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Source credibility and race: Black viewers' responses to television news anchors

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Source credibility and race: Black viewers' responses to television news anchors

by

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A thesis submitted to the graduate faculty
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
MASTER OF SCIENCE

Major: Journalism and Mass Communication
Program of Study Committee:
Tracy Lucht, Major Professor
Joel Geske
Kevin Blankenship

Iowa State University

Ames, Iowa

2015

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to my son, Malachi, who gave me more motivation than he will ever know. I also dedicate this work to my husband, Angel, who encouraged me and stayed right by my side throughout this journey. I thank you and share this with you.

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ABSTRACT

This study used a qualitative approach to explore the impact of diversity on television through Black viewers' responses to newscasters of different races. The goal was to explore 1) the impact of a newscaster's race on his or her perceived credibility, 2) the perceived accuracy of news reports of racially driven stories, and 3) emotional responses provoked by the race of a newscaster. Twenty-two Black males participated in focus groups. Participants watched two sets of news clips, each followed by a series of questions. The first set of news clips included an assortment of random news stories, read by two White anchors and two Black anchors. The second set consisted of two anchors reporting on a racially specific story, one White anchor and one Black. The focus groups were audiotaped and data were later analyzed. The research found that race played a significant role in the source credibility of the anchor. Participants' connection to culture, likeliness, emotion and empathy emerged as factors affecting the news anchors' credibility. Specifically in the race related stories, the imagery used as well as the word choice combined with the race of the anchor to prompt a heavy emotional response from the participants.

The findings imply that there is a serious lack of trust in news media from these participants, and race plays a significant factor. The lack of Black anchors is only one element as the participants acknowledged that regardless of how many Black anchors there are, the news as a whole is still written for and by the White majority. It seems the lack of trust in the news media is here to stay until Blacks have a more dominant role in the industry.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

As the top news source for Americans, local television newscasts provide a wide variety of information and educate viewers about their communities (Pew Research Center's Project for Excellence in Journalism, 2013). In the recently hard-hit media industry, however, local television news is becoming vulnerable. According to the Pew Research Center (2013), local television viewership was down across every key time slot and across all networks. In this environment, local stations must find ways to attract and keep viewers because their advertising revenue depends on it. The more a particular station can grab the attention of viewers and persuade them to keep watching, the more profitable the station will be. Economic conditions are changing for the stations, but more importantly, so are audience demographics.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau's Population Profile of the United States, the proportion of non-Hispanic Whites fell from 70 percent in 2000 to about 67 percent in 2005 while all other racial and Hispanic-origin groups grew faster than the national rate (U.S. Census Bureau, 2005). Not only are racial and ethnic minorities making up greater proportions of the population, but evidence also suggests Black viewers, in particular, watch more television than White viewers. According to the Pew Research Center study (2013), 69 percent of African Americans surveyed said they had watched television news the day before, compared with 56 percent of non-Hispanic Caucasians and 43 percent of Hispanics.

The news media, however, are not keeping up with the nation's increasing diversity. A report by the Knight Foundation in 2005 found that newsroom diversity had fallen below its peak levels at most daily newspapers in the U.S. According to the authors, "[W]hile the newspaper

industry may be slowly adding journalists of color overall, the gains have been uneven” (Dedman & Doig, 2005). Andrew Hacker (1994) highlighted the problems mainstream newspapers have had in gaining the trust of African American readers:

African Americans know that the dominant media are white. To their eyes, the mainstream media speak for a white nation, which expects all citizens to conform to its ways. Nor do they see that much has changed since the Kerner Commission remarked, “The media report and write from the standpoint of a white man’s world.”

African Americans are also underrepresented in television newsrooms. University of Missouri professor Vernon Stone was quoted saying, “The number of black males anchoring TV news is roughly proportionate to their representation in the TV news workforce, and that’s about 5 percent.” (Prato, 1992). Ziegler and White (1990) evaluated 335 stories from major news networks in 1987 and 1989 and found that White correspondents delivered 312 of the stories. That leaves just 23 to be delivered by non-White correspondents, which is just 6.9 percent. A more recent study completed in 2008 found that the representation in TV news still hadn’t made significant change. Owens (2008) examined 857 news stories and 1,530 sources to find that Whites made up the large majority (77.3 percent) of on-camera sources. Of the 21 percent of the stories that had a minority source, only 8.6 percent were Black.

These findings suggest disconnect between minority populations and local television news media. The purpose of this study is to explore the impact of diversity on television through Black viewers’ responses to newscasters of different races, paying particular attention to 1) the impact of a newscaster’s race on his or her perceived credibility, 2) the perceived accuracy of

news reports of racially driven stories, and 3) emotional responses provoked by the race of a newscaster.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Television news programming, whether it is at the local, national, or international level, is typically aimed at a broad audience. It is also very image-based. According to McGuire (1978), who identified five significant components of persuasive communication, there are three aspects to the ways in which people evaluate a source of information: credibility, attractiveness, and power. Viewed through the lens of television ratings, the perceived source credibility of a newscast's on-air talent could persuade viewers to stay with a station or cause them to turn the channel. This phenomenon, well studied in both the communication and the health contexts, is termed source credibility. Source credibility refers to the amount of credibility or believability attributed to a source of information by the receivers (Bracken, 2006). In communication, the concept was originally studied as a measure of audience attitudes toward mass media sources of information (Hovland, Janis, & Kelly, 1953).

Source Credibility and the Media

A significant body of research has been devoted to determining the variables that impact source credibility. The earliest-known research examining source credibility was published starting in the 1950s. Hovland, Janis and Kelly (1953) identified expertise and trustworthiness as the two main dimensions affecting source credibility. Expertise refers to the perceived ability of a speaker to make accurate assertions, and trustworthiness is the extent to which the audience believes the assertions made by the speaker. In addition to expertise and trustworthiness, other dimensions of source credibility identified by researchers are dynamism (Berlo, Lemert, and Mertz, 1969), objectivity (Whitehead, 1968) and authoritativeness and character (McCroskey,

1966). The underpinning notion of this theoretical perspective is that people are more likely to be persuaded to use or believe a message if the sender is perceived as credible. Looking specifically into the variables that affect source credibility on television, Markham's research revealed the characteristics or dimensions of a news anchor, such as his or her showmanship, dynamism and trustworthiness, found to influence perceptions of credibility (Markham, 1968).

Few studies have examined the effects of the race and ethnicity of a news crew on source credibility as perceived by viewers, although identifiable similarities between a messenger and a recipient have been found to increase the perceived source credibility of that messenger.

Feldman (1984) conducted a study examining the impact of the expertise of a communicator and the similarities between communicator and receiver when a health message is delivered to high school students. Results showed that the greater influence on credibility came from the perceived similarities between the communicator and the high school students. The study showed that even a communicator who was perceived high in expertise but low in similarity had low influential value. The researchers concluded that emphasizing the similarities between a communicator and a receiver would likely increase the effectiveness of a message.

Influence of Race and Ethnicity

When asking the question, "Does race play a factor in the way viewers perceive the news?" there are different aspects to consider. Lind (1996) examined the relevance that race can have on the construction of meaning and the evaluation of television news. A group discussion of eight Black and nine White participants revealed that viewers' differing social positions led to different interpretations of the TV text. The results from Lind's study showed that racially driven stories resulted in a different reported level of relevance among the viewers (Lind, 1996).

These results suggested that a White-dominant newsroom might have a tendency to select news that is relevant to the White majority.

Beaudoin and Thorson (2005) conducted a study that examined the roles that race played in predicting the perceived credibility of news coverage of ethnic groups. The survey-based study found that being Black played a more significant role in the perceived credibility of news coverage of ethnic groups than being White. The researchers also found that the Black respondents believed news coverage of Whites to be more credible than news coverage of African Americans, suggesting that race is a more important factor for African Americans than for Caucasians when assessing credibility of the news. Similarly, as determined by Herek et al. (1998), African Americans found information pertaining to a health initiative relayed by other African Americans to be more effective and more credible than the same information coming from a Caucasian counterpart.

These findings support a concept known as distinctiveness theory (McGuire, 1984; McGuire et al., 1978), which suggests that minorities find their own traits to stand out more than the even the most prevalent traits of the majority. Researchers have found that African Americans are more conscious of race (Appiah, 2003) and, as a result, could possibly rely on racial cues while watching media coverage to make related judgments. Thus, the evidence suggests race has more predictive value in the media responses of Blacks than of Whites, who might focus on different types of social cues (Appiah, 2001a, 2001b, 2002).

In terms of source credibility, however, the area of race and ethnicity remains understudied. After reviewing the existing theoretical papers on the topic, Pornpitakpan (2004) wrote: “Cultural differences seem to play a great role in the weight given to source credibility, but have not been researched much” (p. 270). Pornpitakpan determined that interactions between

source credibility and variables such as similarity between source and recipients and recipient personality traits are still understudied.

Seeking to fill that gap, this study has further explored potential connections between source credibility and perceived similarity between source and recipients – this time in terms of race/ethnicity. Understanding how the Black American community responds to news delivered by Black and White anchors has the potential not only to increase the viewership of a station, but also to help involve and educate a community. Thus, knowledge about the potential impact that racial similarities can have on the perceived source credibility of a news anchor would not only advance the literature but also could substantially benefit local news stations trying to attract viewers and inform the public.

Prompted by the review of literature, this study addresses the following research questions:

RQ 1: How does race influence the perceived source credibility of a television news crew among a minority audience?

RQ 2: How do Black viewers perceive and respond to a news story about Black Americans delivered by a Black news anchor compared with a Caucasian news anchor?

CHAPTER 3

METHOD

This study used focus groups, a qualitative research method that helps a researcher understand people's attitudes, thought processes, and behavior (Wimmer & Dominick, 2014). A moderator or facilitator leads the discussion in a relatively unstructured manner, allowing six to twelve people to be interviewed at one time. The discussion should have a focus that is directed by predetermined questions to further the goal of the research. However, the facilitator can stray from the structured questions if participants present information that could lead to unforeseen discussions and findings. Typically the participants in a focus group are homogeneous, or share a particular quality relevant to the study. The reason for this is the purpose of a focus group is to understand the attitudes and behaviors of a particular audience rather than come up with generalizable results (Wimmer & Dominick, 2014). In addition, focus groups provide open-ended data that can be used to better understand and expose various opinions about a particular topic, many of which might not have been preconceived by the researcher. This allows for richer discussion and details to be exposed, although in most cases the data cannot be generalized or used to test a hypothesis (Wimmer & Dominick, 2014).

The use of homogeneous focus groups, comprised of Black men, allowed participants in this study to express their true feelings without introducing other factors, such as gender, which might have changed the dynamic of the group. It also allowed the participants to feed off each other's responses. This, in a way, allows for there to be multiple people facilitating the discussion, meaning more subtopics might be discussed within the focus of the main topic. Three of the four focus groups consisted of at least six Black male participants of various ages while

one had just two participants because of low turnout. The focus groups lasted for approximately 30 minutes. The participants viewed a series of news clips, some with a Caucasian anchor and some with a Black anchor. The group was then asked questions by a facilitator to begin the discussion related to their perceived source credibility of the two different news anchors. The desired outcome was for participants to express their perceptions about source credibility and their emotions or other responses that arose when watching a newscast.

The total of twenty-two participants were selected using a snowball sampling technique. They were divided into four different focus groups. The snowball sampling technique, also known as the referral method, is where the researcher contacts a few qualified respondents and then asks them to provide names of friends, relatives or acquaintances who may also qualify for the study (Wimmer & Dominick, 2014.) The participants were self-identified Black American males, at least 18 years of age, with a diverse representation of age groups. Minimal restrictions were placed on the sampling frame to reduce potential bias. One focus group was held in Ames, Iowa; two focus groups were held in Davenport, Iowa; and the group interview with two participants was held in Des Moines, Iowa.

Procedure

The focus groups started with the participants watching a short film of various news clips. There were two films of clips shown. The first had random news stories that did not address any racial topics, and the second included a racially focused topic. The first set of news clips were actual news stories read by two different Caucasian and two different Black news anchors. The first set was not identical in scripts or topics but comparable. The first two anchors were White and the second 2 anchors were Black in the first set of clips shown.

The second set of news clips were of a Black reporter and Caucasian reporter from the same local station in Texas. Both clips were real reports on recent developments in the Sandra Bland incident. It is important to note that these clips were taken from the same station because they were both likely reviewed and approved by the same associate producer allowing for maximum consistency among the two reports. This is not guaranteed but likely to have been the case. It should also be noted that the local station in Texas was chosen because the incident happened in that area. This allowed for a more detailed report without the influence of a national anchor/station.

Sandra Bland was a Black woman who was found hanged in a jail cell in Waller County, Texas, on July 13, 2015. Her death was classified as a suicide by police and the county coroner, but was followed by protests against her arrest, disputing the cause of death and alleging racial violence against her. A Texas state trooper had pulled over Bland for a minor traffic violation on July 10, 2015. He arrested her following an escalating conflict, during which he alleged that she had assaulted him. The entire incident was caught on dashcam and a bystander's cell phone. The officer was placed on administrative duty for failing to follow proper traffic stop procedures (Montgomery, 2015). On July 16, 2015, Texas authorities and the FBI announced that they had begun a joint investigation into Bland's death. The Waller County district attorney's office said that her death would be investigated as a possible murder. An autopsy conducted by the Harris County medical examiner ruled Bland's death a suicide, and said it found no evidence of a violent struggle. The results from a second independent autopsy requested by her family have not been released. This case, similar to others pertaining the deaths of unarmed Black people by police officers within the past year, gained a lot of media attention (Keneally, 2015).

In the second set of news clips, the Black reporter was shown first followed by the white reporter. It should be noted that the order of the race shown in each set was switched in an effort to make sure that didn't have an effect on the favorability chosen by the participants. It is also worth highlighting that the first set of clips showed anchors and the second set of clips showed reporters. It was decided by the researcher that the clips used were most comparable to each other and in an effort to have consistency; these were the ones that were chosen.

After the focus groups were shown the first film of news clips, participants were asked various pre-determined questions. The initial discussion prompts were, "What were your thoughts when watching the news clips?" and, "Which anchor did you favor and why?" The facilitator then continued to ask both pre-determined and impromptu questions based on the direction of the focus group conversation. Next, the racially specific news clips about the Sandra Bland case were shown, and specific questions were asked in an attempt to provoke conversation about how the race of the news anchor reading a racially specific story may have affected the viewers' perceptions about source credibility.

After obtaining Institutional Review Board approval for this study, the first of four focus groups was conducted as a pilot test for the subsequent focus group sessions. (See Appendix A.) This allowed the facilitator, the primary researcher, to amend research questions and/or focus group procedures to ensure subsequent sections were consistent and potentially free of any issues. The focus group interviews were audio-recorded and then transcribed. The researcher then textually analyzed the data, identifying themes throughout the transcripts. These were not predetermined codes because qualitative research allows the themes to emerge from the data. However, the researcher paid particular attention to any and all words related to trustworthiness, expertise, competence, dynamism, authoritativeness, and character as well as other words—or their antonyms—that

might be used to discuss credibility. Because race was the primary focus of analysis, any racial cues or racially driven conversations were identified as well. The researcher identified words such as Black, White, African American, Caucasian, culture, “our,” “their,” and so on, and grouped the responses into appropriate themes. Due to the nature of qualitative research, a coding sheet was not established before the analysis began in an effort to make sure the themes identified emerged from the focus group discussions. Once the themes were identified and consistent, the researcher determined the findings. The three different focus groups as well as the group interview were used to gather the findings and answer the research questions.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

Profile of Participants

The twenty-two participants in this study ranged in age from 18 to 67. Analysis of the transcripts yielded seven themes that have been grouped into three categories. Specifically, the findings will be discussed according to these three categories: 1) themes that emerged after participants viewed a series of non-race related news topics; 2) themes that emerged after viewing race related news stories; and 3) themes that emerged from conversations about the impact of race on source credibility in relation to news.

Non-Race Related News Topics

Each focus group began with participants viewing a short film of various news clips read by two White anchors. Immediately following, another series of news clips read by two Black anchors was viewed. It is important to note that the topics and scripts for the news clips were not the same between the White and Black anchors but were determined by the researcher to be comparable in relevance. The participants were then asked questions about their thoughts on the anchors, including which anchor they preferred and why and whom they found more credible and why. (See Appendix B for the complete interview guide.)

Favorability of anchor

When asked which anchor was preferred, eight of the ten participants who responded mentioned race. For example:

“I’m with the Black anchor . . . without a doubt.” (Lonnie, age 47)

“I’m staying with the Black anchor.” (Randy, age 40)

Among the participants who initially mentioned race, some stated their connection was simply because they preferred the tone of the anchor’s voice. In addition, the majority of the participants who commented on race said that it seemed the Black anchors were trying a little harder than the White anchors:

“I noticed that some of the Black news anchors really exaggerated or announced their words, I noticed that . . . more than the White ones.” (Jeff, age 40)

For other participants, their attraction to the Black anchor had little to do with his tone of voice or with the content of the news stories. Rather, the preference was simply because the anchors were perceived to be the same race as the participants.

It is worth noting that in addition to stating the preference, many of the participants provided disclaimers (which, at times, seemed almost apologetic) about the fact that they preferred the Black anchor. This implied that the participants felt as though race should not matter and that they were in the wrong for the fact that to them, it actually did matter. One participant said, “As much as we want a colorblind society . . . that is not reality.” It seemed to many of the participants that the “we” they were referring to was not just the Black community, but the country as a whole. Yet the idea the country had progressed enough to stop looking at color was not even close to a reality for these Black participants. Based on their statements, it seemed race was a conscious and salient part of their everyday lives, causing them to feel and

respond in a certain way. These hedging comments stayed consistent through the discussion of the non-race related news clips:

“I am a victim of the imagery ... I just feel more comfortable with an anchor of the same color.” (Terry, age 52)

“Color line doesn’t mean anything, but I am going to support my color line because that is what I am.” (Lonnie, age 47)

“I’m with the first African American guy... he looked like me! For the most part, you don’t really see African Americans on the news unless they are talking about sports and to see him talking about economic conditions ... I would be geared towards leaning towards him because he looks like me. He is educated, someone I can look up and inspire to be like because if it’s not sports, we are not on TV” (John, age 32)

In one particular focus group, two participants considered themselves part of an older generation who grew up seeing people on television who looked nothing like them. They both expressed that to them, the race of an anchor draws their attention more than anything else:

“I grew in the time of not seeing people of color on TV so I’m more attentive just because of their color to begin with before they even open their mouth. . . . They got my attention just because of their color and after that you listen for the content. Now you’ve got to remember the time that I grew up that [seeing people of color on television] was a new

thing all the time, even now it still has that effect. I want to see what that guy is saying because he is of color.” (Ray, age 63)

Another participant added that feeling that way is more about human nature than race:

“We are connected by group and as much as we want to have a colorblind society, as much as we would like to, that’s not reality, especially when people have been deprived. . . . You are going to look for ‘you’ first. That is human nature, has nothing to do with racism, it has everything to do with I’m looking for me first.” (Preston, age 67)

That was not the case for everyone. One participant in that same group (Chris, age 31) stated he felt his age gave him a different perspective on the anchors. He stated that though he noticed the race of the anchor change between the various clips, that race, in particular, did not “jump off the page” for him. For some of the younger participants, “over-trying,” in the form of anchors’ over-enunciating, was more of a favorable factor than race was.

Credibility/believability

When discussing the credibility of the anchors, participants mentioned many different defining factors that influenced the perceived source credibility of the anchors. Again, race appeared to be salient. The main themes that emerged were similarity to themselves and the connection to Black culture. Just as the fact that an anchor “looked like” the participants played a significant role in favorability, the credibility or believability of the anchor also seemed to be related to race. Though not the case for every participant in the non-race related news clips, for a couple of the participants, “being Black” improved the Black anchor’s perceived credibility:

“I think I almost felt as if the Black anchors would be more credible. I don't know if that is just 'cause I am of a similar race. I guess I felt more at ease with them.” (Terry, age 52)

“I feel like I judge [the news clip] different if the person is Black.” (Sequan, age 20)

To those who did not see race as a factor in perceived source credibility with regard to the first group of clips, the determining factors included an anchor's perceived originality, neutrality on political issues, and level of experience.

One main recurring theme that continually surfaced as the groups discussed source credibility was the idea of an anchor's connection to culture. In each group, at least half of the participants stated that although race matters, culture does, too. Participants said that if they perceived the anchor came from a background similar to their own, this would boost the anchor's believability with them:

“I think the more you know about people's experiences, it definitely allows you to understand and accept what they are saying much better. It shouldn't but it does.” (Jeff, age 40)

The focus group discussions often returned to the idea that an anchor could not possibly know what he was talking about or have empathy for a situation if he did not understand the culture that was involved. One participant put it very bluntly when he stated that one cannot report on things that are Black-related if one is not related to the Black community. This topic came up in

two of the four groups even before the race-related news clips were shown, and the concept was not limited to race. The participants said it would be the same for reporting on a “Greek-fest,” stating that a journalist could not accurately report on the Greek-fest unless he attended and immersed himself in the Greek community for that event. The same went for the Black community, according to some of the participants. One stated that it was hard for him to accept a report from an anchor or a reporter who he felt did not connect to his community or culture:

“For me, if I am watching the news and it’s a Caucasian lady and she is in the heart of where there was just a shooting, and she is saying, ‘What can we do to help the community bring down these killings,’ I can't relate to that. It’s your community but you ain’t in that community; you don’t live there, you’re not from there. So when you say ‘we,’ I am thinking as in she is including herself in ‘we,’ when at the end of the day she is out of that community. . . . If it is someone that is in that community and they are witnessing that and they are hearing the gunshots and they are broadcasting that, I would go to that rally, I would do more. That [a report from an anchor not connected], I can't believe. I would just change channels.” (Richard, 30)

Another participant added that sometimes all that is needed for minorities to feel more inclined to respond to the news is the *perception* of a cultural connection, not necessarily an actual connection. Race could serve as a visual cue for that perception. He added that does not mean minority viewers totally disregard what a White anchor is saying, but the fact that a statement is coming from a Black anchor means there is more potential the Black anchor relates to them as viewers:

“Doesn't mean that we discredit that person [a White anchor] totally, but yet we don't feel as close and have the same empathy when that person has not experienced what we have, even if it is a perception. There could be another Black person that was raised in the million-dollar house and I came straight outta my welfare house, but I feel a little close to that person because there is potential for that person to have been from the same place I am. Only because I am assuming because of their color that that is possible, which could be totally different, but it is my perception. I am receiving it and I am making the determination on what that person is saying.” (Ray, age 63)

Other participants seemed to place more weight on culture than on race:

“I think culture is everything. Like he said, you can have a Black male that is from a million-dollar home, and he is so disconnected with the urban area and the urban culture to where you can have a young White guy that you have been going to school with forever and him being more familiar with the culture. Not that I identify with him more, but culturally I would identify with him more because this guy is so removed from the culture. Sure, you face racism, but you having faced the problems that I have with this younger White gentleman. So I think culture is almost everything.”

Credibility in relation to news

Without race even being a factor, the topic of credibility of the news as a whole emerged in each of the group discussions. Although more than half of the participants verbally agreed

that they preferred a Black anchor to a White counterpart, this did not necessarily indicate they really believed the news presented. Some expressed a belief that because Black people were not the majority, the news would never be truly written to reflect the truth from their perspective:

“News reflects the narrative of the audience. Now it is sad to say that, but I think it does, regardless of where you are at. If a predominately Black and diverse audience is being addressed, the news narrative will come from that perspective, but that isn’t usually the case on TV news. If you are telling that to a White audience—majority, I am saying—it is usually in a way that is accepted from that perspective. If I am talking to individuals, it makes a difference what I say and how I say it because I am saying it to fit that audience and that basically is what the news is. The news that we hear, regardless of who is saying it, is being said to fit the audience and is it still credible? For many, it is not. . . . It is suspect because you know what is being said to be accepted by that [White/majority] audience.” (Ray, 63)

What this participant expressed, and others agreed, was that the way news is told could cause Black people to feel disconnected because they are not in the majority. The participants said news stories are not presented in the way they remember or experience them because they are formed to fit the White majority, and that “story” does not represent the truth to the Black community. Preston, from the second focus group, suggested this feeling of disconnect may be a driving force behind Black viewers’ perception of racism in the news media:

“It could very well be the reason why we believe there is racism that favors and drives many of the stories. I mean, you tell a story and it comes out totally different, you tell it and it’s all good intentions, and the way it comes out now is different.” (Preston, age 67)

One participant added that being educated is what allows him to distinguish the difference between what is presented on the news and what is “real” to him and his community:

“If I didn’t go to college, I might say just because he is Black, he is telling the truth. But once you educate yourself and you know how it works and you know what they are trying to feed you, so you can divide it for yourself, no matter what race they are.” (James, 27)

That same participant wanted to add that this did not mean he would not support a Black anchor. This was a common theme among the participants: They would be “rooting” for a Black anchor, but they made a distinction between supporting a Black anchor and believing the news he presented was factual:

“I am going to root for him, but that doesn’t mean I am going to believe what he says.”
(James, age 27)

For one participant, news, in general, had lost all of his trust – regardless of race or topic:

“I have a bias towards the news because I feel like they report whatever they want to report anyway, so I am kind of looking at everything with a skeptic eye so I wouldn't say any of them were more credible to me.” (Chris, 30)

Race-Related News Stories

During the second half of the focus groups, news clips were shown of two different reporters from the same station, one Black and one White, reporting on the Sandra Bland incident. Similar to the non-race related news stories, the scripts used by the Black and White anchors were not identical. It was determined by the researcher that because the two clips were taken from the same news station, they would be the most comparable.

For every group, the entire dynamic in the room changed once the second set of news clips was shown. There was more passion in their statements, more discussion and an overall consensus among the group. In all of the groups, the participants immediately jumped in with opinions about differences in the reporters before the facilitator had an opportunity to begin the inquiry. One rather reserved participant in the second focus group, who contributed minimally to the first half of the discussion, seemed almost outraged by the two clips:

“That is exactly what I was talking. So we got the African American gentlemen and he’s not saying whether she was wrong or right, he is just giving you facts of what he knows. His tone is genuine, you can tell that. They show a picture, a beautiful picture of her ... then they go to the two young ladies [who introduce the White male reporter] and the first thing they say is ‘a Black woman.’ You got to address her as a Black woman? Then they go to the dude [the White anchor] and it’s all negative. ... They didn’t show

none of the traffic [video], instead they show her getting pulled out of the jail cell. Everything was negative. It was just bad.” (Richard, 31)

Imagery/language used

The visuals and language used by the White and Black anchor when depicting Sandra Bland were the two main subthemes raised by the participants when discussing differences between the clips. One concept that continued to come up was that the participants felt as if the reporters or the news station was trying to paint a picture for the viewer even before all of the facts were known about the particular incident:

“The Black reporter showed the picture of her happy and smiling, and when the White guy [reported], that’s when they wanted to show the mug shot. They couldn't have stuck with the one image; they didn't have to show us the depiction of what she looked like when she was behind bars. That, to me, it takes away from what is important, which is the fact that this lady lost her life. They are condemning her in the public eye instead of allowing the court to handle it. . . . If it was just one-time thing, it would probably go unnoticed, but it’s like every time a Black person gets in trouble, whether they are guilty or not guilty, they are going to go find the worse picture to paint the worst picture they can. ” (John, age 32)

“Well he [the White anchor] showed jail cells, showed orange suits . . . basically convicting her and putting her on the wrong feet before even . . . because the image is the

first thing. We can hear all the things ever, but when we see something . . . it travels to the mind faster.” (Lonnie, age 47)

Another participant added that the type of imagery used by the White anchor could prompt the audience to convict the suspect in their heads, without needing the facts or a proper justice system ruling:

“The White news anchor had an imagery attached to his stuff so he was already leading people. . . . He showed her in the orange right away, and he kept saying she got arrested, she became combative, that was no more an opinion, that was him making actual statements. Even though he was saying the jail death was still under investigation, the visual was showing us something totally different. It was actually coercing us. If you didn’t know anything about it, it might coerce, like, ‘Well, maybe she deserved it?’”
(Randy, age 40)

A participant from a different group made the same point and added that it seemed the two reporters told two different stories even though they addressed the same story (and worked at the same station):

“I think they reported on two different stories even though they were talking about the same thing. The White anchor just dehumanized her and almost painted her like a criminal or a villain, like she got what she deserved.” (Chris, age 30)

One participant believed the image was exactly what the news station wanted to portray and had successfully portrayed about the Black community in the past:

“You are putting a label on her and when you see that label, you know who that race is going to be. Even if it didn't say African American, the mind would have jumped to that conclusion because of what is constantly reinforced.” (James, age 27)

According to the participants, the message portrayed did not stop at the images used; it also included the anchors' word choice. For example, participants noted the White anchor used words including “combative” and “aggressive.” Also, participants did not believe it was necessary to label the suspect as Black.

“What bothered me a little bit was that in the beginning of the second clip, the [anchor] had to say the woman was Black. That was not necessary. ... [They] could have just said a woman was arrested.” (Anthony, age 18)

“... His [the White anchor's] word choice—‘combative,’ ‘physical,’ I think he said ‘altercation’—all of those are associated with [the stereotype of] the angry Black woman. That just takes on a whole other spin with everything, and again it is a White male saying those things when all the facts aren't out.” (Cashew, age 23)

Several participants believed statements made by the White anchor were more “conclusive” while the statements made by the Black anchor were more “neutral.” A participant from the

second focus group, Ray, indicated these two “depictions” of the same story strengthened and supported his case that reporters adjust their message to favor their target audience:

“Basically, it was the narrative to fit an audience, and the picture was painted. Whether it was by words, by picture, by example, by picking out a negative [example]. . . you paint a picture to fit the audience that it is shown to.” (Ray, age 63)

Preston, from that same group, added that the picture painted “plants the seed of justification for, like you said, she getting what she deserved.” Both seemed to think that this is what the White majority wants—for viewers to see Black people as guilty, regardless of their actual guilt, in order for them to “sleep at night” knowing that Black people are “being killed at the hands of police officers.”

It is clear from the findings that the participants immediately picked up on differences in word choice and images used by the White and Black anchors. What is not as obvious is what the response would have been had the Black and White anchors used the same words or images. It is hard to know whether the words and images used by the White anchor would have been as salient and hurtful to the participants if they had come from a Black anchor. It should also be noted that some of the participants said they were not sure they could blame the reporters/anchors for the images used. It was unclear to a majority of the participants whether the station or network chose the images used with each story, or whether the anchor did.

Credibility, emotion and empathy

The credibility, emotion and empathy of the anchors emerged as additional themes of discussion among the focus group participants. The findings were consistent as, again, the

participants felt as though the Black anchor was more credible due to the way he presented the story:

“The African American newsman . . . just coming off very strong, nonjudgmental, impartial, and he was intelligent and it was strong. And he was believable, see. The other anchor, he was more subdued and even almost soft-spoken to me after listening to the Black anchor and I just felt very strongly. Maybe it is because I am prejudice or whatever, but the Black anchor was much smoother and much more forthright in how he delivered the information. I could latch on to that, I can believe that. He is more believable to me. . . . Maybe that has something to do with the way I think. But the fact is I just feel like he was stronger in his presentation and he was believable for me.”

(Preston, age 67)

For one participant, in particular, when it comes to racially specific incidents, he says he naturally feels more comfortable getting the news from a Black anchor:

“As far as comfort between the Black and the White, I guess to me that kind of supports how I normally feel, that I am going to get a better scoop from the man of color, especially if it’s a racial incident. It looked like the Black guy gave more of a benefit of a doubt; we need to wait until the investigation developed, we need to look at all of these things as a whole.” (Terry, age 52)

One participant even joked that the Black anchor could come into the room and join their table while the White anchor, due to the way he depicted the news, would not receive the same treatment:

“The Black guy and the way he presented his news, he could have a conversation and will be comfortable. . . . If the White guy came through here and reported the same news . . . he would have to keep going and walk out the back door [laughter].” (Jeff, age 40)

Though meant to be a joke, what the participant was implying was that due to the way the White reporter had handled the story, the participant felt no connection with him. The participant did not feel the anchor would want to be a part of their conversation, their community. Based on the findings, it seemed that connection to the Black community—in terms of empathy and emotion portrayed by the anchors—was very important to these Black viewers:

“The Black anchor, there was a lot—a lot of emotion, so that could create some bias from that standpoint because he is pulling at the heart of the Black community.” (Cashew, age 23)

The fact that the groups felt a connection with the Black anchor and not with the White anchor was not surprising to the participants, although it provoked a lot of initial reaction from them:

“Of course, for us, we are going to be upset because that’s our people, so the Black anchor had that tone, but from their perspective it really doesn’t matter to them. That’s just how it seems.” (Tory, age 22)

“We are more sensitive to issues that are ill towards us. The one that is suffering is going to yell the loudest because of the pain. The people that are not suffering could [not] care less. To me, that is what this [the group’s reaction] is all about. We are able to identify that right away because we can relate to it.” (Preston, age 67)

One participant agreed but acknowledged that the sometimes-rigid world of news can cause the lack of emotion seen in the White anchor:

“Clearly the Black male was more emotional about it, more empathic about it, because that is a part of his community. That’s how I perceived it. The White individual, I think he did a good job doing his job, but there wasn’t that much empathy. But it wasn’t like an opinion piece; it was news and that’s how news is sometime.” (Sequan, age 20)

Nonetheless, these Black participants felt a connection with the Black anchor and not with the White due to the depiction they all felt the White anchor portrayed. This idea sparked a comment from one participant, who questioned whether news stories like these have any responsibility for the current state of race relations in the country:

“So I wonder if us Black men see that report the way that we seen it, and then the White people see it the way that they see it . . . I mean that is why there is such a color divide between people because, I mean, I am sure that they feel about the White guy like we feel about the Black guy. . . . That’s America.” (Mike, age 42)

The State of the Black Race in News

A majority of the focus group participants agreed that just being a Black anchor or reporter on television news landed one a great deal of respect with them. That respect did not always translate into credibility or favorability, but the participants expressed respect for anyone who had overcome the known struggle they feel generally holds Black people back in America. For example, one participant said being Black was enough reason for him to support an anchor because he understands the anchor must have worked very hard to get where he is:

“In fact, I am secretly rooting for them because I know that we have to jump through so many hoops to get to where we are, so I know if that brother is sitting up there talking on that program, he had to do something that really qualified him to sit in that seat that the other people did not have to do.” (Preston, age 67)

Another participant added that he feels the same way, based on his own experience working as a Black man in corporate America:

“He [a Black anchor] is in a marathon with his legs cut off because he has to jump higher than the next person. . . . I know for me I feel like I am in a marathon race and they forgot to tell me that I didn’t have no legs so we had to jump a little higher.” (Jeff, age 40)

That discussion led to the idea that news is an image, and in order for a Black man or women to fit in the image, they must conform. One participant commented that the image of a natural Black person with kinky hair and dark skin is not the image of beauty often portrayed and therefore is not an image that is often accepted on the news.

Don Lemon, a Black lead anchor on CNN, was often brought into the conversation. Lemon’s opinion on political correctness has been a source of disapproval from the Black community (“Black Twitter Hates,” 2015). In June 2015, Lemon did an interview with conservative host Glenn Beck in which he addressed the fact that he has been called a sellout. Lemon was quoted as saying, “Mostly on the Left I’m a sellout or an uncle Tom. I don’t believe in pandering. I believe in telling people the truth. And people don’t always want to hear the truth. And I believe many times liberals don’t want to hear the truth. You know, if you don’t see their world point of view, they get really vicious because, you know, ‘What, are you kidding me? You’re a black man, and you don’t believe certain things that I believe.’” (“CNN Host Don,” 2015)

With limited Black representation in the news, it is perhaps understandable that Lemon’s words would cause problems for many in the Black community. Although one focus group participant referred to Lemon as a “sellout” to the Black community, the same participant said he understands that in order for Lemon to continue to have a job in the news media, he must portray a certain image:

“I think that whether it be Don Lemon or anybody else that is in a predominately White field or market, or where your bosses or the people that you work for have a particular image that they need to present, you are presenting an image.” (Jeff, age 40)

Along with the idea of presenting a certain image came a discussion regarding whether Black anchors can actually be true to themselves. The participants were bothered by the idea that if a Black anchor is forced to conform to a certain image, he could not really be true to himself, especially on race-related issues. One participant stated that if he were a Black anchor, he would fear losing his job if he truly reported the news as he saw it:

“If I knew that the owner of the network was White, my boss was White and everyone was White, and then I’m listening to my coworkers talk about, ‘Hey, look at this picture of her in her jumpsuit,’ you know, I might start trying to be a little careful about how I present myself and how I present the news.” (Mike, age 42)

The groups debated whether having more Black reporters and anchors would have an impact on news culture. Some participants mentioned a more “rounded viewpoint,” better representation, and less bias as positive effects that could result. Other participants felt that having more Black anchors, just like having more Black people in any respectable position, would help the community by showing young adults and children that they could achieve similar success. However, the acknowledgement of a “glass ceiling” immediately followed this discussion of the potential benefits of greater representation:

“Those levels are not just the news anchor industry . . . It’s a problem that Black people have been dealing with forever, how to break into some of these predominately White industries that have been a little bit exclusive throughout time. And we are starting to make progress, but there is still a lot of work to be done.” (Mike, age 42)

Others were not as positive. One participant, who remained quiet throughout most of the discussion, became visibly upset when addressing his feelings about increasing the representation of Black anchors on television:

“I think that it would only make as much impact as they would let it make. White folks are still in control. It doesn’t matter if we go out there and hire 100 Black folks, there is still someone at the top of the list saying, ‘No, we are not going to do this.’ It is about ratings, sponsorships. . . . Until you get a Black person at the tiptop, in control, it is all going to stay the same. How many [acts of violence] have the police committed and we don’t see on TV? Thousands. We only see it when it becomes a real big problem. We don’t get news—we get what they want us to get. Until that changes, it doesn’t matter or make a difference. We can go out there and put 150,000 Black news anchors, but if that person at the top is telling you, ‘I am not running that story,’ it doesn't matter. That’s how I feel.” (Nathan, age 35)

This comment and many others make it clear there is substantial distrust and a strong disconnect between the news industry and these Black viewers.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to explore the impact of diversity on television through Black viewers' responses to newscasters of different races, paying particular attention to 1) the impact of a newscaster's race on his or her perceived credibility, 2) the perceived accuracy of news reports of racially driven stories, and 3) emotional responses provoked by the race of a newscaster. The researcher was looking to determine whether there was a disconnect between Black viewers and local news and, if so, what might be causing it.

This study was designed to answer two research questions through a series of focus groups:

RQ 1: How does race influence the perceived source credibility of a television news crew among a minority audience?

RQ 2: How do Black viewers perceive and respond to a news story about Black Americans delivered by a Black news anchor compared with a Caucasian news anchor?

The findings of this study imply that race has a significant impact on the perceived source credibility of the news crew among a Black male audience. Race not only affected the participants' perceptions of source credibility, but also their viewership and the support they may show a particular anchor. As described and depicted through their own words, race matters and just being black is a characteristic that carries weight when watching the news.

Who was delivering a message and how that message was delivered evoked a lot of emotional response from the Black participants. The findings suggest that for race-related

stories, the race of the anchor mattered tremendously. Many participants indicated they found a Black anchor more believable because they felt more of a connection with him; they felt they could connect with him not just racially, but also culturally. Also, they paid closer attention to the images and language used in news stories about Blacks than in non-race related stories. In race-related news, the Black anchor was perceived as neutral, nonbiased, empathetic and more trustworthy, while the White anchor was perceived as deceptive, biased, degrading and insensitive toward the story.

These findings support previous research by Appiah (2003), which found African Americans are more conscious of race, and the distinctiveness theory of McGuire (1984) and McGuire et al. (1978), which suggested that minorities find their own traits to be more salient. The findings of this study also support those of Beaudoin and Thorson (2005), who suggested that race is a more important factor for African Americans than for Caucasians when assessing the credibility of the news. Multiple participants in these focus groups stated that they felt as if news was not written for them, but for the majority. They did not know whether they could believe what was being broadcast because, in their view, news is written for and by the White majority. These findings are also consistent with a statement Andrew Hacker made that Blacks know the dominant media are white and that, “The media report and write from the standpoint of a white man’s world” (Diuguid & Rivers, 2000, p. 121)

While the findings of this study line up with that of previous research, what they add to the literature is a type of explanation of why it is, exactly, that race matters. This study found that race matters to these Black men because it is important for them to have something, or somebody, to identify with on the screen. In the areas in which these focus groups were held, there is little to no representation of Black people on the local news crews. When shown clips of

Black anchors, the participants were drawn in and were quoted saying things like, “He looks like me,” “I’m going to listen to what he has to say,” or “I am rooting for him.”

Diving deeper, the participants expressed how important culture is when it comes to one’s reasoning for favorability. According to them, an anchor doesn’t necessarily have to be Black in order for them to feel more of a connection and have increased source credibility. An anchor just has to come from a similar culture or have a real understanding of the culture of Black people for that connection to be made. In order for that connection to be made with a White anchor, though, the participants felt they would need evidence of cultural understanding, otherwise they would assume the White anchor did not understand what Black people really go through. That connection to culture seems to be much stronger with the Black anchors because race serves as a visual cue, meaning the participants do not need background knowledge of a Black anchor to feel a connection with him.

Implications

It is important to note the current racial climate in the United States. At the time of this writing, many news outlets are discussing the topic of racial inequality in regards to police brutality. The August 2014 death of Michael Brown, an unarmed 18-year-old Black male who was fatally shot by a White police officer in Ferguson, Missouri, sparked outrage that is still ongoing more than a year later. The officer involved, Darren Wilson, was never charged, and a grand jury of nine whites and three blacks did not indict him (Davey & Bosman, 2014). According to *The Washington Post*, black men are seven times more likely than whites to die by police gunfire even though they only make up just six percent of the U.S. population. From January 2015 to October 2015, 28 unarmed Black men have been shot and killed by police—one

every nine days, according to a *Washington Post* database of fatal police shootings (Somashekhar et al., 2015).

As result of the death of Michael Brown, an organization called Black Lives Matter was started. According to the group's social media page, #BlackLivesMatter is an "online forum intended to build connections between Black people and our allies to fight anti-Black racism, to spark dialogue amongst Black people, and to facilitate the types of connections necessary to encourage social action and engagement" ("Black Lives Matter," 2015). This online forum has since turned into a movement with thousands joining together to hold protests, rallies and other events to demand justice and equality. The Black Lives Matter movement has been called the modern-day Civil Rights Movement. News outlets have both supported and criticized this movement. Fox News' Bill O'Reilly was quoted comparing the Black Lives Movement to the Ku Klux Klan ("Fox's Bill O'Reilly Compares," 2015). This type of division, in conjunction with the numbers of Blacks killed, has undoubtedly caused a deep and obvious racial divide and tension. This is easily spotted in the findings of this study.

Many of the participants stated that they felt as though the news more often than not portrays Blacks negatively and inaccurately. That could be argued, but to best depict what is currently going on and being felt by Black people, here are some examples: Following multiple deaths of unarmed Black men by White police officers, very large and at times damaging disturbances caused mainly by Black people broke out in Ferguson, Missouri, and Baltimore, Maryland. Every major news outlet was there, providing around-the-clock coverage. The disturbances were labeled "riots," and the participants were labeled "thugs." Even though many were peacefully protesting, all were labeled negatively. In contrast, the 20th Anniversary of the Million Man March took place just months later. Hundreds of thousands of peaceful Black

people got together on the National Mall in Washington, D.C., to promote justice—with no violence, no deaths, no disturbances—and yet the event received very little coverage (Prince, 2015). Furthermore, the unrest in Ferguson and Baltimore was broadcast much differently than similar events involving White people have been. Brave New Films, an organization with the mission to “champion social justice issues from examples of media and education,” compiled actual news footage taken from major news networks to show the vast difference in coverage and verbiage used when portraying Black vs. White events (“Black Protests vs. White Riots”). This paints a certain picture. According to the participants in this study, it is examples like this that paint a negative and harmful image of Black people to the White community.

At the time of this study, it has now been 51 years since segregation was made illegal in America, yet racial tension is still at the forefront of the media’s discussion. The findings of this study suggest that race is still an everyday and very conscious part of Black men’s lives. Regardless of how much focus the country puts on equality and inclusion, the Black participants in this study feel excluded and discriminated against. This is something many of the participants actually seemed apologetic or embarrassed about, many saying they noticed race even though, they said, “they shouldn’t.” This implies that society has decided that race shouldn’t matter even though to those directly affected, it does.

It is safe to say there is major distrust when it comes to the representation of Blacks in the news media—not just in the fact that Blacks feel they are underrepresented, but also because they feel they are misrepresented. This study suggests that just having a Black face on the local news will help, but it will not solve the problem. It seems to go much deeper. Many participants stated with regard to Black anchors and reporters that they were not sure they could even believe what they were saying because the White community controls the media that is being delivered.

To a community that already feels “deprived,” adding distrust when it comes to something as important as news is extremely dangerous, which is evident by the current racial climate in the U.S.

If bridging that racial divide is something that mass media would like to take part in, it is very important that they consider the findings of studies like this one. It is important for Black people to feel they are being represented, both physically and appropriately, on the news. News media are a source of possible change within our society. These outlets have the power to be a catalyst for a lot of things, one of which could be racial inclusion. The negative effects are dramatic; the positive effects might be, as well. According to these findings, having more Blacks at all levels of the news media, including anchors, producers, news directors, and corporate executives, is necessary for proper representation, more trust and possibly positive change.

Limitations

This study had several limitations, one being the fact that the scripts for the news clips shown were not uniform. As stated before, the clips chosen were comparable but not word-for-word. Identical scripts could have likely caused the viewers to notice different things or have different reactions. It is hard to know if the reaction seen in the race related news clips would have been the same had the words been uniform. Obviously, there was a significant amount of dialogue in each focus group concerning the word choice used by the White anchor. Had both anchors used the same words, the findings could have been much different.

One of the groups only had two participants. This is a limitation to the study because the lack of numbers could have hindered the discussion within that group. According to Wimmer and Dominick (2014), the ideal size for a focus group is four to six respondents, which means the

information collected is larger and of better quality because the moderator has more opportunities for follow-up questions. This study used snowball sampling, allowing the participants to be made up of friends, acquaintances, or relatives. Although this often creates a comfortable environment, resulting in more conversation, it could have hindered the findings in that participants might have felt embarrassed to share their true feelings. That is a limitation that could be found in all focus group studies.

The purpose of this study was not to generalize the thoughts or opinions of Black males with regard to source credibility in news. The sample was drawn from three cities in Iowa with relatively small Black populations. The Black population in the Des Moines area and Davenport are both just 10% while Ames is 3%. Iowa as a whole has an even smaller Black population at 2.9%. ("Iowa Quickfacts," 2015) The number of Black people working on news crews in those areas is reflective of those percentages. Participants in areas where Blacks are more represented might be more accustomed to seeing Black anchors or reporters on a regular basis within their local news crews.

Future Research

Although the findings in this study fill some significant gaps in the current research, a lot more research could be done on this topic. Future research might use identical news clips with identical scripts since it is difficult to know if the reactions from the participants in this study were more related to the race of the anchor or to the words and images used. If the researcher were to manipulate the scripts, it would be possible to examine the interaction between race and language/images. Future researchers also could conduct the same study with either White males or with Black/White females. This could help determine if findings are consistent across various

demographics. Similarly, it would be interesting to do this type of study with a White male anchor and a Hispanic male anchor and compare the findings to those presented here. Due to the fact that the Hispanic population is also poorly represented in the news anchor field, researchers might find similar results. In addition to changing the demographic of the sample, future research might change the type of sampling used. Using a purposive sample from a larger area, representing a wider generational range, might change the findings significantly. Finally, this study could provide the framework for a longitudinal study. The findings not only answered the proposed research questions but also depicted the current racial climate in the U.S. Future researchers could use this same framework to measure the racial climate every ten to twenty years to help understand how things may or may not be changing in the eyes of Black males.

The data in this particular study was collected via audiotape recordings. This allowed for the responses to be accurately transcribed while protecting the participants' identities. However, videotaped responses done as part of future research would allow scholars to see and record the physical responses of participants, which might provide an even better understanding and a more accurate representation of what was felt in the focus group settings.

One participant was very confident that the advancement of technology would force the media to properly and accurately report the news. The fact that images and events are now being caught on cellphone video, uploaded to social media and instantly viewed by millions could possibly result in more accurate portrayals of minority groups. Not all participants agreed. Time will tell, but future researchers might revisit the issue by examining whether future generations believe the portrayal of minorities has changed due to the advancement of technology.

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APPENDIX A

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL

IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY
OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

Institutional Review Board
Office for Responsible Research
Vice President for Research
1138 Pearson Hall
Ames, Iowa 50011-2207
515 294-4566
FAX 515 294-4267

Date: 4/15/2015

To: Pauli Mayfield
208 S. Maple Ave

CC: Dr. Tracy Lucht
111 Hamilton Hall

From: Office for Responsible Research

Title: Source credibility and race: Black viewers' responses to television news anchors

IRB ID: 15-024

Approval Date: 4/15/2015

Date for Continuing Review: 4/14/2016

Submission Type: New

Review Type: Expedited

The project referenced above has received approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Iowa State University according to the dates shown above. Please refer to the IRB ID number shown above in all correspondence regarding this study.

To ensure compliance with federal regulations (45 CFR 46 & 21 CFR 56), please be sure to:

- **Use only the approved study materials** in your research, including the recruitment materials and informed consent documents that have the IRB approval stamp.
- **Retain signed informed consent documents for 3 years after the close of the study**, when documented consent is required.
- **Obtain IRB approval prior to implementing any changes** to the study by submitting a Modification Form for Non-Exempt Research or Amendment for Personnel Changes form, as necessary.
- **Immediately inform the IRB of (1) all serious and/or unexpected adverse experiences** involving risks to subjects or others; and (2) **any other unanticipated problems involving risks** to subjects or others.
- **Stop all research activity if IRB approval lapses**, unless continuation is necessary to prevent harm to research participants. Research activity can resume once IRB approval is reestablished.
- **Complete a new continuing review form** at least three to four weeks prior to the **date for continuing review** as noted above to provide sufficient time for the IRB to review and approve continuation of the study. We will send a courtesy reminder as this date approaches.

Please be aware that IRB approval means that you have met the requirements of federal regulations and ISU policies governing human subjects research. **Approval from other entities may also be needed.** For example, access to data from private records (e.g. student, medical, or employment records, etc.) that are protected by FERPA, HIPAA, or other confidentiality policies requires permission from the holders of those records. Similarly, for research conducted in institutions other than ISU (e.g., schools, other colleges or universities, medical facilities, companies, etc.), investigators must obtain permission from the institution(s) as required by their policies. **IRB approval in no way implies or guarantees that permission from these other entities will be granted.**

Upon completion of the project, please submit a Project Closure Form to the Office for Responsible Research, 1138 Pearson Hall, to officially close the project.

Please don't hesitate to contact us if you have questions or concerns at 515-294-4566 or IRB@iastate.edu.

APPENDIX B
SAMPLE FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS

- “What were your thoughts when watching the news clips?”
- “Which anchor did you favor and why?”
- “Does one seem to be more credible than the other?”
- “Do you believe what they are saying?”
- “Does one seem to have more experience than the other?”
- “Do these anchors remind you of anchors you see on your local news?”
- “Do you find them to be attractive? Why or why not?”
- “Do you watch news on a regular basis?”
- “Why do you watch the station that you usually choose to watch?”
- “What about an anchor attracts you to watch that station?”
- “Do you believe the news that is reported?”
- “Did you believe the news stories you just watched? Why or why not?”
- “When watching the White anchor read the story, what were your thoughts? Were they different from those you felt when the Black anchor read them?”
- “Do racially specific stories about African Americans carry more or less weight when they come from a Black anchor? A White anchor? Why or why not?”
- “Can a White person accurately report on a story about the Black community?”
- “Does the race of the anchor matter to you? Why or why not?”
- “Did you feel a personal connection with the anchor?”