre goers are at the mercy of what the theatre, actors, script, production staff, etc. want them to see, feel, and hear. Only that which is framed within the stage and curtains is to be considered relevant to the story being told. But as we know, there is a lot more going on in a theatre that is not deemed relevant to the performance. The backstage is bustling with actors and crew; beneath the stage there is often activity and work to support the scene above; the music pit, which is visible to some of the audience, but not wholly part of the frame, only the sounds it makes pertain to the show; the audience members who are outside using restrooms, making phone calls, tending to an unruly child, all miss part of the framed show; the maintenance and facility crew who tend to the restrooms, ticket booth, and general upkeep of the building stand outside the frame. A plethora of stories unfold *outside* the main theatre frame and all can be connected to that frame in some way. Even more importantly, if many outside the frame were absent, it would collapse or reveal an entirely different story.

News media framing is no different than the theatre. There are players in the news room completely outside of a story, who often alter the story through editing, verification (or lack-there-of) of facts, the decision of words to use in a headline, what images are or are not used, and the ever-powerful desire to cater to the dominant audience. Who is self-represented and who is represented by others? Who has a voice in the story? What sources were used to tell the story? These are just a few – and most often present – of the influences that can affect news framing.

While news is a common arena for communication researchers to study how framing works and to better understand it (D'Angelo & Kuypers, 2010); I have been unable to find academic research pertaining to the news media's framing of transgender people. Because

transgender people have become more visible in the media over the past couple years (Morrison, 2016), it is important that there is education attached to this new visibility.

Through my previous research (June, 2016), I have witnessed a gap between what is being reported by news media and what the American people *know* about the transgender population. More visibility without context creates frames based upon shallow assumptions and biases. I believe that one of the main problems in perpetuating this gap is the way news media often frame stories about or on the transgender population.

Robert Entman, whose definition of framing in his 1993 piece, played an instrumental role in igniting communication research on the subject (Cacciatore, Scheufele, & Iyengar, 2016), defines *framing* as “a process of culling a few elements of perceived reality and assembling a narrative that highlights connections among them to promote a particular interpretation” (2010, p. 336). Framing influences and alters how an audience interprets a story or issue. Entman noted that many scholars assert that frames shine a light on prominent ideas that lead dominant audiences to feel, think, or act in a particular way (2010, p. 336). Goffman defined *frame* as “definitions of a situation are built up in accordance with principles of organization which govern events – at least social ones – and our subjective involvement in them” (1974, p. 10).

While the audience may not be fully conscious of framing effects, they do influence future framing by journalists, through their actions and choices while living in the world (Entman, 2010). Entman noted that ordinary citizens are indeed, quite susceptible to framing effects, which comprise a pattern of repeated exposure to resonant words and images (p. 333). Price, Tewksbury, and Powers (1997) assert that a “framing effect is one in which salient attributes of a message (its organization, selection of content, or thematic structure) render particular thoughts applicable, resulting in their evaluations” (as cited in Cacciatore, Scheufele,

& Iyengar, 2016, p. 16). Based on his research, Entman (2010) was convinced that U.S. media show one-sided framing patterns that assist in perpetuating the power of dominant interests, while undermining the power of subordinate interests (p. 335).

If news media have the nearly implicit power to dissuade and persuade society, journalists should be held accountable for their reporting through verification and transparency. In Kovach and Rosenstiel's *The Elements of Journalism* (2014), they argue that what "separates journalism from entertainment, propaganda, fiction or art" is the discipline of *verification* – the essence of journalism (p. 98). The authors note that the pressure of immediate publication (where errors can be corrected after the fact) is no excuse for lack of verification (p. 100). Kovach and Rosenstiel call it the "beating heart of credible journalism" and a process that "must get both the facts right and the truth" (p. 100).

Walter Lippmann, an American journalist of the early twentieth century said in 1920, "there can be no liberty for a community which lacks the information by which to detect lies" (as cited in Kovach and Rosenstiel, 2014, p. 99). Although journalists have codes of ethics and guidelines by which they supposedly adhere to (based on the newsroom or company they write and report for), or the Society of Professional Journalists (SPJ) Code of Ethics, which is written, updated and maintained by journalists, freely available; there is no standardized code to follow or truly hold anyone accountable for how news is reported (2014).

Journalists can select sources that align with their own point of view and use a neutral voice to appear objective. This is deception (Kovach & Rosenstiel, 2014). Journalists, like any human being, have biases, conflicts, assumptions, and backgrounds, and these can be reflected in their work (2014, p. 101). To report the news without bias or subjectivity, journalists must be cognizant of these influences, be diligent in the verification process, and provide audiences with

methods and modes of reporting for transparency, to report objectively and accurately (p. 106). Kovach and Rosenstiel sum it up with this: “the citizen should demand to be shown why he or she should believe any particular piece of content. Each atom of news must prove itself” (p. 111). (See Appendix B for proposed media guidelines on how to report on the transgender community.)

## **Content Analysis**

Limited content analysis informs this project requiring literature review on the structure and methods. Entman relies on content analysis as the most reliable way to analyze news framing (2014, p. 334). Content analysis is defined by Charles R. Wright as “a research technique for the systematic classification and description of communication content according to certain usually predetermined categories...and may involve quantitative or qualitative analysis, or both” (as cited in Berger, 2014, p. 232).

Over the last three decades, content analysis has emerged as a prominent method used in communications research (Lacy, Watson, Riffe, & Lovejoy, 2015; Berger, 2014). The use of this method of collecting and analyzing data has also lead to efforts in standardizing the process. Scholars with expertise in this method of research agree that content analysis tells us what is in the content being studied, but not on the affects it has on audiences (Berger, 2014). Assumptions and estimates of affects on certain audiences may emerge from the research I am conducting, based on the data analysis of the content; however further research and methodologies will need to be conducted to establish true affects, built on the outcomes of this project. A limited content analysis is an integral method in this project to form and build a solid foundation of knowledge obtained through the data analysis, to propel further research and to establish a framework upon which to build from.

### Chapter 3: Methodology

The literature gathered for this project focused on transgender individuals (a spectrum of topics within the transgender population, some examples are: violence against, discrimination, reports released pertaining to the trans community, research on marginalized communities, gender, media handling, etc.). The literature review includes a terminology section to identify and clarify terms and definitions used in this project. Theoretical framework literature and established models; cultural, ethical and feminist theories were also reviewed.

This review included, for example, literature on other representations of marginalized people, hegemonic concepts, patriarchal societies, masculinity (threats to), intersectionality, domestic and hate violence, the media's roles and responsibilities, etc. GLAAD, established in 1985, a staunch advocate and trusted resource of knowledge in media representations of transgender people, has been extensively used to guide and assist in this project. Literature on established content analysis and framing models was explored for guidance.

The intention of this thesis was to answer the following research questions:

RQ1: How were the media framing murders of transgender people?

RQ2: Based on the framing analysis, was there a bias in the reporting of transgender murder victims and were they being underreported?

RQ3: What sources were used by news media to report murders of transgender people? How were these sources being used?

RQ4: Were transgender murder victims misgendered in news reports? If so, why?



Data collection on transgender and gnc murder victims from 2016 from multiple sources, was used to inform the most comprehensive data. Mic.com, NCAVP, and Advocate.com were the primary sources. These sources were determined by doing a Google search to see what organizations were providing information on trans and gnc victims. This project required as much data on each victim that could be found online (i.e. demographics). Using the three sources mentioned above enabled data collection on the victim's name, gender, race, age, date of death, and location of death. Mic.com has created a database called *Unerased: Counting Transgender Lives*, which also includes case information on several victims, whether the case is pending, solved, unsolved and links to articles about trials, cases, perpetrators, etc. (Talusán, 2016).

NCAVP provided numbers only, while Mic.com and Advocate.com both provided more extensive information on each victim, which assisted in the cross-referencing to determine that the data was correct and accurate. (i.e. spelling of name, date of death, age, etc.).

Once the list of victims was determined, a search began for reports, articles, and TV clips on the murders that occurred in 2016. Searches started by using Lexis Nexis and the Advanced Search options: entering the victim's name, date range from date of death to present, News and Case information searches only. Surprisingly, this search criteria and database provided little to no results. Google searches provided more information and data. First, a basic search was conducted by the victim's name to see what results were reflected. Then a comparison was done with these results to those found when using the 'Google News' search tool. More comprehensive results came from simple Google searches.

The disconcerting problem was not easily finding news reports on these victims. Only articles published by media organizations like, Mic.com, Advocate.com, NCAVP and GLAAD, whose focus is covering the LGBTQ+ population, except for Mic.com, which reports a spectrum

of news, provided more in-depth information and accurate reporting. This forced the process of following bread crumbs, or links within these (latter) articles that led me to local news reports, where the victims were often inaccurately named - deadnaming (using the name on the victim's birth certificate, instead of their self-identified name) by police and coroner's reports. This finding though, led to searches using the incorrect name and often this gleaned further news reports on the victim. Conducting Google searches of these victims using their birth names, often revealed more coverage. Also, during the Google search process, only the first three pages of search results were reviewed, because it became more and more apparent that there were no further news articles listed after the third page of search results. Other search terms used included: transgender, trans-sexual, gay, lesbian, cross-dresser, drag, "man dressed in women's clothes," "woman dressed as man."

After conducting multiple searches for the first several victims, a pattern emerged in the coverage of each case. There were more local TV news coverage/reports and online news articles than articles published by local, state, regional or national newspapers. This finding led to research on how relevant actual newspaper articles were for this project. Pew Research released a 47-page report in July 2016, that changed the course of data collection. Four out of ten Americans get their news online. Fifty-eight percent of Americans get their news from television, thirty-eight percent from online news sources, twenty-five percent from radio and only twenty percent of Americans get their news from newspapers (Mitchell, Gottfried, Barthel, & Shearer, 2016).

Because of these numbers and the nature of this research, *newspaper* coverage of transgender murder victims was not relevant when considering the impact that news consumption has on Americans, the dominant society, and on popular opinion. Artifact

collection included online TV reports and online news coverage of each murder victim. While data on several of the analyzed cases included online articles published by local, regional or national newspapers, actual print newspapers were not analyzed.

Two databases were created:

One contains overall details of all the reported transgender and gnc homicides in 2016, including information on the victim, demographics, case details, etc. Internet searches were conducted to secure artifacts for each with the following criteria: each artifact must be a news report published digitally by local, regional, state, national and international news media. Any news report that was published by outlets who primarily report and advocate for the LGBTQ+ population (i.e GLAAD, NCAVP, PinkNews.uk, Advocate.com) were not included in the artifacts or analysis.

The second database created includes the content and framing details of the artifacts gathered for the previously referenced database. Only the first report by a news outlet had contents gathered, follow-up stories by news outlets were noted. Often the “first report” article found during the search process included “Update” in the headline; however, there were no articles found prior to the publication of the updated article. In these cases, the assumption is that the original stories were deleted from online access, or “Update” was simply added to a headline and the article itself was the original news report, updated. Each artifact for each case’s content and data was then entered chronologically, based on the date of publication and the victim’s date of death.

Only readily accessible online digital articles were collected. There was no collection of print newspapers or news coverage video clips. All artifacts and content data were manually

collected, mainly because of the intricacies of the content required for this project. The intent was to be as intimate as possible with the data found and collected to ensure the sanctity of each victim by conducting a complete review of each artifact's content. It had to be a hands-on, human approach.

In the analysis of TV news coverage content, only content of the print stories was reviewed, often the transcript of the television news clip, collecting the data in the same method as the rest of the online news print coverage of these stories. For both types of publications' (online news and TV online news coverage) content, the data collection covered: Case (name of victim), Date of Death, Print Date, Time; Headline, Author(s), Publication, News Affiliate, Location (city reported from), Size/Reach (Local, Regional, National), Type of Publication (online news or TV online news), Beat, Gender (reported), Photos, Type of Representations (how was the victim referred to and portrayed in the story), Sources, Updated/Follow-Up Stories, and whether any education on the trans community was provided.

The *Beat* was determined, either in the site's URL, byline section or above/below the headline. In the cases where a beat was not apparent, I have used the "News" category as the default.

Information gathered under *Type of Representation* included: all variations of reference to the victim (i.e the body, the person, the transgender woman); mention of sex work (including terms like "prostitute," "prostitution"); mention of "hate crime" (sometimes referred to as a "bias incident"); mention of a variation of the phrase "man dressed as a woman," or other dehumanizing phrase like "cross-dresser;" whether the family misgendered the victim (i.e quotes from mother, father, aunt, etc.), misgendering by reporter; use and/or mention of deadname; use of victim's correct name; and gender reported.

*Education* included either a direct quote or information from an LGBTQ+ or transgender advocacy organization; or direct quotes or information provided by a source who was a transgender person, who gave readers insight on their community.

The data collected was reviewed, analyzed, and described. While providing information on the landscape of the data, including all 106 artifacts, only a sample of 11 were comprehensively examined through framing analysis. The smaller sample was broken down into framing categories:

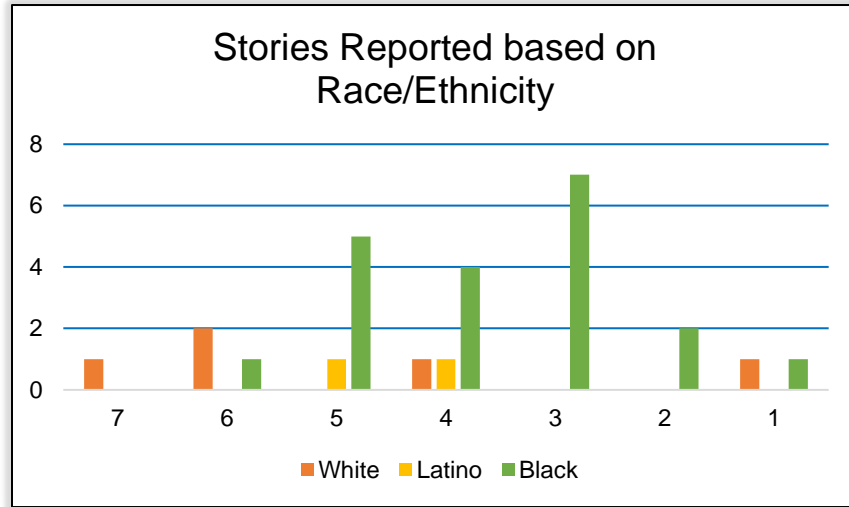
1. Victim Blaming/Criminalizing: mention of sex work/ prostitution, mention of homelessness
2. Misgendering: wrong pronouns used, use of deadname, including images of the victim prior to their transition, quotes from family members misgendering their loved ones,
3. Dehumanizing: use of words like “drag queen,” “cross-dresser,” “man dressed like a woman,” use of “a.k.a,” or quotes around the victim’s self-identified name, confusing gender language – switching the gender and pronouns of a victim within the story, mention of homelessness or low-income
4. Policing/Police Authority: over-use of police sourcing, images used to depict some aspect of law enforcement
5. Empowering: individual identity affirming language, correct pronouns used, correct use of victim’s self-identified name, no mention of deadname, updated and follow-up stories published
6. Trans Visibility: education provided on the transgender community, quotes from transgender individuals, activists, allies and organizations

The main intent of this project is to begin building a foundation for continued research in this arena, leading to global exploration and study; based on the wide spectrum of affects, causes, influences, created by the news media directly impacting the transgender population. How are researchers approaching this niche of study? What do we need to learn to make changes? How do researchers (academic and otherwise) create a framework for addressing and correcting the news medias' misrepresentations of transgender murder victims? This research will begin building a framework or model for future work.

## Chapter 4: Framing and Representations Sample

There were 27 cases included in this project, the total number of victims reported in 2016. Seventy-seven artifacts were on the 21 black victims. Five artifacts were on the two Latino victims. Twenty-four artifacts covered the four white victims. A total of 106 artifacts of digital U.S. news media publications. There were 2 non-binary/gnc cases, ten articles (10%); 22 transgender women cases, 80 articles (75%); and 3 cases of transgender men, 16 articles (15%).

Figure 1. Stories Reported in 2016 based on Race/Ethnicity



While transgender women of color include the largest group of cases and articles, it is important to note that 7 black cases each had only 3 stories. Whereas the white victims had 1 case with 7 articles, 2 cases with 6 articles, 1 case with 4 articles, and 1 with 1 article.

The framing categories are: 1. Victim Blaming/Criminalizing, 2. Misgendering, 3. Dehumanizing, 4. Policing/Police Authority, 5. Empowering, 6. Trans Visibility. The categories were determined in the initial data collection phase and flagged accordingly. Patterns quickly emerged in these trends and directly affected the qualities and elements that made the best written and reported articles, and the worst. Elements like sourcing, education provided to the

audience on the transgender population, use of good quotes and horrible, dehumanizing ones from sources, how the reporter referred to victim, etc. Whether the story had been updated and whether there were follow-up stories written with more information about the victim, was an important finding in the overall data collection and necessary when considering the framing of these victims and their stories.

The lede graf in this review is always noted as the first paragraph. While the lede is not always found in the first paragraph of a news story, analyzing the framing of this sample, the first paragraph is important to note as significantly as where in the article the victim's name is first mentioned. After the headline, the first paragraph is the next part of framing that either entices a reader to continue reading the story or discard it. All these factors provided examples of how these victims were being framed in the news media.

Artifacts lacked sourcing, misgendered the victim, provided confusing information to the audience, created poor framing – negative and dehumanizing and stripped the victim of their authentic identity. Other artifacts provided some elements necessary for accurately reporting on these murder victims, but lacked others. There were artifacts that included positive frames and all the elements for proper, respectful and accurate reporting. Articles were reviewed that had significant content, elements and provided strong examples of what follow-up stories should be.

Brackets [] are used in this section to highlight phrases, groupings of words, often including a quote from a source. Excerpts from the digital artifact are also used to highlight a significant quote or paragraph in an example - pulling it out to look at with a magnifying glass. The chart at the beginning of each example provides the detailed content, review and structure of the article. A screenshot is also provided, to establish a partial visual of the digital article.

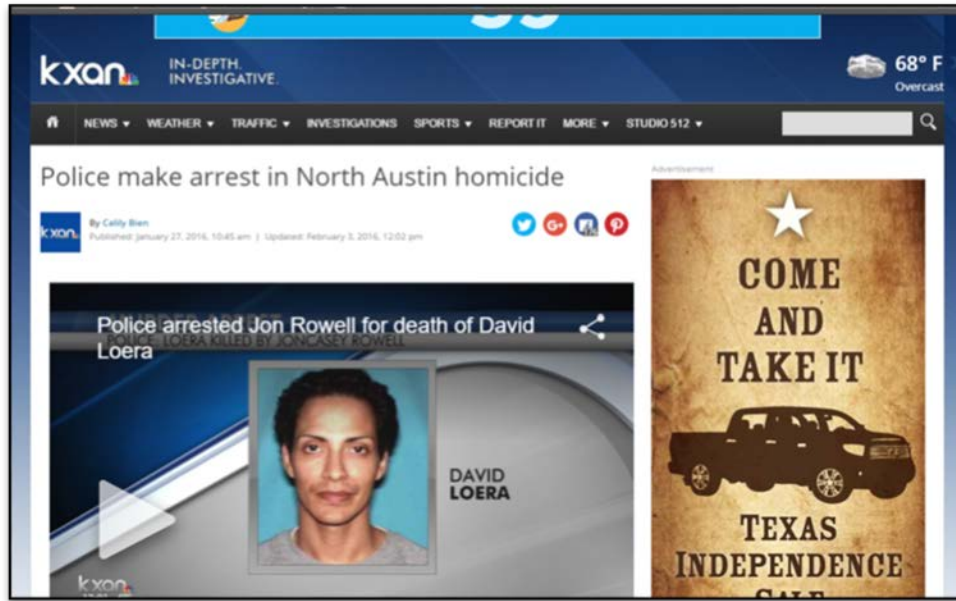


My intent in this process was to choose artifacts that would provide a different aspect or angle of what the reporting looks like for transgender murder victims – to give an in-depth review of the landscape. A plethora of common and reoccurring problems in reporting can be found in this sample that speak to the overall data set, as well as proper ways journalists and news media are reporting on these victims (see Appendix B for proposed media guidelines on how to report on the transgender community). But it is also a review of how this community is being properly, accurately and respectfully reported.

Table 1

*Artifact #16*

<b>Case</b>	Monica Loera, transgender woman, Latino. 43
<b>Frames</b>	Misgendering, victim blaming/criminalizing, dehumanizing, policing/police authority
<b>Headline</b>	Police make an arrest in North Austin homicide
<b>Publication</b>	KXAN NBC News
<b>Lede Graf</b>	A man is in custody charged with murder after police say he shot and killed 43-year-old David Loera in North Austin on Friday. Family and friends of the victim tell KXAN News Loera lived as a woman and went by Monica.
<b>Graf # victim name</b>	G1, however the above mention isn't proclaimed by the reporter as Monica Loera.
<b>Sources</b>	Police; "Friends and Family" (but no names are attached to either friends, family, or police; Loera's roommate (no name is provided)).
<b>How is the victim referred</b>	David Loera; Loera; victim reported as a man; the victim; mention of sex work; "Loera lived as a woman and went by Monica."
<b>Outstanding quote</b>	GRAF 2: Loera's roommate told police that a man kept knocking on the door and Loera said "he was getting rid of him because he didn't want to mess with him." When the victim went to the door, the roommate said he heard a sound like a firecracker and Loera said, "he shot me."
<b>Outstanding quote</b>	GRAF 3: During the investigation, the roommate indicated to police Loera was a "prostitute from time to time" and sometimes would steal things from his clients, continued in the court documents.
<b>NOTE</b>	The photo, shown front-and-center, below the headline is an outdated TXDL photo of Loera before she transitioned, male.
<b>Education</b>	NONE
<b>Link/Screen shot</b>	<a href="http://kxan.com/2016/01/27/police-make-arrest-in-north-austin-homicide/">http://kxan.com/2016/01/27/police-make-arrest-in-north-austin-homicide/</a>



The frames found in this article is most egregious (See Table 2), beginning at the start of the story, displaying a Texas Driver’s license photo of Monica Loera before her transition, a masculine photograph to identify her. Then the lede paragraph consists of the victim’s deadname, with this sentence following: [Family and friends of the victim tell KXAN News Loera lived as a woman and went by Monica.] This sentence is completely minimized by the photo positioned above it and the use of the victim’s deadname. By the choice of wording in these two sentences, set in juxtaposition to each other, the result is confusing, at best, and dehumanizing at worst.

In the first sentence, which aligns with the chosen photo, the victim appears male and the sentence holds power, in that it is based on “what police say.” The next sentence with wording: “lived as a woman and went by Monica,” minimizes the life and identity of the victim. Monica Loera was a transgender woman, not “a man who lived as a woman,” which is what these two sentences frame for the reader.

The sources referred to in this article are also unacceptable. In journalism, proper sourcing includes names, attributions. This article has none. “Police,” “friends and family,” “the roommate,” are insufficient sources. The only acceptable scenario where sources are referred without a name, is when the source needs to be protected, or has insisted on being anonymous. In these cases, the reporter needs to tell the audience this and rely upon more than one source. And to name those sources. The sourcing in this article is a failure. It creates the frame to the audience/reader of non-importance, almost a flippant gesture that names are irrelevant in telling this story, except the incorrect name of the victim. Monica is framed as irrelevant (dehumanizing frame).

To further erase the identity of Monica Loera, the reporter thought it was necessary to include mention that she was “a prostitute from time to time.” Wording follows that suggests Monica stole from her clients, based on a statement from an unnamed roommate. There is no indication that the police thought this may have had something to do with Monica’s death, but an uninformed audience see the frame of a [confused victim who was a prostitute]. This plays into the frame that somehow the violence was the victim’s fault. Prostitution in this country is illegal and has a powerful and negative stigma that instantaneously diminishes a person’s identity, proof that they belong at the margins, criminalized, dehumanized, forgotten.

If the reporter truly believed that the prostitute mention was relevant and necessary to the story, more questions must be asked and answered. Why was Monica a prostitute? Was she really? Was it directly related to her cause of death? Who was Monica Loera? Was she a sister? A friend? An advocate? What does the victim’s Facebook profile and page show? What story does it tell? This article also lacks the inclusion of any education.

Another aspect of framing in this story to consider, is that there were no updates published. The frame is that this story has been designated as unnecessary for the audience to require or want more information, updated information, because it is about a “confused person, whose identity is unclear, who is allegedly a prostitute.

There is no mention that the victim was a transgender woman. The hint to the reporter that this was a transgender woman, lies in the second sentence of the lede graf. That is enough information for the reporter to recognize there is more investigating to do on the victim.

Table 2

*Artifact #15*

<b>Case</b>	Erykah Tijerina, transgender woman, Latino, 36
<b>Frames</b>	Misgendering, victim blaming/criminalizing, dehumanizing, policing/police authority
<b>Headline</b>	No cause of death revealed in death of Eric/Erykah Tijerina yet
<b>Publication</b>	KVIA ABC7
<b>Lede Graf</b>	Before releasing further details, police are waiting for the Medical Examiner to say what killed a 36-year-old man whose body was found inside a unit of a South-Central El Paso housing complex.
<b>Graf # victim name</b>	G3: "Erykah" is the only reference to victim's self-identified name, other than in the headline
<b>Sources</b>	Police, victim's FB page; a witness; police news release; next-door neighbor (no name given); "According to viewers..." (no names or identification of WHO the viewers are.)
<b>How is the victim referred</b>	Eric/Erykah; 36-year-old man; Eric Tijerina; Tijerina
<b>Outstanding quote</b>	GRAF 2: A witness spotted the body of Eric Tijerina about 8:25 p.m. Monday at the Rio Grande Community apartments on the 200 block of Lisbon Street, police said.
<b>Outstanding quote</b>	GRAF 3: ABC-7 spoke to Tijerina's next-door neighbor, who said Tijerina often dressed in women's clothing. According to viewers, Tijerina went by "Erykah"
<b>Outstanding quote</b>	GRAF 4: In a Facebook post, a woman who identified herself as Tijerina's sister said she was shocked to learn her sister "Erykah Monroe" had been murdered.
<b>NOTES</b>	There was a follow-up story published on Sept. 14, 2016 which refers to the victim as a transgender woman. The victim's self-identified name Erykah Tijerina is used and female pronouns.
<b>Education</b>	NONE
<b>Link/Screen shot</b>	<a href="http://www.kvia.com/news/no-cause-of-death-revealed-in-death-of-eric_erykah-tijerina-yet/89174573">http://www.kvia.com/news/no-cause-of-death-revealed-in-death-of-eric_erykah-tijerina-yet/89174573</a>



Erykah Tijerina’s case was one of the worst reported. Every article in her case was similar to this one. In the lede paragraph she is referred to as [a 36-year-old man] and a quoted “Erykah,” [according to viewers], is the only reference to her proper name. And who are “viewers?” This is terrible sourcing. Again, as was seen in Artifact #16, the framing (policing/police authority, misgendering) is made clear in the first paragraph of the story: Police hold authority here, identified a man, who viewers (an unnamed source) call her by a feminine name.

The screenshot above reflects an image (feminine) of Erykah with the name [Eric TIJERINA, a.k.a. Erykah], in bold font to the right of the photo. This image and text alone, can be confusing to viewers, the majority of the audience. The use of “a.k.a” or also known as, creates a further diminishing (dehumanizing) frame of the victim, as though this is just a nickname, not her self-identified name. And to strengthen the demoralizing perception given of this victim, the way the reporter has quotation marks around her name, “Erykah,” is as GLAAD

advises “never appropriate to put quotation marks around either a transgender person’s chosen name or the pronoun that reflects that person’s gender identity (GLAAD, 2016a).” This frame completely minimizes the victim’s identity.

The above view, coupled with the headline that includes “Eric/Erykah,” further frames this story as confusing and dehumanizing. Is the victim Eric or Erykah? Why is there a female and male reference and names?

The sourcing is poor in this article. No names provided with any of the sources: “Police,” “Tijerina’s next-door neighbor,” “police news release,” “viewers,” the victim’s Facebook page. Again, the police are the authority here in this frame. Then a sentence from the neighbor who said that “Tijerina often dressed in women’s clothing.” One, this is convenience sourcing, by referring to the next-door neighbor and two, it is completely unacceptable to provide the minimizing phrase that alludes to a man who wears women’s clothing or a man dressing like a woman - a cross-dresser. A cross-dresser is not a transgender person. This too creates a frame that the victim is irrelevant (dehumanizing). The dominant society carries a negative stigma towards cross-dressers. The reporter put this victim in that marginalized box and viewers cast the victim off as unimportant.

The kicker in the sourcing this reporter conducted lies in paragraph 4, where Erykah’s Facebook page is referenced. If the reporter went to the victim’s Facebook page, it would be clear that Erykah is the correct name and female pronouns were the proper ones to use. But the reporter failed to provide any of this information to the audience. Just a quote that begins “a woman who identifies herself as Tijerina’s sister.” By writing the words “a woman who identifies herself as...” automatically gives the impression that this may or may not be Tijerina’s

sister, therefore removing the power of this source. And no name is provided. There was no educational information found in this article.

The only positive regarding this artifact is that there was a follow-up story published on September 14, 2016 which refers to Erykah Tijerina, the victim’s self-identified name and as a transgender woman. Female pronouns are used throughout the article.

Table 3

*Artifact #13*

<b>Case</b>	Mercedes Successful, transgender woman, Black, 32
<b>Frames</b>	Dehumanizing, misgendering, policing/police authority
<b>Headline</b>	Haines City homicide being investigated
<b>Publication</b>	The Daily Ridge
<b>Lede Graf</b>	On Sunday May 15, 2016 Haines City Police Department found the body of a man dead in the back of a business lot. The body was identified as 32 yr. old Shavon Marlon Shawn. The body was discovered in the parking area of a tractor Supply Co. and Big Lots at 35884 U.S. Hwy 27 in Haines City. Shawn lived on Hinson Avenue in Haines City.
<b>Graf # victim name</b>	G2
<b>Sources</b>	Asst. Chief Brian McNulty; Haines City Police Dept. Victim's FB page
<b>How is the victim referred</b>	The body of a man; 32-year-old Shavon Marlon Shawn; the victim; male pronouns
<b>Outstanding quote</b>	GRAF 2: According to McNulty [HCPD spokesperson] the victim was also a cross dressing performer at local clubs. The Daily Ridge has learned that Shavon Marlon Shawn also went by the stage name of Mercedes Successful and seemed to have a career as a drag queen performing locally.
<b>Outstanding quote</b>	GRAF 2: The performer's Facebook page shows that he had recently been on vacation in New York City & Atlanta. A Facebook post was made at 12:17 pm on the day he was killed, just seven hours before his body was found in the parking lots. Shawn was not dressed as a woman at the time of the murder. [She was found in jeans and a t-shirt]
<b>Education</b>	NONE
<b>Link/Screen shot</b>	<a href="http://www.dailyridge.com/en/2016/05/17/haines-city-homicide-being-investigated/">http://www.dailyridge.com/en/2016/05/17/haines-city-homicide-being-investigated/</a>



Mercedes Successful is another case that was overall reported poorly. The lede paragraph is a police statement quote, giving the audience a similar frame already reviewed. The police are the authority in this story. The image at the top of the story also affirms this frame of authority. The first two references of the victim are: [the body of a man] was identified as [32-year-old Shavon Marlon Shawn] – both masculine references in name and description.

The demoralizing framing continues in paragraph two: [the victim was also a cross dressing performer at local clubs] and [Shawn also went by the stage name of Mercedes Successful] and [seemed to have a career as a drag queen performing locally]. This was not just Mercedes' stage name. Yes, she was a performer - an award-winning performer - but her *name* was Mercedes Successful. Proclaiming that this was only her *stage name* implies its lack of worth, authenticity, truth; especially when the sentence begins with the victim's deadname - Shawn.

Furthermore, it is not acceptable to use the term "cross dresser" unless the individual being referred to by such, has confirmed, acknowledged and given permission to use this label. And the wording in this phrase: [seemed to have had a career...] is fraught with problems. Using the word, seem, or seemed to, gives the impression that whatever wording follows is simply hearsay, unconfirmed. This supports the frame of an irrelevant victim (dehumanizing).



Table 4

## Artifact #14

<b>Case</b>	Mercedes Successful, transgender woman, Black, 32
<b>Frames</b>	Dehumanizing, misgendering, policing/police authority
<b>Headline</b>	Haines City Police Department releases new details about homicide
<b>Publication</b>	The Ledger
<b>Lede Graf</b>	The 32-year-old who was found dead in a parking lot in Haines City Sunday dies of a gunshot wound, the Haines City Police Department said Tuesday.
<b>Graf # victim name</b>	G5
<b>Sources</b>	Victim's FB page; Asst. Chief Brian McNulty; Haines City Police Dept.
<b>How is the victim referred</b>	The 32-year-old; Shavon Marlon Shawn; Shawn
<b>Outstanding quote</b>	GRAF 3: Officers have confirmed Shawn was known to perform as a woman at various clubs, said Asst. Chief Brian McNulty.
<b>Outstanding quote</b>	GRAF 4: Shawn was not dressed like a woman when found, and there is no indication at this point in the investigation that this is a hate crime.
<b>Outstanding quote</b>	GRAF 5: Shawn, whose stage name was Mercedes Successful, was in the process of transitioning to a woman, according to Shawn's FB page. [Her FB page only reflects her as a woman.]
<b>Outstanding quote</b>	GRAF 6: Shawn told a friend May 10 Shawn had been taking hormone replacement therapy for a month.
<b>Outstanding quote</b>	GRAF 7: "My sis just started transitioning a month and a half ago," wrote Damii DeSouza[on victim's FB page]. "She was really ready and looking forward to living her life full time as Mercedes Successful."
<b>Education</b>	NONE
<b>Link/Screen shot</b>	<a href="http://www.theledger.com/news/20160517/haines-city-police-department-releases-new-details-about-homicide">http://www.theledger.com/news/20160517/haines-city-police-department-releases-new-details-about-homicide</a>

This artifact has similar reporting errors as the *Daily Ridge* example (see Table 4). The sentence that is most disturbing is found in paragraph 4: [Shawn was not dressed like a woman when found, and there is no indication at this point in the investigation that this is a hate crime.] What does a sentence like this even mean? Why is this even deemed an acceptable sentence by the reporter and editor? Mercedes was reportedly found in a t-shirt, jeans and sneakers. I wear jeans and t-shirts. Does that mean I am not “dressed like a woman?” This wording and information is irrelevant to the audience, but should have been a flag to the reporter to find out more about this victim. And again, the phrase [not dressed like a woman], implies that she was

male, and that the reporter had enough information to question the victim’s identity and failed, by instead minimizing her identity with such wording.

Mercedes’ authentic name was not mentioned until the fifth paragraph around egregious wording: [Shawn whose stage name was Mercedes Successful, was in the process of transitioning to a woman, according to Shawn’s Facebook page.] I mentioned earlier hints that reporters can look for in a story they are writing. This is the information that tells the reporter this victim is a transgender woman. But again, after collecting plenty of information on the victim to determine that she was a transgender woman, a blind eye is turned to this fact and instead similar framing evolves (dehumanizing and misgendering) as in previous examples: a victim whose identity is confusing and whose life is irrelevant enough that she does not deserve the proper investigation by reporters. Paragraph 7 clearly proves that the reporter was aware of Mercedes authentic identity and denied her the dignity she deserved.

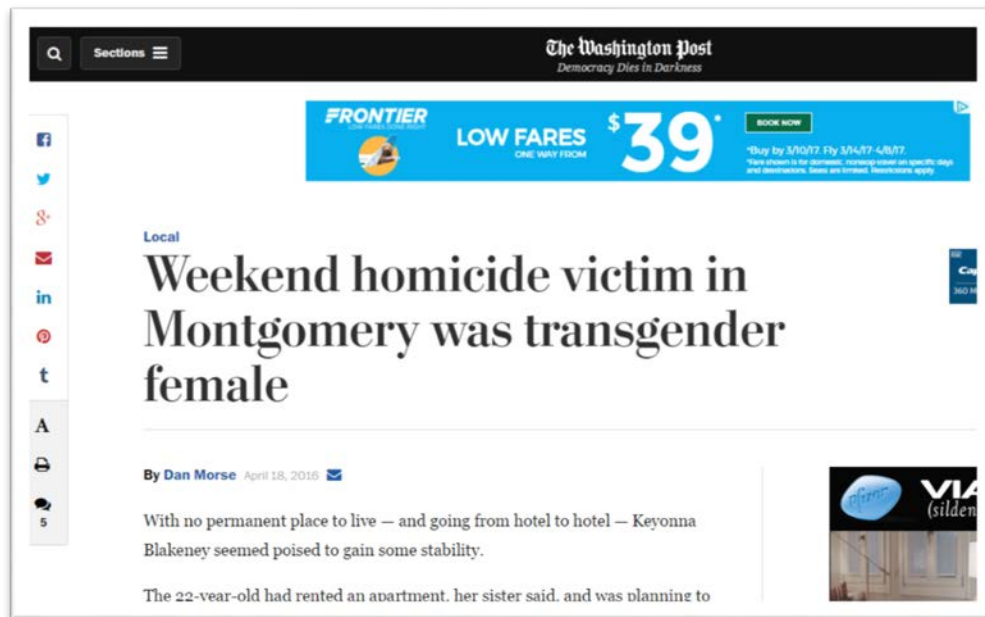
There is no mention of education on the transgender population. No mention that Mercedes was even a transgender woman – in either of the above stories. The police and the victim’s Facebook page are not sufficient sources to tell a full story, especially when the victim’s Facebook page source isn’t used to adequately and correctly report the authentic life and identity of Mercedes Successful.

Table 5

*Artifact #11*

<b>Case</b>	Keyonna Blakeney, transgender woman, Black, 22
<b>Frames</b>	Victim blaming/criminalizing, misgendering, dehumanizing, policing/police authority
<b>Headline</b>	Weekend homicide victim in Montgomery was transgender female
<b>Publication</b>	The Washington Post
<b>Lede Graf</b>	With no permanent place to live - and going from hotel to hotel-Keyonna Blakeney seemed poised to gain some stability. The 22-year-old had rented an apartment, her sister said, and was planning to move in at the end of this month.

<b>Graf # victim name</b>	G1
<b>Sources</b>	Police; Capt. Paul Starks, Montgomery County police spokesman; Kenny Linto-victim's father; Jasmine Blakeney-victim's sister
<b>How is the victim referred</b>	transgender female; transgender woman; female pronouns; Kenny Linton-victim's father (misgenders victim in quotes); reporting uses male pronouns
<b>Outstanding quote</b>	GRAF 3: Police identified her as a transgender woman and said she may have been engaged in prostitution when she was killed.
<b>Outstanding quote</b>	GRAF 4: "Someone out there is evil who did this," Blakeney's father, Kenny Linton, said in an interview on Monday. "My son was, is, very special. He was kindhearted. He was down-to-earth. He would give you his last if he had it."
<b>Outstanding quote</b>	GRAF 7: Growing up, Keyonna went by the name Kenneth Blakeney.
<b>Outstanding quote</b>	GRAF 10: He came out as gay in high school and started dressing as a woman after high school, according to his family.
<b>Outstanding quote</b>	GRAF 11: "He is still my child. I couldn't turn my back on who he was," Linton said.
<b>Outstanding quote</b>	GRAF 12: "She loved doing people's makeup," said Jasmine Blakeney. "She loved fasion. She loved all the glamorous stuff girls do."
<b>Outstanding quote</b>	GRAF 13: Blakeney said she accepted Keyonna's choice. "That was my little brother. She wanted to be a girl so bad."
<b>Outstanding quote</b>	GRAF 14: Linto said that his son did not have a steady income.
<b>Outstanding quote</b>	GRAF 18: In a news release, officials said, "Detectives have information that Keyonna may have been engaging in prostitution at the Red Roof Inn."
<b>Education</b>	NONE
<b>Link/Screen shot</b>	<a href="https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/public-safety/weekend-homicide-victim-in-montgomery-was-transgender-woman/2016/04/18/cb566000-058b-11e6-bdcb-0133da18418d_story.html?utm_term=.a4daff3f410">https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/public-safety/weekend-homicide-victim-in-montgomery-was-transgender-woman/2016/04/18/cb566000-058b-11e6-bdcb-0133da18418d_story.html?utm_term=.a4daff3f410</a>



Keyonna Blakeney was misgendered by the reporter and by her family in this artifact.

The headline is wrong. Keyonna wasn't a transgender *female*, she was a transgender *woman*. The lede paragraph starts off promising enough - the reporter properly refers to the correct name of

the victim in the first paragraph. But it doesn't add anything substantive to the story. The frame here is one of an unstable, low-income person (dehumanizing).

Paragraph 3 includes a sentence that affirms Keyonna's identity – [Police identified her as a transgender woman], but strips it away by including the latter part of the sentence – [and said she may have been engaged in prostitution when she was killed.] By including in the same sentence, [a transgender woman and a prostitute], the reporter has minimized her worth. As in previous examples, the mention of sex work is a fairly common finding in stories about transgender women who have been killed. The news media frames (victim blaming, dehumanizing) imply [trans woman equals criminal] or [trans woman engages in sex work, so is to blame for her own death], criminalizing the victim and situating transgender visibility under this shadow. On rare occasion, there is enough evidence linked to the case that it adds substance to the story; however, the only time it should be mentioned is when the reporter has done research on this group of people and includes employment statistics of transgender people, the average household income of transgender women of color – these numbers speak to why transgender woman so often turn to sex work for an income. There is no other way for them to make a living.

The reporting failure continues with a quote from the victim's father, note paragraph 6 above. Linton refers to Keyonna as "my son" and uses male pronouns. And instead of correcting the incorrect pronoun usage, the reporter follows up this misgendering quote with this: [Growing up, Keyonna went by the name Kenneth Blakeney.] Following up the misgendering quote with a sentence like this is confusing, the victim's deadname is irrelevant to the story and it implies that the reporter is unsure of the victim's identity. The frame here has turned away from a

transgender woman being killed, to a father talking about his “son” – a male person. The use of Keyonna’s deadname in the next sentence supports the misgendering done by the victim’s father.

Misgendering by families and loved ones is unfortunate and an all too common element in these stories. It is a reminder that often families are bound in the same gender binary world as the rest of the dominant society is and the refusal to see these people as they truly, authentically and courageously lived, is aligned with the dominant society’s view and treatment of this marginalized population.

The reporter made no effort in the remainder of the article to use proper female pronouns. From this paragraph on, Keyonna is only referred to by male pronouns. It is almost as if the reporter’s thought process was, ‘well, the victim’s father called their child by male pronouns, I am not going to correct that.’ Even though the headline of this article clearly acknowledges that this victim was a transgender woman.

To further eliminate the true identity of Keyonna Blakeney, in paragraph 10, [He came out as gay in high school] and [started dressing as a woman after high school], according to [his] family. While I have not done any research on the murders of cisgender victims, my guess is that the victim’s sexuality or the way they “dressed” after high school is completely irrelevant, unacceptable, and would never make its way into the story about their murder. Including phrases like the bracketed ones above, the reporter is implying – framing - a particular view of a person that quite literally strips Keyonna of her identity, her name, by minimizing her gender through misgendering and adding that Keyonna had previously come out as gay. This very well might be part of Keyonna’s story, but she is not here to tell it - and it is not substantive information to add to the story.

To validate the usage of incorrect pronouns and continue to deny Keyonna her identity in death, the reporter included two quotes by Keyonna’s sister – in the first one the sister refers to the victim with female pronouns (paragraph 12, see Table 6), and in the next paragraph the sister uses male pronouns. Then in the next quote by the sister, female pronouns are used. The reporter reverts back to female pronouns following the last quote. This is worrisome for the audience. They are left not knowing who this victim was, except for all the dehumanizing frames the reporter has used to tell her story.

In diligent efforts to erase Keyonna Blakeney’s identity entirely, the final paragraph of the story reads: [In a news release, officials said “Detectives have information that Keyonna may have been engaging in prostitution at the Red Roof Inn.”] Remember paragraph three? Same frame (victim blaming/criminalizing) to open and close the story. Twice the reporter refers to this possibility – not even confirmed – an allegation, information to minimize the existence of this human being and it brings no relevance to the story and certainly does not provide a true look at Keyonna’s life.

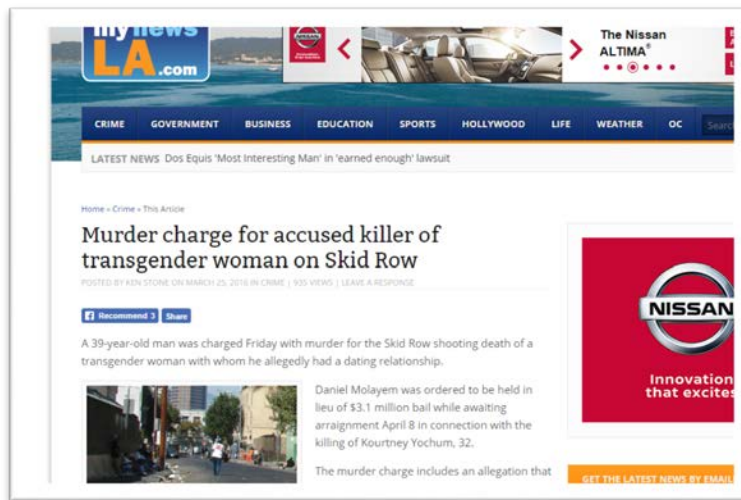
The sourcing is poor in this article and misgenders the victim. GLAAD advises that when reporting on the transgender community, reporters should actually speak to transgender people and experts (GLAAD, 2016a). This article also failed to provide any education for the audience.

Table 6

*Artifact # 3*

<b>Case</b>	Quartney "Davia/Dawson" Yochum, transgender woman, Black, 32
<b>Frames</b>	Dehumanizing (Graf 8), empowering
<b>Headline</b>	Murder charge for accused killer of transgender woman on Skid Row
<b>Publication</b>	mynewsLA.com
<b>Lede Graf</b>	A 39-year-old man was charged Friday with murder for the Skid Row shooting death of a transgender woman with whom he allegedly had a dating relationship.

<b>Graf # victim name</b>	G2
<b>Sources</b>	Police, witnesses to the killing; no further sources listed (no names provided)
<b>How is the victim referred</b>	Transgender woman; Kourtney Yochum; woman
<b>Outstanding quote</b>	GRAF 7: The victim was identified by the coroner's office as Allen Walter Raymond Yochum Jr.
<b>Outstanding quote</b>	GRAF 8: The coroner's office identified Yochum as a female. Police said the victim was a man transitioning to female.
<b>Education</b>	NONE
<b>Link/Screen shot</b>	<a href="http://mynews1a.com/crime/2016/03/25/murder-charge-for-accused-killer-of-transgender-woman-on-skid-row/">http://mynews1a.com/crime/2016/03/25/murder-charge-for-accused-killer-of-transgender-woman-on-skid-row/</a>



Witnesses said the woman was walking on a sidewalk just steps from her home at the Gateway Apartments, a supportive housing complex on Skid Row, when she was shot in the head.

The victim was identified by the coroner's office as Allen Walter Raymond Yochum Jr.

The coroner's office identified Yochum as a female. Police said the victim was a man transitioning to female.

An excerpt from the digital article.

Quartney Davia Dawson-Yochum is the name on her Facebook page and the name I will use in this analysis. Articles have spelled her name: Kourtney Yochum. This is a case where most of the artifacts contain proper reporting.

Artifact #3 is an example of getting the identity of the victim correct and then ruining it with sentences like the above cluster, which are paragraphs 6, 7 and 8 - in the latter part of the

article. There are five gender references (not counting the female pronouns in paragraph 6): woman, Allen Walter Raymond Yochum Jr. (a masculine name), a female, and a man transitioning to be a woman. For an uninformed audience, the victim's identity seems confusing and erroneous here. The reporter should have been diligent in several areas with the information in these three paragraphs and was not. Using Quartney's proper name and pronouns in the first paragraph should have continued throughout the rest of the article.

The middle sentence should have been excluded from this story. Using the victim's deadname not only confuses audiences, it diminishes the true identity of the person and is not necessary for the story. If police reported that the victim was transitioning, this again should have been a flag to the reporter: this is a transgender woman - which is already confirmed in the headline, and should have been affirmed in the body of the article. Word phrasing like [a man transitioning to female] has a couple issues; 1) it is incorrect-transgender people transition from female to male (FTM) and male to female (MTF), not man to female or woman to male; and 2) the coroner's report already established that Quartney was a female and a woman, only to have it stripped away by the inclusion of the police statement.

Another problem with this article is the lack of sourcing. The coroner and the police are not adequately complete sources for this story. Lastly, there is not any education about the transgender population. This is a borderline article between getting it right and then wrong – but a good example of how important clues should be to reporters, to pursue the truth and frame it in a way that allows the audience a true all-around view of the article's subject. The frame empowering Quartney's identity in this article is dismantled by the above sentences; leaving the reader to wonder who this victim really was, or maybe it no longer matters to the audience who



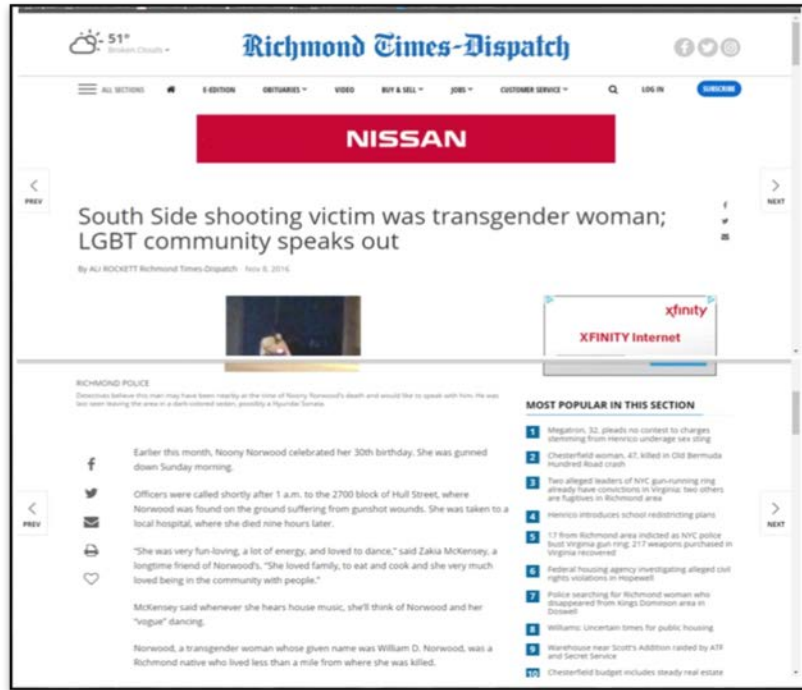
this victim was, because of the change in frame (dehumanizing, misgendering) with confusing mixed-gendered words.

Table 7

*Artifact #7*

<b>Case</b>	Noony Norwood, transgender woman, Black, 30
<b>Frames</b>	Empowering
<b>Headline</b>	South side shooting victim was transgender woman, LGBT community speaks out
<b>Publication</b>	Richmond.com/news and the Richmond Times-Dispatch
<b>Lede Graf</b>	Earlier this month, Noony Norwood celebrated her 30th birthday. She was gunned down Sunday morning.
<b>Graf # victim name</b>	G1
<b>Sources</b>	Zakia McKensy-longtime friend of victim and Exec. Dir. Nationz; police statement; Richmond Police Chief Alfred Durham; Ha Tran-youth community advocate w/ VAVP*; Richmond police LGBT liaison, Capt. Dan Minto
<b>How is the victim referred</b>	Shooting victim; transgender woman; Noony Norwood; Norwood; was a Richmond native; female pronouns; (Family and police misgender victim)
<b>Outstanding quote</b>	GRAF 5: Norwood, a transgender woman whose given name was William D. Norwood, was a Richmond native who lived less than a mile from where she was killed.
<b>Outstanding quote</b>	GRAF 8: Members of the local LGBT community are upset not only that they lost a loved one, but also how Norwood has been portrayed. When Richmond police released the victim's identity from Sunday's homicide, they said Norwood was a "man dressed in women's clothing."
<b>Outstanding quote</b>	GRAF 9: Richmond police Chief Alfred Durham said in a statement Tuesday that Norwood's mother told detectives to identify her son as a male.
<b>Outstanding quote</b>	GRAF 10: But McKensy, who knew Norwood for more than a decade, said Norwood used feminine pronouns to refer to herself and that her trans identity was not a secret among family and friends.
<b>Outstanding quote</b>	GRAF 12: "Misgendering Noony in death is an act of violence on top of what she has already suffered," said Ha Tran, a youth community advocate for the Virginia Anti-Violence Project. "Noony has already suffered enough."
<b>Outstanding quote</b>	GRAF 15: "It is not an easy task when dealing with sensitive situations as what has been presented here. We acknowledge and respect the concerns of the LGBTQ community regarding this issue," [Richmond Police Chief Alfred Durham] Durham said in an email. "We have to strike a balance in respecting the wishes of the immediate family and those in the community. It is always our intent to treat all persons with dignity and respect."
<b>Education</b>	NONE
<b>Link/Screen shot</b>	<a href="http://www.richmond.com/news/local/city-of-richmond/article_9c7bc437-c8ad-5348-bbd2-60dfbe94c05a.html">http://www.richmond.com/news/local/city-of-richmond/article_9c7bc437-c8ad-5348-bbd2-60dfbe94c05a.html</a>

\*Virginia Anti-Violence Project, and affiliate of the National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs



Noony Norwood’s case was fairly and accurately reported, overall. There are some interesting elements to this story. The headline is good and appropriate. The first paragraph frames this story as a young woman who has lost her life too soon. The audience knows she just had a birthday and this humanizes (empowering frame) Noony because people (the audience) can relate to having a birthday. The choice of sources in this artifact are more inclusive and broader than just the police.

The first problem arises in paragraph 5 when Noony’s deadname is mentioned as her “given name (see Table 8).” The mention of her birth name is not relevant to the story and it diminishes her identity as a transgender woman. The next issue is in paragraph 8, the reporter provides a statement from the police that said [Norwood was a “man dressed in women’s clothing.”] As in previous examples, this entire sentence should have been excluded. There are absolutely zero scenarios where it is acceptable by police or reporters to report or make mention

of the phrase (or some variation) of wording: “a man dressed as a woman.” It is purely dehumanizing rhetoric.

The sentence directly before this one states that the local LGBT community is upset because of how “Noony has been portrayed.” Then, the reporter includes such a sentence that perpetuates the dehumanization by the police, passing it on to the readers.

After that, there are two more police quotes that stand out: 1) [Norwood’s mother told detectives to identify her son as a male.]; and 2) The ultimate dilemma that police say they are faced with, as noted in paragraph 15:

"It is not an easy task when dealing with sensitive situations as what has been presented her. We acknowledge and respect the concerns of the LGBTQ community regarding this issue," [Richmond Police Chief Alfred Durham] Durham said in an email. "We have to strike a balance in respecting the wishes of the immediate family and those in the community. It is always our intent to treat all persons with dignity and respect."

There is no mention in this quote by police about the respect and dignity owed to the *victim* in this story. Who is the victim’s ally, champion, advocate? They are the ones whose voices have been snuffed out in an instant, but yet police and reporters tip-toe around the families, catering to them. As most people can attest, our families don’t necessarily *know* who we are.

The quotes from the Richmond Police are framed to show an example of a truth behind law enforcement misgendering transgender and non-gender conforming victims. This, in itself is a frame presented to the news media’s audience. The victim ultimately does not matter here.

Throughout the article, the reporter refers to Noony with female pronouns and a well-placed quote from Zakia McKensy, one of Noony’s longtime friends, in paragraph 10 reflects a

more authentic story of the victim: [Norwood used feminine pronouns to refer to herself and her trans identity was not a secret among family and friends.] Here is a frame (empowering) of a close friend and a community advocate who knew the victim for more than a decade. While it is an important affirming element to the victim's identity, it is overshadowed by the frame positioned above it – police authority.

The overall sourcing in this artifact is sufficient, it only needs to be properly used to assure that the victim's true identity is expressed. The article does not contain any education on the transgender community, nor an image of Noony. The image under the headline is of the suspected killer.

Table 8

*Artifact #1*

<b>Case</b>	Crystal Edmonds, transgender woman, Black, 32
<b>Frames</b>	Empowering, Trans visibility, policing/police authority
<b>Headline</b>	Police canvass area after shooting of transgender woman in northwest Baltimore
<b>Publication</b>	The Baltimore Sun
<b>Lede Graf</b>	A transgender woman who was shot in the back of the head early on Friday morning in Northwest Baltimore has dies from her injuries, police said.
<b>Graf # victim name</b>	2
<b>Sources</b>	Police; T.J. Smith-police spokesperson; Sgt. Kevin Bailey LGBT Liason; GLAAD
<b>How is the victim referred</b>	Transgender woman; female pronouns; Crystal Edmonds; woman
<b>Outstanding quote</b>	GRAF 4: "The person that can shoot a woman in the back of the head and leave her for dead on the street can do it again," police spokesperson T.J. Smith said.
<b>Outstanding quote</b>	GRAF 8: "The LGBT community didn't have a voice for a long time, so when something happens to a member of the community, it affects everyone," Bailey said.
<b>Education</b>	GRAF 7: Police reached out to the local lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community to make them aware of the crime. Police have had liaisons to the LGBT community in the past, but for the first time in October made the role a full-time position as they seek to improve outreach efforts.
<b>Education</b>	GRAF 9: GLAAD, the national advocacy organization, tweeted about Edmond's death, saying she was the 21st transgender woman killed in the country this year, tying 2015 for the deadliest year on record for such deaths.
<b>Education</b>	GRAF 10 (last graf): "The victims of this violence are overwhelmingly transgender people of color, mostly transgender women, who live at the dangerous intersections of transphobia, racism, sexism, and criminalization which

	often lead to high rates of poverty, unemployment, and homelessness," GLAAD said on its web site.
Link/Screen shot	<a href="http://www.baltimoresun.com/news/maryland/crime/bs-md-ci-shooting-20160916-story.html">http://www.baltimoresun.com/news/maryland/crime/bs-md-ci-shooting-20160916-story.html</a>

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## Police canvass area after shooting of transgender woman in northwest Baltimore

Police canvass for tips in transgender woman's fatal shooting in Northwest Baltimore. (Justin Fenton)

By Justin Fenton · Contact Reporter  
The Baltimore Sun

SHARE THIS Baltimore Police search for clues in fatal shooting of transgender woman in northwest Baltimore

SEPTEMBER 16, 2016, 7:20 PM

**A** transgender woman who was shot in the back of the head early Friday morning in Northwest Baltimore has died from her injuries, police said.

Crystal Edmonds, 32, was found around 3:20 a.m. in the 3600 block of Fairview Ave. in Forest Park, police said. She was taken to a hospital and listed in grave condition, and died later in the morning.

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911 service for AT&T cell phone

Crystal Edmonds' case was well covered and properly reported. This is an example of an artifact that has all the elements needed to cover this type of victim, violence and community. The headline, however, refers to police and begins the frame of police authority. The photo that accompanies this article (see above screenshot) builds on this, with several police cadets and

officers talking in front of a house. Here is an interesting observation: there is the photo of cadets and in paragraph 3, [Police brought four vans full of cadets to help homicide detectives...]. This frame may convey the façade that this is an important case and the victim matters, but it may be that the cadets were training and learning field work and it would not have mattered who the victim was. Or, on the other hand, it absolutely could be the case that the cadets were learning how to properly identify and handle a case involving a transgender person. It is concerning that there is no photo of Crystal Edmonds.

The victim is referred to in the first paragraph as a transgender woman and her name is provided at the beginning of the second paragraph. There are aspects to the police coverage in this artifact that provide prime examples of police support and understanding of their role to the transgender community. Police spokesperson T.J. Smith is quoted in paragraph 4, “The person that can shoot a woman in the back of her head and leave her for dead on the street can do it again,” reflects the police properly speaking about the victim, with female pronouns. Police also mention the possibility of a hate crime because of the victim’s gender identity. It is also important to the audience to be aware that the Baltimore Police Department has an LGBT liaison (see Table 9). The police also notified the local LGBT community to make them aware of the crime. For the audience, this is a significant frame (empowering, Trans visibility) of police being a positive example and advocate to the transgender population, pushing beyond the common “police authority” frame.

The sourcing is good, but not superb. The reporter did not include any direct quote from either a local transgender representative, or friend of the victim, only information gleaned from the GLAAD website and what the LGBT police liaison provided. The final paragraph of this article is a statement from the GLAAD website: "The victims of this violence are

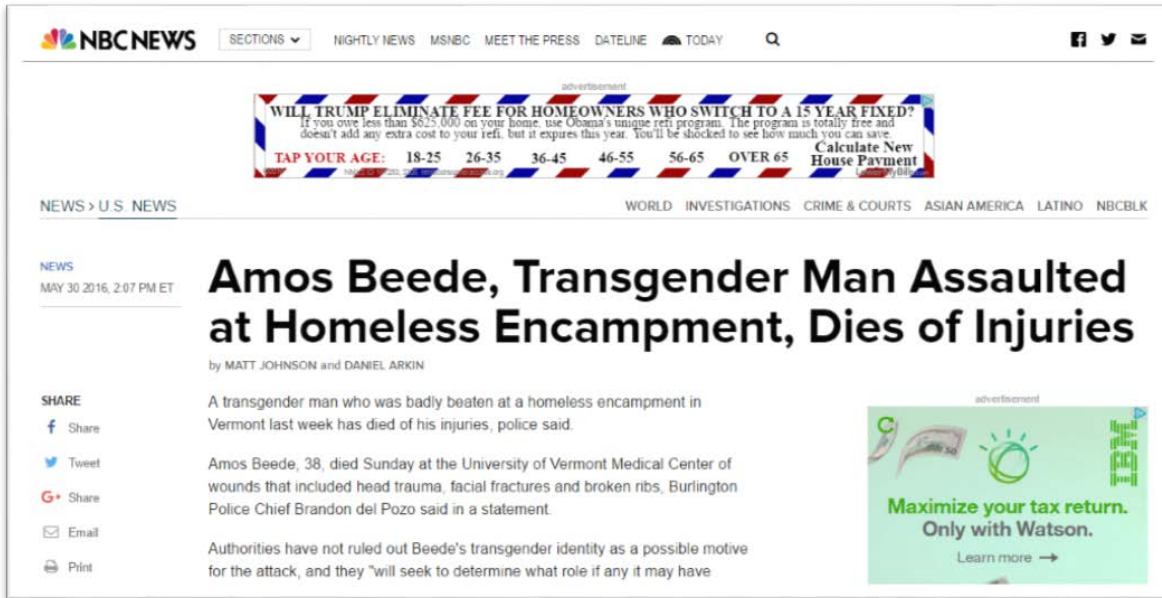
overwhelmingly transgender people of color, mostly transgender women, who live at the dangerous intersections of transphobia, racism, sexism, and criminalization which often lead to high rates of poverty, unemployment, and homelessness," a powerful way to conclude and frame the story, leaving valuable information for the reader to ponder.

I suggest that this example provides hope for the future of properly acknowledging the identities of transgender and gnc victims of violence. It is a clear illustration of law enforcement and a journalist who are educated, trained on how to properly, with dignity and respect, handle the cases of transgender people. They understand the importance of this community's voice. Though, it was fascinating that there was no voice from that community – technically – in this story. There is always progress to be made when understanding a marginalized group of people, but progress is good, no matter.

Table 9

*Artifact #2*

<b>Case</b>	Amos Beede, transgender man, white, 38
<b>Frames</b>	Empowering, Trans visibility
<b>Headline</b>	Amos Beede, transgender man assaulted at homeless encampment, dies of injuries
<b>Publication</b>	NBC NEWS
<b>Lede Graf</b>	A transgender man who was badly beaten at a homeless encampment in Vermont last week has died of his injuries, police said.
<b>Graf # victim name</b>	In headline and G2
<b>Sources</b>	Police statement; Human Rights Campaign
<b>How is the victim referred</b>	Amos Beede; transgender man; male pronouns; Beede
<b>Outstanding quote</b>	GRAF 3: Authorities have not ruled out Beede's transgender identity as a possible motive for the attack, and they "will seek to determine what role if any it may have played," police said.; "possible bias incident"
<b>Outstanding quote</b>	GRAF 4: "We will continue to view this homicide as a possible bias incident," said police. [bias incident = hate crime]
<b>Education</b>	GRAF 7 (last graf): At least ten more transgender people have been fatally shot, stabbed or "killed by other violent means" so far in 2016, according to Human Rights Campaign, an LGBT advocacy group. In 2015, at least 21 transgender people were killed in violent acts, the most ever recorded in a year, HRC reported.
<b>Link/Screen shot</b>	<a href="http://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/amos-beede-transgender-man-assaulted-homeless-encampment-dies-injuries-n582691">http://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/amos-beede-transgender-man-assaulted-homeless-encampment-dies-injuries-n582691</a>



Amos Beede was a white, transgender man. His case was covered by the news media and reported by police well. The above example, shows a story by a news media affiliate that has national reach, *NBC News*. It provides coverage of a transgender man and the proper elements are all present.

The headline clearly identifies the victim as a transgender man. However, it is not necessary to include in the headline that Amos was killed in a homeless encampment. This information should be in the body of the story. Including this in the headline creates a frame implying that the victim was homeless. He was not. Amos just often visited this area and had friends there.

The victim's name was properly attributed in the headline as well as in the second paragraph of the article (empowering frame). The police statement following advised that they had not ruled out that this violent homicide may be related to Amos' transgender identity – a bias incident. This is good information for the audience because it provides a frame (Trans visibility)



in education implying that hate is often a possible motive when violence occurs against those in the LGBTQ+ community.

The reporter concluded the article with information from the Human Rights Campaign (see Table 10) on the number of total murders of transgender people in 2016, noting that 2016 was the deadliest year on record. This is well positioned in the story and leaves something important with the reader, knowledge about what this population is facing.

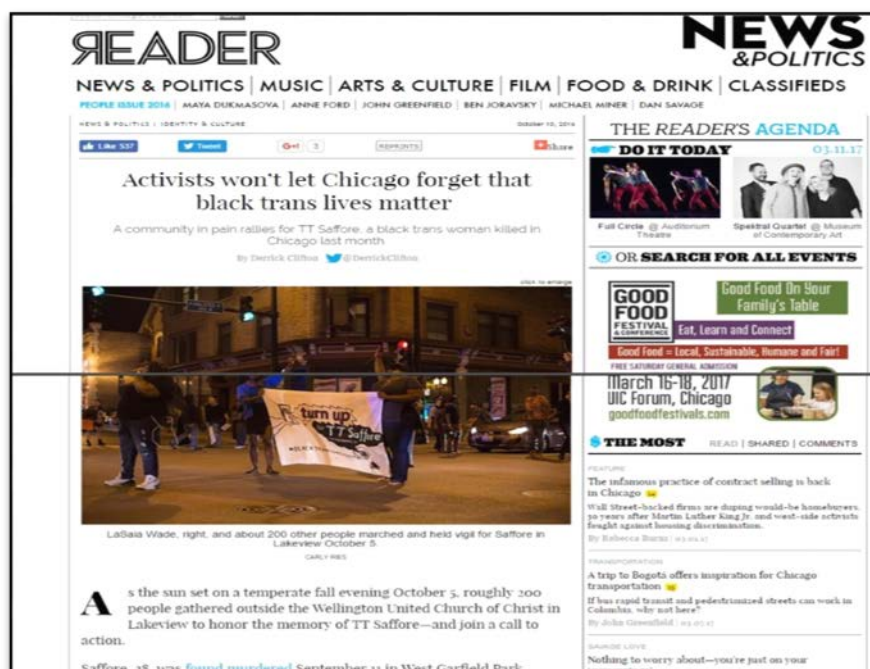
There were no images to review in this artifact. A photograph of Amos Beede would have assisted in affirming his identity.

Table 10

*Artifact #5*

<b>Case</b>	TT Saffore, transgender woman, Black, 28
<b>Frames</b>	Empowering, Trans visibility
<b>Headline</b>	Activists won't let Chicago forget that black trans lives matter
<b>Publication</b>	Chicago Reader
<b>Lede Graf</b>	As the sun set on a temperate fall evening October 5, roughly 200 people gathered outside the Wellington United Church of Christ in Lakeview to honor the memory of TT Saffore - and join a call to action.
<b>Graf # victim name</b>	Headline and G1
<b>Sources</b>	Authorities; Cook County medical examiner; ChicagoPolice; LaSaia Wade-member of the Chicago Trans and Gender Nonconforming Collective; Ms. Afrika-a trans elder; Fresco Steez-digital strategist for the Black Youth Project 100
<b>How is the victim referred</b>	TT Saffore; a black trans woman; Saffore; female pronouns
<b>Outstanding quote</b>	GRAF 3: LaSaia Wade, a member of the Chicago Trans and Gender Nonconforming Collective, which organized the even [memorial service] was among the people who came to mourn her slain trans sister. She also attended Saffore's funeral September 30, and during the service, one thought looped through her mind: "It could be me," she said. "Will it be me?"
<b>Outstanding quote</b>	GRAF 8: "It's lonely doing this [this]work. It's sad doing the work I do," Wade said. "Nor do people try to understand. And if they do, they try to block it out because it's not their life. People mean well, but they can still go home and not worry about these things...to understand these issues is to understand your privilege."
<b>Outstanding quote</b>	GRAF 12: "The police don't love us-they want to see us dead, they want to see us locked up," said Ms. Afrika, a black trans elder. "I was in solitary confinement for three years. I've been there...I know what it's like, and now I'm bringing it to the community."

<b>Outstanding quote</b>	GRAF 20 (quote from Fresco Steez, a digital strategist for Black Youth Project 100): Violence against black trans women also has deep roots in racism and white supremacy, Steez said. Rigid gender norms were imposed on black people during slavery-a time when bodies of Black people were literally not their own-and left no room for gender self-determination.
<b>Education</b>	GRAF 2: Saffore, 28, was found murdered September 11 in West Garfield Park, making her the 20th known transgender or gender nonconforming person lost to violence in 2016, according to local and national news reports. Nearly all were trans women of color, and sadly, 20 is most likely a conservative estimate.
<b>Education</b>	GRAF 2: The murders of trans people often go unreported or are otherwise unknown because initial reports often misgender victims; it's usually not until trans community members speak out and claim the dead that the public learns of their deaths-and their lives.
<b>Education</b>	GRAF 4: Some statistics suggest that the average life expectancy for a trans woman of color is just 35 years. That fact is even more appalling when compared to the average lifespan for white cisgender women living in the U.S.-81 years.
<b>Education</b>	GRAF 15 (a statement that was read at the rally for Saffore): "We know that the state does not mourn the loss of Black lives. We know the names of the Black women lost to violence are held up even less than those of Black men. We know queer, trans and gnc deaths are often hushed by Black communities in addition to being ignored by the state. We accept none of these realities."
<b>Education</b>	GRAF 19: According to a 2013 study of transgender labor issues, Black trans women face extreme poverty, with 34 percent reporting an annual household income of \$10,000 or less.
<b>Education</b>	GRAF 22: ...trans women are subjected to often deadly intimate-partner violence by men who feel "deceived" or who may feel conflicted about their own desires. Only by rejecting such toxic masculinity, can we fully protect and accept all gender identities.
<b>Link/Screen shot</b>	<a href="http://www.chicagoreader.com/chicago/tt-saffore-black-transgender-lives-matter/Content?oid=23883502">http://www.chicagoreader.com/chicago/tt-saffore-black-transgender-lives-matter/Content?oid=23883502</a>



TT Saffore was killed in Chicago and her case was poorly covered and reported inaccurately and disrespectfully. She was misgendered by media and police. This example (see Table 11) was chosen because it was written about a vigil that activists in Chicago organized to remember TT Saffore and to advocate for the transgender community. It provides the essential elements of a well-written story and is important to include in this analysis because it provides information about advocacy and the connection to the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement, that black *trans* lives matter. As has been established in this project, transgender women of color are at highest risk for being victims of violent and often deadly assaults, so being included by the BLM movement is a significant finding.

The beat, or section, of a publication that an article is published has not yet been discussed in this section; however, this designation is important to the framing of a story and should be highlighted in this example. The above story was published under the “News & Politics” beat. Which probably means a greater number of readers will at least see this article, if not read it too. If the story was under a non-news beat, it is a fair assumption that it would not receive as large an audience. The vigil and activism reported under the News beat establishes a frame of urgency to the story (Empowering).

The headline is not just [Activists won’t let Chicago forget that black trans lives matter]; it includes the sub-headline, [A community in pain rallies for TT Saffore, a black trans woman killed in Chicago last month.] Both headlines provide considerable information for the audience to continue reading, creating an empowering frame. The photograph directly under the headlines is from the march that was organized for TT, picturing one of the sources in the article, LaSaia Wade, a transgender woman, activist and member of the Chicago Trans and Gender Nonconforming collective.

The framing (Trans visibility) of this story is significant in showing, truly, what advocates and activists are doing. In the third paragraph (see Table 15), the reporter provides information about TT's case, inclusive of [the 20<sup>th</sup> known transgender or gender nonconforming person lost to violence in 2016], with two more sentences following that educate the audience on the violence toward transgender people, especially transgender women of color and how they are often misgendered in early reports.

This artifact provides substantial quotes and information from local transgender activists and members - transgender people were interviewed and quoted. Paragraph four is one such quote, from LaSaia Wade, affirming the information in the previous paragraph: while attending TT's funeral, Wade had a constant thought, "It could be me. Will it be me?" which is followed in paragraph five by: [Some statistics suggest that the average life expectancy for a trans woman of color is just 35 years. That fact is even more appalling when compared to the average lifespan for white cisgender women living in the U.S. - 81 years.] This is information that continues to build the frame of the story. With one life, the reporter provides significant information reflective of the transgender community and substantial facts about them.

The quote by Ms. Afrika, a (self-identified) trans elder of the local community, in paragraph twelve is well-placed and utilized for the fullest effect: "The police don't love us – they want to see us dead, they want to see us locked up." This is a common view of transgender people and not just the opinion of one person. The NCAVP have included police-violence in their annual reports on violence against the LGBTQ+ and HIV-affected population in this country and the rates are high (NCAVP, 2015; NCAVP, 2016).

"People mean well, but they can still go home and not worry about these things...to understand these issues is to understand your privilege." A quote in paragraph 8 by Wade brings

*privilege* into the conversation. This is not rhetoric the dominant society is necessarily comfortable with, which makes it so important to the conversation. Next paragraph:

Among the privileges many cisgender people take for granted, she said: not fearing for their personal safety while using the restroom, not worrying about finessing every minute detail of personal appearance—even down to hair follicles—so as to appear passable, not having to field constant, invasive questions about their genitalia.

Here, the reporter provides education (Trans visibility frame) to the audience, to advise or remind people – especially cisgender people – what daily life is like for transgender people. Note that the information provided above comes directly from a transgender person familiar with what daily living for them is, a struggle with constant challenges.

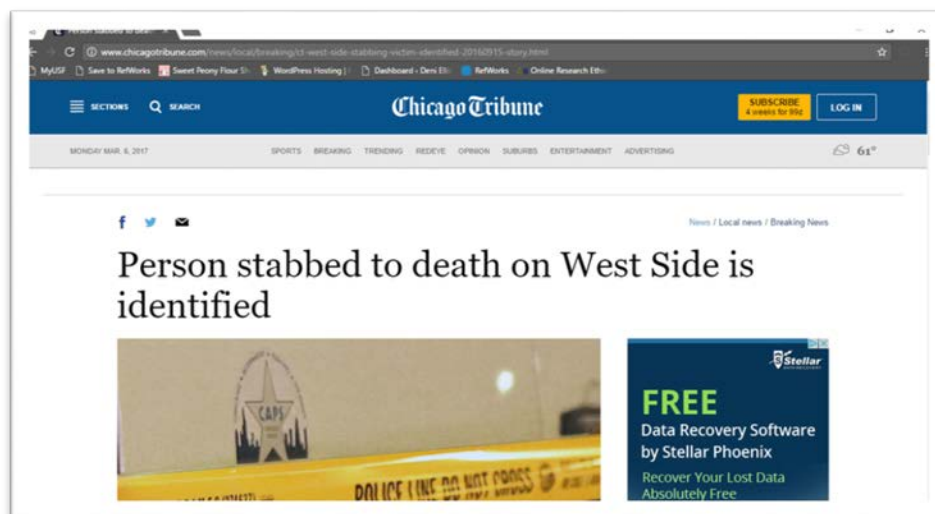
There are several black activist organizations mentioned and the connections to black trans lives, including mention of the structures of poverty and the constant state of trauma that transgender people face, with an annual household income of less than \$10,000 (see Table 15). The frame here is solidarity between black activist groups and the need to establish more substantial collaboration with them.

To end this artifact's review, paragraph 22 provides another aspect of the intimate-partner violence against transgender women, which is a common motive in many of these homicides. A quote from Olivia Pearson, a black, transgender woman present at the march: [...trans women are subjected to often deadly intimate-partner violence by men who feel "deceived" or who may feel conflicted about their own desires. Only by rejecting such toxic masculinity, can we fully protect and accept all gender identities.]

Table 11

Artifact #6

<b>Case</b>	TT Saffore, transgender woman, Black, 28
<b>Frames</b>	Empowering (follow-up story), misgendering
<b>Headline</b>	Person stabbed to death on West Side is identified
<b>Publication</b>	The Chicago Tribune
<b>Lede Graf</b>	The identity of a person who was discovered with a slit throat Sunday evening in the West Garfield Park neighborhood was made public on Thursday.
<b>Graf # victim name</b>	G2
<b>Sources</b>	Chicago's transgender community (no names); police
<b>How is the victim referred</b>	Person; Tony Saffore; the victim
<b>Outstanding quote</b>	GRAF 2: The person found in the 4500 block of West Monroe Street was identified as Tony Saffore, 28, who lived in the 7100 block of South Yates Avenue, according to the Cook County medical examiner's office. People in Chicago's transgender community who knew the victim said she was a transgender woman named T.T. Saffore.
<b>Outstanding quote</b>	Update note (at the end of story): An earlier version of this story, published Sept. 15, 2016, identified the victim as a man, based on information from police and the medical examiner's office.
<b>Education</b>	NONE
<b>Link/Screen shot</b>	<a href="http://www.chicagotribune.com/news/local/breaking/ct-west-side-stabbing-victim-identified-20160915-story.html">http://www.chicagotribune.com/news/local/breaking/ct-west-side-stabbing-victim-identified-20160915-story.html</a>



This example follows the previous story reviewed on TT Saffore and provides a comparison of reporting, but also reflects what should be included in an updated story. This will not include a full review. It is a story missing important elements like education and the failure to exclude the victim's deadname. It is a brief news burst on the basic details of TT's murder and

only lists *Chicago Tribune* Staff in the byline. While the reporter(s) does not outright misgender the victim, by referring to TT as [a person] and [Saffore], using female pronouns; they do so by mentioning TT's deadname, which is masculine (misgendering frame).

When more information is found and a story is updated, especially in a case like this, the framing usually implies that this story is of significance, the victim is important enough to provide follow-up information to the audience (empowering frame). Under the byline is a notation that this article was originally published on September 15, 2016 at 9:58 AM and updated on October 7, 2016 at 2:34 PM. This signifies to the reader that some changes were made to the story, and usually does not include or specify what changes were made. Updated stories often do include a note at the end or beginning of a story that provides an update. In this case, there is an italicized note at the end of the article: [*An earlier version of this story, published Sept. 15, 2016, identified the victim as a man, based on information from police and the medical examiner's office.*]

There were two follow-up stories written, with a reporter's name in the byline. This is a significant finding because it shows that a story was necessary and with enough importance to assign a specific reporter to it, providing accurate, new information to the audience; highlighting the march that had been organized to celebrate TT and to advocate for the community. For a marginalized population of people, it is so necessary that the community is being covered accurately, but also in affirming the visibility of these people. TT was not misgendered in these articles.

## Chapter 5: Further Findings and Discussion

Transgender murder victims *are* routinely mis-identified, misgendered and misrepresented in news media according to the findings of this research. The word to note is “in” news media, not “by” news media. The data confirms that it is not only the media misgendering these victims. Law enforcement, family, coroners are guilty of the three M’s; the media simply perpetuates the dehumanization and erasure of this marginalized community. Before conducting this research, I mainly blamed the media; however, this project reflects clearly, that the problem is a larger one common to the greater societal structure within which we live.

Now, to review the research questions this data intended to answer.

### **RQ1: How were the media framing murders of transgender people?**

Overall, the framing in this data collection was primarily policing/police authority. Thirty-six percent of the articles misgendered the victim. The misgendering and dehumanizing frames were also prevalent. I suggest that the reasons behind this stem from sourcing only law enforcement, providing only that perspective, and thereby leaving out entire sides of the story.

Overall, there were six main frames salient in this data: 1. *Victim Blaming/Criminalizing* - mention of sex work/ prostitution, mention of homelessness; 2. *Misgendering* - wrong pronouns used, use of deadname, including images of the victim prior to their transition, quotes from family members misgendering their loved ones; 3. *Dehumanizing* - use of words like “drag queen,” “cross-dresser,” “man dressed like a woman,” use of “a.k.a,” or quotes around the victim’s self-identified name, confusing gender language – switching the gender and pronouns of a victim within the story; 4. *Policing/Police Authority* - over-use of police sourcing, images used to depict some aspect of law enforcement; 5. *Empowering* - individual identity affirming



language, correct pronouns used, correct use of victim's self-identified name, no mention of deadname; 6. *Trans Visibility* - education provided on the transgender community, quotes from transgender individuals, activists, allies and organizations.

Eighty-one articles did not include any education (76%). Fifty-one percent of the articles included the victim's deadname, while sixty-four percent provided the victims correct name. Twenty-six percent used both. There were 10 articles that had some mention of sex work (9%). Seven articles mentioned hate crime as a possibility. Six-percent of the articles made some reference to the phrase (or variation of), "man dressed as a woman," Many articles framed the victim as the one at fault – victim blaming, because they were engaging in prostitution or were homeless or somehow provoked their killer. Frames often were dehumanizing and diminishing to the identity, life and death of a victim.

While 36% of the articles misgendered the victim, 10% of the total articles included misgendering by family members. These dehumanizing frames of the victims were perpetuated by quotes from family members misgendering their deceased loved one. I suggest that there is this societal belief that families know each other best, are the top experts on a relative, and can provide the most accurate information. This is simply not true. But media and law enforcement often provide a frame that validates family members as experts on these victims and the audience believes this, playing into and confirming the societal perspective on families.

Photos accompanying artifacts were counted and collected, revealing further proof of framing that builds on the police ("authority") frame; with 19% of the articles using some form of police image. Only 15% of the articles provided a correct Facebook (all these photos were attributed to the victim's Facebook page) photo. There were a few additional images of

mourners, activists, alleged perpetrators, memorial and vigil images. Twenty-four percent of the artifacts did not include images.

**RQ2: Based on the framing analysis, is there a bias in the reporting of transgender murder victims and are they being underreported?**

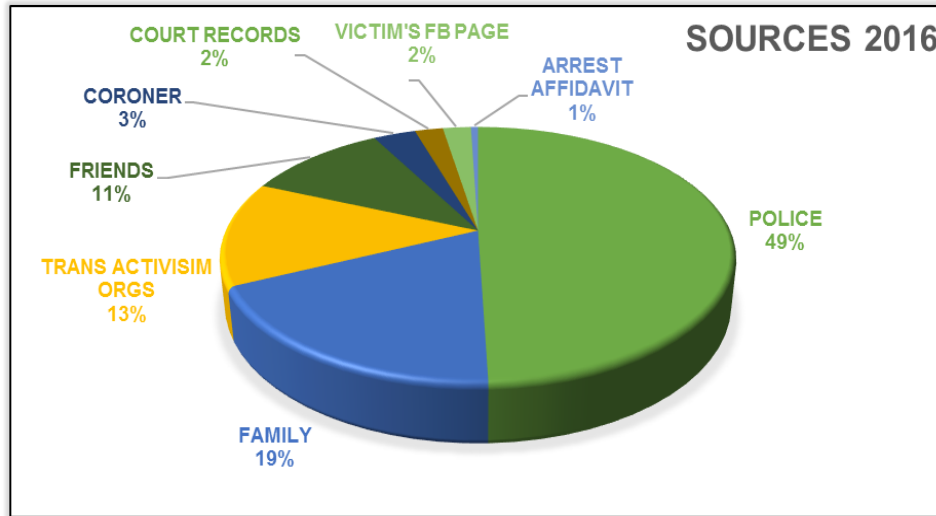
The data shows there were many biases woven into the reporting of these victims. Biases were found in the framing (misgendering, dehumanizing, victim blaming/criminalizing), especially when they were present in case after case. After answering RQ1, the data confirms that there are, in fact, deep biases, that may or may not influence the media framing. It is my opinion that a separate research project needs to more adequately determine whether crimes against transgender and gnc victims are being underreported (based on biases) because the findings of this project indicate this but are not conclusive enough to prove underreporting in general (see Table 1). Many of the cases were underreported with a majority having only three news articles - mostly victims who were black or Latino. Black and Latino cases were underreported. Further research needs to be conducted to more efficiently answer the latter part of this question.

**RQ3: What sources were used by news media to report murders of transgender people? How were these sources being used?**

As was noted in RQ1, the majority of sourcing came from police. The “police” sources were counted by any reference to law enforcement (i.e. authorities, sheriff, deputy, etc.). “Family” sources were determined by reference to any immediate family member (i.e. mother, father, aunt, etc.), sometimes the source would only be noted as “family.” LGBTQ+ and other

advocacy/activist groups used as sources were counted, based on the name attributed in the article.

Figure 2. Sources - 2016



Sourcing is an integral part of the framing of a story, and the difference between telling a complete story instead of a one-sided story. The fewer sources and attribution to experts, the poorer the reporting. The victims and their true identities are the ones who have suffered the most. Well-rounded sources, accurate, efficient use of quotes and information, lead to articles that tell the whole story and give these victims a voice and affirm their identity.

**RQ4: Were transgender murder victims misgendered in news reports? If so, why?**

Yes. Proof of this can be found in the results above and in the comprehensive analysis of the sample artifacts. As noted, 36% of the articles misgendered victims. I conclude that the main reasons why misgendering occurs is based on poor sourcing. And I will suggest that there is a lack of education and training of reporters and law enforcement; both easy challenges to overcome. The bigger challenge is figuring out how to unbind people from the strict gender binary of female and male, and to recognize the diverse and fluid gender spectrum – allowing

space for the inclusivity of those seen differently than one's self. Katherine Bell, professor on media and gender said, "The media's rationale is based on the notion that gender identity has a biological truth to it that trumps everything else. Gender is a deeply held notion of self; some theorists call it a performative way of expressing identity (Bell, 2014, p. 2)."

The number of occurrences in these artifacts of misgendering transgender and gnc murder victims is substantial. As has been discussed at length, misgendering is problematic, oppressive and dehumanizing to these individuals, and should be considered unacceptable by the media, especially news media. There are enough examples of how to accurately and respectfully report on the transgender and gnc community, that it seems negligent, biased, and an act of cognitive dissonance when journalists refuse to provide and affirm the self-identified gender of these murder victims. Addressing and resolving this oppressive problem is ultimately the way media's power will incite change in law enforcement, government, other media and society to bring transgender people out from the margins. Affirming the diverse individual identities will empower the community.

### **Further Findings**

The headline of an article can be considered the single most impactful part of a news report. In the hustle and bustle of the Digital Age, people read more headlines than entire articles. Often, a story is only read if something in the headline intrigues the reader to pursue more details. Data findings on headlines are significant. Nineteen percent of the headlines studied (20) misgendered the victims.

### Headlines by Percentage:

- 19% of the headlines misgendered the victim
- 47% of the headlines included the word “trans” or “transgender”
- Less than 1% of headlines included race/ethnicity (only black cases)

### 19 Artifacts with Victim Names in Headline:

- 8 total victims of color (TOTAL 82 artifacts, 21 TOTAL cases) - **less than 1%**
- 10 total white victims (TOTAL 24 white artifacts, 3 TOTAL cases) - **42%**
- 6 headlines with deadname used, misgenders victim = 4 white, 2 Black

Something interesting that the data results reflected was how race was included or excluded from stories. Only a small number of the articles, and only two headlines, included the race or ethnicity of the victim; however, sometimes a photo of the victim accompanied the article. Race or ethnicity were mentioned only in articles on cases where the victim was black or Latino. Is this necessary or acceptable? I struggle with a correct answer on this because such a large percentage of these cases are transgender women of color. On one hand, it could be provided as integral educational information on the transgender population, since this group is at highest risk. But on the other hand, race or ethnicity very seldom appeared to have anything to do with the perpetrator’s motives in these cases. Should this be considered a frame? A negative frame?

Online media outlets that have reported most, if not all trans/non-binary murders in 2016 (this is not an exhaustive list) are: *Mic.com*; *Advocate.com*; *NCAVP*; *Democracy Now*; *TransGriot*; *Pinknews.co.uk*; *LGBTQ Nation*; *GLAAD*; *Human Rights Campaign (HRC)*;

*Autostraddle.com; Washington Blade; Huffington Post.* These articles were not included in the data collection.

Collecting content on the news affiliates covering these cases provided results that require further research; however, the preliminary results are fascinating. See Table 14, 15 and 16 below for details.

Figure 3. News Affiliates

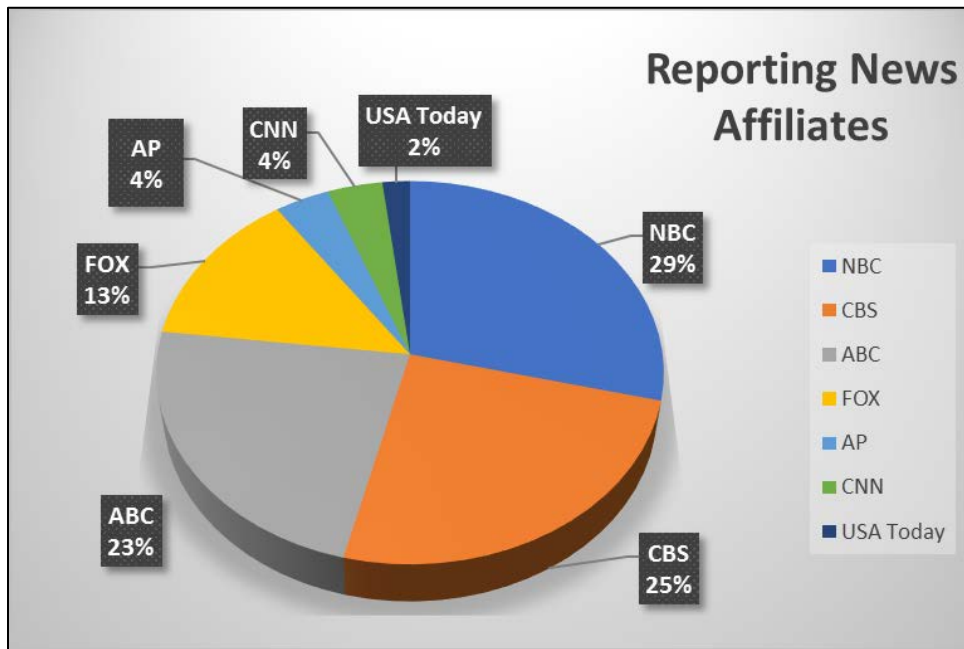


Figure 4. Reach of Publications

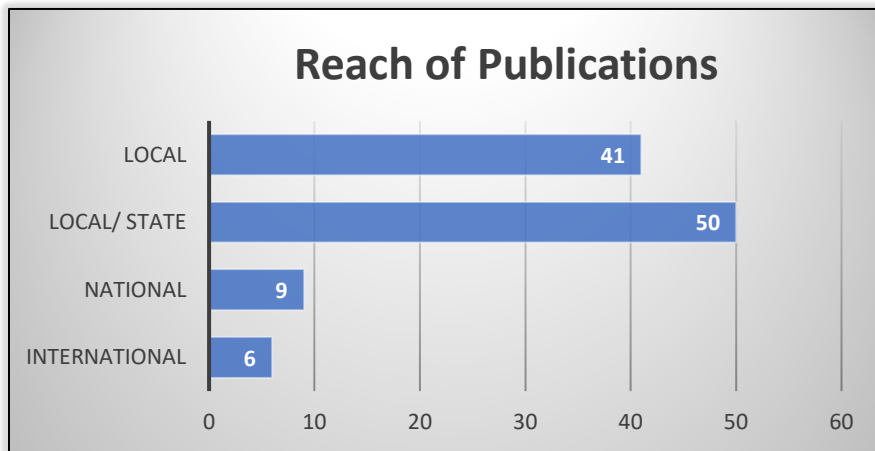
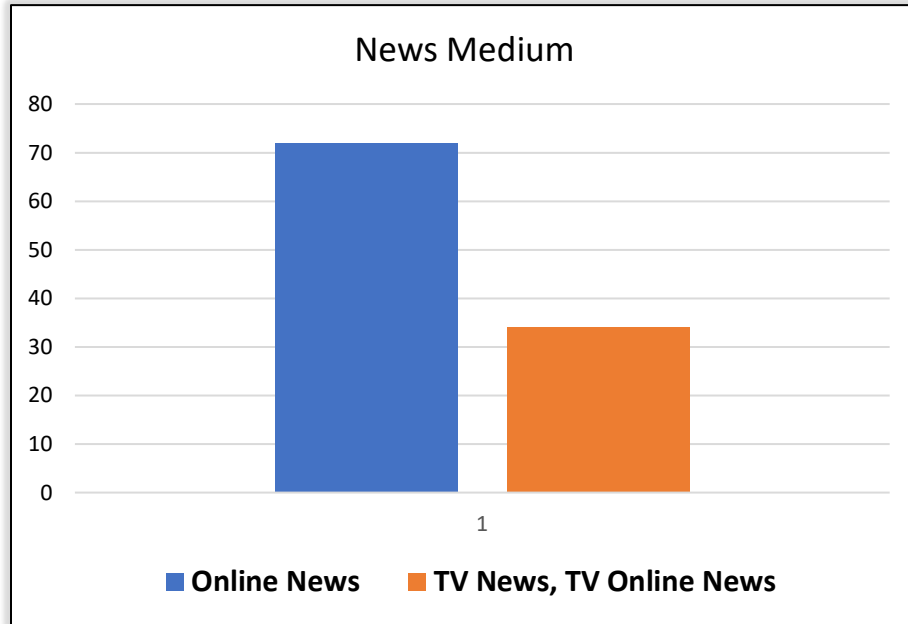


Figure 5. Artifact Media Type



One of the interesting findings that emerged in the evidence was how apparent media coverage would be different if reporters, law enforcement, and coroner and medical examiners went through mandatory training to educate them on how to report on the transgender community and how to handle cases where the identity of a victim is in question. The analysis portion of this project provided nuances of this suggestion. When nearly 50% of the sourcing is coming from police, and often the only source(s), there is an issue that needs to be addressed.

It is a hopeful sign that a number of artifacts *did* include education. Thirty-four percent is a positive finding. Many reporters and news media are providing much needed education to the dominant society on transgender people.

Another sign of progress is regarding the reference of “a man dressed as a woman.” This phrase is only found 6% of the 2016 articles reviewed, only in the body of the article, not in any

headlines. In as late as 2015, there were numerous articles published that included this phrase in the headline.

When looking at the entire U.S. population of an estimated (by the U.S. Census) 323 million in 2016 and an estimated (by The Williams Institute at the University of California School of Law) 14 million transgender affirming people living in the U.S. in 2016 – transgender people only make up 4% of the population.

Mic.com's article, *Unerased: Counting transgender lives*, does the math:

For the general population in the U.S., 1 in 19,000 people is murdered every year. (Approximate average annual rate, 2010-2014, based on data from the National Center for Health Statistics)

For young adults the chance is 1 in 12,000. (Approximate average annual rate for ages 15-34, 2010-2014, based on data from the National Center for Health Statistics)

But for young black trans women, the chance is **1 in 2,600** (Talusán, 2016).

These reported numbers are unfortunately far from the true numbers of transgender murders (Talusán, 2016). This demands attention. Journalists should understand their duty to accurately portray and represent transgender people. Sometimes journalism is the only historical record available for marginalized groups of people.

This is a population of people who need protection, starting with the media and law enforcement. Because transgender people are marginalized by society, it is even more important to make sure they are being represented correctly. In doing so, we create a conversation, awareness and provide education to and for audiences.



## **Limitations**

Because of time constraints I was not able to conduct inter-coder reliability (ICR), having additional coders to review and code the data; however, I intend to conduct ICR on this project for future research; as it is the foundation of a body of work and data integrity is of the utmost importance.

Also, because of time constraints, I was unable to obtain police reports on the 27 victims, to corroborate the information found in articles that reported on them.

As with many research projects, the outcome and the story the data tells is much different than assumptions in the beginning. This project was no different. But because of this, there is considerable data that I was unable to include in this discussion, but believe it is necessary to review and analyze in future research.

## **Future Research**

This project answered some of the how questions. Now, a framework has been created to start determining details, reasons, causes, affects, etc. What are the reasons that make reporters and family members alike, so uncomfortable that they refuse to acknowledge the new (and carefully constructed) identity as transgender? Is transgenderism still so far out that it challenges our understandings of sexuality and gender identity to a point that we deny its existence?

What might a more in-depth review of the reporters writing these stories reveal on biases and underreporting. Based on demographics and geography how are reporters framing stories on transgender murder victims? Does gender, race or age reflect any biases? Does it matter? I believe this research would answer at least some of the “why” questions.

It would be interesting to look at the geography of the cases and determine whether location had anything to do with how a case was reported. Take a closer look at the different news media outlets. How are they reporting? Is it based on size and reach of the publication? Are particular media affiliates better or worse? Does geography play a part in this?

One of the pieces of content I collected was whether there was any mention of a hate crime. It would greatly inform future studies by researching laws in each state on what qualifies as a hate crime (often the state does not include gender identity in the criteria), and to review the federal laws. Why aren't these murders being categorized as hate crimes? Why isn't education on hate crimes against the transgender community more present in news reports?

And finally, a comparative study, parallel to this project looking at coverage in different years, would provide significant information on trends and progress being made in reporting on transgender murder victims.

## **Conclusion**

The intention of this project was to determine how U.S. online news media are representing transgender and gnc murder victims. And to also establish a framework and foundation for academic research and more collaborations with transgender advocacy organizations. This will further the progress of trans visibility. My biggest hope is that this work has successfully revealed the importance of, and created a space for integral research that needs to be greatly enlarged by scholars. As the findings in this thesis show, misgendering and dehumanizing transgender and gnc murder victims is prevalent rhetoric in news media. This must stop in order for the dominant society to accept trans-normative views.

In an email correspondence, Dr. Ella Schmidt, a professor and cultural anthropologist said,

Gender (and sexual orientation) are social constructions based on ideological understandings of desires, roles, etc. The fact that as a rule the great majority of cultures have decided to focus on genitalia to impose a particular identity really prevents us from imagining a different basis for that classification. Interestingly, reporters are exactly an illustration of our fixation on the physicality of genitalia, so much so, that they (and us) ignore the possibility of a different basis for our sexual and gendered beings/identities (transgender individuals (and in fact all of us) are also victims of this). The focus on what they were wearing for instance, or that they were drag queens, also points to the possibility of blaming them for their lot (just as we do [cisgender] women who dare to present themselves in particular ways in particular places). (2017)

There is structural racism and sexism pervasive throughout the news media, law enforcement and the dominant society. Intersectionality deeply impacts the transgender community. It should be the duty of journalists to better understand this population and represent them in respectful and accurate ways (see Appendix B). These victims have had their voices silenced. Journalists should be ever cognizant of this and lend an accurate voice – providing framing that is inclusive, unbiased and informative – empowering this marginalized community.

In closing, I will leave my readers with this quote by transgender activist, Cherno Biko, from Skye Mockabee’s case, a black, transgender woman killed in 2016, “I think it starts by loving black trans folks. Luckily it’s not too late for me and the thousands and potentially millions of us left. We need love, we need freedom, we need protection (NBCnews.com, August 3, 2016).”

## APPENDICES

**Appendix A: List of Artifacts** (listed in alphabetical order by first name)

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## Appendix B: Proposed Media Reporting Guidelines

Here listed, are guidelines for accurate reporting on violent crimes against transgender people (June, 2016). The guidelines not cited are compilations of advice for journalists found in articles, other LGBT media reference guides and personal insight based on several years of research. No one set of guidelines currently exist that include *all* these integral actions and all appear to be missing how to report on a victim whose gender is unidentified for a breaking news story.

1. Journalists should educate themselves on terms and concepts to provide more accurate coverage (Morrison, 2016).
2. If it is a breaking news story, with no time to do further research or obtain more sources, but the police or coroner's report includes *some* evidence that there is a discrepancy about the victim's gender identity, journalists should report the murder and refer to the victim using *only* gender neutral terms, like "the individual," or "victim," or "person," and disclose that the preferred gender of the victim is still undetermined.
3. Journalists should refer to victims by their name and pronouns (when available) consistent with how they identify(ied) at the time of the incident and refrain from including salacious details about the victim's appearance or gender identity (Morrison, 2016; GLAAD, 2016b).
4. Before and after publishing a story, journalists should do further research when there is *any* question about the victim's gender identity.

5. Journalists should not solely rely on police reports when covering violent crimes.  
(Journalists who cover the transgender community advise using social media (i.e. Facebook, Instagram) for current and preferred gender identifying information.)
6. Journalists should not assume a victim's gender identity\*, but provide terms, context and statistics relating to the transgender/non-binary community when evidence suggests any possibility of a transgender victim; and promise readers a follow-up story(ies) when more information is revealed.
7. Journalists should be accountable after misgendering victims or using incorrect pronouns, and when new information is obtained and/or when contacted by GLAAD, other LGBT media watchdogs, or advocates, promptly and respectfully correct any error(s) with clear visibility to readers, (GLAAD, 2016b).

\*GLAAD provides an extensive review and guidelines for journalists to follow comparing “incorrect” and “correct” ways of reporting and should also be utilized (GLAAD, 2016b). The below guideline pertains to proposed action #6:

If how the person identified is unknown, use the pronoun consistent with how they lived publicly. This holds true even if only given the victim's birth name, and even if the only name given for the victim does not match their self-identified gender.

**Incorrect:** The victim, John Smith, was found on Friday morning in his Brooklyn neighborhood.

**Correct:** The victim, who was identified by police as John Smith, was found on Friday morning in her Brooklyn neighborhood. (2016b)

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